A Tangled Web

by Tyhyin

Summary

Coop dreams of dying and then details of his dream start appearing in his waking life. It seems the universe doesn't want him to die. Cold Case: Forever Blue.
And So It Begins

Eileen Bruno wanted a glass of milk and thought that the walk downstairs would settle the baby who was currently using her bladder as a trampoline. Yet she lay in bed a while longer her right hand going out to caress the cold space that her husband Jimmy should be occupying, she could faintly hear him and his partner Coop talking in the backyard. When the need for hydration intensified and the fact that she suddenly needed to pee became too strong she reluctantly got up. Once her bladder had been emptied enough so that she could at least stand her unborn acrobats she made her way down the stairs and into the kitchen. Her hand on the refrigerator handle she heard the disembodied voice of her husband say "Why do you gotta piss of Teddy Burke like that?"

Intrigued she walked over to the back door, held the yellow curtains aside and looked out at the two men. They were sat on garden chairs passing a bottle of whiskey between them.

Coop scoffed "Are you afraid of that scumbag?"

"It aint about fear, you know what it's about" Jimmy replied his voice growing quite towards the end

Coop sighed and asked "What's it about Jimmy?"

"Keeping my job, I aint going against McCree" Jimmy replied looking over at Coop.

Passing the whiskey bottle back to Jimmy, Coop replied with "So that makes it alright to be on the take?" and angled his head slightly

"Everything's always black and white with you" Jimmy more sighed then actually vocalised then "You don't know anything" and took another swig of whiskey.

Coop leant forward enthusiastically and said "We're cops, that's all I need to know."

"I've got three kids. Don't talk to me about taking fifty bucks a week from a piece of crap!" Jimmy defended whilst passing the whiskey bottle back making Eileen's heart swell with love for her handsome provider but never once letting go off the curtain.

"Then you are just like McCree" Coop poked a finger at Jimmy and half snarled as if he remembered he was talking to his best friend at the last minute.

"Get off your soapbox Coop! You go out there and bust shins 'cos it's another good time for you!" Jimmy shouted his anger slowly rising

Coop stopped lifting the whiskey bottle to his lips and said "I bust shins 'cos I am enforcing the law." pointing at the ground as he did.

This made Eileen smile behind her wood and glass partition and made Jimmy sigh "You and your John Wayne act."

"We're the law. We're here to put the scumbags away it aint fun and games." Coop said vehemently. Eileen, although having no clue as to what the two men were talking about suddenly felt this overwhelming feeling of foreboding. Like something bad had been set into motion.

Then Jimmy said leaning further towards Coop with every word "Sure it is, just like the fun you had slaughtering Vietcong. You miss that free pass to kill don't you?"
Eileen saw Coop's temper snap and before she could realize what had happened Coop had whacked Jimmy's head with his forearm leaving behind a thud that echoed in her ears. As Jimmy was struggling to reorientate himself Coop put all his weight behind his fist and punched him in the face.

Standing up he said "You're right that was fun."

Jimmy gasped "Go to hell." before he was on his feet again and he and Coop were grappling for a hold on each other until Coop pushed Jimmy away with a hand to his chest.

They stood there staring at each other for what felt like an eternity to Eileen her throat constricting hoping that they'd leave each other be and go sleep off the whiskey and bad feelings. Then Coop's hands came up from his side and grabbed the back of Jimmy's head just as his lips claimed Jimmy's own. Jimmy gave a muffled gasp and placing his arms in between Coop's pushed him off. Eileen was staring wide eyed. Jimmy looked more confused than anything else and Eileen could relate. They stood Jimmy looking at Coop, Coop looking at the floor. Suddenly his face changed the look of confusion replaced by a lust evident in his eyes and he took the two steps towards Coop and repeated Coops earlier gesture, enveloping Coops face with his hands, his lips with his own. Coops hands came up and desperately ran over every part of Jimmy's back they could reach. They kissed like they'd been wandering in the desert for years and now they were each others oasis; Jimmy never kissed her like that. Looking through that window with her mother's yellow curtains clenched tight in her hand Eileen heard her heart break not knowing what the sound meant. She tore her eyes away from the two men still kissing, let out the sob she had been holding back and released her grip on the curtains. Bending slightly she unconsciously brought her hand to her stomach then forgetting the glass of milk she had come down for turned and made her way back to the room she shared with Jimmy.

When she entered the room it was just the same as it was when she had left. Although only minutes had gone by Eileen thought something momentous should have occurred upstairs so as to balance out what happened, was probably still happening downstairs. She led down on the bed and drew what she hoped would be a steadying breath however it only caused her eyes to close and the scene of her husband kissing his partner to replay itself on her eyelids. There would be no sleep for her; Coop had chased it firmly away. In days past she used to see a dim light when she looked at Coop, like a light bulb that needed polishing and she had hoped that he would find a good woman to help him shine. But now all she saw when she thought of him was the devil. Satan himself come to take her sweet Jimmy away from her and his children. She would not have it. Tomorrow she would go to Serge and tell him what that wicked son of his had done. But would Jimmy deny his part in the events, would he deny kissing Coop back? The Jimmy she married would but that man she saw was not the Jimmy she married. With eyes wide open she stayed perfectly still watching the ceiling, trying desperately not to hear any noise from the back yard.

When Jimmy finally came up to bed she was dozing on her back dreaming of righteous fury and the return of her Jimmy. He woke her up by kicking off his shoes and dropping his belt to the floor the buckle clattering loudly. His lips were kiss-swollen and his shirt was un-tucked, she pretended not to notice. He climbed into bed next to her dressed in his boxer shorts and mumbled that Coop was asleep on the couch 'cos he was too drunk to drive home. He smelt of whiskey and Coop, her nose wrinkling at the thought. There was nothing she could do but lay there and hope sleep would claim her and God forbid if she dreamed. When sleep finally found her she dreamt that Jimmy had not taken those two steps toward Coop after pushing him off but had taken two steps back. She dreamt of the words queer and cocksucker coming from her husbands mouth and fear in Coop's eyes. She smiled in her sleep.

The light of early morning woke her to an empty bed, Jimmy's side already cold and the smell of breakfast cooking. Smiling sleepily she slowly rose, slipped on her dressing gown and waddled to
the bathroom. Once finished brushing her teeth she turned for the stairs. She was in her ninth month now so soon her baby would come. Jimmy had liked Charlie for a boy and Charlotte for a girl. There eldest Jason really wanted a younger brother and he would spend hours on end whispering into her belly telling his unborn sibling the things he would do with him if only he would be born a boy. Mary there daughter didn't seem to mind what sex the baby was just that it was born healthy. Lost in her thoughts she had made her way downstairs and was assaulted at the bottom by Mary who grabbed her hand and said "Mummy, Daddy and Uncle Coop are cooking breakfast!" whilst pulling her in the direction of the kitchen.

Coop!

Her tranquil morning was shattered. Last night really did happen; she had hoped it was a nightmare. Dragged into the kitchen by an overactive five year old she quickly composed her face into the most genuine smile she could muster and said mock cheerful "Boys you really didn't have to." and took a seat at the little table pressed against the wall. Jimmy smiled at her, giving her hope that he regretted what happened last night but then when he thought she wasn't looking he turned to Coop who was frying some eggs and the smile met his eyes and made them sparkle. Jimmy placed three crispy rashers of bacon on a plate and Coop supplied the fried egg then Jason took the plate from his fathers waiting hands and placed it in front of her. Little Mary tugged on Coops trousers and asked him if he could pass her the ketchup and once it was in her chubby hands she too placed it in front of Eileen. Smiling despite herself she said "Is it my day to be waited on then, darlings." Jimmy, Jason and Mary laughed while Coop just smiled. How dare he, how dare he stand there among her children after what he'd done to there father, she thought, her rage returning. Every bone in her body ached to scream at Coop, scream the words she'd dreamt Jimmy saying but the fact that her children were in the room and her lingering doubt that Jimmy wouldn't deny it stilled her tongue. So she put some ketchup on her eggs and ate them along with her bacon her eyes never leaving the pattern on the plate. Her children and their father chatted around her, talking with Satan at the breakfast table she thought and nearly made herself giggle with the absurdity. Jason and Mary had finished there breakfast and were playing in the living room and Jimmy was at the sink dealing with their plates and the frying pan whilst Coop dried up after him. Finished eating she placed her knife and fork on her plate and Coop took it away. In the absence of the plate she stared at the wood of the table drawing patterns in her head. Looking up for a moment she caught Jimmy's hand lingering on Coops whilst passing him a washed knife. With eyes like saucers she again fixed her gaze on the table. After he and Coop finished the washing up they joined Eileen at the table each with a cup of coffee and one in Jimmy's hand for her. Coop smiled that charming smile of his and told her she was looking beautiful today, it charmed Jimmy more than it did her.

Jimmy stood up saying that the only reason Coop ever came round was to eye up her, then with a kiss to her cheek he told her that he was gonna go get ready for work walking out the kitchen leaving her and Coop alone. With the sound of Jimmy's footsteps on the stairs Eileen was all set to rip into Coop. Demand he get out of her house and to keep away from Jimmy. Then Coop's eyes went to her belly and his smile faltered, his face clouding over. This was the Coop Jimmy had introduced her to last year, a good man who knew when what he was doing was wrong. Any thoughts of talking about last night fled Eileen's mind as a new hope bloomed in her mind, she would let Coop stop this. He had started it therefore he should finish it. She found herself slipping back into her easy way of talking with Coop now that the pressure was off herself, if in her mind only. While waiting for Jimmy to get dressed she and Coop chatted idly about nothing it was then she again found the man that shone dimly and she rejoiced. Jimmy walked down the stairs and into the kitchen in his uniform smiling from ear to ear. Coop asked what he was grinning at and Jimmy replied nothing, this time Eileen missed the look that passed between them. If she had seen it she would have know that Coop had no intention of ever quitting Jimmy, willingly or otherwise. This would have made the blossom of hope she was revelling in wilt and die. As it was she was content in the plan she had formed not
seeing how flimsy it was. As Jimmy and Coop walked out the door throwing goodbye over their shoulders, on their way to Coop's apartment so he could change into his uniform she saw only what she wanted to.

That day she would bake cookies, Mary eating more of the mixture than actually helping and sit on the couch watching but not listening as Jason and Mary played. That day Eileen Bruno thought her fear that her family would crumble was unfounded and foolish. If only she knew.
Sean Cooper's day started like every day had started ever since he had meet Jimmy Bruno. He woke with an erection tenting the sheets. He closed his eyes again and sighed, it had been a particularly steamy dream last night. He angled his head away from the light coming in through the cheap ass curtains the apartment had come with and rose hoping his erection would go down before he got to the bathroom. Seeing as the bathroom was only about four steps away he highly doubted that possibility. In the shower his erection was still as insistent so he got himself off thinking about broad shoulders and large hands.

Getting out of he towelled himself dry, walked into the corner of his apartment that served as a kitchen and set about making himself some toast. Once it was buttered and one slice was in his mouth the other in his hand he started getting dressed. He slipped a white t-shirt over his bare torso and went in search of his trousers. Chewing as he pulled his pants on and strapped his gun to the belt he had looped through his trousers Coop was almost ready. Finding his shirt sprawled over a chair he put it on and buttoned it up straightening his name badge. Looking at the clock he picked up his keys and started for the door knowing that he would be late for Jimmy if he didn't hurry up. Walking down the three flights of stairs to the main lobby of his apartment block and then out the door onto the street he turned to walk down to where he'd parked his car.

He'd had the same car since he was eighteen, his father giving it him as a birthday present. A Chevrolet Impala, the best gift his father had ever gotten him. He drives the distance it takes to get to Jimmy's house in his own head, reacting to the road but just out of instinct. Where he's really at is that dream last night, Jimmy straddling his hips there groins rubbing together. In his dream Jimmy had took charge with steady hands opening his jeans and pulling out his dick. Coop doubted that the older man would be so forward if they ever got to it but the Jimmy in his dream didn't hesitate before he engulfed Coops length with his mouth. The Sun had woke him up just before Jimmy had brought him to completion. Nearing Jimmy's house Coop tried to calm himself not wanting Jimmy to get in the car and to immediately notice his woody. He stopped outside Jimmy's front door and sounded his horn to alert Jimmy to his presence and so he knew to get a move on.

He turned his head when he heard the door open and caught Eileen kissing Jimmy's cheek smiling as he walked towards the waiting car. Coop sat there feeling jealousy course through him and he thought that if Jimmy were his he'd do more than kiss his cheek. With two children and one on the way he knew Jimmy and Eileen did more than kiss on the cheek but he himself would not be able to limit himself to that even if they were in public. God he was in trouble. Jimmy opened his door and got in knocking Coop from his thoughts. Smiling a wry smile Jimmy asked what was wrong and all Coop could do was grunt in reply not trusting himself to speak. Shrugging Jimmy strapped himself in and they set off to the station, Coop trying hard not to watch Jimmy out of the corner of his eye. He already knew that it would be a hard day. They drove listening to the radio Jimmy singing along and Coop grinning like the proverbial cat until he couldn't help but join in. They were still laughing as Coop pulled into the stations car park. They both got out of the car at the same time and having entered the station exited at the same time. They were to go on patrol today, oh joy Coop thought. As they climbed into Coop's patrol car he said to Jimmy "Let's go catch some bad guys."

They'd been circling the more seedy parts of the city for two hours before they came across Teddy Burke leaning against the boot of his car. Jimmy saw him first and pointed him out to Coop, then they both saw the little blonde thing run up to him and get her next fix. To hell with it thought Coop, the bastard was asking for it and he turned on the siren and turned the corner. Pulling up to a stop they both got out, Coop with his baton in his hand and said to the blond woman "Now what is a fine looking lady like you doing in a dump like this."

Edging away whilst he had been speaking she just
tilted her head and ran away. Burke pushing himself off his car and put his hands on his hips.

Joining Coop in moving closer to Burke, Jimmy said "They always run away from me."

Turning to him Coop replied "Maybe it's your shiny personality huh?" then with his hands around both ends of the baton he turned back to Burke and asked "What are you doing?"

Burke replied with "Selling ice cream"

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, what are you doing?"

Leaning back slightly and turning towards Jimmy he said "Ah, let me see" before he brought the baton down against Burke's right shin with his left hand. Jimmy looking at the man stood next to Burke's car, warning him.

"Argh you son of a bitch, don't you know who I am." screamed Burke holding onto his shin

"A drug dealer in an ugly leather jacket, am I getting close?" Coop replied

Raising his hand from his shin and straightening up Burke said "You're making a big mistake."

Jimmy told him to shut up and took a step forward whilst Coop put his baton on his belt and moved around to the backseat window of Burke's car.

With a "Whoa" he leaned in through the open window and drew out a yellow block of heroin holding it up and walking back round to Jimmy's side.

"There's ways to get a piece officer, that aint one." Burke said grinning at them.

Coop just said "Cuff him Jimmy." and Jimmy grabbed hold of Burke's shoulders spinning him around to press him into the boot of his own car.

Burked said "This wont stick why are you bringing me in." his words laced with laughter.

Using his baton to hold up Burke's jacket Coop said "It's your jacket, it clashes with the neighbourhood."

Jimmy pulled a cuffed Burke towards their patrol car whilst the scumbag said "You mark my words I'm gonna last a lot longer on these streets than you." gesturing to them both with his head.

Jimmy opened the door and Coop pushed Burke down into the car deliberately making it so his head hit the side of the car then said "Watch your head."

Jimmy smiled at him as they got back into the car. Burke pissed and moaned that it was a waste of time all they way back to the station leaving Coop and Jimmy nothing else to do but ignore him.

Coop pushed him from the backseat and guided him into the station by a hand on his back. Once inside they cuffed him to the arm of a bench and waited leant against the opposite wall waiting for the interrogation room to be free.

They'd been leant there for quite a while when Coop turned to Jimmy and asked "Eileen home tonight?" to which Jimmy replied "Are you in love with my wife Coop?"

Coop just laughed and said "Just her cooking." which was true enough. Burke was glaring at them and pulling the bottom cuff taunt against the wood.
"She's taking the kids to see Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." he replied. Good, Coop thought he could have Jimmy all to himself.

Coop smiled and said "Too bad, that means we have to drink and watch TV all night without someone nagging us"

Shaking his head but smiling Jimmy replied "Damn shame." Coop shaking his head too.

They both turned, there smiles fading when they heard Owen Murphy, a fellow officer walking up the stairs from the floor below pushing a man in drag along saying "No you may not use the ladies room," then seeing Jimmy he asked "We're allowed to beat up queers for information, right Jimmy?"

"Your bust your call." was Jimmy's reply

It was then that the door at the end of the wall they were leaning on opened and Lieutenant McCree walked out, gestured with his head into his office and said "Inside."

Looking back at Jimmy, Coop pushed off the wall and walked in, Jimmy following. Burke laughed from his position cuffed to the bench.

Once McCree had shut the door he said "Am I on LSD or is that Teddy Burke out there." walking to stand next to his desk, in front of them.

Coop couldn't resist. "You take LSD boss?"

"Damn it Coop save the wise ass remarks" then looking to Jimmy he asked "Why'd you guys bring him in?"

Looking incredulous Jimmy replied "He was selling smack on a corner."

"And which one of you came to me for the ok?" McCree asked turning from one to the other.

Scoffing Coop said "We gotta get permission."

McCree's facing scrunching up he said "Don't play dumb."

"Lieutenant, correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't the Crimes Code say the possession of drugs is illegal."

Sighing McCree looked at Jimmy and said "Are you gonna get this jackass under control."

Jimmy swallowed and said "I'll make sure we get proper clearance on all politically sensitive suspects."

"Screw that!" Coop said "Jimmy and I have been together for a year, we've had more busts seen more convictions than any other team."

McCree just looked at him blankly and said "Your point?"

Laughing Coop stepped forward and said "Point is Captain appreciates our work, you think he knows your such good pals with Teddy Burke?"

Smiling McCree went in to Coop's personal space and said "Do not try to go over my head Coop. You'll regret it." then he turned away and said "Now scram."

"What about Burke?" Coop said
Turning back around a puzzled look on his face McCree said "What Teddy Burke, was he busted today?" smirking at the end. God what Coop would have done to be able to wipe that smug smile from McCree's smug face.

Jimmy nudged his elbow and he walked out the office with his partner on his tail. Burke was being released by another officer as they came out of the office and sauntering up to Coop and Jimmy he inclined his body just enough for it to be mocking then turned and walked down the stairs. McCree was on the take he'd known that but was Jimmy too? Coop didn't really want to know the answer to that. Half way down the stairs Burke turned around and waved at them smirking away. One day he'd see that man behind bars Coop swore to himself. The Desk Sergeant sent them back on patrol with a wary aye at a seething Coop.

Jimmy was being cautious of him and Coop couldn't stand it anymore, that or the silence. He knew Jimmy had a family to provide for so he had to do what McCree said but he couldn't stop it hurting when Jimmy didn't side with him. Losing his anger he sighed, the often used sign to Jimmy that said it was time for him to distract Coop. Almost feeling Jimmy's smile Coop heard a "That was quicker then usually." and he himself smiled.

"It aint mad at you Jimmy, you gotta know that. It's that bastard McCree." Coop replied getting serious, the need that Jimmy know he wasn't angry at him; could never be angry at him was too overwhelming. Looking at Jimmy through the corner of his eyes Coop saw the fond smile Jimmy sent him.

"Yeah I know Coop and I need you to know I hate it as much as you. You have your Dad to fall back on if McCree decides to make an example of you, I don't." Jimmy said his eyes never leaving Coops face.

Never been one to mince his words Coop said "That's what you think I'd do, cut you loose and get myself safely away!" the anger flaring in him again. When Jimmy didn't respond Coop growled low in his throat and steered the car to side of the road. Putting on the parking brake he spun to glare at Jimmy.

"Your my partner Jimmy and to me that means something. It means I'd take a bullet for you, that I'll stand by you whatever shit comes your way professional or personal." Scared that the emotion behind the words would show in his eyes Coop turned away looking out the windshield at the neighbourhood they'd ended up in.

So he wasn't looking when Jimmy's laughed and not knowing the reason he growled again almost ready to swing for him. Then Jimmy said "Your crazy Coop you know that? It means a lot to me too. You remember when Mary got sick and Eileen was at her mothers?"

"Yeah?" Coop wondered where this was going

"Who did I call?"

There it was, Jimmy depended on him. Saw him as a shoulder there for friendly support. Coop reluctantly said "Me."

Smiling Jimmy said "Yeah it was you, and it was you who stayed all night with Mary whilst I was dead in the armchair exhausted."

Coop remembered that night well, how he'd been frantic when he got Jimmy's phone call the older
man sounding so panicked that Coop had said he was on his way without even finding out what was wrong. He'd pulled up to the house and Jimmy had run out carrying a red faced Mary in his arms and as soon as Coop looked at her he knew what was wrong. It turned out that little Mary had a fever and that Jimmy didn't know what to do. Coop had just smiled at Jimmy and took Mary from him and ushered them back inside. Inside Coop had bundled Mary up in blankets stretched out on the couch and gave her some Calpol stroking her hair saying it would all be ok. Jimmy explained that Jason was at a friend's for a sleepover. His adrenalin gone Jimmy had flopped down in the armchair opposite the couch and fallen asleep as soon as his head met headrest. Coop had spent the night telling Mary bedtime stories to ease the fever breaking. He had told her of someone he loved who had brown hair and brown eyes and that he wished this person loved him. Captured in the throes of sleep Mary had mumbled "They do." as if she knew the truth of her words and promptly fallen asleep. By morning her fever had broke and she was all up for pancakes for breakfast. So careful not to wake the still sleeping Jimmy he'd made them both blueberry pancakes because that was both there favourite. Revelling in the pseudo domestic bliss of it all Coop forgot about Eileen. Mary was his and Jimmy's daughter and Coop didn't have to hide how he felt for the brown eyed man. This illusion however was shattered by Eileen racing in the door just as it turned nine frantic herself. She had got the messages Jimmy had left her at her mothers and had driven all night to get home. Coop dreading a cosy family scene that would only break his heart had excused himself politely and walked to the door, Jimmy mouthing thanks as he walked through it. Yes he remembered that. Knowing he remembered Jimmy smiled and added as a ending statement "I'd take a bullet for you too buddy." and put his hand on Coop's knee for longer than was necessary.

There shift finished at seven and Coop dropped Jimmy off at his house promising to bring back some good beer. He was sure he broke several speed limits racing back to his apartment but he really didn't care. Once inside the apartment slamming the door against the frame in his eagerness he had no idea what he was going to do. He isn't a girl and it isn't a date he thought to himself so why was he so nervous. It was because of Jimmy touching his knee it had addled Coop's brain instilling something in him that hadn't been there since he'd first met Jimmy; hope. Stripping on the way to his bathroom he jumped in the shower, rinsing all his anger due to McCree away and was out in three seconds. Walking naked to his bedroom he opened his wardrobe and studied the contents. Pulling on a pair of well worn jeans and a plain white t-shirt he made to go out the door grabbing a bottle of whiskey from the shelf under his sink thinking it better than beer. Running down his apartment steps without his feet actually touching them he was in his car speeding to Jimmy's before he knew it. It was only when he was half way there that his hope deflated and he realised he was making too much of what was what they did every Friday, knowing that they didn't have to go into the station until late on Sunday.

When he arrived at Jimmy's door brandishing a bottle of Southern Comfort his mood has sobered some and he wasn't expecting the hug Jimmy gave him, damn he thought it was going to be a long night. When Jimmy released him then ushered him in he saw a matching bottle of whiskey on Jimmy's kitchen table and he smiled. Seeing him look Jimmy said "Great minds think alike." and smiled. God Coop hoped so. Eileen and the kids arrived home at nine and by that time they had finished Coop's bottle of whiskey and were three quarters of the way down Jimmy's, they weren't drunk but they were getting there. Eileen sent Jason and Mary in to say goodnight to them both and Coop sat there watching how good Jimmy was around them even in his squiffy state. When Mary came up to him she giggled at the faces he pulled at her then kissed his cheek with a whispered "Night Uncle Coop."

Coop smiled and replied "Night Lil' Mary."

Jason having said night to his father and a kiss on the forehead turned to Coop and said night, tilting his head Coop said "Night Deputy." putting on a southern accent making Jason smile despite himself. Once the kids were in there rooms Eileen came in and said she was going to bed, kissed
Jimmy on the cheek and told him not to get too drunk. Jimmy smiled and promised he'd try not to. Eileen just sighed and told Coop to make sure he behaved. Coop didn't think he could keep that kind of promise but he said he would anyway. Waddling up the stairs Eileen left them alone. They passed the bottle back and forth telling each other jokes until Jimmy decided that the room they were in was too hot and stumbled out into the back yard calling to Coop to follow him. Laughing Coop got up glad that he had the whiskey otherwise Jimmy would have spilt it in his attempts to get the back door open. In the yard Jimmy had set up two garden chairs side by side facing the back fence and was already basking in an imaginary wind. Coop laughed again and whispered to himself "Lightweight.". Sitting down next to Jimmy he passed him the bottle and Jimmy took a long pull shaking off the burning it induced. They sat there in silence for a while just listening to the night and drinking it in. Then without warning Jimmy said "Why do you gotta piss of Teddy Burke like that?" passing the whiskey back to Coop. Although out of the blue, Coop knew the question was coming all night.

They needed to talk about it. Scoffing he said "Are you afraid of that scumbag?"

"It aint about fear, you know what it's about" Jimmy said his voice growing faint at the end. Yes Coop did know the reason but he wanted Jimmy to say it, needed to hear him say.

He sighed, not at Jimmy but himself and asked "What's it about Jimmy?"

Jimmy looked at him and said "Keeping my job, I aint going against McCree."

"So that makes it alright to be on the take?" Coop said tilting his head and passing the whiskey back to Jimmy. Yet again another question he knew the answer for.

"Everything's always black and white with you" Jimmy said every word on the end of a breathe "You don't know anything" and took another swig of whiskey. Jimmy was avoiding the question and Coop was steadily getting more angry.

Leaning forward in his chair Coop said "We're cops, that's all I need to know." a fire lighting in his eyes. He knew he was a stubborn bastard but he also knew he was right.

"I've got three kids. Don't talk to me about taking fifty bucks a week from a piece of crap!" Jimmy said his voice raising and passed the Southern Comfort back to Coop. To Coop that kind of attitude was just like saying it was okay.

"Then you are just like McCree" he snarled forgetting who he was talking to and reeled himself at the last minute.

"Get off your soapbox Coop! You go out there and bust shins 'cos it's another good time for you!" Jimmy said, Coop could see that Jimmy was getting angry and it just made him madder.

He was going to take another swig of whiskey but he paused and he said "I bust shins 'cos I am enforcing the law." adding two jabs at the floor for emphasis.

Jimmy let out a huge sigh and said "You and your John Wayne act.". Usually that name would be used playfully, to tease him. Now it had a sting in his tail.

"We're the law. We're here to put the scumbags away it aint fun and games." Coop replied meaning each and every word.

