Spinning Jenny

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Spinning Jenny

by jenstraflintlocked

Summary

mostly an attempt at canon Jenny/Vastra meeting and build up of relationship and making up some history for Jenny
not gonna be excessively big on historical accuracy Edit: there will be so much historical accuracy. this fic will abound with useless historical information that will nonetheless be quite accurate.

don't like f/f don't read

it's gonna be a lot longer than this and history will be filled in as and when

Edit: Oh it ended up being so much longer...
Edit: over 300 Kudos! You guys rawk
Edit: holy smokes when did pass 400...

Notes

So the Doctor saves Jenny Flint when Vastra and her first meet but the letter tells about a later thing?

Only one thing for it then! They met more than once before Jenny started living with Vastra.
He Saved Your Life When We First Met

She sat, coughing, wondering if the police were going to pick her up. She debated the Ragged Schools, wondered if they’d help at all. People passed in the streets but didn’t even glance, even when she hacked a cough and spat out blood, vivid red against the slush that had been snow earlier. Despite the cold, she still felt hot and shivery. Her broom had been stolen a few hours ago by an unscrupulous urchin and she didn’t have the energy or the heart to blame them. Her clothes were soaked, either by slush or sweat she couldn’t tell. She slumped over, lying there now, watching feet pass, and not even having a voice with which to beg a few pennies. She was dying and she knew it. She thought of her mother and her brother and all the others who had gone before her. How they’d been when they were dying. How it was before they died. There’d been a stillness and she felt it now, her limbs slowly stiffening. Her eyesight blurred and blackened and she heard rather than saw a swish of a dress and a clump of shoes stop in front of her.

“I still don’t see how you can say these apes are worth anything. Look, they leave their young to die and pass by without even looking. Without even picking up the dead body and burying it.”

Jenny stirred at such a tone of voice. It sounded so contemptuous. “’m no’ dead yet…” she tried to say, whether she actually did or not, she couldn’t tell.

“So you aren’t. You woulda buried him too early, Vastra.” She opened her eyes, with the last of her energy, to find a man crouching in front of her. “Hello! I’m the Doctor. Who’re you?”

She shook her head. “Can’t ‘ford no doctors…” she rasped out, slightly louder.

“Ahh well that’s where you’re lucky. I don’t charge.” He grinned but she couldn’t keep focus and slumped to the floor again.

She had a vague sensation of being picked up, like a small child and carried somewhere. There were bright lights and flashes and a brief sting of something. She wondered if this was dying and then everything went black.

“Ey! Look! He’s coming round.” She opened her eyes to find herself lying in a bed. It was fairly comfortable. And warm. And soft.

“I do believe, Doctor…” the scornful voice, more amused this time than derogatory. “…it is a she.”

She turned to find the cloaked woman (Vastra was it?) and the doctor man standing by the bed.

“A she?” he turned back to her and she flushed slightly and struggled to sit up. “Well whatever they are, they’re getting better. Here. Eat this.” He plonked a bowl of some sort of stew in front of her and after a brief glower of suspicion; she grabbed it and gulped it down, ignoring the burning heat that made her eyes water. “And hungry too.”

She paused in chewing and glowered at him again. “And angry. What is it with the Victorian era? I rescue you and you just glower. She was the same.” He jerked a thumb at the cloaked lady.

She felt considerably better but still didn’t quite trust the Doctor. She cautiously got out of bed, feeling no dizziness when she stood up.

“Hey now. Better rest some more maybe.” He cautioned. “You’ve been out for a while.”

She looked at him properly now, with his short cropped hair and leather jacket. He didn’t quite fit
somehow. She turned to look at the lady in the rather ragged dress and cloak but could see nothing.

“Here. What’s yer name?” he asked. She stared at him mutely, debating whether to give her brother’s name as she had been doing. But then that lady had already guessed, already knew; though how she did was anyone’s guess.

“Jenny. Jenny Flint. ‘ard as ‘em.” She crossed her arms to look more impressive.

The woman in the cloak snorted.

“You wanna start an argy?” Jenny turned to look at her, annoyed at that cynical snort.

“Why on earth would I “start” something with a little ape?”

Jenny scowled. “I ain’t little neither. I’m thirteen.” She stuck out her tongue.

“I’m two hundred and thirteen.” A rather more impressive tongue appeared from the hood, making Jenny’s eyes go round as marbles.

“And I’m nine hundred and thirteen. Can we act our age ladies?” The Doctor rolled his eyes.

Jenny shrugged. “She started it.”

This seemed to rile the lady. “I told you. I don’t “start” things with little apes.”

“An’ I tol’ yer I ain’t little! Nor a bleedin’ ape fer that matter.” Jenny gestured vigorously with her fingers.