Then he felt the static hanging in the air around them crack and Jimmy said "Sure it is, just like the fun you had slaughtering Vietcong. You miss that free pass to kill don't you?" leaning slowly closer to Coop.
All of a sudden Coop's vision was clouded with red and Jimmy's face taunting him speaking of the years of is his life he'd rather not remember. Jimmy knew that and it hurt Coop that he'd so casually use it as a weapon to injure him. Simultaneously the leash around his tempers neck snapped and his face twisted into a grimace it hadn't had to form since he was a POW, he placed the bottle of whiskey down next to his chair. Before he knew it he was on his feet and he was hitting Jimmy across the face with his forearm, sending the brunette flying out of his chair. The bottle of Southern Comfort sat safe on the grass. Then as Jimmy was struggling to get up Coop drew back his fist and letting it go punched him in the eye with a finishing statement of "You're right that was fun."

He was lying through his teeth.

Jimmy gasped "Go to hell." and was on his feet again hands grabbing for purchase on Coop. Every touch was burning to Coop, Jimmy was touching him like he'd never done before albeit more violently than he'd hoped but all the same, he was touching him. Eventually it became too much and there was a choice for Coop to make, either pull Jimmy to him and kiss him or push him away. Using a hand on Jimmy's chest he pushed him away and as they stood there staring at each other he regretted it. Jimmy's eyes were shining deep brown in the darkness and Coop wanted to kiss him so bad that he could hardly resist. Then Jimmy swallowed and Coop stared mesmerised as his Adam's apple bobbed up then down, taking two shallow breathes Coop launched himself at Jimmy. He felt his hands touch the back of Jimmy's head then he felt Jimmy's lips against his own. Just as quickly as he'd done it Jimmy was gasping and pushing him off. Coop looked at Jimmy but didn't like what he saw so he moved his eyes to the floor waiting for the words he knew would come next. Then as Jimmy took a step forward Coop raised his head wondering why Jimmy wasn't shouting and he saw the lust in Jimmy's eyes. With the second step towards him Jimmy's hands came up to cup his face and he had resealed there lips, this time more gently. Coop was in heaven and the rest of the world quietened down leaving them alone, safe. He brought his hands up to touch Jimmy, really touch him now he had permission. Feeling Jimmy's shoulder blades beneath his fingers he hungrily ran his hands over all the expanse of Jimmy's back that he could reach. He knew he was coming across as desperate but he couldn't find the energy to care. With both there eyes shut, focusing on each other they didn't see the yellow curtains over the window set into the back door flutter as Eileen let them go. When they pulled apart Jimmy buried his face in the crook of Coops neck and all Coop was think was "Wow!".

Coop could feel Jimmy's breath ghosting against his skin. With his breathing trying to even out Coop drew his arms around Jimmy and sighed, content. When Jimmy re-caught his breath he mumbled into Coops neck "I didn't mean it." Confused Coop pulled Jimmy's face up so they were eye level and asked "Didn't mean what Jimmy?"

Looking him in the eyes Jimmy said "The thing I said bout the Vietcong, I know it wasn't fun. I was angry and I wanted to win the argument." he finished by ducking his head. Smiling Coop brought the hand that wasn't occupied holding Jimmy's waist to Jimmy's chin and raising his head drew there lips together in a soft kiss.

Pulling away he said "I know." He really did.

Never once looking away from Coop's eyes Jimmy said "What now cowboy?" Coop raised his left eyebrow, Jimmy had recovered quickly and he liked the new nickname. Smirking he tugged Jimmy flush against him so he could feel exactly what Coop wanted to do next, feeling Jimmy's answering hardness. He felt a sense of achievement when Jimmy's eyes widened and he groaned. Lust clouded Jimmy's eyes and Coop had a second to smirk before he was tackled. They hit the ground with a thud that reverberated through Coops bones and then Jimmy was straddling his waist kissing along his jaw. Assaulted by the pleasure Jimmy was giving him Coop let his hands wander. They roamed all over his back before coming to rest on his shoulders and pushed him off so he was sitting astride
him. Coop gave a strangled moan and Jimmy ground his arse against the groin underneath him smirking. Coop needed to feel Jimmy's skin, needed it bad so with a growl low in his throat he pushed Jimmy's t-shirt up to reveal his torso his thumb stroking along the trail of hair he found. With another growl Coop flipped them over so that he was astride Jimmy his fingers going to unbutton his shirt. As more and more of his chest was exposed Jimmy pushed Coop's t-shirt up and over his head. Coop shivered as the night air hit his back and Jimmy grabbed his face and pulled him down into a kiss that left them breathless. Lying flush against each other, chest to chest, groin to groin, feet to feet Coop whispered into Jimmy's mouth "You sure Jimmy?" and when he nodded kissed him again. They lay there awhile enjoying the feel of each others skin until the sound of a dog barking jarred them from their bliss and reminded them where they were. Once the heat of passion was gone they were both freezing but despite this Coop was reluctant to let Jimmy go.

Grunting Jimmy said "Get off me Coop I'm freezing."

Smiling Coop replied "Aint I keeping you warm darlin'," and stroked his hand over Jimmy's shoulders causing the older man to shiver.

Returning his smirk he said "Yeah that and crushing me," and pushed Coop off of him. Sitting up Jimmy started to re-button his shirt the paused and leant back down and kissed Coop said "Get your shirt back on cowboy." then stood starting to fix the garden chairs and retrieve the whiskey replacing its cap. Sighing at the stars he too sat up and upon locating his t-shirt he pulled it back on. Jimmy was already in the kitchen putting the whiskey away out of reach of Jason and Mary. Coop stood in the garden watching him through the open door marvelling at how handsome and strong he looked. Walking into the kitchen he grabbed Jimmy from behind and whispered into his neck "What now handsome." Jimmy pulled away until he was leant against the counter facing Coop.

"We're drunk Coop. We need to go to bed." he said bringing his right hand up to pinch the bridge of his nose. Coop's alcohol ridden mind saw this as an invitation.

He sauntered across to Jimmy putting his hands on the older mans hip and said "Then lets go."

Knocking Coop's hands off his waist he said "I'm going to my own bed and you're going to the couch." Leaning off the counter he walked past Coop. Was Jimmy saying they only kissed because they were drunk? He bloody well better not be. He grabbed Jimmy's wrist as he walked past and used the momentum to swing him round to face him again.

"What we did tonight Jimmy we did 'cos we wanted to, or I did I can't speak for you." he said suddenly becoming too sober. He looked up at Jimmy seeing his eyes shine.

"I wanted to, I want to." he said looking Coop in the eye.

Smiling Coop took a step closer to Jimmy and when he was suitably close enough he placed a kiss on his lips and said "Good." Taking the blanket Jimmy offered him he walked through into the living room and flopped down onto the couch with said blanket wrapped around him. Jimmy walked past on his way to the stairs and said "Night cowboy." Smiling to himself Coop allowed the drowsiness the alcohol had plagued him with take over and was soon asleep. Thoughts of Jimmy sleeping in the same bed as him eventually and the possibility that they wouldn't have to hide swirled into half awake visions of a man silhouetted by a street lamp under the arch of a viaduct. That night he dreamt of static over a walky talky, Jimmy telling him to hold on and way too much blood for it not to be fatal. That night he dreamt of his own death.
Jimmy Bruno knew exactly who he was right up to the second that Coop kissed him, now he's not so sure. Five years of marriage swept away as if it was never there. He knows that he and Eileen married young and what people say on that subject but they were different, or so he thought. When he first saw her he was in his last year of High School, he was at his locker as she walked past. He couldn't concentrate in his next lesson so he asked his friend about her, she was in the year below him, Catholic and most importantly she was single. By the time two weeks had rolled by he was already in love. For as far back as he can remember he has always been confident, sure in his looks, comfortable in his skin. But that girl, woman, Eileen Gray made him fall over his own feet and stutter his words. He tried to ask her if she would go out with him unsuccessfully four times until she took pity on him and asked him out herself. For the first three weeks that they were going out he was so shy around her he could barely speak, he was shy around Coop for the first month when they became partners. Maybe that said something. After he graduated school he spent a year doing odd jobs waiting for Eileen to graduate. She married him as soon as they were able and they moved in to a two bedroom house on the outskirts of Philadelphia courtesy of their parents. They had been married awhile when she fell pregnant with Jason and Jimmy joined the Police Academy. Those years he was training were tough but they held it together, Eileen got a job as a machinist in the city and he did odd jobs when he could. A year later had Eileen pregnant again and her parents in there little house looking after both Jason and his mother. Mary was born in a flurry of excitement, white sheets proclaiming her arrival. He doesn't mind Eileen's parents but the time they spent living in his house were not the best years of his life.

Maudette, Eileen's mother, was nice enough but her father, Bob, was a royal pain in the ass. The man complained about everything Jimmy did, he didn't bring in enough money, he didn't spend enough time with Eileen and the kids, hell he even criticised him when he ate. One day he comes home to find Maudette sitting in the Station Wagon and Bob packing things into the back. He remembers how Bob was a wall of ice as he walked past him and how his silence as he opened the car door was the highest form of damnation. The Gray's pulled out of the driveway Bob's jaw clenched tight, Maudette throwing him a polite "Goodbye" and they were away. He stood there watching the ever decreasing dot that was Eileen's parents and inside he was jumping for joy. They had come stocked up on nappies and baby formula as if he and Eileen didn't already have a child and were completely clueless on the subject. He made his way to the house with trepidation imagining a upset Eileen but he found her sitting at the table staring at the wall, Mary happily chewing on a teething ring in her pen in the corner. A crying Eileen he could have dealt with, he had never seen this Eileen before. Mary mumbled "Da Da" around her teething ring and he went over to her picked her up and settling her on one arm.

"My parents have left." Eileen said not taking her eyes of the wallpaper as if the flowers there were trying to stare her down. Not waiting for an answer she carried on "He went too far Jimmy, he went to far and I told him to leave." Her tone said no questions so he didn't ask any, he was just happy Bob was gone. To this day he still hasn't. He said "Ok" and went upstairs to settle Mary to sleep. Placing the little girl in her crib he leant over the bars and kissed her nose and whispered "G'night Pumpkin." On the landing he turned towards Jason's open door and peeked his head in. His eldest son was led on his bead staring at the ceiling. A question of "Are you ok son?" was replied with a mumbled and almost inaudible "Yes Dad.". Now he was curious, something had happened between Eileen and her father and it had left everyone who heard it in this silent brooding mood he had no idea how to deal with, bar Mary. Bless her innocence.

When he went back downstairs Eileen was still sitting caught in her staring contest with the wall. His hands on her shoulders roused her of whatever thoughts were occupying her head. The subsequent weeks had stilted phone conversations being held between Eileen and her mother, both father and
daughter refusing to talk to the other. The years passed as years tend to do and his children grew up only knowing there grandmother. On several occasions he had tried to find out what Bob had said that made Eileen cut him out of her and there children’s lives but she always turned into that quite brooding Eileen when he did and he didn't like it so he had stopped asking. Then three years ago Maudette's phone call had come bearing bad news, Eileen's father had died. Eileen dropped the receiver and hearing it clatter he had come running. Not getting any words out of his wife he had picked up the phone and got the news from a Maudette whose fake calm was only for her daughters benefit. The funeral was held three days later, Eileen insisting that Mary and Jason come too. Be there with their Mother and Grandmother, to bury a Grandfather that now she wished they had known. Again the years had passed and now Eileen was pregnant again and here he was having a epiphany that could very well lead him to loose his family and maybe his life. He, Jimmy Bruno did not, not like what he and Coop did last night and it was seriously freaking him out.

He opened his eyes and groaned as the sunlight hit his sensitive eyes. His hangovers usually equated to nothing more than a headache and a aversion to loud noises and he thanked God that this one was no different. Eileen stirred next to him and as soon as his eyes met her rounded stomach guilt washed over him. What is he doing? He has a wife and two kids, a wife who is pregnant again with his child. Shaking his head he got out of the bed as swiftly and quietly as he could so as not to wake his sleeping wife. He picked up his pants flinching when his belt clattered on the floor looking at Eileen to make sure she was still asleep. Gathering his shirt and shoes he left the room closing the door carefully behind him. Walking down the stairs he came to the conclusion that he would have to tell Coop that last night was a drunken mistake and would be best forgotten, no matter how much it would kill him to say. He had dreamt of Coop. The details where fuzzy but he knew that it had involved less clothes than last night and had resulted in a raging hardon when he woke up. He sighed to himself, thinking that he's a lost cause already. But he is still married and homosexuality is still a sin. They do say that everything fun is a sin. It hadn't felt wrong but he had to do what was best for his family.

He stepped of the bottom step and caught sight of Coop asleep on the couch and every idea of saying that the previous night was wrong in any way left his mind. A wide smile adorned his face as made his way over to Coop's sleeping form. Crouching down next to the couch he looked at Coop. When he met Coop all those years ago his jaw had hit the floor metaphorically he was so handsome. If he was honest with himself he would say he had never been completely straight but he had never done anything about it though. No, he buried his feelings towards men and threw himself into pursuing women. That's what he had done with his attraction to Coop thinking the other man straight. If Coop hadn't of made the first move it never would have been made. He let his eyes trace Coop's features. His jaw, his lips, his nose, his eyes which were open and staring back at him. Coop smirked and said "See something you like?" The laugh that left Jimmy's throat was relief and joy mixed into one. The moments since he had woken up a part of his brain had entertained the thought that Coop would be regretting last night but now that part had been silenced. Leaning forward he whispered a "You bet." into Coops mouth before he kissed it. His hand found itself on the back of Coop's head and he pulled away before he got too lost and forgot where he was. Standing up he said "Come on cowboy lets go make breakfast." and pulled Coop up with the hand he was offered.

In the kitchen they fell into an easy rhythm, Jimmy grilling the bacon and Coop frying the eggs. Smiles and feather light touches are passed back and forth between the two men as they move around they kitchen. Jimmy is in a good mood. Leaving Coop making a pot of coffee Jimmy walks back up the stairs to wake the children. Jason first, his door is closed and all Jimmy does is open the door, stick his head in and say "Jason, son breakfast will be ready soon. Get up." That's all it usually takes. Mary's door is open, all the better to keep an eye on her. Walking in he sees her asleep on her tiny bed, her stuffed rabbit clutched in her arms. The pink duvet has collected itself at the bottom of her bed abandoning its post. The room is painted the same shade of pink as her duvet with little
flowers here and there, the type from The Magic Roundabout. He and Coop painted this room. The little yellow bookshelf in the corner not matching the rest of the room at all is where her rabbit, usually lives. Sitting down in the space next to Mary, Jimmy gently nudged her awake. Blinking rapidly at him she mumbled "Daddy?" and sat up rubbing the sleep from her eyes. Smiling Jimmy swooped down and bundled her up in his arms and said whilst nuzzling his nose into her neck eliciting a fit of giggles "It's time for breakfast Pumpkin, Uncle Coop is downstairs making it." A squeal of "Uncle Coop!" ended the giggling abruptly. Mary had always loved Coop, loved him as if he were really her fathers brother. Sticking his head back in Jason’s room he said "Come on son." then continued on towards the stairs. Mary squirmed in his arms trying to look behind him at the door to his and Eileen's room. She turned back to face him her face scrunched up in confusion "What about Mommy, doesn't she want some breakfast?" He kissed her cheek and said "I think we should let Mommy sleep, carrying the baby is making her tired" Mary nodded as if that was all the confirmation she needed and said "Can I go help Uncle Coop?". Jimmy tapped her nose with a finger of his free hand and said "Sure you can." setting her on the floor. She was immediately running down the stairs and he could hear a excited "Uncle Coop" a moment later.

In truth he was scared Eileen would take one look at him and know what he had done, what he wants to do. He knows he's being selfish, wanting to prolong his time alone with Coop. Eileen would surely ruin it. A twinge of pain from below his eye reminds him of the punch and he makes a detour towards the bathroom. He studies his reflection in the mirror above the sink and only sees a slight discoloration of what he knows will be a big bruise. He smiles at himself before he leaves. He is met by Mary stood on a chair next to Coop 'helping' him fry the eggs when he enters the kitchen, Jason is in the living room watching early morning cartoons. The smile Coop gives him when he looks up is a reflection of his own. The breath stolen from his lungs Jimmy feels like he's on a precipice staring into black nothingness, but he not standing there alone. Coop is with him and together they will jump or fall, hand in hand.

The bacon had done whilst he was upstairs and now it resides on a plate under the grill, crisp and brown. Mary is already sat in her chair at the small table eagerly awaiting her breakfast when Jason trudged into the kitchen dressed for church. Jimmy is worried, it usually took quite some time to get Jason to put on clothes before ten and here he was doing it voluntarily. Brushing the odd feeling Jason's uncharacteristic behaviour instilled in him Jimmy made to resume his position in front of the grill but he was shoed away by Coop. "You sit yourself down Jimmy, I'll serve up." dazzling him with his smile. With a smile of his own, dazzling or not he took his seat between Jason and Mary. The plates and cutlery were sitting on the table courtesy of Coops little helper. The bacon was the first to be distributed then an egg was placed on each plate as soon as it was fried. Jason ate his bacon and first egg and accepted a second from Coop without looking at him and only nodding curtly, adding more fodder to Jimmy's previous odd feeling. Mary only had room for the two slices of bacon and fried egg she had eaten so pushing her plate towards the middle of the table to indicate she was finished she began talking to Jason "Jason did you like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang last night?, I like Tout Sweet don't you? The Child Snatcher scared me I..." but Jimmy didn't hear the rest and nor did he hear Jason’s reply, he was far too busy watching Coop. The man in question was leaning against the cooker watching Mary and Jason clearly lost in his own world. God, Jimmy thought he couldn't believe he had managed to suppress his attraction towards the other man, he is gorgeous. Then as if he had heard what Jimmy was thinking Coop's head turned to him and winked at him. Jimmy couldn't stop the smirk that was rapidly spreading over his face and he frankly didn't want to.

Mary's voice pierced through his thoughts sharply not because of her tone but because of what she was saying "Mommy’s coming!" and fast as a shot she was up out of her chair and through the French doors that separated the kitchen from the living room to the bottom of the stairs. Jimmy heard her say "Mommy, Daddy and Uncle Coop are cooking breakfast!" and tried not to visibly wince, he failed. Coop shot him a look he couldn't muster before Eileen entered the room. Just as he had
predicted the moment, his time with Coop unsullied by guilt or a wedding ring was shattered. Eileen's smile seemed forced but he choked that up to the baby causing her discomfort and she said "Boys you really didn't have to." and sat in the seat Coop had vacated upon hearing Mary announce that Eileen was coming. Jimmy smiled at her and found to his horror that it wasn't difficult to lie to his wife if not yet verbally. Eileen looked at Jason and Jimmy took the opportunity to look at Coop again, he couldn't resist. Jimmy was back at the cooker near Coop and they set about putting Eileen's breakfast together Three slices of bacon for Eileen with a fried egg. Jason took the plate from Jimmy's hands without looking at him leaving his father perplexed and placed it in front of his mother. Jimmy was staring at Jason trying to figure out what was wrong with him as Mary retrieved the ketchup from Coop and gave it to her mother. "Is it my day to be waited on then, darlings." Eileen said her smile finally reaching her eyes an he, Jason and Mary laughed. Coop smiled. If any of them had been looking they would have seen the glare Eileen shot Coop then seen her visibly deflate. As it is they only caught her as she was putting ketchup on her fried egg. Jimmy chatted with Mary and Coop, getting a cold reception from Jason. Eileen was silent as she ate. Jason and Mary having already finished there breakfast they went into the living room to play leaving only him, Coop and Eileen in the kitchen. Jimmy knew he had to be careful now that there was nothing to distract Eileen.

He and Coop started washing the plates and cutlery. He washing and Coop drying. Coop collected Eileen's plate letting it slide from his hands into the soapy water with a sideways wink for Jimmy. Thinking Eileen to be focussed elsewhere Jimmy let his hand linger on Coop's as he passed him a knife, a current passing between them both. Finishing washing up before Coop finished drying Jimmy made three cups of coffee. Coop's with two sugars and milk, Eileen's with five sugars and no milk a result of her pregnancy and his like Coop's but with one less sugar. Giving Coop his coffee they both returned to the table Jimmy carrying his own and Eileen’s. Coop smiled at Eileen saying she looked beautiful and Jimmy smiled himself. Standing up he said "That the only reason you come here, to eye up my wife." letting the rapport between he and Coop become a screen behind which to hide the truth. Kissing Eileen's cheek he told her he was going to go get ready for work and walked out of the kitchen with big strides.

In his and Eileen's room he got changed into his uniform on autopilot. His thoughts caught on the matter of Jason's odd behaviour and on how he was going to explain the bruise he could feel blooming over his eye. He couldn't fathom what was wrong with Jason, the truth it seems was too unthinkable for him. He would have to say that a perp got a lucky shot. He had his undershirt and shirt on and was searching for his work trousers. He sat on the unmade bed he had slept so deeply that night and tried to recall what he had done with them. When Coop had dropped him off after work he had rushed up to his room thanking God the house was empty and he neededn't explain his speed. In his room he had stripped and spent nearly all the time looking for clothes he wanted to wear. He had chided himself for acting like he was getting ready for a date. He had throw the clothes he had removed on the bed but obviously Eileen had tidied up before she went to sleep. Where would she put them? They weren't with his work shirts were he usually puts them. He found them with his jeans and other trousers. Looking at himself in the mirror set into the door of the wardrobe he straightened his name tag and left the room. Walking down the stairs Jimmy realised they'd have to go to Coop's apartment so Coop could get changed and he smiled. Walking into the kitchen Coop asked him what he was grinning at and he replied "Nothing." but he made sure his eyes said a different thing. He knew his signal was received when Coop's eyes clouded over with barely concealed lust and he smiled. Walking out the door Coop leading the way the both threw "Goodbye" at Eileen.

The journey to Coop's car was filled with idle chatter punctuated by 'accidental' brushes of hands and bumps of shoulders. Once reaching Coop's car they both got in calmly but once the doors were closed the grins they had been restraining broke free and lit up there faces. Coop looked at him
shaking his head and said "Christ Jimmy, you certainly know how to get a man going." Jimmy scoffed and angled in his seat so Coop could see the line of his erection against his work trousers. "Aint the only one am I, Cowboy." Coop growled in his deep in his throat and Jimmy's cock twitched. One of Coops hands was suddenly gripping Jimmy's thigh as Coop said "God Jimmy I want to kiss you so much right now." Despite the pain and most probably bruises Coop's fingertips were causing Jimmy smiled and said "Lets get to that apartment of yours" squeezing Coop's leg in kind. Jimmy had to remind himself next time that Coop drives like a maniac when he's horny. He couldn't exactly judge as he himself was right there on the horny train with Coop, shovelling the coal as Coop drove. They arrived a few houses down from Coop's apartment in what felt like seconds. They both got out of the car trying to walk at a normal speed to Coop's door but failing at the home stretch where they broke into a run. Fumbling with his key Coop unlocked the door and they both ran up the stairs to his floor letting the door shut itself.

With the slam of the apartment door behind him Coop had Jimmy pressed against it, there bodies flush. Coop's mouth was hot against his and as if his tongue was rejoicing at the return of Coop's they kissed until they were breathless. Coop pulled away and knelt his forehead against Jimmy's breathing heavily. Also breathing heavily Jimmy made a decision, in for a penny in for a pound as they say. He brought his fingers up to his own shirt buttons and with swift fingers began to remove it. Coop's forehead left his and as Jimmy looked up he saw the questioning look in Coops eyes. Continuing to unbutton his shirt Jimmy said "I want to see you Coop." The words seemed to jumpstart Coop and he was unbuttoning his own shirt so fast Jimmy feared he'd rip off a button. Matching Coops speed they were both naked standing a few feet apart. Staring at Coops body he followed the lines of his shoulders down until he was face to face with Coop cock. This was the boundary, if he crossed it he could not turn back. It's a good thing then that he has no intention of turning back. Coop rolled his hips and made it bounce eliciting a gasp from Jimmy. Coop was trembling and he realised so was he. It was Coop this time that took the next step, he said "I want to touch you." and walked slowly towards Jimmy. Coop arms wrapped around Jimmy and his followed suit, there mouths clamped together they stumbled further into the room until Jimmy’s legs hit the edge of Coop's bed and they fell backwards.

"Lets take it slow, Jimmy" Coop whispered into his right ear as he began ever so slightly to rock backwards creating friction between there bodies.

Jimmy moaned but it wasn't enough.

As Coop sped up Jimmy gasped out a strangled "Touch me Coop!"

With no more invitation needed Coop wrapped his hand around both of there erections letting his rocking cause the friction. As they got closer to completion Coop growled and pressed his face into the juncture between Jimmy’s neck and shoulder. Letting out a gargled "Jimmy" Coop came just as Jimmy said "Ugh" and came. Breathless again and covered in sweat and stuck together by the congealing come covering there stomachs they smiled goofy smiles at each other. Coop slid off of him and settled himself with an arm over Jimmy's chest. Trying to dislodge sleep before it can take hold Jimmy says "We need to get to work, Coop." Coop just grunted. Jimmy didn't want to move either his limbs felt like rubber. But they'd be late if they didn't go now and McCree has a fit whenever anyone’s late. That wouldn't be good what with Coop pissing him off yesterday. Jimmy nudged him with his leg saying "McCree is already pissed at us, we can't be late" Coop grunted in what to Jimmy sounded like agreement so he got off the bed in search of his underwear. When his underwear was once again on his body he turned around to look for his pants and saw sat up in bed looking at him. He ignored him and carried on looking but he could feel Coop's eyes on him the whole time. When he finally found them he turned around to face Coop and said pants in hand "What you staring at Coop?" Coop got up wordlessly, still naked and walked towards him. Jimmy couldn't read the expression on Coop's face and it was making him antsy. Coop's arms came up and
his hands touched Jimmy's face before his body did. Stood there his face cradled in Coop's hands Jimmy thought of how fast they seemed to be falling and found he wasn't scared, more excited.
"That was amazing Jimmy." Coop near whispers before he presses a gentle kiss to Jimmy's lips. A broad smile breaks over Jimmy's face, Coop reflects it and kisses him again before going to get changed himself.

The drive to the station was taken in comfortable silence and sidelong glances on Jimmy part. It turned out that Coop's lust induced maniac driving from earlier saved them from being late, they arrived just in time. Jimmy felt like he was still moving long after they stopped, he had to look at Coop to stop the world spinning. Well, he thought this'll make for a hard day and walked into the station behind Coop.

The day was fast approaching seven, Jimmy and Coop where in the locker room surrounded by there fellow officers. They we stood against there lockers side by side trying not to look at each other, but only succeeding in glancing a each other when nobody was looking. The bruise on Jimmy left eyes now bloomed in all its glory drew less attention than he had thought. Anyone who asked just accepted what he told them, that a perp had got one up on him. That was a slight weight of his mind. Everyone around them was chatting among themselves then Owen Murphy came it with two other men each side of him saying "So I'm pulling this little queer out of the bathhouse on Munroe Street and he's crying 'Don't tell my wife, wah.'" Coop's face darkens at the sight of him. The men around him laugh. Then he catches sight of Coop and Jimmy tries to stop the blood from leaving his face.

"You must have took a lid on the back door in Nam huh Coop, all those lonely jungle nights?" Jimmy is stood there trying to shield Coop without looking as he is.

Coop scoffs before Murphy has finished then says "Sure."

Murphy indicates towards Coop with his hands saying "See he agrees, didn't know you played on their team."

Jimmy said "Shut up Murph." turning around for as long as it took to say it then turned back towards Coop, keepings his eyes on him.

Murphy said "Ahh you too Jimmy, you a fairy queen or what?"

Coop jumped to his defence saying "Give it a rest, man." but it only made it worse, seemed to egg Murphy on.

His mouth formed an 'o' then he said "I get it, Jimmy and Coop the dynamic duo. You know they say Batman and Robin are homos."

Jimmy had moved to look at the ground so when Coop walked past him and slammed Murphy into the lockers behind him he didn't stop him. Not so sure he would have anyway.

Everybody went still and silent then Coop said "What if I was?" Murphy looked out of the sides of his eyes at Coop, his face so close to his and said "Was what?"
"A homo, a queer." he added his face contorting. This was getting out of control Jimmy thought, Murphy was only taunting them he didn't really think they were queer. Now he will.

"Coop easy." he said trying to warn him all that he was risking in those two words. Coop didn't hear or if he did he was too mad to care.

"You one too Murphy huh, that your problem fairy boy?" Coop said.

Murphy's angry was clearly growing and it burst as he broke Coop's hold on his shoulders with a
hissed "Get off me!"

Then walking backwards he pointed at Coop and said "I 'aint no queer, you get that straight." and left.

Everyone was silent and Coop stood in the middle finally hearing what Jimmy had said in those two words. Looking at the others then at Jimmy he went back to his locker. Jimmy sighed and went back to getting changed into the clothes in his locker. He turned to Coop as he unbuttoned his shirt and said so only Coop could hear "You ok, cowboy." The use of his nickname made Coop smile as he unbuttoned his shirt. "Yeah Jimmy, I'm ok." he replied not looking at him, that meant that he wasn't. The men still left in the locker room were whispering around them and Jimmy knew what they probably looked like. But he couldn't care right then. Jimmy didn't know about Coop but what he really needed was to touch Coop, not an erotic touch just a something to link them again. He said "We'll see." deliberately leaving it open to interpretation to what he meant and punched Coops arm. Connection established. Coop knew what Jimmy meant and he grinned at him. They changed into there normal clothes in easy conversation, the others in the room getting bored after a while. Some got on with what they were doing before Murphy entered and others left. It took ages for the desk sergeant to sign them out and what felt like longer to get to Coops car. Jimmy was in before Coop and as soon as he heard the door slam he had his left hand on Coop wherever they wouldn't be seen from the outside. Jimmy couldn't stop himself, Coop made him reckless. Coop said "Jimmy, Jimmy calm down." but his right hand was doing its own round of Jimmy's lower body. Murphy had been a catalyst and the fear of what they were doing that had lain dormant at the back of his mind were now awake and terrorising him. What Coop did in the locker room was foolish, Jimmy knew Murphy was asking for it but now there was speculation about him and Coop and a spark can so easily become a fire. Coops face set into a determined expression and his right hand joined his left on the steering wheel saying "Lets get you home." As they drove Jimmy didn't remove his left hand from where it had settled on Coop's thigh and Coop didn't either.

As soon as they drew up outside his house Eileen was at the door, as if she had been waiting at the window for him. Coop sighed and unbuckling himself got out of the car. Confused Jimmy followed. Walking up the path towards the door he said "Hi honey" the joviality in his voice not even needing to be forced. Coop accompanied him to the doorstep and after saying hi to Eileen he said "See ya Jimmy." slapping him on the back. As he was walking away his hand drew down Jimmy's back in a tight arch, the touch making him shiver. He hoped Eileen didn't notice. That was Coops real 'see you later' a promise thrown in.

Eileen had made meatloaf and there was fresh cookies in a jar with it on the counter. The table in the dining room was already set up for dinner. They always waited for him to get home before they ate. Jimmy expects Eileen to ask where he got the all mighty shiner he's sporting but she doesn't, this worries him. Jason is in the living room watching cartoons and he shoots him a "Hi Dad." Jimmy is glad that the day has seemed to rid Jason of his frostiness from that morning. Mary is sat on the floor at Jason’s feet playing with her rabbit and a doll with unkempt hair. She squeals "Daddy!" and runs at him, he sweeps her off the ground swinging her round and says "Hi Pumpkin, how has your day been?" This is permission to Mary to recount a list of her activities, of how her and Mom baked cookies, how she licked the bowl, Sarah from next door coming over to play dollies and how Jason wouldn't let her watch what she wanted on TV. The last one resulting in a "Yes I did!" from the living room. Jimmy touched her nose with his pinkie and set he down on the floor with a "What a busy day for such a little girl." which made her smile. They pray over the food Jimmy leading and Eileen grips his hand hard enough to leave bruises the entire time. Eileen barely looked at him as they chat during dinner, as they always have. Eileen looking like
she has to make an effort to talk to him. When they're all done Eileen takes the plates into the kitchen wordlessly and Jimmy shouts "You need a hand in there?" He is met with silence then just as he's about to get up and see if she's ok Eileen replies "No" That night as they're led in bed Eileen is rigid next to him and Jimmy drifts of to sleep utterly confused as to what he's done to get him in the dog house.
A Frown Like Thunder

It has been a month since she saw Jimmy and Coop kissing in the back yard and Eileen still has no idea what to do. She is trying so hard not to succumb to the anger and bitterness she is feeling but by each passing day it is becoming increasingly harder. It is so much easier to be angry. She is living in a world she does not recognise, she cannot unsee what she saw. It is like Pandora's box, now she knows she sees it all the time. The looks Coop gives Jimmy, the slight touches that pass between then. She hasn't seen them kiss again, no, she makes sure of that. That first day she had so much hope. Hope that the man who shone dimly, the man she thought Coop was, would do the right thing. But when Coop dropped Jimmy off that night she saw Coop brush his hand down her husbands back and she knew. Coop had done nothing. Her hope had reality for an adversary. That night her bottomless well of hope failed her and she could hardly contain the resentment she felt for Jimmy. He was still kissing her on the cheek, still calling her honey like he had never kissed that man. Coop was not the devil she thought him to be although he did a good imitation, charming and handsome. Jimmy was not under some spell, he was doing what he wanted to do.

They prayed before the ate, as they always did linking hands around the table. When Jimmy said "...And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil" she gripped his hand with all the strength she possessed. Jason asks where Jimmy got the black eye and he says "Ahhhh, me and Coop pulled this guy over for speeding and he got one over on me. Drunk as a skunk he was." brushing the whole matter off as if the lie he just told was the truth. Eileen could not suppress flinching. As they eat meatloaf and vegetables she talked to Jimmy without looking at him, focussing all her attention on Jason and Mary. The second the plates are empty she has them in her hands and is in the kitchen placing them in the sink. Jimmy asks her if she needs a hand and the words are so familiar she looses her breath sinking down the counter to rest on the floor awkwardly. Her left hand rubs at her stomach and she starts to cry. Her Jimmy is gone, he died the moment that man kissed him. The man that has taken his place is acting the part but he isn't fooling her. Two can play at that game. She can act too and just maybe she can fool him. Wiping her eyes she manages to say "No" not trusting herself to say more. She is in bed before Jimmy and when he gets in she goes rigid trying not to touch him, knowing Coop has. Eventually Jimmy falls asleep and she allows herself to relax. The baby kicks inside her and this time she doesn't wake Jimmy to let him feel her stomach as she has done previously. No, she lies there staring at the ceiling. A line from the poem her mother read at her fathers funeral goes through her mind "But you frowned like thunder and you went away." Jimmy gave her no goodbye, a frown or otherwise.

When she fall asleep she finds herself in the kitchen downstairs. Jimmy and Coop were sat at the little table, Coop had a baby cradled in his arms. That was her son she just knew it. Jimmy looked up and his happy face changed into a startled one. "Who are you? How did you get in our house?" he said his voice like an echo. Jimmy didn't recognise her. Mary and Jason came running in hearing their father shout. The look of shock on Mary's face when she saw her made Eileen's heart break, her little girl shouted "Daddy!" the sound echoing around the kitchen but it wasn't Jimmy that responded. 

"It's ok Pumpkin, come here next to me and Pops." said Coop his voice an echo too.

Her eyes went wide as realisation hit her and she took a step back. This was not her family. Her children called Coop daddy and didn't know her. She felt her legs collapse and she hit the linoleum of the floor with a thump. Jason took a step towards her interested. "No!" she screamed holding her hands up, the echo of the strange place making it bounce around the kitchen till it hit her again the tone changed so it sounded mocking. She had startled them and they stood frozen staring at her. She raised her head and looked Jimmy straight in the eyes as her own filled with tears. As soon as she said "To love and to cherish, Jimmy!" the tears streamed down her cheeks so fast she feared she'd
drown in them. Desperate to leave that horrible place she shook her head so hard her neck hurt and kept shaking it till the walls of that kitchen shook and vibrated. She could hear the echoey voices of Jimmy and Coop but didn’t listen to what they were saying. Finally the walls of the kitchen dissolved into the ceiling she was staring at before she fell asleep. Her nightmare had left her shaking and her heartbeat accelerated. The baby was kicking her in protest. She was crying and it was that way she fell asleep again soothed by Jimmy's breathing. When she woke in the morning she only remembered the feeling that her family was being stolen by Coop and she vowed she wouldn’t let that happen. The dream had repeated itself only once since. Upon waking she could only remember the look on Maryís face when she saw her, the fear in her eyes. Eileen was not her mother she was an intruder in her home that might hurt her. For a while afterwards she constantly needed hugs from her daughter, needed to know that she was in no danger of loosing her. She would not loose her family.

It is Sunday and Jimmy is at work, Eileen takes Jason and Mary to church that morning. Father Mac is stood at the door welcoming his congregation. He smiles at all three of them as they enter saying "Hello." to each. Father Mac has been the Bruno family priest since they moved to there house as newly weds. He baptised both Jason and Mary and he will baptise the child inside her when the time comes. The church soothes her. The incense bringing back memories from her childhood, when she didn't know of men kissing men. Father Mac starts addressing the people settled in the pews and Eileen looses herself in the glory of God. Mary fidgets next to her until they start to sing hymns. The Latin words fall from her lips with a calming familiarity that pushes her troubles away, like a light chasing shadows. During Mass she is again reminded of her childhood, of how when she was little the wine that was given to represent Christ's blood tasted so bitter. It wasn't until Karl Lederman split her lip in the third grade that she tasted blood for the first time. She didn't care for it. It is only at the end of the service that Eileen realises she has not thought about Jimmy or that man once. This makes her smile, she has found a place she can retreat to when she needs to escape from her husbands sin. Father Mac wishes everyone well as they leave but Eileen stays sat down, Mary and Jason sat each side of her watching as people leave. "Eileen Bruno, what can I do for you?" Father Mac says, suddenly next to them stood in the aisle. She smiles and her hand goes to her belly, Father Mac notices. "You are still getting that little one baptised in my church I hope?" knowing full well that she is. Laughing she stands up and hugs him. He touches the top of Jason and Mary’s heads with almost visible reverence. Father Mac loves children, to him they are Gods creation in its purest form especially the Bruno children. Eileen knows this. When he asks her where Jimmy is she notices that neither Jason nor Mary have asked about there father since they stepped over the churches threshold.

Children are perceptive, she makes a note to remember that. Father Mac tuts when she tells him Jimmy is at work saying "He used to be such a good Catholic boy." A dark thought flits across her mind saying "You have no idea." before she can reel it in and she's scared it might have shown on her face. If Father Mac sees he doesn’t mention it. Eileen leaves the church with renewed rigour. She will not let this threat on her family stand. If Jimmy has chosen his side then so be it. This is a battle she fully intends on winning.

When Jimmy gets home she is in the kitchen making a casserole. He calls for her but walks into the kitchen before she can answer. Coop has dropped him off again, she need not look. She can feel that Coop has touched Jimmy, almost smell it. When Jimmy touches Coop the smell is different. That day the smell radiating off of Jimmy was a mixture of both. Turning away from him she went back to stirring the meat for the casserole trying to get the smell of it cooking in her nostrils instead. He kissed her cheek and asked when dinner would be ready. Deja vu washed over her, had she not had a conversation with Jimmy that started like that so many times before. It seemed to Eileen that everything had changed but still stayed the same. Nothing ever changes, not even when it does. Jimmy was smiling and although she knew the reason was Coop, Eileen had a smile of her own. It still infuriates her there is no avoiding that but she had found a way to channel her anger into energy to win this war with Coop.
Then as Jimmy was walking back into the dinning room, Eileen's water breaks. Calmly she took the beef off the heat and turned the cooker off, then waddling more awkwardly than usual she went and sat at the kitchen table. Drawing a deep breath she shouted for Jimmy. When Jimmy came running back into the kitchen a second later his eyes were wide. She giggled inside at the look of panic on his face, unlike her Jimmy had not got used to the pandemonium that was giving birth. Eileen had got over that after Jason was born. Noticing the water on the lino Jimmy didn't ask her what was wrong he just went about setting the plan that had been in place since the first month of Eileen's pregnancy into motion. At least she could rely on him for some things. Jimmy left the room and Eileen sat there mentally going through the list of things he'd need to do. First he'd have to go to their room and get her overnight bag that was already packed, then ring the hospital to warn them of her arrival, go across to the Liddellís across the road and borrow their car as already agreed, then take Jason and Mary over to Mrs Wroe's next door and last but not least get her into the car. Jimmy came back into the kitchen before he should have, the panic from earlier turned into terror. "The Liddell's are out." he said, the sound coming out in one breath. Now Eileen herself started to slip into panic mode but not for the same reason as her husband. She knows perfectly well what has to be done but she really doesn't want to have to do it. Jimmy will have to call Coop, get him to take them to the hospital.

It feels like defeat as she says "Call Coop ask him if he'll take us to the hospital." Jimmy's face almost lights up as he goes into the hall to use the phone. She can hear Jimmy talking but she tunes him out. He comes back into the kitchen all smiles and says "Coop will get here as fast as he can." Once he's taken the kids to Mrs Wroe's, Jimmy spends the time it takes Coop to get there fussing over her. It was all too soon before Coop was sounding the horn of his Impala and Jimmy was rushing out with her overnight bag. The silence of the kitchen weighed down on her and she struggled to get up gasping, feeling like she was drowning. Waddling out into hall she ran into Jimmy coming back to get her. The smell was even stronger now. Swallowing the bile that was rising in her throat she took his offered arm and walked towards the car. The drive to the hospital didn't take as long as she thought, her contractions growing steadily closer together sullied it however. At the hospital a nurse brought her a wheelchair, alleviating the pressure on her ankles. Smiling at the nurse she allowed her body to sag and let the porter wheel her to the delivery ward. Jimmy was following dutifully at her side with her overnight bag clutched in his hands. She couldn't see Coop but through the noise of her own thoughts on the subject of that man she vaguely heard Jimmy say "Coop is parking the Impala." It seemed Coop was going to be there when she gave birth. Having no strength or the desire to argue with Jimmy she resigned herself to the fact that he would be there.

When she was in a room on the delivery ward the air settled and she fell into a doze in which she dreamt that she were on a chessboard watching as the White King and Queen gravitated away from each other. The other pieces choosing sides, effectively dividing the White camp. Separated they easily fell to the Black King. Her contractions woke her up, slowly her eyes fluttered open and she saw Jimmy sat in the chair placed against the wall. A smile flit over her face as she saw how anxious he looked then she saw Coop sat next to him. His hand was on Jimmyís knee and she had to fight to keep her eyes closed, to appear as if she was still asleep. That man was so audacious, she was led in the same room as them and he has his hands all over her husband. Ok maybe she's exaggerating but still. She had to stifle a gasp when Jimmy grasped the hand that was on his knee and brought it to his lips, dropping a gentle kiss on its palm. He was definitely no longer her Jimmy. She could feel her hope seeping away and just as she thought she'd loose it forever the baby inside her kicked. As if it was trying to comfort her, even inside the womb her child knew something was wrong. It was a few hours until her contractions began growing closer together in earnest causing the nurses to gather round her asking questions like "Would you like to go into Twilight Sleep during the birth?" and "Will you be breastfeeding the child?" Her mind addled by pain she tried to think. She had gone into Twilight Sleep when she gave birth to Jason and Mary so she saw no reason to change it. But Jimmy was with her then, she wanted to remember it this time No, she wasn't going to breastfeed, there was formula in her overnight bag. Answering the questions accordingly she smiled at Jimmy, squeezing
his hand through the pain.

A doctor came in and began telling the nurses what to do whilst sitting on a stool, she thought they were doing ok as they were. Then a contraction ripped through her and she screamed almost crushing Jimmy's hand. The doctor told her to push, so she did. Her child has a large head as it was taking too long to get it out. It had crowned but now she was pushing to get it all the way out. She pushed and she pushed and delirious her eyes fell on the doctors face when it came into view. He was handsome, blond with a strong jaw. Coop was still in the room and her rage overtook her, she screamed "Get out!" and the nurses told both Jimmy and Coop that they had to leave. She had meant for Coop to get out, she needed Jimmy. But she couldn't use her throat for anything other than screaming so she let her head fall back onto the pillow. She put her hands on the bed and clenched the bedsheets tightly in her fist. After pushing for what felt like hours she finally heard a baby cry and she sighed with relief. She heard the doctor announce that it was a boy and she tried to tell them she wanted Jimmy. One of the nurses, a young woman with red hair seemed to understand her and went out of the room only to come back in with Jimmy following. Watching as Jimmy's face lit up with joy she saw him go over to the nurse who was holding there son and take him from her arms. As soon as he was in his fathers arms he seemed to glow. Jimmy walked over to her and gave him to her. Sitting on the bed next to her and with his arm around her shoulders he said "Charlie Bruno meet your Mommy." As she held him she felt her hope rising, she'd win this war if it tore her to pieces just so the beautiful little boy in her arms could have a family. She and Charlie stayed in hospital for three days before they were allowed to go home, he is a healthy baby but they still need to observe him.

When they arrive home, again driven by Coop, Mary stares at Charlie in awe her mouth a round "o". Jason remembers when Mary was little so he isn't as awed but he is practically ecstatic to have a brother. The week following Charlie's birth Eileen found herself metaphorically static, watching her household move around her. She looked after Charlie, fed him, burped him did the things a mother should all the while seeing that even the birth of a new son couldn't break whatever hold Coop had on Jimmy. Her early anger had faded and now she wore her sadness like a cloak only managing to throw it off when in the presence of her children. Jimmy was all the father and husband he had always been that too hadn't changed. It scared her but she felt herself growing to hate him, sin begets sin after all, but even that was tinged with the sadness of losing the man she married and loved in ways she never dreamed she would.

It is the day of Charlie's baptism and the Bruno family are in varying stages of undress. Eileen is stood in the bathroom naked, water beading on her skin from the shower she just had. The door is locked and the air is heavy with moisture. Looking at herself in the mirror over the sink she draws a smile in the condensation over the reflection of her mouth. Watching as droplets of water slowly travel down its surface from where she disturbed them she begins to cry. One after another her tears fall each one taking with it a tiny piece of her sadness. She is glad it has happened in the bathroom, when she is alone. She feels as if she is a glass sat upon a tabletop and that somebody is pouring her up to the brim with water. They haven't ceased and know it is overflowing, risen up and spilled over. Once the tears stop she wipes her cheeks with the backs of her hands and wraps herself in a bath towel. Checking that her eyes aren't too puffy she gives one last look at her reflection then leaves. Out in the corridor she hears Mary talking to Jimmy as he helps her put on her Sunday Best and Charlie cooing from the master bedroom. She closes her eyes as she goes to him, letting the small light noises he makes guide her. He starts giggling as she steps into the room and she opens her eyes. He is a beautiful child. The herald of the end of his parents relationship. He doesn't know it and neither do his siblings or father. When she looks at him she sees Jimmy, the Jimmy she married. As if somehow her Jimmy died and was reincarnated into her son and the man inhabiting Jimmy is a demon sent to test her.

Sighing she picks him up out of his cot and walks over to the bed placing him gently on the duvet, so
she can see him and he can watch her. She closes the door. No matter how many theories she comes up with she cannot find a way to fix it or reverse it. Going to her dresser she pulls out a bra and a pair of knickers. She pulls the knickers on underneath the towel then turns away from Charlie as she lets the towel drop and puts the bra on. At the wardrobe she gets out her own Sunday Best, a off white dress with a broad collar. With one arm balancing herself she shimmies into the bottom half then straightening up pulls her arms into the the short sleeves. Turning to the mirrors set into the doors of the wardrobe she zips up the top half. She looks at the clock on Jimmy's side table and turns to put Charlie in the white gown Jimmy wore when he was baptised and his father before him. She has approximately half and hour before Giselle arrives to do her hair. She puts on a pair of white gloves that were placed on top of the dresser. When Jimmy said to her that he wanted Coop to be Charlie's Godfather during the second week after his birth she couldn't say no or arise suspicion, so she had agreed. Then she had said she wanted Giselle to be his Godmother knowing full well that Jimmy dislikes her. It was a new low but it got the desired effect.

Giselle is a hairdresser and has a salon in the city, she lives down the street from them with her husband Karl and teenage son Pete. Karl is a Advertising Executive and is always on business trips. Giselle has a wandering eye usually only partial to men half her age, but she has taken a liking to Coop. Giselle enters the room with a knock on the door, her auburn hair is held up by a white faux ivory hair slide. She is wearing a black dress and carrying two bags no doubt filled to the brim with hairdressing supplies. Giselle stands in the doorway just looking at her a smile gracing her features and Eileen can only smile back. With a small laugh she puts her bags on the bed and says "Well then Eileen what do we want today?" as she produces various combs and cans of hairspray from her bags. Eileen replies that she'd like a beehive today Giselle. A wide grin forms on Giselle's face in the mirror. She'd expected that style to be asked for. Taking the chair from Jimmy's desk she sits herself behind Eileen, armed with a metal toothed comb and 'long lasting' hairspray. As she sits there with Giselle teasing her hair into what will become a beehive Eileen knows, can smell it. Coop is in the house. As much as she can't do anything bout that she hopes that he and Jimmy aren't eating the food for the get together after the baptism. She spent ages making little sandwiches and mini sausage rolls so there'd be hell to pay if they did. Secretly she wanted Coop to dare eat something so she'd have an excuse to let loose at him.

Her mother is downstairs also along with her sister and her husband. They came down from Canada three days ago. Lily, her sister, is a nurse and her husband is a Mountie. Her chest clenches and she wishes not for the first time nor the last that her father was there to see Charlie and his baptism. All too soon Giselle has created a modern hair masterpiece and it is time to go to the church. Picking up Charlie in sure arms she follows Giselle out of the room. Once downstairs her mother tells her that Coop and Jimmy popped out soon after Coop arrived, to get something, they didn't specify what. Not today she thinks, not on the day of his sons baptism. Her children are wearing there Sunday Best Jason is in a suit and tie, Mary wearing a little white dress her hair in a matching ribbon. Picking up her handbag she leads her children out the door after her mother and sister. They run into Jimmy on the driveway and he looks like he did 'that' night stumbling into there room after kissing Coop. Only this time his shirt has been clearly re-tucked and his tie is skew whiff. His lips are again kiss swollen and she cant help but hate them as he says to Jason and Mary "Right you couple of Munchkins lets go," and they pile into the Liddell's car. Jimmy went out the night before and barely made it back before the sun came up. She didn't think about where he'd been nor did she ask. Today she thought, the man who was breaking her family would invade her safe place and she had has to look at Charlie in her arms to stop herself from crying.

Jimmy's assorted family made there own way to the church and where already outside the church when they get there. His mother is stood with his father at the doors of the church looking regal and positively beaming, she has a new grandson why shouldn't she be happy. Father Mac came out of the church and ushered them all in with the wide sweep of the doors. She hands her handbag to her
mother, who has been instructed to take pictures using the camera inside. The families took seats on there respective sides and Eileen walks up to the font holding Charlie close to her chest with Jimmy at her side and Jason and Mary tagging along behind. Charlie is too have two Godfather's and one Godmother, the other Godfather is Coop's father. He is there stood next to Jimmy dressed in his Sergeants uniform, Giselle next to him. Coop is nowhere to be seen. All they could do is wait, Father Mac started lighting the candles and they waited.

Cradling Charlie's head in a gloved hand she says to Jimmy "Maybe we should start without him." and was met by a response of "Five more minutes."

Coops father looked agitated and started looking at the doors every few minutes. Eileen said "Does Coop even remember what a church looks like." and hoped it only sounded as if she was playfully disapproving and not slow burning hate.

Jimmy doesn't bat an eyelid so she assume it sounded as was intended but then he says "He'll be here, relax."

Mary is annoying Jason by playing with the collar of his suit jacket and Jimmy looks past her and says "Hey you two, knock it off." and Jason looks at his father and Mary smoothes down her dress.

They stand still. Turning to Coops father Jimmy says "You talked to your son today Serge?" and he replies "I called him an hour ago. No answer."

She says "Perfect." and then the church is filled with the sound of doors opening echoing off the stone and everybody turns to look at Coop. There he is she thinks, just walking in. He may as well as be brandishing a sword or a gun, like the malevolent oppressor that he is. He is tucking his shirt in as he walks up the aisle and she dreads to think how he got that way. Turning to look at Jimmy she sees his eyes shining the way they do whenever they’re pointed at that man. Both Jimmy and Serge are smiling broadly.

Serge says "So what do you think Jimmy, a brawl or a babe?" and Eileen contains the 'ha' she feels rising in her throat.

Jimmy responds with "Nah, a brawl then a babe." Charlie chews his thumb as Eileen rocks him more to soothe herself than him.

Serge says "Isn't it time he got married." and Jimmy replies "You gotta go out on a second date for that Serge." How easily Jimmy lies now, Eileen thinks he must have always been a natural liar.

By this point Coop is nearing the font and he puts his arms out saying "So what are you gonna believe, my alarm broke or I got lost?" bringing his hands down onto his father and Jimmyís shoulder as he steps up to the font area.

Gesturing with his glasses Father Mac says "Since you were a alter boy here Sean I'd go with the former."

Coop nods his head and says "There it is as Father Mac says."

He moves past Jimmy looking at her and says "Looking beautiful Eileen." and kisses her cheek.

She feels as if he has branded her as he says "Sorry, really."

Doubting he meant he was sorry for kissing her husband she tells him "Forget it, Coop." She doesn't see it but the inflection she put on Coop's name puzzles Jimmy.
Coop ruffles Jason's hair saying "I've been wondering where my deputies been hiding." and put his hand on Mary's head saying "Sweetheart."

Taking his position between Jimmy and his father he said "So what are we waiting for?" Father Mac smiles at her and gestures for her to step up to the font. Smiling back she does Charlie gurgling in her arms.

Father Mac starts "You have asked to have your child baptised, in doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him..." Eileen stopped listening because she was listening to Jimmy and Coop. Her mother has started taking photos.

Jimmy asks Coop if he thinks Charlie will be a cop and Coop replies "No choice its in his genes, forever blue."

Her husband sounds sad when he responds "Someoneís gotta break out, live a better kind of life."

Coop doesn't sound convinced when he says "Yeah, what else can guys like us do for a living huh?"

Jimmy looks at him and says "Sales."