The lady whipped off her hood and if Jenny’s eyes had gone wide before, it was nothing compared to now. She was struck dumb. All those green scales, that snub little nose and limpid blue eyes that seemed a little at odds but complimented the green perfectly. Her heart thumped harder in shock but still there was a thought that crept in. You’re beautiful…

“Vastra.” The Doctor sighed. The lizard woman grinned and flicked out her tongue again, snapping the air by Jenny’s ear. It jerked Jenny out of her reverie and she stuck her chin in the air to show that she wasn’t scared. It seemed to annoy the lady who hissed.

The Doctor grinned. “Yer not scarin’ this one.”

“What’d I be scared of a stupid lizard woman for? E’en if she IS two ‘undred ‘n’ thirteen.”

“Because I eat little apes like you for breakfast.” The lizard woman hissed, swishing towards her and trying to stare her down.

Jenny shrugged to signal her distinct lack of caring. “Go on then.”

The Doctor burst out laughing. “Oh I like this one. We’ll have to keep ‘er.”

“Feel absolutely free to take this wretched urchin on any amount of journeys in the TARDIS. But it will not be staying anywhere near me.” The Lizard Woman picked her up by the scruff of the neck. “Get out, little ape. Next time, I will eat you.”

Jenny gnashed her teeth at the Lizard Woman’s arm, making her drop Jenny to the floor. She rolled and then scarpered. After all, bravado aside, you ran whenever you could and a being that could haul a thirteen year old aloft with little trouble was not someone to be tangled with.
“Awh why did you say that for Vastra? I liked her.” She heard the Doctor complain as she darted out the door.
She was out one night in December 1883, lifting from pockets before a job to keep warm and saw what she figured was a widow, probably old despite her upright figure. Perfect. Fool for walking out so late, what with ruffians like her around. But as she jostled against and dipped her hand in, she got caught; her hand clasped in a strong gloved one. She stumbled as she was pulled back to face the widow.

“What do you think you’re doing, little ape?” a voice hissed from inside the hood.

Jenny scrunched up her face, going for pathos, although she was far too old at fourteen for it to really come off. “’m ‘ungry.”

“So am I.”

Well, that clearly didn’t work then. Still, no time to stall. She kicked the woman in the shin and attempted to wriggle free but the widow had a ferocious grasp. She got a kick in return when the woman eventually tripped over her, the hood falling askew as they both slipped in the snow.

Jenny gasped as she saw a flash of green, iridescent in the moon light. In her shock of realisation, the recognition of the “little ape” and the voice, she did not run away as the Lizard Woman released her to rescue the hood, both of them scrambling up.

“You gonna eat me now?” Jenny goaded, folding her arms.

The Lizard Woman seemed to consider it. “…no. But do not try to pick my pockets again, little ape.”

“No ma’am.” She grinned, bowed, stuck her tongue out and ran off, turning back just once to see the Lizard woman standing there watching her. “Merry Christmas!” she yelled before dashing back off, thinking that that made twice now where the Lizard Woman hadn’t eaten her despite threatening. She wondered briefly if she’d see her again, although if the Lizard Woman really did eat people, perhaps it would be better if she didn't.
All the acts looked hokey and fake and Jenny was rather bored as they wandered round the circus. The Strong Man in particular did nothing for her and Lettie teased her about being jealous.

“C’mon then maybe this’ll be more your style.” Lettie laughed and dragged her to the next tent.

“Lizard woman?” Jenny’s eyebrows shot up at the sign. It surely couldn’t be but as they stumbled through the tent flap, Jenny’s eyes were drawn to the green scales, iridescent still against a grubby white shift. Lettie looked at her dumbfounded expression.

“Oi. I was on’y kiddin’.” But Jenny ignored her. Her first thought was that they’d captured her and were keeping her prisoner to entertain the crowds. She walked straight up to the man outside the cage, pattering away and grabbed him by the front of his shirt.

“Oi! How come she’s inna cage?”

“Cos she’d eat you alive if she were free!” the man mock snarled, clasping her round the shoulders with one burly arm and the lizard woman hissed at her and shot out a tongue to snap at the air. “You see the fearsomeness of the lizard woman!” he called to the crowd who laughed.

“So?” Jenny shoved him off. “None of the others is inna cage! The Strong Bloke nor the Fire Eater! Why’s she?”

“What’s up with you ey? Bloody Lizard Liberation League?” the man grabbed her and hauled her into a headlock. “Shall we feed this brave young gent to the lizard woman? Will he survive or will he get eaten?” he yelled to the crowd as she struggled. There was more laughter and she felt the cruelty of it.

“I bet she ain’t never eaten no-one really!” She bit down on his arm and he released her cursing. She heard the lizard woman hiss, almost like a laugh and she turned to look at her. Their eyes locked and Jenny saw once again the blue that seemed at odds with the green skin and yet was so beautiful too. The moment was broken as she was cuffed soundly round the back of the head.

“Get ‘im outta here!” the man picked her up off the floor where she’d dropped and flung her into the arms of two bulky men who had appeared from the back of the tent.

“No!” Jenny yelled, grappling against them, still half stunned from the blow. “Let ‘er out! You let ‘er out! Let ‘er out right now!” it came out as a scream as they dragged her outside and round the back of the tent.

“He’ll be the lizard woman’s dinner later!” she heard the show man cry in an attempt to cover it up, the crowd cheering and gasping.
The two men knocked her to the ground and kicked her hard in the ribs a few times for good measure but were stopped by a third man who silently warned them off.

“An’ don’t come round ‘ere again else we will feed yer to somethin’.” They threatened before walking off, leaving her groaning on the ground. She coughed, trying not to vomit as she dragged herself upright to find a familiar face watching her from a body that was crouched down beside her.

“Whatchoo lookin’ at?” she spat out a bit of blood and tried to wipe mud off her face.

“I don’t like seeing her in a cage either.” He grinned.

She looked at him oddly, with his short cropped hair and his leather jacket. He looked familiar.

“Oo ‘re you then?”

“John Smith. I juggle here at the circus.”

“You say you don’ like it yet yer a part of it all?” Jenny snorted in disgust. She staggered upright, massaging her ribs and stormed off without looking back. The man watched her curiously.

She met up with Lettie by the entrance.

“You’re a bloody mad ‘un you are! What did you go off like that for? She’s a lizard int she? Prob’ly eat you alive like a lion or a tiger, what did you even care for?” Lettie berated her.

“So? She ain’t an animal. She shouldn’t be inna cage!” Jenny yelled and Lettie stalked off angrily.

She didn’t follow Lettie home but instead hung round the circus until it closed down for the evening, dodging the guards and fingering her lock pick set.

Once it got dark enough she light footed her way between tents until she found the Lizard Woman’s one again, peering through a gap to see if anyone was around. She was about to slip inside when the Lizard Woman unlocked the cage herself. And then undressed. Jenny’s eyes went wide again at all the scales, proving once and for all that the Lizard Woman was real and no prosthetics or anything like that was involved.

She shook herself and followed when the Lizard Woman went to a small tent round the back, where the juggler man was sat waiting. She hid and listened in. Now she recalled the face. The Doctor who had saved her life. He’d been with the Lizard Woman before. She wondered if they were lovers.

“This wasn’t what I had in mind, Vastra.”

“There is no other occupation available in this ape filled time and besides, they seem to enjoy the scares and thrills I give them. How is that not helping humanity? And all for a very cheap price!”

“What about that boy earlier? He didn’t seem too happy.” The Doctor pointed out.

“That was a girl.” Jenny wondered once again how precisely the lizard woman could figure that out.

“Either way, they kicked up…wait another girl dressed as a boy? Are all the boys in Victorian London secretly women? Mind you some of the books I’ve read it wouldn’t surprise me…” the Doctor trailed off and then regained focus. “Either way, they kicked up a fuss about you being in a cage.” He grinned. “One of those good ones I was telling you about. Even accused me of being part of it.”

“One. Out of all who have come to see me, one.” The lizard woman snorted. “Hardly redeeming.”
“One’s enough, sometimes. The right one in the right place at the right time.”

“She certainly wasn’t. I wonder if they will feed her to me.”

“Nah. I stopped her getting beaten too badly and then she scarpered.” The Doctor shrugged. “That’s two good ones you’ve lost now Vastra. No wonder you don’t have much hope for humans.”

“Any good apes seem to be punished soon enough. It’s small wonder they’re so rare. It’s a miracle they manage to survive at all in such a barbaric society.”

The Doctor sighed. “Look, I know you didn’t exactly get off to the best of starts with them. And I know they take some getting used to and they’ll take some getting used to you too but believe me humans…”

The Lizard Woman held up a hand suddenly, darting out a tongue to taste the air.

“We are not alone.” She muttered and stalked across the tent.

Jenny did not wait to be discovered and fled, running all the way back home. She felt ashamed at her flight but the Lizard Woman didn’t need rescuing anyway it seemed. She was perfectly content to stay in her cage. And probably wouldn’t thank an “ape” for rescuing her anyway.

Chapter End Notes

in the brilliant book 2012, on Vastra's poster there is a Jovial John Smith, Doctor of Juggling. I'm only guessing here and I could be wrong of course...

Anyways, I wanted to include it in the story so I had Jenny run into them there. Given her reaction in Silhouette, I don't think Jenny would've been pleased at Vastra being in a cage.

Yes Jenny is still running round disguised as a boy at the current time.