"Sales, yeah right." Coop replies and they both laugh. Eileen has had enough, she tells them to shush. They have the good grace to look like chastised little boys. They all start listening again when Father Mac says "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." crossing Charlie with his hands as Jimmy, Coop, Serge and Giselle cross themselves with there own. Eileen says amen, Jimmy saying it too. Coop doesn't say it. She looks at Coop not trying to conceal her feelings from him. His isn't phased. As the baptism goes on and the Godparents have to renounce the Devil Eileen remembers how she thought Coop was the Devil that first morning after. All three Godparents denounce the Devil without hesitation and it makes Eileen seethe. Father Mac takes Charlie from her and takes him to the font. As soon as the water touches his head Charlie starts crying and Eileen feels a tugging in her chest, the instinct to comfort her child. She is glad when it is over and she can hold Charlie again, rock his tears away. Giselle has been looking at Coop whenever she didn't need to look at Father Mac. They are given Charlie's candle then it is over. They all go outside and get in there respective cars to head back to the house for the get together.

Eileen had given June Liddell the key to the house so that she could put the food out and sure as eggs are eggs the food was out when they let everyone in. People started to mingle and Jimmy's mother comes over and kisses her cheek and pinches Charlie's. He doesn't appreciate it. She smiles at her sons son and says "Another handsome little boy Eileen, you're getting good at this." and she can't help but join in laughing at the old joke. When Eileen had married Jimmy his mother had took her aside and told her she expected lots of grandbabies. After Jason was born she had told her to keep up the good standards, she had replied with "I do my best Sarah." and a private joke was born. His father, Frank comes up next to her and he said "Congratulations Eileen, again" kissing her cheek. He stepped back to stand next to his wife, his arm automatically going around her waist to draw her near. Charlie starts to make little whining noises and Eileen uses it to get away. She likes Jimmy's parents.

Finding her mother she hands her Charlie. Seeing Coop and Jimmy hanging around the drinks table she takes off her gloves, puts them in her handbag and places it on the kitchen table. She walks over to her husband and his partner with the intention of stopping Coop from corrupting him any further. They stop talking as she draws closer and she almost rolls her eyes at how obvious they are being. "Coop, can I talk to you?" she asks and it almost looks like he is going to ask why but then he looks at her and he says "Sure.". She sees Jimmy's puzzlement written all over his face. Coop walks into the kitchen and she follows. She finds it fitting that they are going to have this conversation in the
room that overlooks where the sin was committed, where she heard her heart break.

Coop walks to the sink and says "What is it Eileen." with his back to her. His shoulders are not slumped nor is he turned away to hide from her. He is not ashamed and God if that doesn't infuriate her. He's even got her using the Lords name in vain.

"You know very well what." she hisses.

He whispers "Yeah" but still doesn't turn. They stand in silence, the weight of what she needs to say hangs in the air like storm clouds. She knows it will not be easy, Coop can be stubborn.

"Why Coop?" but as soon as she asks she realises that she really doesn't want to know. Now he turns and looks at her, his eyes steely, defiant.

"Because I love him Eileen, I was drunk and I took a chance." Her eyes go wide, he is telling the truth. What a snake in the grass he is, must have always been.

Wanting to look away from his piercing gaze but finding herself unable she sighs "How long?"

Understanding her he says "Since we met." It is then that tears start to stream down her face and her fist clench at her sides. Coop grabs her right fist and his touch feels like a burn but she has no energy to pull away.

"I know it's wrong." Coop says but she knows he doesn't believe it.

"How could you do this to me Coop, to us?" she asks and he stares at her incredulously then says "What do you want from me." She wants him to stop kissing her husband and doing God knows what else. She wants him to tell Jimmy that it's over. Just as she is about to say as such she sees somebody out of the corner of her eye. Turning her head she sees Tom McCree standing a few feet from them. Wrenching her hand out of Coops grasp she edges her way past Tom a hand going up to cover her mouth, attempting to stifle the sobs that threaten to manifest. As she leaves she catches the tail end what Tom says to Coop. Making her way through the crowd of well wishers she tries to hide her tear stained cheeks. She walks past her mother holding a giggling Charlie and straight up the stairs without looking back. Making it to her room she closes and locks the door before the sobs caught in her chest erupt. She slides to the floor her back against the door. Coop will never willingly let go of Jimmy, neither will she. It seems that this is to be a battle of wills. When she thinks of her children her heart shatters anew, poor infant Charlie. She will fight knowing that they will be dragged through it with her. She vows through a tearful haze to keep this war quite. A secret war of sorts. She is still crying, for the man she lost, her children, the retirement she wanted when someone knocks at the door and she holds her breath effectively halting her sobbing. "Eileen what's wrong" comes Jimmy's voice through the wood of the door. She doesn't answer, doesn't want him to see her nor does she want to see him. So she ignores him and eventually he walks away and she can breathe again.

Her tears have dried and she sits there staring blindly at the dresser on the other side of the room when there is another knock at the door and she hears her mothers voice say "Honey, are you ok." She needs her mother feels it so keenly so she gets up and unlocks the door and opens it. Facing her she says "Moma," and a new wave of tears breaks forth. Her mother strides forward and engulfs Eileen in her arms closing the door with her foot. Sobbing into her mothers shoulder she feels herself being led to the bed. Once sat down her mother pulls away and wipes at her tears with a handkerchief. "Now tell your Moma what's wrong." and Eileen grabs her hands, knuckles going white. The desire to tell her everything is so strange she has to actually club it down. Telling her would only lead to pain, she would no doubt storm down the stairs and have it out with Jimmy. Charlie would cry due to the noise. Then her Daddy would punch Jimmy and Mary would cry,
Jason would try to defend his father and get held back by Elijah, Lilyís husband. No she couldn't breathe a word of what she knew. Doing the only thing left to her Eileen sobbed yet again into her mothers shoulder. Tomorrow she will tell her mother it had been hormones that made her cry and be rewarded with a affectionate knowing smile. She will fall back into the routine of cooking and being a mother to her children, she will entrench herself in it. A thing to help her weather the secret war that was soon to be declared. Her children are her reason and morale so therefore she cannot loose even if she is fighting an enemy that has love for a cause. Her courage will never falter.
A River In Egypt

Thomas McCree is a man of no religion he feels not the pull of laws written by God. He has his own set of rules, rules that were instilled in him by his father. "Thou shalt respect your elders, Thou shalt do as I say not as I do, Thou shalt treat others as you yourself would wish to be treated, Thou shalt never lie, Thou shalt always be polite." Things were simple when he was small, the world was big and he was innocent, sure in the knowledge that his parents would love and protect him. The rules back then where gentle, designed to benefit both him and his parents. When he hit puberty the world shrank and reality hit him tenfold. His father lost his job and began to drink. At first he just passed out and he and his mother were left to eat dinner in peace but the more he drank the more he could handle it. He remembers with startling clarity the first time his father raised a hand to his mother. He was in the kitchen washing the dishes when he heard noise from the living room. The door was ajar so he could see right in, his mother was stood up his father facing her. She was asking, pleading with him to get a job and clean himself up and Tom could almost see the moment his father turned from being a drunk to a violent drunk. The second he saw his fathers arm raise he was stood in front of her in a flash, on instinct. The blow meant for his mother caught his chin. His father had looked momentarily dazed before he fell backwards into the coffee table and passed out. That night his mother wept into his shoulder. A bruise formed on his chin, purple and blue. Every time his mother looked at it her eyes filled up with tears.

It was then after that night that the rules started becoming cruel and were enforced upon his mother too. Their rules differed but were essentially the same. His mother could not talk to or associate herself with other men and Tom could not have friends over, the other rules continuing in the same oppressive fashion. There were five rules until he was fifteen and he brought his friend Stephen home with him one day after school so he could help him with his algebra homework. They went up to Tom's room and Stephen tried to make him understand why the numbers were suddenly letters. To Tom the night had gone well, he had a slight understanding of algebra now. His father on the other hand did not think the night was a success. Almost as soon as Stephen was out the door his Dad was muttering "Queer." under his breath but it wasn't until he went back to his room that his Dad let loose. Shouting at his mother, why had she let that little faggot boy into there home. Tom had sat on his bed his body tense, on edge. He had to be alert, his father could turn violent in a flash. He didn't. When he came down for dinner that night he saw the look in his fathers eyes and a sixth rule was written. Thou shalt not be a faggot.

He and his mother lived there lives dodging his fathers drunken temper. By the age of seventeen he was a master liar, lying about where he got the bruises, why friends couldn't come over, why his clothes were falling to pieces and weren't washed. Slowly as he grew up defying his father all the way his fathers rules became his own. It wasn't until he became Lieutenant that his father died. When his mother rang him with the news he felt a loosening at his neck and suddenly felt the urge to do things he hadn't dared do before. He grew up hating being told what to do, craving power. Being a cop brought him power and he was pretty good at beating people up. Thinking back on it he finds it funny that he ended up as a Lieutenant of Philly PD, he'd been pretty sure he'd end up a crook. Using his powers for good instead of evil he supposes. But even a policeman has rules he must follow and it's that fact that lead him to Teddy Burke. Being on the "take" means he can take the Policemanís Code and twist it to his own gain and that's exactly what he did.

Being in charge of 4,250 Patrol Officers indeed brought him power. Having never cared for popularity he didn't care that most of them hated his guts. He feels his is a fair man, he gives everybody three chances until they become an enemy. There are some that he is on friendly terms with Murphy, Scutturo, Mann, Peters and Reynolds. They are also on the take, introduced to it by him. His life as is easy except for one thing, one person. Sean Cooper. The only person he has to
answer to is Sergeant Cooper, Seanís father. The thing about Cooper is that he isn't a complete jack ass because he is the Sergeant's son but because that is his nature. The first strike. Cooper acts righteous and is a war hero from Vietnam and it really infuriates Tom. The second strike. Never before has he broken the sixth rule but Cooper tempts him and it leaves the worst taste in his mouth. Out of everyone in the whole department Cooper is the one he wants the most to unleash upon his accumulated power but the shadow of Serge looms over him and he finds himself once again bound. That is Cooper's third strike. The arrangement with Teddy Burke is that he gets half of the drug dealers earnings if he turns a blind eye to his business ventures, subsequently the patrol officers get equal shares of his half if they also turn a blind eye. If Serge ever found out about his deal with Teddy Burke it'd spell disaster for Toms dreams of one day being Commissioner. That is his fourth strike. Cooper is the only person he has ever known that has been issued four strikes, mainly because when others got three strikes he dealt with them. He is unable to do that with Cooper and it makes him feel like he is on a leash.

Cooper started making sarcastic comments that hinted towards a knowledge of his and Teddy Burke's deal a month ago. It all comes to a head however when one day Cooper and Bruno bring in Burke. He hadn't seen them come in because he was engrossed in paperwork, just because he was on the take doesn't mean he could let his responsibilities slide. He had looked up and seen Burke handcuffed to a bench next to the Desk Sergeants area. He sees Cooper and Bruno standing outside his office and he thinks "Sonofabitch!" Raising himself out of his chair he strode across to the door, opened the doorway and said "Inside" to the two men outside. He waited by the door till there both in the room.

Then closing the door he said "Am I on LSD or is that Teddy Burke out there?" folding his arms as he walked to stand in front of them.

Cooper the sarcastic bastard replied "You take LSD boss?"

"Damn it Coop save the wise ass remarks" he said exasperated then looking to Bruno he had asked "Why'd you guys bring him in?" hoping that looking at Bruno and away from Cooper would keep his temper in check.

Bruno had looked like the answer was obvious and replied "He was selling smack on a corner." Bruno was being as obtuse as Cooper apparently.

He had looked at each one of them in turn and asked "And which one of you came to me for the ok?" He knew it would rile Cooper and that was half the reason he said it.

Cooper had scoffed and said "We gotta get permission."

Cooper knows that Tom is on the take and Tom knows he knows, and Cooper's dumb act was wearing thin so he said "Don't play dumb."

Next Cooper had quoted the law at him "Lieutenant, correct me if I'm wrong but doesn't the Crimes Code say the possession of drugs is illegal."

Sighing he has looked at Bruno and said "Are you gonna get this jackass under control." Bruno had swallowed and said "I'll make sure we get proper clearance on all politically sensitive suspects." Yes thats right Tom has Bruno on a leash just like everybody else in the department, except Cooper.

"Screw that!" Cooper had said "Jimmy and I have been together for a year, we've had more busts seen more convictions than any other team."

Tom didn't give a fuck if they'd caught Al Capone themselves and so he had said "Your point?"
Laughing Cooper had stepped forward and said "Point is Captain appreciates our work, you think he knows your such good pals with Teddy Burke?" So Cooper thought he could intimidate him did he. Tom did what he always did when danger loomed he fought back.

Smirking he said "Do not try to go over my head Coop. You'll regret it." then he turned away and said "Now scram."

"What about Burke?" Cooper said.

Tom knew that what he was planning to say next would really stick it in Cooper's craw so he turned around a broad grin on his face and said "What Teddy Burke, was he busted today?" Cooper's fury was clear in his eyes and if not for Bruno nudging his arm Tom thinks he would have tried to punch him. He laughed silently at that thought, Cooper could just try it.

That had been a month ago and now he found himself sat in a church waiting for who of all people but Cooper. It was Bruno's new son's baptism and he had been invited. He actually likes Bruno he just feels sorry that he was partnered with such a foolhardy piss ant as Cooper. Bruno, his wife there two eldest kids and Serge are up at the front with the priest waiting for Cooper, who apparently is going to be the poor kids Godfather. They've been waiting forty minutes when the bastard finally arrives, banging open the church doors like a superhero come to save the damsel in distress. He tucks his shirt in as he walks up the aisle and Tom feels disgusted. You don't walk into a church with your shirt untucked. He barely hears the service all his attention focused on Cooper. Unaware to him he has developed a strong hatred for that man it has bloomed out of bondage. He cannot act on his hate therefore it has grown. The service is over before he knows it and as everyone else is walking out of the church he sees Murphy take Serge aside. He files that away to be thought over at a later date and goes outside and gets in his car to follow the rest back to the Bruno's for the reception.

There are a lot of pretty women at the Bruno's when he gets there and he tries not to strut into the house like the cockerel his father always wanted him to be around women. Some habits are hard to break. He gets himself a tumbler of whiskey and starts making his rounds of the women there. None of which he finds pleasing and he really tries. Soon enough his tumbler is empty and he makes his way through the crowd to the kitchen. He opens the doors and is standing just in the doorway before he knows someone is in there. It's Cooper and Jimmy's wife. They are arguing. Jimmy's wife, Eileen he thinks says "How could you do this to me Coop, to us?" and alarm bells go off in his head. Cooper replies with "What do you want from me," and he sees there hands entwined. Eileen turns and sees him. She leaves with a hand over her mouth edging past him. Tom tilts his head and says "Looky what we got here." whilst putting his tumbler down on top of the Bruno's fridge. Cooper turns to face him straight on. "How long's it been going on?" Tom asks and when Cooper doesn't answer adds "Does Jimmy know?" Cooper looks at the floor and says "No." Feeling victory deep within him he says "What would you're old man say, his own son banging another cops wife?" and he knows he's hit a nerve when Cooper replies "You leave Serge out of this." Tom has to refrain from smiling, Cooper has fallen for the bait. He always finds it proper to warn people of the terms of their blackmail up front. "I don't give a rats ass about you, but Jimmy's a good man. He doesn't deserve this." pausing a breathe he says "You end it, you understand?" Cooper looks as if he is thinking before he says "Yeah I understand." He doesn't sound the least bit ashamed so Tom continues "This is a cops wife, you crossed a line." At this he sees some recognition in Cooper's eyes and he says "I know." He finished with "You better." He had gotten himself another tumbler of whiskey all the while Cooper stayed stood in the same spot. The rest of the party was spent wondering if Cooper would really end it with Eileen. Well even if he didn't Tom would for him.

The next day there is a folded piece of paper in the pigeon hole outside his office door. He reads it
sat at his desk, it says:

"A man in denial is a man shut off from himself."

He knows exactly who it's from even though it has been typed up. The fucking bastard, he'll kill him. When Serge and Murphy tell him what Cooper and Bruno are doing his hatred swells tenfold. The bastard is corrupting a man who has three kids and a beautiful wife. At home in bed that night he dreams of comforting Eileen. But once he loses control of his consciousness Eileen looses her breasts and turns into Cooper. His last conscious thought is to swear that he will kill Cooper.
Owen Murphy believes he is a good man, he upholds the law and does it well. He is the only beat cop without a partner because his partner, Eddie, was killed by a guy trying to rob a bank. He was there he just wasn't fast enough. The guy had a shotgun and before either of them knew it Eddie had a hole in his chest. He feels an immense amount of guilt over it that sometimes he can't stand to put on his uniform. He is close to the other beat cops but they mostly feel sorry for him. Not Jimmy and Coop, they were friends with Eddie too. They share his grief. Eddie had a wife, Joan. At the funeral he'd stood next to her, holding her hand. As they lowered the coffin into the ground Joan had collapsed against him and sobbed into his shoulder. God bless her she doesn't blame him. She should but she doesn't. Coop and Jimmy had been there too along with Edies mother and brother. He had made a speech about how Eddie was a brave, honourable man. How he was a good man, a good partner and his best friend. He'd held his head high and cried as he spoke. The blue sky belled the sad occasion but Owen thought it fitting. Eddie would like that he was buried on a clear day. Hope shining as he was put to rest. Owen had smiled at that thought and made it part of his speech. Joan had smiled as a result. Eddie dress uniform picture from when he'd graduated from the academy was put up on the wall of honour in Joe's bar the day after. It had been nearly a year and still the guilt and sadness hadn't lessened, but at one point he'd knew he'd have to stop grieving and do his job. Protect and serve the people of Philadelphia. He swears he'll never have another partner though. Three weeks after Eddie had died McCree approached him about being on the take from Teddy Burke. He accepts and uses the money to help Joan. He would never have agreed if Eddie had not died, Joan need the financial help. But he thinks apart from that he is a good man.

Owen is a man who does as people say other people should not knowing there is a viable option to the contrary. He has lived his life as a good boy should but he finds himself falling for Joan. Even though Eddie's dead it still feels like a betrayal. He is a stack of emotions layered one atop the other, like a pile of old newspapers. Love on top of guilt, guilt on top of love. Never ceasing just getting higher until one day it will overbalance and fall dragging him with it. A raid was scheduled on a bar on the east side of the city and when they got there they found it full of queers. Owen has nothing against queers personally but the general opinion regarding them is bad so who is he to say its wrong. Jimmy and Coop weren't part of the raid and he only sees them when he's pulling a queer dressed in womenís clothes up the stairs in the station that he sees them. He tells the queer that no he cannot use the ladies room and then asks Jimmy "We're allowed to beat up queers for information, right Jimmy?" and gets an answer of "Your bust your call." When he turns the corner and is out of sight he says to the queer "Go on be quick about it." and nods his head at the ladies bathroom. Once he processes the man in drag and three more men from the club he goes back out on patrol. His day is only marred by two petty thieves who he puts firmly in their place.

When he clocks off at seven he doesn't head back to his own house he heads over to Eddie and Joanís, he still can't call it just Joanís. Joan is on the front porch sat on a rocking chair reading when he pulls up. His heart should not flutter when he sees her but it does. He thanks God that Joan never gave Eddie any children even though he knows if she had he'd support them too. It's the timing he doesn't understand because when Eddie was alive he never batted an eyelid Joan's way. Why is it now that he finds her residing in his heart? Was she always there? No good can come of following that train of thought so he brushes it aside and walks up the porch steps. Joan greets him with a wide smile. Owen is enraptured, the porch light is casting a glow over her making her auburn hair look as if it is fire and her blue eyes shine out at him. He can't move and he's sure the neighbours are having a field day with this. Joan giggles and the sound travels down his spine to a place a giggle has never gone before. Saving her place in the book she stands up from the rocking chair and approaches him. God he thinks, it's gotten worse. All she does is hug him hello and tells him to come in but his mind takes the moment and runs with it even as hes following her inside. He has to sit down at the kitchen
The table so that she doesn't see how hard he has got. She's made roast lamb because she knows it's his favourite. It's when she asks him if he wants some gravy on his lamb and tells him that she's lonely in such a big house by herself that he feels another layer of guilt and love added to the pile already gathered inside him. They eat and tell each other the day they had. Joan tells him how one of her kindergarteners made a picture of her out of Penne pasta and how she taught them the words to "Allouette." but not there meaning. He tells her about the raid on the bar and the queer he let go to the ladies room. She frowns at him and says "Why do you do that Owen, follow the crowd when I know you don't think what they think?" He doesn't have an answer for her so he puts a fork full of lamb in his mouth, she narrows her eyes at him and says "I hope you choke on that." He just gives her a closed mouthed grin. Once there plates are empty she smiles at him and says "I've got some cherry pie if you'd like some." and she takes his grunt as the affirmation that it is. She goes to the fridge and produces a cherry pie and a jug of cream when there is an almighty noise outside the back door. It sounds like dustbin lids been knocked against each other.

His mind registers the sound of crockery smashing before he’s out the door with his gun raised. Outside it's freezing and there's four kids gathered in Eddie's backyard banging dustbin lids together. They see him and there eyes widen almost comically as they turn and run. He shoots into the air as a warning. He stares after them and slowly turns to find Joan stood on the back porch staring into the darkness. She isn't shaking but just standing there. A thought sparks in his head, this isn't the first time that this has happened. He stalks over to Joan drawing out her name, she turns to look at him her face impassive.

"This has happened before hasn't it?" he asks her as he closes in. Her eyes leave his face and move back to the darkness outside the ring of light that the porch light provides. The same darkness that the little bastards ran into.

"Why did you never tell me?" he asks and still no answer. He's scared now and like every other time he’s gotten scared it morphs into anger.

He grabs her by the shoulders and shakes her as he shouts "How many times has it happened Joan?" She is looking at him again but still not talking.

He shakes her again shouting "Why are they doing this?" and he can't seem to stop his arms from shaking her even though he sees fear start to creep into her eyes.

She whispers "Owen." and his arms stop and he takes a step back nearly falling off the porch steps. Joan's hands go up to catch him and all her can do is stutter "I'm sorry."

Her eyes soften and with and "It's fine Owen." she's back in the kitchen with a whack from the door hitting its frame. The cold seeps through Owen's thin uniform shirt causing goose bumps to appear on his torso to join the ones on his arms and he goes back inside. The sound of smashing crockery was the dish containing the pie and the jug of cream smashing when Joan dropped then. Apparently she was startled but not surprised. But she is on her knees picking up the broken pieces of said jug and dish getting her fingers covered in cherries, pie crust and cream, Owen wont have that. Kneeling down himself he said "I'll handle this Joan it's ok." She gives up to easy but he's too focused on trying to save as much of the pie as possible that he doesn't notice. The dish had cracked down the middle causing the pie to lop sideways onto the floor. At least there was half of the pie still edible. He's glad cos it looks like a tasty pie. It's as he’s collecting the pieces of the jug that he notices Joan's hands shaking out of the corner of his eyes. She'd not moved away when she let him take over clearing up merely sat still. He drops the pieces in his hands and says "Joan?" Not waiting for a response he has her in his arms before she answers. He knows it isn't the appropriate way to comfort a friends wife but the situation was far from normal. Joan is still shaking and Owen hugs her to him.
trying to keep her together.

Her voice is a breathy whisper when she says "It started the week after Eddie died, a man came to
the house. He said I'd need protection now my husband was dead. I told him I could look after
myself and he just laughed when I told him to get out of my house. The next when I woke up the
mailbox was on the front lawn in pieces." She took a breath which blew against Owen's chest.
Carrying on she said "The man returned that day, after you'd gone and demanded money. First it was
just fifty then it increased to sixty. I told him that I needed money for myself but he just laughed." 
sighing she continued "When I'm not 'prompt' with paying him he sends kids round to 'encourage'
me." She pulls her face out from the hollow of his throat and looks at him "You remember when that
window got smashed." she asks and he nods numbly. "That was them." Anger flows through
Owen's veins and he has to steady his breathing before he can say "I'm staying here tonight." Joan
doesn't argue and he kisses the top of her head. Once they've tidied up the mess of cherry pie, cream
and shards of pottery on the kitchen floor Joan says she's tired and goes to bed. Owen puts the
surviving pie back in the fridge. Sleep evades him as he lays in the bed of Eddie's guest bedroom.
Temptation is just across the hall. Admittedly his libido has been dampened, right now all he wants
to do is hold her, keep her safe. He can't remember when he started but he doesn't think it matters
that he loves her. He can't change it so why try. It's not the cop in him that wants to protect Joan, it's
the man.

The next day he meets Joan in the kitchen already dressed in the uniform. He had slept in only his
boxers. She made him some toast and sent him out the door with a hug. When he sets foot in the
station he feels himself fall back into the role of Owen Murphy ordinary guy. He hates it but doesn't
know how he can stop. Philadelphia Police Department is quiet that day, only one call coming in and
that's only a robbery being reported. Beaumont Groceries has been hit during the night, Mann and
Eckstrom are sent out to respond. Owen spends most of his day out on patrol trying hard to avoid
places where Burke might be. He'd usually do that anyway just so he wouldn't feel guilty when the
bastard would smile at him lecherously as he sells smack to kids that should really be in school.
Today however he's avoiding him cos if the bastard smiles at him today he might just punch it off his
face. It when the time is nearing seven and he is heading back to the locker room to hopefully
shower and dress into the civy clothes he keeps in his locker that he thinks he shatters his friendship
with Coop. Walking in to the locker room with Darryl and Faraday saying "So I'm pulling this little
queer out of the bathhouse on Munroe Street and he's crying 'Don't tell my wife, wah'." and if he
really meant the words he was saying he'd have missed the way Coop's face clouded over when he
heard him. As it was Owen saw it. The men around him laugh and it only goads whatever it is inside
him and it fixes on Coop. He can't stop his mouth even though he sees what he's doing. The others
can't see what is so plainly in front of them, there hate hides it from them.

His mouth opens and words fall out that he'd never say "You must have took a lid on the back door
in Nam huh Coop, all those lonely jungle nights?"

Owen hate himself when he can feel his own face form a smirk when Coop replies "Sure."

The other guys laugh as he nods his head towards Coop and says "See he agrees, didn't know you
played on their team." and Jimmy stood next to Coop comes back with a "Shut up Murph."

This doesn't nothing to stop him, he just replies with "Ahh you too Jimmy, you a fairy queen or
what?"

It's as Coop looks at him again and says "Give it a rest, man." that Owen tries to make him
understand, that he can't back down now. The others will get suspicious. He isn't gay and he doesn't
think there's anything wrong with being gay but labels sticks. He realises Coop can't back down
either.
So he says "I get it, Jimmy and Coop the dynamic duo. You know they say Batman and Robin are homos," because he does. Sees it whenever there near and he's glad for Coop but Jimmy has a wife. That's the only condemnation he gives them, in his head, that Jimmy is married. He's close enough to Coop to know that he is about to snap but reining himself in has become impossible. In a blink of an eye Coop has slammed him against the lockers behind him and is close to his face.

Coop says "What if I was?" and Owen ignores the pain in his back to respond "Was what?" even though he knows what.

Coop says "A homo, a queer," getting closer to Owen's face with every word so he has to twist backwards into the lockers to keep away.

Jimmy says "Coop easy." from behind the wall of flesh and muscle that is Coop.

When he doesn't respond Coop deals another blow "You one too Murphy huh, that your problem fairy boy?" Coop must know that he can't let that one stand but he tries to calm down but can only follow as it leads him.

He knocks Coop's arms off him an almost hisses "Get off me!". He backs away hoping he can leave the situation in the mess it is in and not add to it.