Lettie is an OC, more will be found out about her later.
Down A Dark Alley

Chapter Summary

cw: violence of the being attacked down a dark alley by gang members kind

Chapter Notes

once again using the big whatever 2012 book and Vastra's letter to the Doctor this time as inspo. (I'm betting that Vastra edited the conversation somewhat when relaying it to the Doctor)

Introducing: Jenny's piece of flint.

The gang found her in the February of 1887, selling matches from the factory she'd worked at before, shivering and after a rough winter, weak enough that they could haul her down an alleyway.

She kicked and cursed and even screamed but she’d never really screamed before and it came off kind of hokey, even to her ears.

“Hold the wench still!” the leader of the Tong’s boys sneered. “I wanna deal with her myself.” He drew out a sharp looking knife and pressed it against her cheek. “Bet you thought we’d forgotten all about you, little Flint.” He hissed.

“I ain’t little!” She spat and kicked him in the balls. He dropped to the street.

“Ow!!! She kicked me inna nuts!”

“You little…” one of the men holding her gaped.

“I. Ain’t. Little!” Jenny repeated, tripping his legs out from under him, sending him cursing to the ground. The boss had regained his feet and as she tried desperately to wriggle free from the two other men holding her, he grabbed her face, slamming her head against the wall. Dazed, she stumbled, only to be pressed against the wall, a hand gripping at her throat. She shivered in fear, her mouth dry and there was no smart comeback, no nothing, not even a plea. The third man was on his feet by this time, grabbing her arm and holding it out to the side, pressing a leg against hers to stop her kicking out again. A sharp pain bloomed in her side as she felt the knife cut through her clothes and her skin. She didn’t realise blood could be so warm, so alive.

“After all you’ve done, you little bitch, I thought I’d kill you nice an’ quick, string you up for an example no problem. But after kickin’ me like that, you’re gonna be in a lot of pain tonight, a lot of long, slow pain.” The man hissed as a knife replaced his hand at her throat.

There was a disdainful snort from the darkness up the alley that made them all turn. “I rather think that you are, gentlemen.” A rather cultured sounding voice with a Scottish twang rang out. “But I’ll make it as quick as possible.” The gang peered into the gloom but for Jenny a distraction was a
distraction and she didn’t care where it came from. She bit down hard on the hand holding a blade to her throat. It dropped the blade and more cursing ensued. She spat on the floor, the hand had tasted disgusting. She got an elbow clean to her face from one of her captors as they sprang towards whoever it was. She took advantage of her momentary freedom to drop to the floor, blood pouring from her nose, fumbling round to pick up the knife. She had never killed anyone but she didn’t want to find out what the gang boys were going to do to her. She’d gone seventeen years without a man doing much, (women were a different matter) and it wasn’t going to happen now. She got whacked on the back of the head again as a heavy body collided with her and sent her crashing into the wall, the world going dark.

The next thing she knew she was coming round on the alley floor. It was wet with blood but she felt too groggy to deal with it. There was no sound of movement except a small swish of a skirt. Her attackers were gone or perhaps dead. She lay still, playing dead until a hand moved her face and she bit it, grabbing the knife that her fumbling hand had found and scrambling upright to get a look at her saviour. She stared dumbfounded, blinking, then blinking again, not quite able to believe it.

“You…” The dizziness overcame her and she collapsed into darkness.

She woke with stars before her eyes and a splitting headache, feeling hot and shivery. She groaned and tried to get up from wherever she was but the world span and she retched. She was only vaguely aware of arms catching her.

She opened her eyes a little more cautiously on the second return to consciousness and didn’t move. There was a ceiling and, slowly rotating her eyes, she found a small room. She herself was in a pallet bed in a corner of it.

“Ah. You’re awake. Don’t be alarmed. There really is no need to faint.” She remembered all of a sudden. That bloody Lizard Woman had come and scared off the Tong gang and had apparently rescued her.

“I din’t faint cos o’ yor scaly face. I passed out cos I got walloped a lot.” She gingerly touched her head and winced, coughing at the tightness in her throat from the strangulation, massaging it gently.

The Lizard Woman looked mildly affronted that Jenny hadn’t found her that terrifying but also a little pleased. “Oh.” She sniffed. “I did wonder. You were out for a while. I dressed your other wound.”

Jenny frowned and then realised that she was quite clean, had a bandage around her middle and was dressed in an overlarge nightgown that most certainly wasn’t hers. Her eyes went wide.

“What? You were covered in dirt and blood, although at least you don’t smell as bad as other apes, and you were bleeding. I had to do something.” the lizard shrugged unconcernedly as she discerned the reason for Jenny’s consternation.

“Wot’ve yer done wiv me clothes??”

“Burned them. They were disgusting. I don’t know what you picked up but it made the fire burn blue and green and give off a rather acrid stench.”

“That would’ve been me matches.” Jenny rolled her eyes.

“Matches?”
“Yes. Matches. I’mma match girl. I sells matches. They wuz in me clothes and you, ya stupid lizard, burned ‘em all up. How’m I gonna make a livin’ now ey? Wot’m I even supposed to wear?? An’ me flint gone too!” Jenny buried her face in her hands.

The Lizard Woman tilted her head to one side and then sat down on the bed beside her, holding out an upturned hand. Jenny glanced at it, having felt the bed shift. In the middle of a soft, scaled palm was her flint.

She glowered at the Lizard woman, swiping it off her hand. “Still gotta work tho ain’t I? Gotta earn money.”

The Lizard woman looked thoughtful. “So must we all. But this is an age of luxury. I rather fancy some of it.” She gave Jenny a grin.

“Oh yeah? You got money then?” Jenny eyed her curiously, not exactly trusting that grin.

“No.”

“Well ‘ow you plannin’ on gettin’ luxury then?”

“Fear not. I shall think of something.” She grinned again. Jenny found her lips twitching into a half smile despite herself, the lizard sounded so confident.

“Well that sounds all well an’ bleedin’ good fer you an’ I wish yer luck but ‘ow about gettin’ me some clothes so as I can be on me way?”

The lizard woman stared at her. “You are still injured. And if you should be attacked again, will you be able to fight them off?” Jenny’s face grew solemn at the thought of the Tong Gang. “I only slew a few of them. I have observed them, there are many more. They regularly accost women.”

“I know.” Jenny picked at the covers and hung her head. “Not that I ain’t grateful or nuffin’ but you shouldn’t ‘ave ‘elped me. They’ll be after you now. They’ll kill yer fer killin’ their men. You stupid lizard…” she whispered softly.

“Really.” Jenny looked up into a predatory grin that she definitively did not trust. “Hm. That does sound like a challenge. Well, for now, you may stay here and recover.”

“Stay ‘ere?”

“Unless you have somewhere else to go?” the lizard woman quirked her head.

“…not really, no.”

“Well, then. That’s settled. You can sleep in the bed. I’m going out.” She got up and drew a cloak about her before stalking out.

After staring dumbfounded for a while, Jenny flopped backwards onto the bed. Rest sounded good, although she couldn’t quite reason why the lizard woman was being so nice to her. Hadn’t even threatened to eat her yet.
Jenny woke up and for a moment thought she was back in their flat, sleeping with her younger siblings. But her siblings were dead or disappeared. Maybe she was on the streets, sleeping back to back with Jacob, her partner in crime. Or perhaps it was Lettie, who’d kissed her and they’d been caught or maybe Grace though Grace always slept closer where was Grace anyway…she turned over, sleepy confusion clearing in an instant when she saw the back of a green scaled head.

“What the hell?” she shunted backwards and banged against the wall.

A grunt came from the lizard woman. “Keep it down. The landlady.”

The fog of sleep cleared and she remembered the lizard woman rescuing her. Still, it wasn’t an expected sight. Jenny had woken up next to friends, family, drunks, horses but in the same bed as a lizard, she thought she could be excused for being surprised.

Now that she’d recovered, her body was complaining of a slightly pressing need to go to the loo. She kicked the cover off, causing clicks and hisses of complaints and went in search of it. There was a small window overlooking a derelict backyard and she spied the small shed she was looking for in the corner. There were sounds of movement downstairs. The landlady. Nothing else for it then. She heaved open the window, shivering in the blast of cold air and clambered out of it. She laughed to herself, it reminded her of her days working as a snake for the gangs when she was a child.

Crouching on the very thin ledge, she inched along until she reached the drain pipe and prayed it was sturdy enough to take her weight. Sometimes in the past they’d been rusty and she’d been unceremoniously dumped on the ground. It hurt.

Still, this one was intact and she made it to the outhouse in time.

She came back up to see the lizard woman curled up completely under the covers now, probably driven there by the wind through the open window.

“Oi…get up.” She said, rather daringly she thought as she slammed the window closed again.

“No. It’s too cold.” Came the muffled reply.

Lizard. Right. She set the fire going again to see if that caused movement but it struck her suddenly that the lizard was not a morning person either.
She sighed and put a kettle on to boil, sitting close by the fire. It was cold. And she was only in a borrowed nightie. But she wasn’t about to climb back into bed either. She made tea and, after a thought, made a cup for the lizard woman too. She tiptoed over to the bed and blew the steam at the lump and it stirred.

Limpid blue eyes met liquid brown once again and Jenny felt a jolt, somewhat unreasonably she felt. She sipped her tea to dispel the moment. Perhaps she was afraid.

“I like you, little ape. I think I will keep you.”