He says "I aint no queer, you get that straight." then he walks out. He isn't gonna go back in there and change so Joan will have to deal with his hard work stink. He stays at Eddie's place that night, neither mentions it. Joan kisses his cheek when she says goodnight.

It has been a month since Coop albeit outed himself to everyone in the locker room and Owen can't find the words to apologise. He saw the truth in Coop's eyes when he was inches from his face, saw how Jimmy's hand trembled with the need to touch Coop. He has grown good at watching, he feels like a scientist observing a group of Gorillas to study there behaviour. Coop is always the brightest when he's around Jimmy, Owen hadn't really taken it into account has he overheard there conversation in the patrol car lot. When he went out to sit in his patrol car there was no-one else in the yard. He'd come out there to think about Joan and what the hell he was going to do about fucking Teddy Burke.

Then Coop and Jimmy's patrol car pulled in and he actually itches to get a notepad out and start taking notes. They get out of the car and Coop goes around to Jimmy's side to lean against the car behind him. They do nothing but stare at anything that isn't the other for ages and Owen just wants them to go inside.

Coop says "I can't go on like this Jimmy." and Jimmy ever the obtuse one replies "Like what?"

Coop doesn't let it deter him "You know what I mean. Making plans day to day not knowing when I'm gonna see you." and there is the confirmation Owen didn't want to get. The confirmation that'll force his hand.

Owen can't see Jimmy's face but the tone of his voice shows he's still confused when he says "You see me everyday."

Coop looks down at his shoes and says "That's not what I mean."

Jimmy looks away from Coop then back in a second and says "Then say what you mean." He is half blinded by the sun but he doesn't need to see them he can hear what they feel in every word they say. He feels the love, anguish, defiance and most importantly he feels there hope. He doesn't want to be the one to dash it.
Coop becomes animated as he says "We got something here and it aint going away."

Jimmy shakes his head and says "I got a family." Owen's glad Jimmy has some guilt.

Coop says "You think Eileen wants to be married to a stranger, you think if she knew she'd wanna keep living a lie?"

Jimmy responds "I aint leaving my kids Coop." and Coop deflates a little.

"I'm not asking for that." Coop says and they look away from each other.

Then Jimmy says "What then?" and Coop inflates again and leans closer to Jimmy as he says "You remember what you were talking about, living a different kind of life? This is our shot."

He hears Jimmy reply "That was just talk. We're cursed with this thing." Whatever is in Jimmy's eyes stalls Coop for a few seconds and Owen hopes they'll stop, carry this conversation somewhere else, somewhere private.

But then Coop pushes himself off the patrol car he's leaning against and continues with "My folks, been married forever right? But whatever they had died years ago and I look around and I see everyone like that. Staying together cos of the church or cause it's expected or cause they've got nowhere else to go. Cursed. We're the lucky ones Jimmy."

Jimmy is shaking his head and he says "I dunno." and Owen's heart is reeling cos what Coop wants is what he wants.

Coop says "You sure about that?" as Jimmy pushes of from leaning on his and Coop's patrol car.

Suddenly they're close to each other and Owen hopes they don't kiss, not here in such a public place but all Jimmy does is say "I guess I don't got a choice." From the angle he's in he can see they do something with there hands but not what. Then just as suddenly as they came together they break apart and head back out to patrol. His brain knows what he has to do but his heart is screaming "NO!" so loud his ears are actually ringing. It's on the way to his apartment that a spark lights his brain as to whom the mystery crook is that is squeezing protection money out of Joan. He changes direction and heads home, and isn't it funny how Eddie's place went to Joan's place to being home in a night and a day, he asks Joan if the man that’s making her pay protection money wore a cheap leather jacket. When she says "Now you mention it, yeah he did. How did you know?" he feels a familiar anger flow through him. The money McCree gives him could very well be Joan's hard earned money. He'd never thought about where Burke's money came from he'd just assumed it was from drugs not from threatening women in their own homes. That bastard was going to pay.

He agonises over the decision for days and suddenly it's Jimmy's kids baptism and he's sat in a pew with Joan them both dressed in there Sunday best. Coop is late and Owen curses him for it as it gives him more time to think. His heart was still fighting the good fight and God knows if he hadn't made a list naming the pros and cons of telling McCree. Coop arrives and before he knows it the ceremony is over and he has a choice to make. The choice has morphed from should he tell or shouldn't he into who should he tell, McCree or Serge. It was no secret around the station that there is no love lost between McCree and Coop so Owen decides to tell Serge. Everyone stands up to leave and he sees Mrs Cooper break away from her husband to talk to Jimmy's mother and he sees his opportunity. Serge is set to follow his wife but Owen catches him by the arm and whispers conspiratorially "I need to talk to you Serge...about Coop." whilst pulling him to the side.

The look on Serge's face didn't change much and he just said "If he's sleeping with your wife there's nothing I can do about it." whilst wrenching his arm out of Owen's grip. He marvelled at how little faith he had in his own son and how little he knew about his own officers.
Owen took a step forward and whispered again "More like someone’s husband." That got a reaction out of the older man and Owen smiled inside.

Serge looked like he wanted to punch him in the face but instead he hissed "You have no proof." It is true he doesn't have proof but by the look in Serge's eyes he doesn't need any.

Serge turned away and sighed "Who?" and Owen said "Jimmy Bruno." The older man's head whipped round so fast Owen thought he might have broke it.

Owen put his hand up and said "I'm not saying this cos I find it fun sir, I'm saying it cos I thought you should know. It isn't illegal anymore you know." he added the last bit hoping to console the man. Serge just glares at him and walks away. He thinks that's the end of the whole mess and he goes home with Joan feeling lighter than he did before. The weight however is hefted swiftly back onto his shoulders when he goes into the station the next day. McCree calls him into his office and upon walking into the room he finds Serge waiting. Owen's heart stops, Serge has told McCree. McCree asks him to take a seat and Owen hates the formality he says it with. They're going to want him to tell them what he saw. They'll will twist it into something sordid. For the first and not the last time Owen regrets telling Serge, he should have just stayed out of it. He should have warned Coop to be more careful and let that be the end. He has only seen one moment in which the relationship between the two other men has been definite so that's what he tells them. Serge sits squirming in the chair next to him, his eyes widening when Owen recounts how Coop referenced his parents. At the time, as he sat in the car watching Coop open his heart to Jimmy he knew that nothing good could come of him hearing it. When Serge suggest getting someone to rough Coop up Owen is too shocked to respond or express his shock. McCree is far too eager and the look in his eyes scares him. Owen suspects he wants to do it himself. Serge nods silently and leaves. Owen sits there for a while after McCree leaves.

There is only a shallow divide between he and Joan and Jimmy and Coop. The only difference being that Joan is a woman, some people would say that that's all that matters. But to him it isn't, love is what matters but he had told Serge anyway and he had told McCree cos Coop wouldn't listen to his father. Owen had recognised the look in McCree's eyes when he went into his office and found Serge there, it was the same look the guy who had shot Eddie had worn just before he had pulled the trigger. Fear coursed through him. What he thought was the only thing for him to do had spiralled out of his grasp and now he sat safely off to the side as it lead a path of destruction to the two men he valued the most. He is powerless to stop it. Absently he wonders if this is how Dr Frankenstein felt once his creation began causing chaos. They are birds of a feather he and Dr Frankenstein, good intentions run a mock.

As the days passed and the curl of guilt in Owen's gut grew he tries hard to keep himself in the loop with McCree and Serge. He needs the information so he can help the two men. Owen decides that he will tell Jimmy on the day, so he has little time to tell Coop therefore the blonde man can not hunt McCree down and have it out with him. The plans change however when McCree decides that he will give Jimmy a test on the day, say some veiled comment about queers and see how he reacted. If Jimmy still went out on patrol with Coop then in McCree's eyes he is just as guilty as Coop. Owen knows that Coop is hot-headed and most certainly wont listen to reason. His new plan formulates itself around the idea that if he explains to Jimmy the situation then he'll somehow be able to stop Coop from going in or something. But that still left him with a murderous McCree on his hands and he'd bet his life that the Lieutenant would just postpone his plans until Coop came back. Neither Coop nor Jimmy are men that hide from their problems and Owen knows it. He feels helpless he wants so much to help the two men that are his best friends but he can't. The divide between them has become a chasm with McCree on the other side stalking Coop like a Wolf that's down wind of an oblivious Deer.
It's the fifth time Coop dreams about dying that he gets the whole picture and Jimmy is asleep next to him. Jimmy was supposed to be helping him re-paint his apartment. Coop didn't even own paintbrushes. Even though it's been a month since they first kissed they have yet to actually have sex. It is a rarity that they have time alone at all, Coop has a sneaky suspicion that it's Eileen's doing. That night they had just rutted wildly against each other punctuating each grunt or moan with fevered kissing. Afterwards Jimmy, always the stickler for cleanliness, had cleaned them up and once that was done had promptly collapsed on top of him not to be budged. That’s how Coop fell asleep.

He opens his eyes and the scene before him flickers like the picture from a television, he is in the patrol car lot. Usually when he dreams he is under a viaduct and a shadowy figure walks out and shoots him twice, he hears Jimmy’s voice over the radio telling him to hold on then he wakes up. This dream has started from the beginning.

He is stood leant against his patrol car trying not to look like he is watching Jimmy talking to Thompson when McCree walks over to him and says "You two sit close to north Philly tonight, we've been getting armed robbery calls from under the bridge."

The response lefts his lips without them actually moving "Send the bad guys."

McCree laughed low in his throat and that alone scared Coop and when he said "I'll try to scare some up for you." he almost choked.

McCree walked away and as Jimmy walked to join him Owen brushed past him and whispered something to his partner that he couldn't hear. Owen was by Jimmy side one moment and the next he's gone leaving Jimmy frozen with a look of terror on his face. Coop is severely confused.

Jimmy slowly walks up to him and Coop gestures with towards the car with his hand "You getting in or what?"

Jimmy looks nervous as he says "Think I'm gonna take out a rookie." and Coop thinks he's joking but when Jimmy doesn't laugh with him his face too sombres.

His "Serious." is met with a "Yeah." Coop shrugs, he figures they can't spend every second of everyday together even if that's all he wants.

He says "I'll pick you up some beer and meet you after." and turns to get in his car.

It's as his hand is sliding over the metal of the handle that Jimmy says "I can't make it tonight." Coop's heart stops, this is what he's been dreading. Jimmy realising that being with him is too much trouble than it's worth.

He tries not to show it when he asks "Why not?" Jimmy stands with his hands on his belt for too long before he answers.

"Maybe it's time for a change." Jimmy is pleading him with his eyes and breaking Coop's heart at the same time.

He manages to say "What kind of change?" around the lump in his throat.

"I wasn't thinking right when we talked. I haven't been right for a long time." This dream has suddenly become a nightmare thinks Coop.
He says "What's going on Jimmy?" and hopes it's all a joke.

Jimmy's response did not enforce that theory "I'm not gonna be making over your place no more. You should get a new partner" Coop thinks he knows what set this off in Jimmy, fear.

"You afraid?" he asks and this time he sounds resigned.

Jimmy shakes his head and says "It's got nothing to do with that" but it's too rushed to be the truth. Coop tries to edge closer to Jimmy but the brunette places the car mirror between them.

"I'm afraid too." he says because by all that is holy he is. He loves Jimmy and he knows it's dangerous. He's seen men put in jail for this, seen men killed for this.

But if he tries to stop it'd be like ripping his own heart out. Jimmy looks at him, his eyes sad, a message he can't decipher and says "Look, I gotta get going." He turns and Coop feels his heart being tugged with him.

"Jimmy don't go, please." he pleads and the sound of his own voice cements the feeling of loss.

When Jimmy just looks at him he says "We're the lucky ones, remember." Jimmy turns away so his face is obscured and when he turns back it is schooled into a neutral image.

His words however belittle his facial expression when he says "I think you got it wrong there, I aint a queer."

That is when Coop really dies. He can't stand to watch Jimmy walk away so he yanks open the car door and gets in. He starts the engine and is out of the yard as fast as he can. He doesn't see Jimmy falter or hear him shout his name so he drives to the viaduct. In the back of his lucid mind he knows that he will die under the viaduct but he doesn't care. Jimmy has killed him already. Coop has always prided himself in being a good cop no matter what. So when dispatch sends out a report of a armed robber loose on foot near the East Inn and Diamond he responds to it. He's only a block away. He drives to the alleyway under the viaduct pushing every thought and feeling regarding Jimmy Bruno into a locker in his head. A big locker. He needs to be focused.

When he pulls up under the arc of the bridge he does it calmly with eyes searching for his killer. Putting the hand break on he sits back ready to get out of the car. In his previous dreams he has died leant against a wall, flat on his back and in one particularly gruesome recollection plastered all over his cars windscreen. Maybe it's the fact that he knows it's there is the reason why he doesn't see the shadow spring fourth and shoot him in the chest. The windscreen shatters and a round hole is left to match the one in his chest. He's suddenly very glad that Jimmy already killed him otherwise this would have hurt a lot more. As it is he feels like a red hot poker in the shape of a circle is being forced into his chest and back out with every beat of his heart. The shadow steps under the light of a streetlamp and turns into McCree, who shoots him steps closer and shoots him again. Great he thinks, now there's two red hot pokers in his chest. McCree leaves. Coop tries to gather his breath but every breath he takes in leaks out of the holes in his chest before they get to his lungs.

He grabs the radio and making sure he's holding the button down rasps into it "Officer down, east end of the bridge at Diamond. I've been hit, two shots out of nowhere." McCree doesn't deserve jail. Blood is trailing down his face as he presses the button and says "Jimmy you out there?" and he hears "I'm here man, hang on." almost immediately. Talking is sapping his life away but he needs to say this.

Jimmy voice over the radio, crackly, says "Coop!" and he replies with a gasped "Jimmy" hating how
"Keep talking, we're almost there" echoes around him followed by "You hear me?" and he'd laugh if it didn't hurt so much. They're not gonna make it in time.

Jimmy shouts his name again and Coop responds "We were the lucky ones, don't forget that."

It is as if the words carry his life away with them over the radio waves. He dies hearing Jimmy shout his name with panic around the edges and his final thought is "He didn't mean it."

Coop eyes are open as he sits there with little streams of blood flowing down his face as he waits for someone to come find his body. He is glad when it's not Jimmy and the rookie that arrive first. Instead it is car 110. Coop's eyes are fixed on the exact spot where the rookie pulls up and Jimmy is out before the car stops. If not for the rookie and another officer Jimmy would have run at him, covered himself in blood and contaminated evidence Coop knows isn't there. Outed himself into a world where Coop couldn't protect him. As he stares at Jimmy crying with dead eyes and Jimmy stares back the viaduct fills with officers and crime photographers. They take several photos of him from different angles as if looking at him from above his left shoulder looking down will make him look less dead. Two men lift him out of the patrol car once swabs have been taken and 'evidence' bagged, Jack Simmonite and Kurt Adams he thinks. They're gentle with him lifting him so as not to jolt his injuries. He knows he is dead. Jack closes his eyes with a brush of his fingers and the world is extinguished. They must have put him in a body bag but he can't remember that or the journey to the morgue. All he knows is that mortuary slabs should be cold but the one under him is toasty compared to his skin. A young woman takes his clothes off and he'd blush if he had any blood left. A little sheet is placed over his groin and a man with white hair removes the bullets from his chest. He hears them ping as they're dropped into a metal bowl.

Someone puts a sheet over him pulled up so as it cover his face. He lies there staring up at white cotton for what feels like an eternity unable to lift his hand and throw the sheet off. Then he hears the door open and a set of footsteps enter. His eyes are closed but he can still see. The owner comes into view and Coop's eyes would widen if they could. It is Jimmy, but a Jimmy who looks as if he is dead too. Tears land on his face as Jimmy stands over him and Coop is glad he leaves them there. He is caught off guard when Jimmy's lips meet his. They feel as if they're on fire, burning against his stone cold ones. Jimmy whispers "I love you Coop, always have." into his mouth and then straightens up to his full height. A hand is ran through his hair before Jimmy leaves his eyes and the sheet is replaced.

The dark created by the cotton over his eyelids comforts him for all of a second before he is itching to move, move anything, a little toe even. Time has dissolved for him so he doesn't know how long it is before two sets of footsteps enter the room. Someone lifts the sheet from off his face and his vision fills with his mother's face. Her face is marred with tear tracks and her eyes are puffy. She gasps and steps closer to him, her mouth moving as if she is talking but Coop can't understand what she's saying. He hears another voice answer her and then she leans down and kisses his forehead. Now she's close to his ears he can hear her when she says "My brave, brave boy." His heart clenches and he feels it begin to pump blood again, feels his veins swell with it. He is still cold but the blood brings control back to his extremities. With a sweep of her thumb over his cheek Charlotte Cooper turns and leaves. The sheet is replaced on his face and he is alone again.

What he thinks is a minute passes by and he slowly starts to move. His face un-freezes and he blinks to alleviate the sudden dryness that grips his eyes. Wiggling his fingers he hopes it means he can move. Lifting his arm he grips the sheet above his hand and pulls it off. He is naked and very pale. Avoiding looking at the two holes in his chest he instead searches for his clothes. They're folded into a neat pile on a table in the corner. His pants are un marked apart from a few flecks of dried blood
but his undershirt and uniform shirt have two large holes in the chest. He puts them on anyway. Not sure whether he is a ghost or a zombie he plays safe with clothing. Just as he is about to leave the steel door opens and the same woman walks in that undressed him. When she doesn't scream but instead walks through him he sways more to the ghost idea. In the doorway he sees the woman re-dressing him and this time he thinks he does blush.

As he stares his body and the woman fade away along with the room replaced by a church. The church where Charlie was baptised in if he recalls correctly. Sunlight shining through stained glass leave green and blue shapes on his face. He is happy. God touches him through the Sun. He stands in the light, until he hears an organ start playing. His brow furrows, the notes of the Funeral March ring off the stone walls around him. Realisation dawns on him and he turns around to see people occupying the pews. His mother is there, she is sobbing into her handkerchief. His father is sat at the back, they are not sat together. Coop hopes his mother can finally be free. A few guys from the station are there. Owen is there with Joan. McCree is absent. Most importantly Jimmy is there, he is crying silent tears. There is an old black woman sat next to him, his hands are clenched tight around hers. She is trying to soothe him. Eileen sits on the other side, her face akin to a statue. Mary is weeping openly, making little pained sounds that shoot to Coops heart. Jason is staring right at him and for a moment Coop thinks he can see him but then he sees the vacant look in the boys eyes. Jason is staring at Coops body where it lays in an open casket the red of the lining offsetting his pale skin. Someone, probably his mother has dressed him in his best suit. It is strange to look upon yourself, Coop feels like his twin has died and not him. There is not a mark on his body, every one carefully hidden. Father Mac is at the front, his eyes covered with a film of sad tears. He is talking about how much a good man Coop was, a good son, a good friend, a good cop. Coop almost hears Eileen shout 'Ha!' in her head. The eulogy echoes the one the priest used at Eddies funeral that Coop darts a glance to Owen, he is rubbing Joan's shoulder murmuring silently to her. Coop is still looking at his dead body when he hears Father Mac say Jimmy's name and he swivels around to see why. Jimmy is at the altar now, politely clearing his throat, he looks at the coffin to his left and begins to speak.

"When I first met Coop I thought he was an ass. When I was assigned his partner I thought it'd be like policing with a caveman, in ways it was." A small smile lit his lips. "We didn't become friends until our second week as partners. It wasn't anything heroic, he just asked me if I wanted to go back to his place and get absolutely bladdered. A man drinks with his friends after all. Coop was hot headed, proud, stubborn and an idiot at times but he was my best friend. I should have been with him under that bridge and for that Coop I am so sorry. Coop, you were the person I could turn to when I was in over my head with my kids, when I wanted to get drunk, or when I just needed a laugh. I know I realised this too late but you were right Coop, we were the lucky ones."

Jimmy retakes his seat and the elderly black woman says "Bless you, child." just loud enough for Coop to hear. Father Mac retakes the altar and tells everybody that it is there last chance to say goodbye to him before he is laid to rest. A line forms in front of his open coffin. His mother just kisses his forehead and turns away, she said her goodbyes in the morgue. Serge, his father is wearing a look of shock, as if he still can't believe Coop is dead, he touches the wood of the coffin and whispers "I'm so sorry son." What is his father sorry for and why thinks Coop but then Jimmy is revealed when his fathers turns. Jimmy touches his hand briefly then moves on, Eileen just stares blankly at him but Coop suspects she'd like to spit on him. Mary gets Jimmy to pick her up so she can place a kiss on his cheek and adorn it with a breathy "Goodbye Uncle Coop." Jason nods at the coffin then lets Owen past. Owen stares at Coop's chest, as if he can see the bullet wounds still seeping blood. He says "I tried to stop him Coop, I truly did." and Joan steers him away. Coop moves from his coffin, stands at the back of the church. He's had enough listening to people say things that he doesn't understand. Everyone is re seated when Coop feels something tug behind his naval and just as Father Mac says "In the name of our Father, Amen." he is propelled backwards
through the closed doors of the church.

He flickers back into existence outside an unfamiliar house. A porch wrapped around the front is painted a jaunty blue colour but appearing grey in the dark. A garage sat neatly against the side. The porch light guides him towards the door and he swears he sees it wink at him. The house is as normal a suburban house on the inside as it is on the outside. Coop wonders why he is there. In the foyer he stands and decides where to go. He is stood in front of the stairs so he decides to start with them. As he is wandering down the hall he passes a pink nursery with a wide cot in the centre. He smiles at the thought of children, they can see him. He keeps walking his feet seemingly on a mission. He reaches what appears to be the master bedroom. There is a coat hanger on the handle of the wardrobe with a cops uniform shirt on it. The shiny badge pinned to its breast taunts him. The badge says Murphy. He wonders where Owen and Joan are. He walks out of the room, his feet taking up there journey once more. They are leading him back down the stairs but instead of pausing in the foyer as they did at first they lead him to a cream painted door. As he draws near he hears grunts and strangled gasps. His feet aren't making the decisions anymore. Sounds like that never mean anything good. He runs to the door and right through it. The room is dim, it appears to be the garage he saw from out front. The grunts come from the darkness within.

He walks blindly into the dark. Near the middle of the room he walks through something hanging from the roof. He jumps when a light is turned on in front of him revealing Owen. He is dressed in a black t-shirt and his work pants. His eyes are ringed with red and he is carrying a step ladder. With horror Coop's eyes land on the object he walked through in the dark. It is a noose. With wide eyes Coop tries to run for Owen. To maybe tackle him to the ground or something. He ends up going through him, the wall behind him and out into the back yard. The moon shines her sympathy at him. He stumbles over his own feet. Once righted he throws himself through the wall. Back inside the garage he goes through Owen's legs. He is already stood on the step ladder, the noose around his neck. "Owen no!!" Coop shouts but of course Owen doesn't hear. Coop wraps his arms around Owen's legs as close as they can be without passing through. He tries to concentrate, to somehow make himself corporeal. He is there as Owen's foot kicks through him to knock the step ladder away. Coop tries even harder to concentrate. He needs to hold Owen up. Owen gulps a gurgled breathe then all is quite. Struggling he hears an ominous crack and he realises Owens legs are already hanging half in his chest. Owen is dead. Coop lets go and falls backwards hoping he might fall to the centre of the Earth and burn at its core.

He is on the floor when he hears footsteps and someone opens the door. Without moving Coop is on his feet again. Joan is staring through him at Owen, a heavily pregnant Joan. She screams and it leaves her mouth with a sob on it's tail. She runs towards Owen her arms flying around his legs with a screamed "Owen!" and Coop can see her back tense as she tries to hold him up. Her breath heaves and seeing it futile to hold him up she frantically searches for something to cut him done with. Moving her head from side to side she tries to find something, shifting her arms to better accommodate Owen's weight. Her eyes set on a pair of garden shears. Coop can't move, not that he'd be much use if he could. Joan lets go of Owen and goes for the shears as fast as she can. Owen's body visibly lowers. Height betrays Joan's swiftness, she cannot reach the rope. Tears are falling fast from her face as she pulls up the step ladder. She cuts the rope above the knot and Owen falls. The moment hangs forever as Joan barely catches Owen, she stumbles with him in her arms. Her legs collapse but she doesn't fall, she doesn't want to harm the baby. Slumped against the door frame she cries for an hour with Owens head cradled in her lap.

Coop's feet become unstuck and he walks over to the weeping woman trying to force himself into being, so he can comfort her. Joan looks up and she gulps as she gently slides Owen's head out of her lap and cushions it on the floor with her cardigan. She kisses his lips. Then she pushes herself to her feet and goes to ring for an ambulance even though she knows her husband is dead, hiccupping as she walks. He follows her as she slowly moves from the living room to the kitchen. The
ambulance is on its way and all she can do is wait. Coop is with her when the paramedics arrive and Joan points silently to the cream door as it stands ominously at the end of the hall. Two paramedics go down the hall and one stays with Joan. He asks her what happened. She just stares at the clock on the wall as if she is willing the hands to move backwards. One of the men comes out of the garage with a grim face and he asks Joan where the phone is. She nods to the door leading to the living room, the paramedics disappears. The other paramedic in the kitchen abandons all hope of getting her to speak and follows his colleague. Coop can hear them talking in the other room and when Joan grits her teeth as one of them says "Suicide." so can she. After that a patrol car pulls up and Coop is glad to see that it's not Jimmy. However it is Simmonite and Adams who are first on the scene, to once again find a friend dead.

People come and go, Owen being taken out of the house in a body bag. Joan stays where she is, off to the side keeping out of the way. She makes a statement to Simmonite, writing it instead of speaking. Then suddenly it is just him an her in the house. She is all of a sudden, alone. That night she doesn't sleep and the baby inside her doesn't kick once. Coop is bound to the house, by choice and circumstance. He watches Joan as she grieves and wishes he were alive. Sadness gave way to anger, it has yet to pass. He is there five days and counting when Joan finds the letter in a baby book, her name written on the envelope in Owen's messy scrawl. He sits with her in the kitchen as she stares at the letter. He thinks she is too angry at Owen to want to know his reasons. She opens the letter with slender fingers and pulls it out. Unfolding it she lays it flat on the table and smoothes over the creases. Her eyes flit back and forth as she reads. Coop wants to hear what the letter says and Joan reads it aloud not knowing why. The words falling from her lips like lead.

"Joan, my love
If you're reading this than I've got up the courage to end both our suffering. I never thought I was a selfish man but I would not give in 'till I had you and now this. So I guess I am. I haven't been a pleasure to live with have I and I know you have no idea why I changed. I'm sure you remember when it started though. The day Eddie died I broke and the day Coop died I broke anew. I couldn't stop Eddie dying but I could have prevented Coops death. I have never told anyone this and I'm telling you because I know how you feel on the subject. Do you remember Jimmy Bruno? Well he was having an affair with Coop. I saw them and I told Serge. God how I wish I hadn't but I didn't know what else to do. Serge tried to stop it but Coop wouldn't listen. Serge told McCree. You may not know this but McCree hated Coop. Serge wanted us to get some guys to rough him up a little. McCree wanted to rouse a lynch mob. McCree killed Coop. I couldn't stop him.

When Olivia is born I want you to tell her that I love her very much because believe me I do. I couldn't be more happier that you're carrying my child, Joan. But I just can't shake this guilt. When Eddie died it was a combination of you, Jimmy and Coop that pulled me through. I was the reason one of my best friends was murdered. Jimmy has his grief and Eileen to deal with. I'm not saying you're not enough. You are. I just didn't try hard enough.

I've made sure that you will get my pension and that you and Olivia are well looked after. What I wrote earlier is probably presumptuous. I have probably only increased your suffering but like I said I am selfish. You can do whatever you want with this letter. But if you intend to get justice for Coop then let me warn you, Serge is torn up about what he allowed to happen but he still wont allow the Cooper name to be tarnished. He will bury you, love.

I've set you into the same situation you were in when I fell in love with you. I had no intention of doing so. I can apologise 'till I'm blue in the face but it wont bring me back and if it could I wouldn't. I've done this for a reason. I'm sorry I've left you alone to raise Poppy, I'm sorry that I'm not the man you fell in love with and I'm sorry that I'm such a coward but I'm not sorry for killing myself. It was the end I needed.

Love Owen"

Coop was reeling. His father did this. For such a small reason, because he loves Jimmy. Joan wiped
tears out from the corners of her eyes with unsteady hands. Standing up she goes into the next room, Coop doesn't follow. He figures he should at least give her some semblance of privacy. A few minute later she walks back in with a metal bin and a box of matches. She places the bin at her feet once she is once again sat at the kitchen table. The letter is in between her thumb and forefinger floating above the bin and she forces them apart. The piece of paper on which Owen confessed his sins floats slowly into the bin. Joan has a match lit before it even hits the bottom. The letter catches alight instantly and Coop watches as words form in the fire. Words of apology and guilt. Joan's hand is on her rounded belly and her eyes are glossy with unshed tears. Coop looks at her than finally he feels the tugging again. He is somewhat relieved, he has just enough time to brace himself before he is dragged down through the floor.

He is pulled back out of the ground, pulled right through Jimmy. He doesn't miss the irony that it's his first time being 'in' Jimmy then he is literally scattered. The feeling of sorrow and self loathing in Jimmy lingers in every bit of him. He gathers again stood out of the way of possible collision with the living. He is guessing Jimmy is out on patrol but he doesn't know where the patrol car is. Jimmy is stood in front of a shop front. Beaumont Groceries is what the sign says. It's the place that got robbed the day before he died. Jimmy must be getting follow up statements. Coop can see him inside now talking to a pretty black girl behind the counter. He walks through the shop window right through a display of pumpkins. Jimmy says "Hi Poppy." and Coop stops, motionless in the middle of a giant orange squash. He is familiar with this girl, he has been here more times than is necessary.

Jimmy leant against the counter and said "I got some news bout the robbery." causing Poppy's head to turn from straightening the display of cigarettes.

She tried to feign indifference when she said "Oh yeah, what's that then?"

Jimmy just smirks and says "Oh I forget, I think I need something to jog my memory." and he continues to smile as Poppy glares at him. It is a stand off, neither willing to back down.

Then the girl huffs "Fine." and throws a chocolate bar at Jimmy who catches it mid air.

The smirk doesn't leave his face and he says "See that wasn't so hard."

Poppy rolls her eyes and says "Yeah, yeah now spill it pretty boy." Jealousy surges through Coop but then his common sense kicks in, this girl is just that, a girl.

Jimmy stands up and unwraps his chocolate bar and says "The guy who robbed you got into a crash in Germantown, he died." then proceeded to munch on his chocolate.

The girl then said "He deserved it. Threatening my Grandmamma like he did." the feeling behind the words obviously shocking Jimmy as he stopped chewing. Suddenly the hanging beads shrouding the door behind Poppy was split by an elderly woman walking out.

"Hush your mouth child, no-one deserves to die." Coop recognises this woman, she is the one that comforted Jimmy at his funeral. Jimmy swallows what's in his mouth then re-wraps his chocolate and slips it in his pocket. The old woman doesn't miss it though "I hope you paid for that James Bruno." and Jimmy blushes, actually blushes.

He roots in his pockets and says "Yes Ma'am." as he places some change on the counter. It is now Poppy's turn to smirk as she puts the change in the till. The old woman radiates a feeling of calm, a calm learnt from living. She lifts the partition that separates the back of the shop and stands waiting in between the counter,
Jimmy smiles slightly and says "It's good to see you Astrid." as he walks forward to her. He is promptly enveloped in a bear hug. Shit Coop thinks, that's Astrid Beaumont. She sure doesn't look like a helpless old lady. When Jimmy is released he starts to tell Astrid the news he told Poppy but he is stopped when she raises her hand.

She says "I heard, it happened the day after we were robbed didn't it?" Jimmy nodded silently.

A great sigh leaves her and she says "That man was a catalyst James, but no man can do great things alone. The blame for everything that has happened lies with more than just him." Coop is confused once again. He wishes that there wasn't great huge gaps in what he understood. He feels like he is reading a newspaper after someone’s made a ransomed note out of it. Words and letters missing. Silence descends on the shop.

With a flurry of colour Astrid says "Enough of the melancholia, let me make you some tea child." and she is back behind the counter.

Jimmy says "Yes please Ma'am." and Poppy begs her if they could please have normal tea this time instead of peppermint tea. The old woman just smiles and walks into the back. Coop follows her, she intrigues him. She moves methodically around the little kitchenette and produces three slightly chipped teacups. He watches her as she goes to the sink and fills up the kettle. She puts three teabags into a teapot.

With her back to him she says "What exactly are you gawking at Sean Cooper?" and turns around to look straight at him. She can see him. His shock hampers his tongue and he can't speak. Astrid smiles and turns to the drawer under the faux marble counter to get three teaspoons.

Finally Coop’s tongue unsticks from the roof of his mouth and he starts to ask her how she can see him when yet again she talks to him without turning. "Don't bother talking child I don't have the ear. I can see you clear enough though."

The spoons at the ready on the countertop she turns to look at him. "I know all about you Sean, you are a brave young man." the kettle whistles at her and she pours the boiling water into the waiting teapot absently.

Letting the tea steep for a while she turns back to him "What you are seeing doesn't have to happen, you don't have to die. Everything hangs on whether or not the man who held me at gunpoint is in custody by eight pm the day you die. His name is Ronald Turing, remember it child because if you don't you wont find him till it's too late." She pauses to pour tea into each teacup them once they are placed on there accompanying saucers with a teaspoon on the side she turns back to him.

"The James out there is different than the one you remember Sean, he is open about what it is he feels, who he is. He only got that way because I gave him a good talking to but like everything it was too late. You and James have to come take the statement from me, not Officer Mann and Officer Eckstrom. I'll handle the rest." The cups and saucers are on a blue tray and she is at the door before she turns around and looks at Coop

"You sure are handsome child, I can see what James sees in you." and Coop would blush if his blood could still flow against gravity.

"He loves you, and this world doesn't understand it but one day they will and if you keep each other alive you will live to see it." and she is gone back through the beaded doorway.

Coop really wants to believe that all this pain can be avoided. He's seen a lot of it so far and he doesn't think he's anyway near finished yet. Astrid called him brave but he's scared shitless. If he
messes this up, forgets Turingís name then Jimmy will be alone. You can't protect someone if you're dead. He's not afraid of dying, it's the risk he took when he joined the Academy. Jimmy getting hurt or worse killed makes him want to throw the brunette into a fireman's lift and march back to his apartment never to be seen again. But he doesn't think that'd go down too well with Jimmy. It's as he starts comparing himself to Ebenezer Scrooge and these things he is being shown to the three spirits that the tugging starts again. This time he isn't moved, but the Earth is. Places fly past him as if he is on a turbo charged conveyor belt. Starting to get dizzy he closes his eyes and is very glad he technically doesn't have a stomach anymore.

He stops so suddenly that he is jolted forward. He is in the Bruno's dining room and it is tea time. The years have left Coop behind and now Jimmy's hair is flecked with grey. Eileen is the same as he remembers, beautiful but with a few extra wrinkles around her eyes. Jason is in his teens, looks to be going on sixteen and Mary is a pudgy thirteen year old. Charlie is nine and is being as quiet as he is able. Coop can see that both the Bruno children will grow up to be heartbreakers. Just like there father. The whole family is sat around the table in silence. They are silently eating there food not looking at each other. Coop has been invited to enough Bruno family meals to know that this is not normal. Jason and Mary are tense whilst Charlie is oblivious, something is going to happen. Something long awaited and feared. Mary has been moving the same boiled potato back and forth across her plate since Coop got there. She is nervous.

Eileen clears her throat and gains everyoneís rapt attention bar Jimmy who stares at his glass of beer. The tension grows as no-one speaks, a monster pushing down on all of there backs. Mary is the one who buckles.

"Please don't get a divorce!" she shouts a hand flying to cover her mouth as soon as the words have left. Eileen seems puzzled, she thought they hid it well. They didn't.

"Why would you think that honey?" but Mary is adverse to answering, so to is Jason.

It is Charlie who answers with only the blunt honesty a young child possesses "You don't love Daddy anymore.". It is a statement. They all know it's true.

Jason sighs and says "And he doesn't love you either." Eileen and Jimmy are the ones who are speechless now.

Jimmy stutters over the word 'How?' and Mary's face falls into a sympathetic look and she says "Jason saw you and Uncle Coop in the backyard and I just knew." Coop is reeling at the fact that Jason saw he and Jimmy that first night but is insanely happy that he is still their 'Uncle Coop'. Charlie was too young to have known but he doesn't look surprised.

Eileenís face twists and Jimmy asks "Why didn't you ever tell us?"

Any thought of eating is forgotten as Jason starts off: "At first I was so mad at Uncle Coop and I saw your face the morning after Mom, I knew you'd seen it too. "

He stops and faces his sister who then proceeds with "I kinda always knew Uncle Coop loved you, Dad. Jason told me what he saw when I was ten, Uncle Coop had been dead five years and we both figured you were trying to forget it. That is until Jason found you crying into a glass of whiskey, Dad. You forgot in the morning but you told him how you were a fool to let Coop get in the car by himself. You kept saying you killed him. After that we knew you weren't forgetting about it."

She turns to Eileen and says "Neither were you Mom."

Charlie takes the story up "Jason told me last week. There has been something missing from the both
of you. The first thing I remember is how Mom's eyes turned to steel when Uncle Coop's name came up." Charlie uses the noun out of respect for a man he should really hate. Uses words beyond his years.

"You both need to be happy and staying together isn't making you happy."

Eileen hates the fact that she has to agree. She and Jimmy will get a divorce, but the damage has already been done. Jimmy will spend the rest of his life alone, grieving and guilty, she will spend it alone because she allowed bitterness to blacken her heart. The Bruno children have saved themselves from lives akin to there parents. The age they will mature in is a liberated one and there is nothing they cannot do. Coop has never loved them more and this time when the tugging returns it feels like it originates from his heart. He is pulled in on himself, into nothingness. Folded even.

Coop unfolds inside a cemetery. Someone else he loves has died and he starts looking for the headstone with a familiar name on it. He stops short when he sees his mother. She is stood in front of a marble tombstone emblazoned with the name 'COOPER', she is crying. It is his grave. There are flowers in his mothers hand, held tight, there are flowers on the grave too. They're Jimmy's flowers, he can tell. He approaches his mother and her weeping slows to slight tremors. She is older and really shouldn't be out in the chill at her age. Coop would hate for her to catch her death visiting his grave. Her hair is white, pure white. He wants to hug her, she is his Mum he needs her. Laying the flowers next to the ones Jimmy left she straightens up with a grunt and a hand on her back.

She starts speaking, breathy words leaving her lips. "He visits more than I do Sean, we both miss you so much. He's told me about what happened between you. How he loves you and if I know my son you loved him. I tell him as such but I think he needs to hear it from you. Now he can't. He and Eileen are getting divorced, took them long enough if you ask me. I think Eileen was hoping that Jimmy would forget you. That woman put herself and Jimmy through so much pain because she couldn't let him go. He blames himself for your death, honey. So does your father."

She pauses and then "But I don't blame Jimmy, he was just scared. Your father was too proud, I blame your father."

Clearing her throat she taps the top of his headstone then walks away. Coop watches her leave and he smiles. At least one good thing came of his death, his mother wasn't wearing her wedding ring. She divorced his father. He is there for a few minutes before he starts to wonder where the tugging is as why he hasn't been ripped asunder yet. He sighs and walks over to a bench, sits down and goes right through to the floor. He sits on the ground with his torso through a bench and waits. The sky overhead darkens and it starts raining, the tiny droplets of water falling through him to hit the bench and the concrete underneath him. He is filled with an intense feeling of cold like he is sat in an industrial freezer. This time he blinks and he is gone.

He opens his eyes and his is in a seedy motel room. He is facing a wall. A guttural moan alerts him to the presence of a bed at his feet. There is a man on his knees, sucking off another man. There faces are shadowed so he can't see who the man is. One has shaggy blonde hair and the man sat on the bed has short brown hair, hair kept in its place. The guy on the bed moans again and his hand grips a handful of the others hair. Coop starting to get uncomfortable when the man on his knees elicits a throaty moan and he snaps his head to look down at the head occupying his lap. He closes his eyes and probably pretends he didn't see the man he murdered. Coop toys with the idea of pulling a Jacob Marley and giving McCree the fright of his life. He decides against it. The next thing Coop knows McCree is coming into the poor guys mouth and
yelling "Ronnie!" as he does. McCree doesn't look as surprised as Coop is. The blonde guy stands up and wipes his mouth, his face blank. The guy isn't even hard. McCree falls back onto the bed and mutters "The money's on the table." and closes his eyes. The blonde guy grunts and pulls on faded blue jacket. He snags the money and is out the door in the space of one breath. Coop turns to McCree and realises he is asleep. Well that's just great thinks Coop, what's he meant to do now?

Just as he thinks he is going to be tugged out of there he finds himself on a pristinely manicured lawn with two rose bushes flanking him on either side. There is a house in front of him, he is stood at the window that looks into the living room. He looks around him, everything is too bright, the colours too bold. The grass is greener than he has every seen. Through the window he can see a red haired man sat with a little chubby baby on his lap. The baby has a tuft dark hair atop his head and he is chewing on the mans finger. The man says something and McCree walks in with a bottle full of milk. He passes leans down to pass the other man the bottle and gets a chaste kiss in return. When he pulls back his face is split with a grin. This is McCree’s dream Coop realises. A dream within a dream. This is what McCree wants, the same thing Coop wants with Jimmy. Why couldn’t he man up and face his fears, then maybe he wouldn't be paying for sex from rent boys. Coop is so angry he kicks the wall in front of him and he doesn't go through it. He must have made a noise because when he looks up McCree is at the window, staring at him with eyes full of fear. Just as quickly as he arrived Coop is once again stood at the foot of the motel bed. McCree is crying, Coop hadn't meant to ruin his dream. Hadn't meant to make him cry. McCree, Tom turns moves so he is lying fully on the bed. Turning onto his side he sobs into the pillow. Coop walks forward, to do what he doesn't know. Comfort Tom hopefully, he doesn't see how he can when he couldn't for Joan but he wants to. It is then as he is a step away from putting his hand on Tom's shoulder when he is tugged again.

He is suddenly at what once was the car lot at the back of Philadelphia Police Department. His old patrol car is next to him and he wonders if cars can be ghosts. It is lacking a big smashed hole in it's windscreen. He looks down at himself, it appears both he and the car have been 'healed' so to speak. He is wearing his uniform as if it were brand new. Suddenly old Jimmy is in front of him, looking at him. He walks forward and as he nears Coop his hair starts to darken and his skin tightens. He is young again. Jimmy is dead. Coop smiles and puts his hand on the bonnet of the 'dead' patrol car. Jimmy returns his smile and puts his hand over Coop's. It's the first time Coop has felt warmth in ages. If Coop doesn't fix this than the only way they'll ever be together, he and Jimmy, is when Jimmy dies sixty years after he does. That's far too long a wait for Coop.

He feels the tugging once more and he is pulled backwards, like a paintbrush leaving a trail in the shape of his body. Jimmy's ghost is still smiling at where his head was. The air around him hisses and suddenly he is back in the patrol car under the viaduct. Only everything is backwards. The bullets leap out of him and through the hole in the windscreen, which repairs itself in there absence. McCree steps backwards than walks back into the shadows. Coop's leg twitches and he is awake again his breath coming fast and sweaty staring up at the lampshade he got as a housewarming gift from Owen. Jimmy's arm is tight around him and his head is on his chest. Coop tightens his own arm around Jimmy’s back drawing the man closer. Jimmy grunts and his lips brush Coops right pectoral. That is how sleep reclaims him and for the first time in a month Coop doesn't dream of dying. The next day as soon as he wakes up he writes 'Ronald Turing IMPORTANT!' on the back of his hand. Dream or not he won't let any of it happen.
Charlotte Cooper is a woman trapped by religion and love. One weighs down on her whereas the other lifts her up. She remembers when she soared, when the love she had for Brogan and the love he had for her were wings on her back. When Brogan still left roses on her desk at the hospital and kissed her every time he left the house even if she were still asleep. Things that showed her he thought about her. She remembers the first years of their marriage and smiles. Brogan was handsome and charming then in his uniform with his hair combed neat. She could never resist that uniform. They moved into a little house near her parents, Brogan made a swing for the backyard saying "Our son is gonna wanna have a swing set." Charlotte planted roses and made lemonade. That is how the first three years of their marriage went. Brogan would go to the station in his freshly starched uniform and fix things around the house and she would garden and cook.

She remembers explicitly the night Sean was conceived. It was an ordinary night, like all those preceding it. Brogan came home and the moment he stepped in the door she noticed his hair was out of place. A stray curl edging over his forehead and she reached up to brush it away. Her hand fell to his cheek of its own accord and she saw his eyes saturate with lust. Before sex was a thing calculated, a thing done when they had time. Passion was allocated its time frame. This was not. She remembers how Brogan's hands found her waist and she shivered. When he kissed her then it felt as if he was reaching inside her and searching for something. Brogan drew back and she slid her hand from his hip to his arse making him grin. His uniform shirt was open at the top and a tuft of blonde, almost transparent chest hair was peeking over at her. How she loved his chest hair. Brogan huffed and picked her up his arms overlapping as they pressed her close to his chest. She wrapped her legs around his waist and gasped when she felt his hardness press against her groin.

He walked them upstairs as she peppered his cheek with kisses. In their room he threw her on the bed and stepped back. She sat waiting, thinking how if he got his cuffs out she would go wild. Instead her stared at her as he removed his shirt. He was built as a man should be. Muscular shoulders, firm muscle and hair everywhere. She licked her lips as his hands went to his belt buckle. He removed his pants without ceremony and kicked off his shoes. Socks be damned. All of a sudden he was stood before her his underwear tight against the hard outline of his cock. Charlotte felt overdressed. Unbuttoning her blouse as fast as she could she let it fall from her shoulders. She got off the bed, stood before Brogan and let her skirt pool at her feet. Kicking it to the side she reached behind her back and released the clasp of her bra. She held it in place as she removed her arms. Then she threw that to the side also. Brogan groaned as she walked forward. His eyes flickered from her face to her breasts and back again. When she could feel his breath on her she hooked her fingers around the elastic of his underwear and pulled down. His penis sprang free bobbing up and down, alert and pulsing. She stepped out of her knickers and pressed herself against him. He kissed her again as he walked them backwards to the bed. He laid her down gently, with reverence almost. Brogan dropped to his knees, one leg either side of hers.

A smile grew on Charlotte's face stretching at the corners and from above her he mirrored it. He kissed both her breasts, light as a feather as he lowered himself so they were flush against one another. Charlotte turned her head pressing her lips to his jaw and nodded, she was ready. Brogan slid in. There, right then with her eyes rolled back into her head and Brogan grunting as he grasped the sheet under her was the best sex she would ever have. Subsequently it would also be the last time she would have sex with her husband for another ten years. The day she told Brogan she was pregnant everything changed. Oh, he was ecstatic why wouldn't he be he had always wanted a son but gradually things changed. He started taking night patrols and he stopped fixing things around the house. Worst of all he stopped kissing her before he left for work, that one stung the most. He had always made time for it before. Her pregnancy was a normal one, her stomach grew and her
hormones flared. All the while Brogan changed in more and more small but significant ways, significant to her anyway. He doted on her, stood her mood swings but she knew his mind was elsewhere. After nine months she gave birth to the most beautiful baby boy she had ever seen in a hospital room so white it blinded her to open her eyes. Brogan missed it, he was out on patrol. Her mother was the one who squeezed her hand, her father the one who paced outside. That day thirty seven years ago set the tone for the rest of their marriage and their sons childhood.

Sean was a beautiful baby, she remembered looking at him and wondering if he was what cherubs looked like. With his blonde curls and pale blue eyes he fills her heart. If not for him she would never have survived, her marriage would never have survived Brogan's drastic change. She felt as though her heart was slowly being siphoned of all the things that sustained it. For the first few months, when she needed him the most Brogan did switch back to day patrols. But Sean was never a loud child so he was soon went back to doing days as well as nights. As Sean grew older, she and Brogan grew further apart. He would go to the station in the morning, sleep in the afternoon and then go back to the station at night. They fought endlessly, she would cry and Brogan would end up sleeping on the couch but nothing was ever resolved. They fell into a rut that formed itself around Sean. Brogan said he was working so much because they needed the money. Charlotte told him that they didn't need it at the expense of him. It didn't change anything. But despite all this, years later Sean will tell her that he had a happy childhood. His memories full of smiles, laughs and ice cream at the park. For a short period whilst Sean was teething, Charlotte worried that Brogan was having an affair. There could be no other explanation but sensibility won out and the thought left her head as angry as it came in. She still loved him as fiercely as she did when they were newlyweds.

Charlotte misses the days when she was Sean's world. Brogan like their moon, only visible a certain amount of the time. One day when Sean was in nursery he came out waving a piece of paper at her. Smiling as she remembers how he wouldn't show it to her until they got home. In the kitchen he hung up his little coat and backpack on his hook near the door. Charlotte acted impatient to make him giggle. When the paper was revealed as they knelt in front of the coffee table she tried to freeze her smile. It was a drawing of Sean and her holding hands in front of their house. The colours strayed out of the lines and the house was out of proportion but she had never loved a drawing more. With a "Do you like it Mama?" her eyes went to her son again and she promised him she loved it. Over the period of that afternoon she persuaded Sean to copy the original but add Daddy this time. As Sean got his wax crayons and started Charlotte folded the first drawing carefully and put it in her handbag for safe keeping. So she could look at it whenever she wanted. Later when Sean showed her the finished drawing with Brogan added she made a big thing of sticking it to the refrigerator with magnets.

When Brogan got home later that afternoon he noticed the drawing without any prompting. Charlotte watched as his eyes widened and he grabbed little Sean into a bear hug like no other. Whilst he was facing her looking over his father's shoulder, Sean brought his chubby pointer finger to his lips and mouthed 'shhhh' around it. She winked back, she had asked Sean if he would keep the first drawing a secret, just between them. He had looked ponderous for a few seconds until he kissed her cheek and said "Ok Mama." That night before Brogan left for his night shift he kissed them both twice, even to the extent of waking Sean up to do so. Charlotte would never regret asking Sean to lie to his father because for that night she felt the wings on her back unfurl slightly. Also at the age of thirteen Sean would tell her that the memory of that night is his first real memory of his father. Sean doesn't remember the first drawing but she thinks it is better that way and to this day that first drawing still resides in her handbag. Edges softened and limp from countless unfolding and re-folding it is still there and there it shall stay.

It was when Sean was around seventeen that Brogan decided he needed to have the 'talk' with him. Personally Charlotte thought she could have handled it better and with less embarrassment. Brogan still on the same work schedule had come home one afternoon and took his chance. Charlotte had
just stood perplexed at the kitchen sink until she realised what was going on then she had giggled to herself and turned back to the washing up. If she recalls right it was an hour or so later that Brogan emerged from Seanís room, face red and definitely embarrassed. He looked at her sheepishly and she had held back her 'I told you so'. Time had been kind on them both. She had fewer wrinkles than the women she knew and Brogan still had his musculature. Sean was developing that same musculature. Ever since he hit puberty she watched him grow into a man, one she is proud of. Sean is all the son she ever hoped for polite, handsome and very charming.

Sometimes he reminds her of a young Brogan when she was his priority not the force. Brogan slowly worked his way up the ranks in Philly PD with his constant overtime and good performances he was promoted to Lieutenant. She knew she should be proud, she remembers feeling proud at first but then dawned on her that it was just another thing that would keep him away from her and Sean. Brogan made her a thousand promises. Little ones that made a small 'snap' when he broke them to big ones that cracked so loud the house shook. He promised he'd be careful out on patrols, promised that he'd bring home milk and eggs, promised he'd come to Sean's seventh birthday party. Disappointment became a staple in the Cooper house. Now years later she regrets that she didn't think to ask that he promise to always love her.

Sean was sixteen when he first brought a girl home for dinner, a Leanne Rizzo from his Biology class. Charlotte remembers looking at her over the dining room table and thinking her a wannabe prostitute. Nowhere near good enough for son. But Sean was smiling and holding her hand on top of the tablecloth. Brogan was practically beaming next to her. He asked the usual questions designed to ascertain the girls intentions but it was just for show. He had already deemed this girl worthy. Leanne on her part was polite and answered each question with a smile. Charlotte spent the whole meal clamping her mouth down around question she knew Brogan would not appreciate her voicing. At the end of the night Leanne kissed her and Brogan on the cheek before going out the door with Sean so he could take her home. In hindsight she thinks she may have been a little harsh with initial judgement. But she never got the chance to get to know Leanne. Sean broke up with her a week later.

After that he brought home a steady stream of girls, each and everyone lasting only two weeks. Brogan saw it as "He's a real man Charlotte, he's having his pick of the woman." She couldn't believe he had said such a thing to her, it was another wedge driven into the foundations of their marriage. If she hadn't practically raised Sean by herself she would have fallen for it too. She hadn't brought him up to think of woman like Brogan does but what he was doing was bad in itself. She made a point to look, look as best she could without producing a magnifying glass and donning a deerstalker, but Sean didn't find the girls he brought home attractive. Some he didn't even like. It near made her weep to see so plainly the evidence that Brogan didn't know his son at all. Whereas Sean may have liked some of the girls he brought home it was never in the way Brogan thought.

Sean was popular in High School. He was a batter on the school baseball team and always had a girl on his arm. But he was a mans man, he thrived for the attention of his team mates. You didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to see it, you just had to actually look. He had a team mate over at the house more than he did his girlfriends. It was when he was a Junior that it became one team mate that was always over, one boy with whom Sean was rarely seen without. He was Ronald Turing and he was a pitcher. They used to practice in the back yard and despite being smooth and precise on the field during games they were like newborn foals every Wednesday and Sunday. All long limbs and nervous of there footing.

Had she been a different woman, a different mother, had her father not bought their groceries from the black owned stores she would have told Brogan of her suspicions. But she didn't think what she saw blooming between her son and Ron was wrong nor what that meant about them was wrong and she knew what happened to boys Sean’s age once there families knew. Brogan would send Sean
away to one of those camps to be 'healed' even though he isn't ill and she'd wear he throat raw screaming over the matter. Brogan can be cold when he wants to be. Her son was falling in love with his best friend. It was Ron that came up with Sean's nickname, Coop. That she had pulled a face at and told him "I named him Sean for a reason, Ronald." and the poor boy had turned as crimson as his hair and replied "Yes Ma'am."