“Whatchoo mean keep me?” Jenny eyed her suspiciously.

“You can stay here and keep my bed warm and bring me tea in the morning.”

Jenny’s jaw hung open for a little while, whilst she processed precisely what had been said and then dismissed it as a joke. The lizard woman disliked apes and was certainly not about to let her stay.

The lizard had curled up in the covers sipping her tea while Jenny gaped at her.

Jenny sipped her own and laughed. She looked cute, snuggled up like that. Well, in a lizard-y kind of way.

The lizard woman looked at her as if to say “I’ll question you later, once I’m warmer and more awake.”

They finished their tea in silence and eventually the lizard woman slithered, that was the only way Jenny could think of it, out of bed and walked over to a chest that sat at the end of the bed.

She brought out a rather ragged black dress, held it up and then threw it at Jenny.

“There you go. Clothes for you. For now.”

“Fer now? What, shall I be givin’ it back then?” Jenny quirked an eyebrow, amused, as she deftly caught a pair of drawers as well.

“Unless you particularly want to keep it afterwards.” a battered corset joined it.

Jenny tilted her head to see beyond the pile she’d accumulated. “After what?”

“After you have new clothes. We shall have to take you to get measured of course. We can do that today. I know a place that won’t ask impertinent questions.” The lizard woman winked (yes actually winked) at her as she drew her own nightgown over her head.

Jenny was distracted by the sight from what the lizard woman had said. The lizard woman turned, caught her staring, and grinned coldly.

“Yes. They go all the way down.” She said as she got dressed.

Jenny looked away hurriedly and recovered herself. “Yor gonna buy me new clothes?” she set down her tea cup with care.

“Well, as you pointed out, I burned your old ones. Although I still think that was the right thing to do. Now come on. Get dressed.”

Jenny looked around the room and didn’t see anywhere particularly that she could get dressed.
“I’ve seen it all so you needn’t be shy. Really, what is it with apes?” the lizard woman commented offhandedly.

“I’m not an ape!” Jenny had a feeling she could tell the lizard woman that a hundred times and she still would be.

The lizard woman snorted. “Whatever you are, hurry up.” she buttoned up her dress.

“I’m human. An’ me name’s Jenny. Jenny Flint. ‘Ard as ‘em.” Jenny told her as she dragged the nightgown off and the dress on as quickly as possible. She looked up at the sudden silence and grinned at the lizard woman’s shocked face. “’Ello. Din’t fink I’d see you again.”

“Jenny Flint. I remember. The little ape who wasn’t dead after all.”

“Still ain’t dead.” Jenny grinned. “Unless…” she let the pause hang and it was the lizard woman now who tilted her head to consider her. Jenny folded her arms. “You gonna eat me now?”

“Hmph. I did say I would eat you next time I saw you.”

“Aye an’ you never ate me that time neither.”

The lizard woman stopped and then carefully examined her. The folded arms, the mole. “You gonna eat me now?” A tongue flicked out. “You! The little ape thief!”

“Not so little anymore. And not an ape!” Jenny retaliated.

The lizard woman stalked right up to her, staring down at her but Jenny stuck her chin up and stared back.

“Well…that explains a great deal.” She snorted and turned to go. “Come on then, not so little ape.”

“What?”

“Clothes! You look like a guttersnipe.”

“Well thas cos I am.”

“That explains why you were being attacked down an alley at least. Did you try and steal from them too?”

Jenny fell silent. “No.” she froze, suddenly remembering why all this was happening.

The lizard woman paused in pulling up her hood to look at her, the stillness drawing her attention.

“I’m sorry. I can’t go out there. They’ll get me. An’ you! They’ll be comin’ after you now too!” Jenny’s face twisted in consternation.

But the lizard woman merely laughed. “I doubt that. Don’t worry. I don’t think they’ll be bothering you or me anymore. Nor any other poor women.”

“Whatchoo mean?”

“I’ve dealt with them.”

Jenny didn’t really want to ask but she had to. “’ow?”
“I ate them.”

Jenny was stupefied. It’d always been a bit of a joke. She thought it was a threat, nothing more.

“Well, some of them. The rest I just killed. Don’t worry. I’m not planning on eating you.” The lizard woman snorted at her expression. “Are you coming or not?”

So Jenny tripped out after her. They got more than a few stares, walking through the streets. A hooded figure and a loose-haired girl in a ragged black dress dancing behind her in order so that her bare feet didn’t freeze to the pavements.

A man stopped them. “This urchin causin’ you trouble ma’am?”

“No. She’s with me.” The lizard woman brushed him off superiorly; rather irritated it seemed to Jenny. “She’s a… the lizard woman looked at her and grinned. "She's a charity case."

Jenny scowled alternately between the man and the lizard woman as both moved off. The lizard woman was asking for a swift kicking if she tried saying that again.