But like a snowball it grew as more and more people heard it and soon it was all people addressed him as. Some not even knowing his given name. She never called him Coop, he was named after her father and so that is what she called him. Brogan grasped the nickname with a vigour Charlotte had never seen him exercise. One day Sean appeared at her shoulder as she was making an apple cobbler and whispered her name. Sean hadn't whispered her name since he was little and it was always when he was so upset he was scared to talk loud lest his emotions escape with the sound. She had turned to find him red eyed and his chin resting on his chest. God was with her that night, Brogan was at work.

Her arms were around him before anyone could blink and she fell into the tone she used to soothe him as a boy "Oh baby boy what's wrong?" and Sean had cried into her chest, fingers clutching at her back getting caught in her apron strings. When he his crying had slowed enough so he could breath without sobbing she lifted his head and asked "What is it sweet pea?" and he had told her. He had told her that he was in love but no-one could ever know, he told her that whenever he looked at this person his heart took flight and he fumbled with whatever he was doing. He mentioned their smile, their auburn hair, the pattern the freckles on their face made. She had asked him if this person knew and he had said "No, they'd kill me if they knew Ma." Although not dramatic it was not true, Ron would never hurt Sean. She was so tempted to tell Sean that Ron would never do that but instead asked who it was. Sean’s eyes darted from the clock on the wall to the fridge behind her and to other things around the kitchen apart from her. His eyes were going so fast she feared he'd make himself dizzy so she said "It's Ronald Turing isn't it love?" Sean’s eyes jerked back to hers as if they were set in a sling shot. They were wide and the colour was rapidly leaving his cheeks. A yes then she had thought. She smiled and kissed his forehead, and said turning back to the apples bubbling on the stove "Your grandfather was once arrested for being at a black rights march you know. He said it wasn't right to treat your fellow man the way the blacks are treated, I wanted to go with him so much but your Grandmother knew the violence the police unleashed on the marches and wouldn't let me. She had to go bail him out and when he got home he was covered in bruises and had a cut on his forehead. We both found it ironic that I fell for a policeman." The brown sugar she had added to the apples was all but dissolved when she had turned to her son and asked him if he understood her.

It would be best for them both if they knew where the lines stood clearly so she had explained "I believe God made all of us the way he intends us to be, faults being part of a perfect whole and it is he who dictates what is and isn't wrong about a person. God made you so therefore he made you to love Ron and just maybe he made Ron to love you." Sean had cried some more, in relief and had gone to leave for his room but she had stopped him with a hand on his arm. She had kissed his forehead and whispered into his golden hair "I wont tell your father." To this day she has never told Brogan, their conversation and its topic being just another thing she kept from him in order to protect Sean. It was a few days later that she overheard Ron call Sean, 'Seany' and saw them kiss, she had smiled and walked back to the kitchen with the tray of refreshments still in her hands. Coop was only a nickname for everyone else to use. She would go back up stairs and conveniently cough on her way to Sean's room and say "Would you boys like some juice." pretending not to see that Sean’s shirt was untucked and Ronald’s hair was stuck up at odd angles. Sean had always been good at reading her so when she smiled he knew what it meant.

She watched proud as Sean graduated High School with good grades due to Ronald tutoring him and joined the Police Academy. He continued to live a double life simply because there was nothing else he could do. She hated the world for its small mind and quick to raise fists. Sean had formally
introduced her to Ronald in his role as ‘boyfriend’ one dinner when Brogan was at work. She had kissed the boy on the cheek and treated him like a son. Charlotte knew that it was difficult being homosexual and even more difficult to find love. So to her that the two things had come together so beautifully was a miracle in itself. Brogan was promoted to Sergeant and Charlotte felt him drift further away. As if they were both on an ice flow already smashed into small pieces and the tide was pulling them in opposite directions. She had no energy to fight it anymore. Brogan had stopped being the man she married years ago.

It was during his second year of the academy that Charlotte saw her sons heart break in two. He and Ronald had managed to stay together and keep themselves hidden from people who would wish them harm. Ronald had trained as an accountant and was doing well for himself. But one day he came home to the word ‘faggot’ spray painted all over his driveway and fear was placed in his heart. A fear so huge it near pushed Sean out. However love persevered and Sean chased away the fear. Ronald stayed at there house a lot that year. Charlotte thinks he was scared to be alone and she remembers hugging him a lot. Everything was conspiring against them and she imagined that it must be how God feels, so full of love for the people he sees but powerless to stop any evil befalling them. It is just the way of the world. In the end fear engulfed Ronald and he moved away. She is sure he told Sean where but he never followed. He spent too much time in his room and barely ate. Brogan thought he was just heartsick over the most recent girl he had been out with. Charlotte could have killed him, grabbed a steak knife and jammed it into his chest when he said ‘It’s all right Char he’ll be onto a new girl soon, don’t you fret’. All right they hadn’t told him but they hadn’t hidden it either, he was blind out of choice. It took a month but eventually Sean had mourned enough and he got back into the life he had set out for himself.

Then he had met Jimmy. They were assigned partners and Charlotte was sure Brogan would see the love that shined from Sean whenever he spoke of him, but he remained blind. She looked at them together and saw two pieces of a whole. She saw Gods plan. Ronald was a stepping stone for Sean, a stepping stone to Jimmy. But Jimmy was married and had children. The cruelty of it was only quenched when she remembered that she could not know all of Gods plan. That she may never see the end of it. She wasn’t told or there to see it but she knew by the look of Sean that his heart had been filled instead of broken. Jimmy is still married though and that was most certainly not good. It isn’t perfect but they have their niche. Then after the baptism Brogan was in a foul mood and he wouldn’t tell her why. All he would tell her is that whatever it was that put him in the mood was being dealt with. She had never heard more ominous words in her life. It felt like a dark black thing in the pit of her stomach that was just waiting for its turn to deal pain on those she loved. The dark fear is looming over Sean and she doesn’t know how to stop it.
Let the Trap be Sprung

It's early morning when Coop wakes up to the sound of Jimmy in the shower. He turns over and closes his eyes against the glare the crappy curtains let in. Jimmy is singing Del Shannon's 'Runaway' and Coop winces as he attempts the high notes. He smiles to himself. Jimmy comes out of the bathroom and catches him singing along. They grin at each other. There is a towel around his waist and the sight tempts Coop. Too bad they have to go to work. Jimmy offers his hand and pulls Coop to his feet and he heads for his own shower. Jimmy touches the small of his back as he walks past.

Ignoring his morning erection Coop strips off his boxers and gets in the shower. He washes his body first then as he is shampooing his hair an image of Jimmy dressed in black and with his cheeks wet pops up behind his eyes. Snapping his eyes back open causes shampoo to run into them and when he closes them again to alleviate the sting the image of Owen swinging slightly from the beams of his garage produces itself. It's unfortunate that his brain supplied those particular images. If they had been more desirable than maybe Coop would have faced them as soon as he remembered. He might not have washed off such an important name from the back of his hand. But as it is he pushes them aside, gets out of the shower and goes to get dressed.

The dream could have played out word for word if not for a woman walking on the pavement as Coop drives he and Jimmy to the Station. He recognise her, remembers feeling embarrassed when she looked at him. He remembers being naked and pale. In the end it's as he turns her over in his head that the memories break through and the dream floods in. He remembers everything except for the name of the man Astrid talked to him about. It feels like there is a mental block there, a wall built in front of the knowledge. The stone weathered with age. He remembers what she told him to do with that man and he figures thats enough for now.

He is determined, the dream has given him direction. A point to reach and things to achieve. He is driven. But he spends the whole morning ignoring the knowledge that is sitting at the edge of his brain, crouching, taunting but protected by the wall so he can't get to it. Knowledge he knows he needs but at the same time doesn't want to know. He wonders how he could have forgotten something if it were so important but that line of thought doesn't lead to anything productive so he shuts it down. Grey clouds roll in as they step into the Station, heavy with rain. The Sun hides.

Inside the Station is brighter than should be possible and Coop has to squint until his eyes adjust. Jimmy strides over to the Desk Sergeant to get their 'orders' from McCree. Coop takes his time, he really doesn't want to go on patrol. The other officers watch him as he walks to the desk and he knows what he's done. He's opened a can of worms. A can Owen handed him. He hopes he doesn't see Owen. Nearing the desk he overhears Chris, the Desk Sergeant talking to Jimmy about a raid that took place yesterday. How Mann and Eckstrom couldn't go check out the Beaumont robbery because of it. Neither of them mention how he and Jimmy were purposely excluded, again. Coop tells Chris that he and Jimmy will go check it out and almost grins at how easy it is. Astrid was worried for no reason. Chris looks wary for all of a second then nods and writes it in the log book. Jimmy wants to ask him something, Coop can read it on his face. He's at the door before the words leave Jimmy's mouth. He'll explain in the car, explain as much as he can anyway. Well, more like make up a reason. Owen turns the corner to the reception area just as Coop opens the door. He looks as if he is going to come up to them. So Coop steps outside and lets the door slam shut.

All three of them are stubborn men. Owen, Jimmy and him. Coop knows that but that doesn't mean he's going to put any effort into changing. It's not like he started it, the blame for that lies on Owens shoulders. What makes it worse is that it wasn't just speculation Owen was using for fodder. The
others were but not Owen. Coop saw the knowledge in Owens eyes when he was up in his face growling out damning questions of his own. He knows about Coop and Jimmy, Owen knows and yet he used it to hurt them. He was their friend, they kept him together when Eddie was killed. Coop feels betrayed. But the dream tugs at him. Owen felt so guilty that he hung himself. But he told Coops Dad and worse, McCree. Putting both him and Jimmy in danger. Betrayal again. But Owen is like a brother to him, to Jimmy too. Coop is far too confused.

Jimmy swivels to face him almost as soon as Coop is sat in the car. His eyes are searching and his left hand is twitching on his knee, he wants to touch Coop. For a short moment whilst looking at Jimmy’s hand Coop lets himself believe that his dream was just that, a dream. The moment passes swiftly. They both knew going in that this thing between them could get them killed but now they're in the most fraught time of their relationship. Jimmy is still staring at him and Coop stills. He has never thought the word 'relationship' about he and Jimmy. He likes it. He avoids word's like affair and adultery because guilt will only mar the time they have. They are living a delusion, one set to be shattered. The question is whether or not the pieces will tear them apart.

Jimmy is starting to get fed up of waiting for Coop to speak. He obviously can't tell Jimmy about the dream, let alone that he thinks it's going to come true. He likes his walls without padding. So he does the only thing he can do, lie. "I want to check out this Beaumont place." and it's half truth but it's Astrid he wants to check out. He needs help if he's gonna stop himself from being murdered. He hopes it sounds believable and when he looks at Jimmy he knows he doesn't buy it. They leave the lot and Jimmy rattles off directions as they go. Coop sifts through the dream to see if he can find information that might be useful, But all he comes up with is McCree moaning 'Ronnie' whilst fucking a rent boys mouth. That's not helpful at all. Jimmy sighs all the way to the crime scene.

Coop expects to find the shop the way it was in his dream, but instead it has a boarded up window and there are no vegetables in crates outside. No pumpkins. It looks like someone beat up, like it has a black eye and is keeping itself hidden in case the danger might return. It looks sad. The worse is yet to come. The inside of the shop is sad too, the colours muted. The beaded door hanging is missing. No-one is behind the counter when they enter. The effect is very eerie. The chimes over the door jingled as they came in so someone should be out soon. When Astrid does emerge Coop can't hold back a hiss. Jimmy turns to look at him wearing reprimand face. Astrid laughs and says "You're right sugar, I do look a mess." Her right eye is framed by a big bruise, so recent that it is still a deep blue, nearly black. She is also leaning heavily on a cane. Jimmy, the professional steps forward taking out his pad whilst Coop just stands and gawps at her.

"Hello ma'am I'm Officer Bruno." Jimmy says and shakes her hand. Then he gestures at Coop "And this is Officer Cooper." Coop walks forward and holds out his hand for Astrid to shake. When she takes his hand and grips it hard he knows his dream was anything but just a dream. Astrid looks at him with keen eyes. She sees something but isn't forthcoming. Her face splits into a toothy grin and she gestures them into the back room. Coop steels himself for a big hit of deja vu. He isn't disappointed. The room is exactly the same apart from a small table and four chairs around it. He wonders when Astrid gets them.

Once they are seated at the table Astrid offers them some tea and before Coop can stop himself he says "I'm sorry I don't like peppermint tea." Jimmy gives him a sidelong look and Astrid says "It's ok child I've got some Earl Grey here somewhere." without batting an eyelid and removes the peppermint teabag from Coops teacup. Jimmy does a double take but doesn't speak. Coop thinks he might just end up in the nuthouse anyway. Astrid moves around the kitchen setting things on a little tray and finally fills the kettle with water and plugs it into the wall. Wiping her hands on her skirt she leaves the kitchen to sit across from them at the little table. She smiles and waits for them to speak. It's Jimmy that speaks.
"Mrs Beaumont were here to get a description of your assailant. What can you remember about him?" His professional voice smooth and reassuring.

"He was about your height Officer Bruno and he had ginger hair, I couldn't see his eyes 'cos it was dark." she paused and then continued her voice softer "His hands were shaking and I could tell he'd never held a gun before let alone fired one."

"He had a gun?" Coop asks. There was nothing in the report about a gun. Jimmy is equally surprised if his face is anything to go by.

"Yes child, he didn't use it. He was more scared of it than I was." she responds her eyes moving to rest on Coop. He thinks how she gives him the willies. She smiles.

Jimmy takes point again and ask "Can I ask how you sustained your injuries?" but Coop buts in at the end "Did he do this to you?". Jimmy sighs and Astrid’s smiles grows wider.

The kettle whistles and she rises slowly pain clear on her face and her knuckles white on the handle of her cane. She gets to the small kitchenette without a sound and has the teacups full of steaming tea before either of them can so much as blink. How she expects to get a tray with three teacups full of tea and a plate of assorted biscuits across from the kitchen to the table Coop has no idea. Just as she's about to jostle the tray onto one of her hands Coop is on his feet saying "Let me help you with that Ma'am," and he doesn't realise until the tray is on the table and both he and Astrid are both again seated that that was how she expected to get the tray across. The crafty woman he thinks and smiles.

Getting herself settled once again and wrapping a hand around her teacup she asks "What was the question again child?" Coop snags a Bourbon cream.

Jimmy seems to have given up trying to keep Coop professional and so has dropped his own professional tone. He says "Did the thief inflict your injuries?"

Raising her teacup to her mouth she takes a dainty sip and upon resting it back in its saucer she says "Only the black eye and that was only because I got to close to his elbow as he was making his escape." her lips upturned at the last bit. "I slipped on the wet floor a few days before the robbery, bruised my hip. The doctor gave me this cane." She tapped the cane with her foot a look of distaste on her face.

Coop almost sighs, he doesn't know why but he really didn't want the thief to be a batterer of the elderly. He adds it to the list of things he isn't going to dwell on.

"How much cash did he get away with?" ask Jimmy after taking a sip of his peppermint tea. He hides his facial reaction to the taste by stepping up his concerned face a notch or two.

Astrid sees it anyway but just smiles. "I think it was around 150 dollars and forty five cents." then she pauses and thinks "He took a chocolate bar too I think."

Coop is enjoying his own cup of tea and picks up another biscuit, a Nice Biscuit this time. Jimmy has no more questions and Coop drains the last of his tea in preparation.

"Thank you for your cooperation Mrs Beaumont, we'll call again if we have any information." and they both rise. She stands up with them with the hint of a wince.

Coop snags a Custard Cream from the tray and says "We can let ourselves out Ma'am, you rest your hip." They leave the back room with Astrid smiling.

As they leave the shop looks less depressing to Coop. The sunlight catches the dust particles dancing
and brings the colours of the fruits and vegetables to life. It looks like hope. Once back in the patrol
car Coop's stomach rumbles despite the copious amount of biscuits he just ate. Jimmy laughs and says
"Yeah I agree, it is about time for lunch." Coop smiles and thinks "You bet it is." Coop pulls back
into the traffic and heads for the diner that makes onion rings the way Jimmy likes, Marco's. He is
driving on autopilot again. There is no link between the robbery and Germantown, and just because
they guy is supposed to croak there doesn't mean he lives there. He hates working a case backwards.
This is really the work for the detectives but Coop knows, knows, they wont get the desired result if
he were to hand if off to them. Plus they'd never take his tips to heart seeing as he has no justification
for them. They'd just think he was crazy.

They car park is near full when they get to Marco's and Coop has a hard time finding a space. A beat
up truck pulls out and Coop is on it like a shot, he hopes it's not as busy inside. When Jimmy opens
the door and they walk in Coop sighs, it is indeed busy. Coop sweeps his eyes over the diner
searching for a table and sees one free at the back next to the window. He nudges Jimmy's arm to get
his attention then moves towards the table without waiting for him. He's practically starving. Getting
to the table he slides into the booth with his back to the wall, he outran a fat couple. Will do them
some good he thinks and turns back to the table when Jimmy slides in opposite him. There are menus
in a little stand on the middle of the table along with matching salt and pepper shakers and a bottle of
ketchup but they don't need to look. Jimmy grumbles under his breath.

"What'd you say Jimmy?" Coop asks

Jimmy makes an annoyed noise in his throat and says "That damn peppermint tea, the taste is still in
my mouth. I really hope coffee will get rid of it." Coop just laughs, how can he not with the faces
Jimmy is pulling.

"It aint funny Coop, that shit is disgusting. Don't get me wrong I like mint but I can barely tolerate
tea at the best of times and let me tell you, tea and mint...not a good combination." Jimmy says and
Coop just carries on laughing.

He scowls at Coop picks up a menu and pretends to choose what he's going to have.

Coop looks at him with affectionate eyes and says "Aww c'mon Jimmy don't be like that." and when
this garners no response from Jimmy he leans over and half whispers "Well I sure aint gonna kiss
you again till you get rid of it."

Jimmy jerks backwards in the booth and his back goes ramrod straight. He exclaims "Coop!" in a
stage whisper.

He's like a skittish animal at the moment and Coop keeps forgetting. Jimmy is looking out the
window and breathing through his nose, trying to calm down. Looking at Jimmy's profile for a
second Coop turns to try and catch a waitress, he spots Becky. He raises his hand when she looks his
way to catch his attention. Her face lights up. They haven't been into Marco's for a few months, he
and Jimmy. Not since that night in Jimmy's back yard. Becky flirts and Coop used to flirt back but
that was when he was trapped, when he was cursed. He smiles slightly at that thought. Now he is
free, the spell broken by a kiss and he doesn't want to flirt with anyone other than Jimmy.

He turns back to Jimmy and his stomach grumbles loudly. Becky makes her way over to their table,

He smiles at both of them and asks in her chipper voice "What can I get you two?".

She is wearing a jumper that hugs her boobs, a knee-length skirt that sways when she moves and a
small apron over it. Her name tag is perched precariously on her left breast. Coop is observant, he
knows what to compliment, when to flirt, where to look just a tad too long to show interest. Two months previous it was his life.

Jimmy says "I'll have a burger with extra onion rings and a coffee." and smiles at her.

Becky will expect him to flirt so when she turns to get his order he says "I'll have steak, chips and a coffee too thanks." then adds "How's Chuck doing?" onto the end. He looks back to Jimmy almost immediately, no need to let her think he's staring anywhere too long.

Jimmy is looking at him, his face sharp on edge. He is still so afraid of this.

Chuck is Becky's husband and the chef, a good guy who takes his wife’s flirting in stride. Coop would never touch another man's wife. Becky frowns, they never mention Chuck. It was a silent agreement, Coop thinks she doesn't like to think of him when she's flirting with other men. Even when he's only a few feet away.

"He's fine thanks, I'll tell him you asked." Becky replies her voice broadcasting he confusion. She puts the pad and pencil back into the pocket of her apron and walks back to the kitchen.

Once she is out of earshot Jimmy leans forwards and hisses "What are you doing Coop! She's gonna suspect something." his face tight with barely suppressed fear.

Coop sighs and says "What's she going to suspect Jimmy? She'll just think I've finally got myself a girl. Calm down." exuding calm, trying to force it onto Jimmy.

Jimmy just huffs his own sigh and turns away again. Coop see's the man from his dream, the man afraid of taking a chance, afraid of his own heart. The man who told him to get a new partner. He understands, knows that there is everything to fear and more to lose, but he hopes that to Jimmy there is at least one thing to gain. Even if that one thing isn't him. Still watching Jimmy he moves his right foot under the table until it rests on Jimmy's left ankle. His shoulders relax and his eyes flutter closed, a smile playing at the edge of his mouth. There is hope. When Becky comes with there food Coop tries to move his foot but Jimmy presses his own against it and looks him dead in the eye for a second. Then he is taking the food off Becky and asking her for some mayonnaise. Coop smiles broadly and Becky thinking he is smiling at her smiles back before turning back for the kitchen. He doesn't notice, his eyes are on Jimmy who is tucking into his burger heartily. Not the most attractive of sights but still.

He chuckles and says "I thought I was meant to be the hungry one, you're attacking that like you haven't eaten for days." Then he forgets himself again and says "Isn't Eileen feeding you?" The moment it is out of his mouth he wants to grab it back. He waits for Jimmy to move his foot or hiss at him again but instead he just grunts around a mouthful of burger. Mentally shrugging his shoulders Coop looks to his own meal and turns his fork to attacking his chips. Becky brings the mayonnaise and brushes Coop's hand when she places it on the table, Jimmy clenches his jaw. Coop has to hold back his smile, so Jimmy can be jealous. Putting some mayo on his chips he resumes eating them. They talk between mouthfuls, about past cases, Owen and Jimmy's kids specifically Charlie. Jimmy barely shut up about the boy and Coop loves him more for it. Jimmy is half way through telling him how Charlie said 'Daddy' even though Eileen insists it was just wind when Misha the owner of the diner is at the table asking if he can have a quiet word. Jimmy shifts over in the booth and says "Sure."

Misha's eyes are a piercing blue and his hair a jet black. He is handsome. The foot against his under the table presses harder and Coop fights against a smirk. Jimmy jealous two times in one day, who would have thought. Misha starts off speaking "Guys can you do me a favour." and without pausing goes on in his gravelly voice "There's this car out back and its been there for a couple of days now. I
thought someone would come pick it up but no-one has, I checked it out and the door was open the keys still in the ignition. I locked it and put the keys behind the counter just in case. I think it's something shady and I was wondering if you guys could check it out?" Finally finished he breathes again and looks at Jimmy and Coop expectantly.

Coop has a feeling in his gut and a voice in his head that sounds remarkably like Astrid. It's saying "This is your lead, child. Follow it." So when Jimmy starts to say something like Misha should call it in to the station Coop cuts him off with "Sure buddy." and grins at him. No doubt Jimmy definitely thinks he belongs on a funny farm after this but Coop can't seem to care. He's not fighting for himself anymore, he's fighting for Jimmy, for Jason, Mary, Charlie and Eileen. Most importantly Eileen. She doesn't know it but she is standing just inside a prison cell looking around but seeing it as a family home and if she's not quick the barred door will swing shut behind her. It is the same trap his mother is in albeit from different origins and for different reasons but the end is just the same. It will leave her broken and bitter, Jimmy lonely and unhappy. The worst will be dealt to the Bruno children, they won't understand what happened or what they did wrong just that there parents aren't happy. He is not totally selfless, the heart wants what the heart wants after all and Coops heart wants Jimmy. So if he has to follow some unconventional sources to get him, get him and keep him then he will.

Misha thanks them both enthusiastically then goes back to taking phone orders behind the counter. Coop watches him go just so he doesn't have to look at Jimmy, who is staring a hole into his face sat opposite him. Without turning his head he asks "What is it Jimmy?"

He feels Jimmys breath against the side of his face as he huffs yet again and says "Oh I dunno Coop maybe it's the fact you've been acting crazy all day. What is up with you?" Then silence and Coop turns to look at him, he seems to be waiting for an answer and when Coop doesn't give him one he says "Jesus Coop, we've got to be more careful." His voice is taunt and Coop suspects there not just talking about police work anymore.

Fighting his rising temper he says "What exactly do we have to be careful of Jimmy, we haven't even done anything. All we look like is two cops having some lunch. You're paranoid." The whole thing coming out as a long continuos sigh. They seem to only communicate in sighs of late, thinks Coop. 

"There's rumours going round the station about us Coop and you fed them with your little stunt in the locker room. You don't even want to hear how they think I got my black eye." Jimmy replied keeping his tone clipped.

"Yeah Jimmy but that's all they are, rumours. Owen can say what he likes but they don't have proof." Coop replied seeing that the argument was weak himself.

"People don't need proof to lynch a man Coop, you know that." was Jimmy’s reply and when Coop looks up he expects to see fear in his eyes. Instead he finds them soft with affection and on the damp side of watery.

Coop nudges his foot under the table as acknowledgment and says "Just eat your onion rings Jimmy so we can go check this car out." and he hopes Jimmy recognise that he wants to drop it. If Jimmy blinks more than usual whilst eating his onion rings neither of them mention it.

Once Jimmy has eaten his onion rings they drink their coffee in silence. The noise of the other customers preventing it from being awkward, barely. Coop finishes his coffee before Jimmy but stays sitting, waiting. He starts out looking at Jimmy's hairline and slowly his eyes lose focus as he becomes more involved in his thoughts. Surprisingly they aren't thoughts of Jimmy, Eileen, Jimmy's kids or even McCree. No, he's thinking of his mother and by proxy his father. He thinks she's the best mother a man has ever had, her ready acceptance of him that day when he was sixteen a beacon in his memory. That maybe once of a day, when they first got married his father might have deserved
her, been worthy of her but when he looks back on the pivotal points in his childhood the supporting cast is always his mother. His father has only ever been an enforcer, an oppressor whether or not he knew it and still Coop strove to make him proud. They were a broken family that hadn't fully severed down the fault line, a broken family before Coop even knew the meaning of the word divorce. Coop is so deep in his thoughts that he misses Jimmy finishing his own coffee and only realises when Jimmy says his name and shakes his shoulder. He blinks a few times then slides out of the booth following Jimmy to the counter. They pay and get the keys, leaving with more thanks from Misha.

Jimmy is a few steps in front of him, letting his anger settle or something. It's a good job to since he has the keys. When they turn the corner they see the car, a Cadillac. A shiny blue Cadillac. Jimmy whistles and turns to grin at Coop. Anger settled then. Coop runs through scenarios in his head, it could just be that a guy got too drunk in the bar near by and got a taxi home, or a guy got lucky and went back to the girls place and the last but most probable one. The car is stolen. Jimmy unlocks the car and they both slip into 'cop' mode. Jimmy opens the driver side door and Coop goes around to the back. As he's walking he says "Jimmy, keys," and without looking Jimmy throws them. They go wide but Coop catches them muttering 'crazy ass' under his breath. There's nothing in the boot apart from a few junk food wrappers and an empty brief case with broken hinges. He doesn't really know what he was expecting anyway, bloodspots, a dead body. He laughs at himself. As he's shutting the boot however Jimmy says "Coop, I got something." Locking the boot he makes his way back to Jimmy sliding the keys into his pocket. Jimmy is knelt on the floor between the open passenger side door. Standing next to him he asks "What is it Jimmy?" The glove compartment is open and there is a wallet on the seat.