They arrived outside a back alley tailors shop, dingy and drab. When Jenny saw the owner, she suddenly realised why the lizard woman was coming here.

"Ahhh hello. The Amazing Lizard Lady! I was expecting you soon! New dresses and costumes for the show ey? They will soon all come by no doubt." the very small man that came out the back was extremely well dressed, although the clothes were all old.

"I have quit the circus George." the "Amazing Lizard Lady" sighed.

He eyed her cautiously. "What will you do for money now then? Not much work for us. I had other talents ey?"

"I will think of something. For now, I require clothes fitted. For her. Mine are obviously too large. And yes, I have money. Savings."

"Ah well, in that case."

Jenny took a step back as George came towards her.

"A new recruit is she?" he circled her. "And what're your talents ey?"

Jenny shrugged. "I c'n pick a lock."

"Ah! An escapologist in training are you? Do you have any specific requirements for your clothing? Concealed pouches for wires and...whatever it is you people use?"

Jenny glanced at what she wasn't entirely sure she would call the amazing lizard lady but then again Jenny was feeling slight amazed at all this. Her lizard woman went round eating people, not buying them clothes.

"Just some basic black dresses for now, thank you George." the lizard woman intervened.

Jenny felt like a dress-up doll as she was measured. New! She hadn’t had new clothes in forever. Not that the black cloth that George held against her was particularly fancy, but it was new. The lizard woman even bought her a pair of second hand boots, all worn in and clumpy. They’d belonged to an acrobat. "Not for performances!" George assured her. "She was wonderful in performances."
"...was?" Jenny asked. The second question that day that she didn't quite want to know the answer to.

"Fell. Broke her back. They bring the day wear to me to sell on. I do a good business on it too. The costumes would never sell so they are given on, so to speak, to the next performer."

A grubby shift swam to the front of Jenny's mind. She wondered briefly who wore it now that The Amazing Lizard lady had quit.

George insisted on entertaining them to tea in his little shop, pressing the lizard woman for news on the circus. Jenny thought gossip from a circus might be interesting but it was more intrigues and awfulness and she crept back out into the shop, fingerling the rolls of fabric, the old dresses.

"I hope you haven't stolen anything." came a call from the doorway to the backroom. Jenny jumped and then scowled.

"Ain't nuffin' worth takin'."

"George is a friend. An old friend." the lizard woman stared at her.

"I didn't take nuffin'!"

"Hm. Come on then." she swept out and Jenny followed, without precisely knowing why she was obeying.

She staggered a little on the way back; it'd been a long time now without proper food.

“What’s wrong now?” the lizard woman turned as the clumping footsteps behind her faltered and stopped.

"'m 'ungry." Jenny gave a wry grin at the phrase.

“Why does that not surprise me in the slightest?” the lizard woman snorted. She fished in a skirt pocket for her purse. "Seeing as you had the grace to ask first this time." she held out a few coins. “Go. Buy whatever you apes happen to eat.”

Jenny took them warily. There was that niceness again. The lizard woman was giving her a meal, rather than using her for one. Still. She skipped off and found a place selling stew and bought a bowl and some bread.

"Fanks." Jenny said through a mouthful as the lizard waited impatiently for her to finish.

When they arrived back at the flat it was already dark. Jenny put her boots very carefully by the chest and folded up her dress and corset, getting changed back into what was now her night gown she presumed. The lizard woman was dressing in some weird get up and left before Jenny could question her on anything that had occurred that day.

She curled up in the bed, her mind buzzing with wonder and suspicion, her head aching slightly. With a groan, she rolled over and fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes
but there will be quite a few for now?
She woke the next morning and sensed someone next to her once again. She turned over carefully and saw the back of the lizard woman’s head. Without thinking, she reached out to touch the head spikes and the next thing she knew she was pinioned to the bed by a murderous lizard.

“How...little ape and I shall kill you.”

“Sorry. Sorry.” She whispered, trying not to tremble in fright. This one did seem like a genuine threat. Eating was a little more than a beating after all. However, nothing could stop her from muttering “not little, not an ape” under her breath.

The lizard woman snorted and curled back up. Jenny dashed out the bed as fast as possible and shimmied down the drain pipe once again to relieve herself.

When she returned the lizard woman was up, draped in several blankets and had made tea as a peace offering.

“How...food.” Jenny said again, more sincerely, taking the cup she was handed. She wondered how she would feel if the lizard woman just randomly started touching her hair. It struck her suddenly that as much as she was a lizard woman, and as much as she had spent time in a circus, she wasn’t a freak or anything. She should’ve known that already. She flushed in shame but then her stomach grumbled.

“How...food already?” The lizard woman gave a quick quirk of a grin and handed her a handful of coins out a small box on a desk along the back wall. “Go get food.”