"This." Jimmy says and hands him the wallet. "I think it's the owners, drivers license is in there too." Then rooting around in the glove compartment he produces a leather bound folder. "Yeah this is proof of ownership. It's the same guy."

Coop barely heard him though as he was still staring at the drivers license he had pulled out of the wallet. The picture was familiar and upon reading the name a few of the weathered bricks crack and fall away. He remembers, he knows this man. Thought once that he loved him.

Ronald Turing. The drivers license picture stares up at him.

"Coop, what is it?" Jimmy says breaking into his thoughts. "Do you know this guy?" His voice is muffled as he is leant inside the car looking under the seats and Coop can hardly make it out. What he does hear however is a sharp hiss. For a moment he thinks something under the seat has cut Jimmy but then he straightens and pulls out a gun carefully balanced on a pen through the trigger guard. Well isn't this interesting thinks Coop.

They both stare at the gun for a few moments before Coop grunts and Jimmy says "What do you think, does it belong to the owner?" Instantly Coop says 'No.' in his head even though it's been years. He doesn't know the man anymore.

He turns saying "I'll go get an evidence bag just in case," and walks back to the patrol car. His head isn't in the present even as he's opening the car door and reaching into the glove box. No, he is sat on his bed in his room on Thirstfield Road at the age of sixteen with the head of his boyfriend in his lap. His fingers running through his red hair and enjoying the rumbling sound it elicits. That was before the giant words painted on a driveway, before everything crumbled around them.

A feeling of numbness settles over him as he walks back to the abandoned car with the evidence bag clutched in his hand. He is on Jimmy before he knows it and then the gun is in the bag. The numbness prevails but he leaves the clouds in his head. Jimmy is staring at him, probably a second away from calling the men in white coats. He really is acting strange, he can concede to that. Either
Jimmy sees what he's looking for or he gives up because he turns away and walks back to the car with "We better go give this guy back his wallet." tossed over his shoulder.

Once inside the car Jimmy asks him "So, do you know this guy then?" and waits for the answer staring straight ahead.

Coop doesn't know how much to tell him, how much he could handle so he just says "Used to yeah."

Those are the only words spoken during the drive to Ron's house. Coop expects sidelong glances from Jimmy but all he does is stare straight ahead. He'd given Coop the directions before they'd gotten in the car. Coop keeps a transistor radio in the glove compartment and as they're pulling out of the Marco's car park Jimmy gets it out and turns it on. The radio valiantly tries to fill the silence with Aretha Franklin's 'Respect' and The Doors 'Love Me Two Times'. It works, if only slightly. The rest of the ride Coop thinks about Ron, wonders if he'll recognise him, if he ever got married, if he's happy. Even though he knows it's selfish, he wonders if Ron still loves him. The time he and Ron shared is like a candle forced to burn to quickly. A flame drowning in it's own molten wax. As they are pulling into the Turing's drive the beginning chords to Jimi Hendrix's 'All Along The Watchtower' come on the radio before Coop turns the engine off. He tries to think of it as a good omen.

From the address Coop figured that Ron had done good for himself but once he is stood in front of the house he is still taken aback. It's in one of the more up scale areas of the city and is way bigger than Jimmy and Eileen's little suburban house. It looks to be a triplex but there's only one name on the mailbox. The whole house is Ron's, he did real good for himself.

Jimmy is already at the door ringing the bell before Coop shakes himself from his thoughts. He chastises himself, he most certainly isn't on the ball. A woman with black hair answers the door and he is on the porch steps so he hears Jimmy when he says "Hello Ma'am does Ronald Turing live here?" He stops however when she replies "Yes, he's my husband." and turns calling "Ronnie!". Front on it's not obvious but when she turns it's clear as day, she's pregnant. He feels like he's been slapped in the face, his cheek actually feels hot. She called him Ronnie. He draws a huge breath and starts walking again and reaches the doorway just as Jimmy is saying "..my name is Officer Bruno." and seeing Coop says "This is my partner Officer...". Ron having just appeared in the doorway cuts him off by exclaiming "Coop!" in a somewhat strangled voice. Well that answers one question anyway, Coop thinks and looks at Jimmy seeing that it must have answered his question too.

There is nothing else for it now. "Ron." Coop says and thinks of what best to say next and settles on "Can we come in?" seeing as it isn't a personal visit.

Ron just nods his head and moves back into the house. Coop steps into the house nodding at Ron's wife, Jimmy follows doing the same but his face is tight, again, Coop just knows it. It is left to Mrs Turing to close the front door. Coop can see Ron in the living room from the foyer, he is sat on a couch staring into space. Jimmy steps past him and walks into the room and sits on the opposite couch. Coop sighs and his shoulders drop noticeably. Unseen Mrs Turing is still stood by the door watching with a knowing look on her face.

Squaring his shoulders again Coop goes and joins Jimmy on the couch, with a respectable amount of distance in-between them. This could ruin us Coop thinks. However he knows touching Jimmy in any way would make the situation worse. Finally Mrs Turing makes it to the couch, flopping down next to her husband.

When no-one breaks the silence she takes the initiative and says "I'm Sarah Turing, nice to meet you Officer Bruno." whilst sticking her hand out to Jimmy who shakes it with a answering "Likewise.".
She turns to Coop and says "Officer Coop." and Coop can't decide if he wants to laugh or cry. Ron clearly doesn't talk about him.

"Cooper." Coop corrects her and shakes her offered hand. "We're here Mr Turing because your car has been found behind Marco's. Was it stolen?" That's right he thinks, use distancing language like they taught us at the Academy.

Ron looks up at his voice and can't seem to speak. Sarah puts her hand on his knee and answers for him "No Officer it wasn't, I met my husband at Marco's and we took my car home. I've been craving their cheeseburgers recently." Coop looks at her as she is speaking and can't get over her resemblance to Snow White. Her hair a jet black, skin almost white and to top it off she is wearing scarlet lipstick. He wonders if the look is intentional.

Jimmy says "We're sorry to bother you, the owner was concerned and asked us to look into it. We have the keys." and Coop sits there for a minute before he realises they're in his pocket. He fishes them out and drops them into Ron’s open palm. "We'll be going then." Jimmy says as he's getting up and quickly as Sarah starts to stand "We'll show ourselves out."

As soon as they're out the door Coop can see that something is on Jimmy's mind and it's festering. He takes big strides to the car and his lips are a thin line. Coop is thinking how to word what needs to be said as he gets in himself. Pulling out Coop risks a look back at the house, Ron is at the window. This time Jimmy doesn't switch on the radio instead putting it back in the glove box. They drive a few blocks before Coop thinks he has the words right in his head and pulls over. He starts to speak but Jimmy stops him by speaking himself.

"How long Coop?" he says in a flat dangerous tone.

Not understanding Coop looks at him and asks "How long what, Jimmy?"

Jimmy's anger fills the car in the space of a blink. "How long have you been fooling around with him? he grits out through clenched teeth.

Coop has only ever seen this side of Jimmy once before and even then he was sloppy with drink. He treads carefully. "Who, Ron? I haven't seen him in years. Look Jimmy.." he says but is cut off again.

"Shut up Coop!" Then "Do you make a habit of it, perverting married men?" leaves Jimmy's mouth and hangs in the air. Jimmy looks as if he didn't mean to say it but isn't gonna take it back either.

Coop's vision swells with red and he finds himself shouting too "Is that what I did to you Jimmy? Perverted you?" and wonders idly if you can have a brawl in a car.

"I sure as hell didn't feel like this before you kissed me!" Jimmy replies, arms gesticulating madly. He looks desperate, he wants it to be true.

"That's bull Jimmy and you know it!" Coop fires back and almost as one they turn back to face the stretch of road in front of them.

Coop has a feeling that the part of Jimmy wishing and hoping that he was just going through a phase has had a harsh wake up call. Has a feeling that he brought it about.

When silence reigns supreme over the patrol car Coop says "He was my boyfriend in high school that's all." and sees how Jimmy flinches at the word 'boyfriend'.

Sometimes he forgets how 'new' Jimmy is, forgets that he'll need time and space to come to terms with the fact that the life he has isn't an absolute. He learnt that much with Ron if nothing else. On
that note Coop is half surprised and half glad, the only feeling he gets now when he looks at Ron is nostalgia and a smidgen of pity. They both ignore what Jimmy meant when he said 'feel like this'. It's too soon for that particular conversation. When Coop looks over at Jimmy, his anger is gone and like a veil falling away it reveals what is underneath. Jimmy is jealous.

Coop sighs over exaggeratedly so Jimmy will look at him and says "We good Jimmy?" He smiles and hopes for one in return.

"Yeah Coop, we're good." Jimmy says and smiles too before ducking his head to procure the banished radio.

Just as he is turning the keys in the ignition he says to Jimmy and if he's honest to himself "There's no-one else." It's as close to a declaration of commitment as he is allowed.

During the ride back to the station he is troubled. If Sarah Turing is to be believed then Ron can't have robbed Beaumont Groceries. The dream and Astrid were wrong. But they can't be, he's taken the leap already and now he has to follow through. Land on his feet or fall to his death. He knows one thing for sure though, he wasn't wrong about Ron. Skeeter Davis' 'The End Of The World' comes on the radio and Coop hopes that she's wrong. The song seems to settle around them both and it isn't until it has ended that they even contemplate looking at each other.

The whole journey Coop's suspicions chatter at him. But it's only when he gets to the junction that can either take them back to the Station or to Marco's that he realises that there was never an option. Right for the Station or left for Marco's.

Once the lights go green he takes a left and answers Jimmy's question before he asks it. "I don't trust that Sarah Turing, I think we should go check out her alibi." He has to think of it as her alibi, not Ron's alibi. Even though he knows that if she lied then it implicates Ron. Death or loyalty, you'd think it was an easy decision but Coop's never been more torn in his life.

"Coop, are you sure it's not just wishful thinking?" Jimmy asked with a slight plaintive tone to his voice.

"I'm not jealous Jimmy." Coop said keeping his eyes on the road. He'd only just looked at the time, they'd spent too much of it dawdling. They have a eight pm deadline after all.

Jimmy exhales through his nose and says "I didn't say you were.". He sounds disappointed.

Coop decisively ignores Jimmy's tone and says "We're going back to Marco's and we're gonna ask Misha and Becky if they remember Sarah Turing."

"And Ronald Turing." Jimmy supplies helpfully.

Ignoring Jimmy again Coop stares pointedly at the road and mumbles to himself "Damned dream."

The parking lot at Marco's is almost empty when they get there, the dinner rush well and truly over. The Sun is low in the sky and Coop is yet again reminded of how little time they have left. Misha is stood behind the counter when they come in, he looks up from his newspaper when he hears them come in. A grin splits his face as they walk towards him. Jimmy is behind him at a respectable distance, like he's trying to distance himself from Coop's foolhardy mission. Well, Coop thinks, we'll soon see who's the fool and who isn't. Misha's smile is burning fifty watts bright by the time they get to the counter, Coop wonders what made him so happy.

"Thanks for dealing with that car out back fellas, I appreciate it. Whatever you're having is on the house." Misha said through his smile tossing a nearby cloth over his shoulder as he speaks.
Coop smiles and replies "There's no need for that, we were just doing our job." then he thinks, wait? What? "What do you mean Misha, dealing with the car? Is it gone already?" he asks.

Misha looks confused as he says "Yeah, I thought you knew. It was here an hour ago and then when Riley went to put something in the dumpster out back it was gone. I just assumed you knew."

No, they did not know. He doesn't say that though, instead he asks "So no-one saw who collected it?" knowing the answer will be no.

"Well I didn't and neither did Riley but Becky or Chuck might have. You can go through and ask them if you'd like." was Misha's reply then he turned to serve the customer that had just come up to the counter.

Lost in thought Coop mumbles "Yeah we might just do that."

Misha nods absently whilst serving the customer and lifts the counter divide. Coop steps to walk through to the kitchens when Jimmy grabs hold of his elbow and tugs him to the far end of the counter. He not so subtly looks around to see if anyone is watching them, then turns back to Coop and just stares at him. Coop doesn't look away he has nothing to hide from Jimmy, at least not now anyway. Not that he was concealing Ron, just that the memory was his and bared no relevance on his present life. Or so he had thought.

"Don't you think you're making a big thing out of this, Coop. It's only a car left overnight in a diner parking lot, at worst Mr Turing will get a fine." Jimmy says breaking into Coops thoughts.

"Be that as it may Jimmy, you heard Misha. The Turing's car is gone. Now who the hell could have got here before us and collected it, certainly not the Turing’s." Coop replies his voice wavering between raised and not.

Jimmy sighs like he did in the car and it grates on Coops heart. He's not jealous dammit! "That doesn't prove a thing Coop, maybe they got a friend to pick it up." Jimmy says.

"Even so, it doesn't hurt to ask questions." stated Coop then made sure to enter the kitchen before Jimmy could reply.

At the far end of the kitchen Riley, the busboy, was washing some dishes and Chuck was at the grill flipping some burgers. Coop caught himself thinking, what a cliche. The kitchen was buzzing with activity. Another man was stood at the chopping board chopping onions. He had a pretty impressive moustache and when he looked up at Coop his eyes hardened. Despite the onions the man wasn't crying. Coop shivered, turned back to Chuck and cleared his throat to get his attention. If anyone will have seen the Turing’s it will be Becky or one of the other waitresses.

"Hey Chuck do you know where Becky is, me and Jimmy want to ask her a few questions." Coop called not needing to look to know that Jimmy had followed him.

Chuck answered him without looking up "Yeah, she's in the back taking her break." and continued right on flipping. Coop wondered if he was drunk today.

As he and Jimmy walked past the moustachioed man chopping onions Coop felt his gaze like ice along his side. Jeez, he thinks, that guy is creepy. His gaze follows them all the way into the Rec Room and Coop is extremely glad when Jimmy closes the door behind them. Becky is sat at a square table in the middle of the room cradling a steaming cup of coffee in her hands when they come in. She looks up and grins when she sees Coop, it falters a bit when she sees Jimmy behind him but nevertheless stays in place. Coop knows he has to talk to her about this crush she has on him, before
it only felt like flirting now it feels like cheating.

"Hey Becky, me and Jimmy'd like to ask you a few questions. See if you've seen certain people at certain times. Is that ok?" Coop says and has no idea why all of a sudden he's going by the book. Becky looks like she thinks it's for her benefit. He and Jimmy sit at the two chairs opposite her.

"Sure, sugar fire away." Becky replies. The word 'sugar' doesn't effect Jimmy, he doesn't so much as flinch but to Coop it suddenly sounds like nails on a chalkboard.

Clearing his throat Coop attempts to describe first Sarah Turing then Ronald Turing with additions regarding height and estimated weight from Jimmy.

"So this Ronald is her husband then, yeah?" Becky asks.

"Yes." replies Jimmy.

"In that case yeah she was in here yesterday, but she wasn't with her husband. She was with some nigger." Jimmy freezes next to Coop at Becky's words. Aha! thought Coop, Sarah Turing lied! Then in quick succession he thinks 'Oh shit!

Neither Coop nor Jimmy can speak and Becky to her credit doesn't speak either, just sits there sipping her coffee.

"Is she always with this coloured man?" asks Jimmy, his voice betraying his trepidation.

"No, sometimes she does come in with her husband but lately it's just been the nigger. He dotes on her too, helps her up and rests his hand on her bump to feel the baby kick. You'd think it were his, of course it can't be because...." Becky replies getting caught up in relaying gossip.

Coop stops her with a gruff "Thank you Becky, we've got what we needed. We'll be off now." Almost in unison Coop and Jimmy rise from their chairs and head for the door.

They're out the door when Becky shouts "Coop, wait!" Reluctantly Coop hangs back and walking past him Jimmy throws him a look he can't decipher.

Stepping back into the Rec Room Coop's intended words are forced back into his mouth by Becky's. She has him pressed against the wall, her body aligned with his. Coop gasps when her hand cups his groin and she uses the shock to slip her tongue in his mouth. It feels like a slimy wet slug that is trying to take his tongue hostage, to which it will do unspeakable things. Coop pushes her off and quickly away, not being careful about the force.

"What the fuck Becky!" he exclaims but Becky surges back in as his lips round the 'u' in fuck. Her tongue is in his mouth again, he thinks he might actually be sick. This time when he pushes her off he puts the table between them.

"Becky, what are you doing? You're married!" Coop asks incredulous. He always thought, despite Becky’s flirting, her and Chucks marriage was one of the good ones. One that would last.

"That never stopped you before." Becky spits back, rejection tempering her words. Coop flinches and Becky smiles.

"Maybe you're right, but it's stopping me this time. I like Chuck, he's a good guy. I'm not gonna do this to him." Coop shoots back.

Suddenly there is a twinkle in Becky’s eye that Coop does not like. "And Jimmy is a good guy is he
not?" she delivers like a death blow. It hits its intended target, his guilt. Not the guilt Becky thinks, but guilt nonetheless.

Fixing her with a steely glare Coop says "The best." then strides across the room and out the door not caring when it bangs against the wall.

Chuck doesn't look up but Coop can see he is hunkering around the grill, the line of his shoulders rigid. Poor Chuck he thinks. Riley’s eyes widen when he sees the state of Coop and the creepy guys face doesn't move but there is laughter in his eyes. Coop tries to straighten his clothes as he walks but knows he isn't successful when upon entering the diner proper a trucker jeers at him. He sees his reflection in a napkin dispenser as he passes and inwardly groans, he has lipstick smudges around his mouth and his father isn't here to see them, oh the irony. Calling bye to Misha he exits the diner post haste.

Coop stops to breathe away his shock and when he looks up Jimmy is staring right at him from behind the windshield. He feels like he's betrayed Jimmy, feels dirty and to top it off part of him is elated, part of him feels like he's done his father proud. Now he's just disgusted at himself. The Sun mocks him yet again but this time rushing can wait. He sidles over to the car and gets in. Wordlessly Jimmy hands him a napkin. Coop yanks his sun visor down and starts vigorously rubbing at the lipstick on his face. The napkin is nearly entirely red when he is done and it looks like someone's used it to staunch a bloody nose. Jimmy was quite the whole time and Coop has no idea what to say. To top it all off the clock is ticking Coops life away, literally. Coop really doesn't want to turn the ignition and go back to the Turing's.

The silence envelopes them and then Jimmy says "Christ, Coop that fella with the moustache was one creepy bastard. You see the look he was giving us?"

Coop's face cracks and he laughs out "I know! I thought he was trying to burn holes in us with just the power of his mind." Jimmy laughs and Coops joins in, silence is conquered again, temporarily.

Coop knows they'll probably have to talk about this, eventually, but right now they need to go get the truth out of the Turing's.

The blue Cadillac is in the Turing’s driveway when they pull up outside and it sits there a testament to the lies he and Jimmy have been told. Coop barely has the engine turned off before he is yanking his door open. He is half way to the Turing’s door when Jimmy grabs his elbow and pulls him around to face him. His back is to the house and his vision is dominated by Jimmy, if only procrastination could last forever.

"Cool it Coop! We can't go in there guns blazing, we don't have any proof. Let's play this one by ear ok?" Jimmy says eyes following Coops as he ducks his head.

"Sure, Jimmy." Coop says knowing he sounds noncommittal. Jimmy smiles and his hand brushes Coops as he walks past him towards the house. Purposefully.

Coop smiles too.

Jimmy once again is the one who rings the Turing's doorbell. Coop stands at his shoulder, fingers hooked in his belt loops. They hear the chime echo in the house, emphasis on the word 'echo', and Jimmy stares intently at the door. For his part Coop watches Jimmy and he can almost see the air of calm that has settled around him. If he knew that all it took was a personal meltdown to free Jimmy from his up tight shell he would have done it sooner. He really wants to kiss him and decides to see how un-upright this Jimmy is. He leans over so his mouth is inches away from Jimmy's ear and whispers "Jeez Jimmy, you have no idea how many times I've wanted to kiss you today." He expects
Jimmy to hiss at him like he did in the diner.

Instead he turns to him says "If it's half as many as I have then I think I do." and licks his lips. Needless to say Coop is stunned.

Finally the door opens and they are once again faced with Mrs Turing. A smile is on her face that Barbie herself would be envious of.

"Officers so nice to see you back so soon, what can I do for you?" she says tone jovial and light. She is quite the actress.

Jimmy takes it in stride and replies "Is your husband in? We would like a talk with you both."

"Yes he's here." then she pauses and her smile falters for a second before returning. She continues by saying "Wont you please come in." whilst almost gritting her teeth.

She steps aside and Jimmy sidles past her with a "Ma'am." whereas Coop offers her no such pleasantries.

They are lead into the living room again. Ron is sat almost exactly where he was when they left. He is cradling a cup of coffee and seems to be mesmerised by it's depths. He starts when Jimmy and Coop sit opposite him.

Rons mouth opens to say something but snaps shut instantly. Sarah sits down next to him and nudges his elbow so he'll release his coffee cup. He does so with a nasally sigh.

Mrs Turing fixes her gaze on Jimmy and asks "What would you like to talk about?", a picture of politeness. Her hands are clasped loosely on her lap. Coop wonders where her pearls are.

"First of all I see that your husbands car is in the driveway, who collected it from Marco's Diner?" Coop asks looking Mrs Turing square in the eye.

She turns to face him her expression still neutral and responds without even blinking "A friend of Ronnie's collected it, he lives 'round there." Coop sees Ron flinch out of the corner of his eye. Jimmy sees it too.

"Does this friend have a name?" Jimmy asks Ron. They both know who this 'friend' will turn out to be. They just need a name.

Ron opens his mouth to answer but Sarah cuts in. "His name is Samuel, he's a janitor at my husbands accounting firm.". Ron is sat next to her silent.

"What firm would that be?" Coop asks looking at Ron who for his credit looks right back.

Sarah deems to let him answer this one it seems as he replies "Bechstein, Crueger and Dahl."

Jimmy writes it down in his pad and Coop pushes on. Time to crack this nut he thinks.

"In your previous statement you said you and your wife had lunch together at Marco's Diner." Coop says leaning over to consult Jimmy's notepad, who indulges his theatricality.

Her face gives nothing away as she says "Yes that is what I said, all of three hours ago." Coop is going to enjoy wiping the smirk off her face, even at Ron's expense. Maybe.

He tries to fight the smirk sneaking on to his face, he really does. Alas he doesn't fight too hard. "We have two witnesses that disagree Mrs Turing. They say you were there on the day in question but not
with your husband." Sarah’s face seems to slip as if it has suffered some sort of facial landslide. She isn't smiling anymore.

It's as Coop is, for want of a better word, basking in his small victory that the next logical question sneaks up behind him and metaphorically hits him over the head with a large mallet.

Jimmy saves him from voicing it. "Where were you Mr Turing, the truth this time." he says facing Ron and if Coop didn't know Jimmy as a straight laced professional, he would swear he sees jealousy flash in his eyes. For a second of a second.

Ron stares at a point behind Jimmy's head for three minutes. Which is just the amount of time for a litany of 'Shit! Shit! Shit!' to form in Coops head and for Jimmy to get impatient. "Mr Turing?" he asks trying to coax him to speak.

He exhales through his nose and it echoes in the silent room. His eyes move and suddenly he is staring Coop dead in the eye. It's like a fishing line straight to his heart, complete with fish hook.

"I did it." He says to Jimmy whilst still looking at Coop. An emotion passes over Rons eyes like the reflection of a cloud on a lake, it makes him shiver.

"Did what Mr Turing?" Coop asks, 'cos now he is confused. Doesn't know exactly what Ron is confessing to, or why he's doing it so bluntly.

"Robbed the Beaumont store." Ron replies, his lack of tone making it sound like he doesn't care. Coop knows he does, remembers that much.

"Ronald!" Sarah Turing hisses then turns to Jimmy and says "He didn't mean that officers, he's been under stress at work lately and I think...".

Ron cuts her off before she can continue lying "Stop lying Sarah!" then looks at Jimmy this time "I was fired three weeks ago and we needed money what with the baby coming so I did what I had to do."

The room is silent until Jimmy's need for detail saves them all "What did you take?". He is testing Ron.

"I got away with about 150 or so dollars." He doesn't mention the chocolate bar and a the little flame glows at the very end of its wick, hoping that Astrid was wrong.

"Oh and a Hershey's bar." Fuck thinks Coop, very nearly says it too.

Jimmy stands up his hand already on the cuffs at his belt. Ron stands and faces Coop once more, Sarah stands a second later arms out stretched towards her husband but falling short of touching him. Jimmy moves around behind Ron and clicks the handcuffs into place around his wrists but Coop doesn't see him. He can't look away from Ron's eyes, he can't move. The whole room is standing except for him. He is fixed in place by a memory. Doesn't move even when Jimmy leads Ron to the door with Sarah following behind opening and closing her mouth like a goldfish and he is left looking at a faux Swiss cuckoo clock.

"Coop, you coming?" Jimmy says from the doorway as Sarah Turing frets with her coat and purse. It's not a question but he answers by getting up, lining up behind Sarah and following the leader out into the daylight. The sun reflecting off of the Turing's mailbox is like an epiphany. He is going to live, his first love is a criminal but he is going to live. By no means is everything fixed or the future struggles suddenly made easier to bear but at least now he'll be there to bear them with Jimmy.
At the patrol car Jimmy puts Ron in the back with the usual 'mind your head' gesture and Coop wishes he'd been the one to arrest him. Wants to touch his head one last time, wants Ron to feel him one last time.

To say the ride back to the station was strained would be doing it an injustice. It was the epitome of all tense atmospheres and Coop could only look in the rear-view mirror at a Ron that is staring blankly back. Not for the first time Coop thinks how fucked up the situation is. He isn't blind, he notices Jimmy getting more equal parts angry and hurt second by second but the man in the back that is wearing Ronald Turing's face draws his eyes time and time again. Nostalgia is sinking her sweet tipped claws into him and for all that he is capable of, Coop can't resist. The silence in the car is almost sentient, the only noises the three men breathing and the sound of wheels on tarmac.

Coop nudges Jimmy's leg and says "Put the radio on will you Jimmy?" and fixes his gaze on the road, ignore the back seat completely. At his side Jimmy’s face is yet again pinched and Coop genuinely wonders if the other man has a clothes peg concealed on his person as to affect the perfect 'pinched' look. Despite this he gets the radio out of the glove compartment and turns the dial causing The Supremes' 'You Can't Hurry Love' to fill the car. Coop flinches and Jimmy leaves it on.

When they finally pull into the Station parking lot the sun is still shining and Coop feels it like hope on his skin. They get out and Jimmy all but yanks Ron out of the back, the same tactic they use for Teddy Burke, Coops thinks, if with more aggression behind them. This time around it's inside the Station that seems gloomy, like the outside and inside have switched places. Metaphorical rain clouds threaten the polished floors. Once inside Jimmy mumbles to Chris who Ron is and what he is being charged with. He also asks for an interrogation room even though Ron has already confessed, Chris drags Ron away by his cuffed hands. Coop's eyes follow him and Jimmy hisses "Christ Coop, could you be any more obvious!" and follows Chris. Coop sighs, there is something boiling up in Jimmy and Coop is most definitely sure that it wont be good, for either of them but he figures he can reassure his partner later. He figures.

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