Jenny dressed quickly and ran to a nearby shop. She bought a pie and some bread and some apples and then ran back, negotiating the drainpipe even with her packages with a skill born of snaking.

The lizard woman watched her with seeming fascination as she crouched by the fire, an odd sight in her black dress, tearing into the bread rolls, eating the pie with her fingers. Not that the lizard woman could exactly talk about table manners.

Jenny wrapped the rest up and placed it by the fire to keep it warm for lunch, licking her fingers. She looked curiously at the still staring lizard.

“What...was that?”

“Pie.”

“Pie.”

“Like...pastry...an’ meat.”

“Meat?” That got her attention.
Jenny carefully unwrapped the pie again. “Try a bit. S’good.”

The lizard woman gave her a look that said she didn’t entirely trust an ape’s opinion of food but delicately picked up a piece of meat. Her tongue snicked out and she swallowed.

“Hm. What kind of meat?”

“Beef I fink.”

“Hm.”

“Prefer people?” Jenny grinned.

The lizard woman gave her an odd stare but made no further comment and led down on the pallet bed with a book.

Jenny looked around, wondering what to do and decided to investigate the flat.

_Vastra ended up watching out the corner of her eye despite herself as the young woman ran silently, moved silently. It was intriguing, watching an ape move in this fashion. It reminded her of a hatchling. She only needed a darting tongue to taste the air. Vastra snorted at her idea and went back to her book._

_She saw Jenny stop out the corner of her eye. Three…two…one…_

“Whatchoo readin’ then?”

Even though she’d been prepared it startled her a little. The ape was silent, she’d give her that.

“A book.”

“Wos it about?”

“Apes.” Jenny looked with a most unimpressed expression on. She remembered it. “Humans, then.”

Jenny sighed. “What kind of people?”

“How should I know? The Doctor recommended I read some books to get to know the habits of ap…humans.” Vastra huffed. “Said it would help me integrate.” She studiously returned to her book and there was a moment of silence before…

“Did I ‘urt you when I touched yer…”

“Crests. And no. The idea that an ape could hurt me.”

“Not an ape!” Jenny stuck her tongue out again and didn’t wait for the lizard woman to stick hers out in return. She returned to scouring the flat.

It wasn’t large, a square room with the bare boards underneath a sloping roof. An attic room more than anything. The pallet bed and chest were tucked in an alcove in the corner. Further along the wall was the window overlooking the back yard. Along the next wall the fireplace, large enough to boil a kettle and to keep the room warm. On the hearth rested a tea pot and some cups. Along the next wall a set of steep narrow stairs, down which she hadn’t yet ventured alone. And then the back wall with the plain table that served as a desk, two stools shoved underneath it along with a small pile of books. It was strewn with papers, pens, old posters from the circus and the small ornate box that
Vastra had given her money from. Jenny steered clear of it, not wanting to be accused of stealing.

She looked in the chest but all that was in there was a pile of ragged dresses. She glanced at the lizard woman and then lightfooted across the floor and down the stairs.

They went onto a landing with other rooms leading off of it. A brief investigation turned up a very smelly bedroom and a bare room with a tin bath and a fire place in it. A string was hung from wall to wall, draped with stained underwear and clothing. Down another flight and the stairs came out into a small kitchen with a hob. An old woman was snoring in front of a fireplace, a bottle knocked over next to her feet. Jenny wrinkled her nose in disgust at the smell of alcohol. She was amazed a spark from the fire didn’t set the whole building ablaze. Apart from a sack of potatoes in the corner there didn’t seem to be much else in the way of food. The cupboards she opened deftly were filled with chipped crockery and old dishes. The table was clean but pockmarked with burn marks and knife holes. She wandered through the door, wincing at the squeak, into a largish room, dominated by tables and chairs and a bar.

She wandered casually over to the bar; behind which was a row of spirit bottles and leant on it, wondering if the amount of alcohol in the place was the reason the lizard woman had chosen it for quarters. After all, no-one was going to believe someone who’d been here and glimpsed a lizard woman were they. She snorted in contempt and turned round and ran straight into the old woman, who turned out to be a lot more solid than Jenny had given her to be.

After an ear-splitting rant about little urchins coming into her shop to steal gin, Jenny got dragged out into the street and the door slammed on her.

Not that this particularly caused her any problems. She darted down the side alley, hopped up onto the wall and shinned back up the drainpipe.

Vastra, having heard the rant of the landlady from up in the attic room, grinned to herself as the ape reappeared in the window and dropped lightly down into the room. Clearly the climbing skills of its ancestors hadn’t been lost. It went to sit by the fire and ate more of the pie, whilst staring into it. Vastra tried to read her book but ended up wondering what the ape was thinking about. She still looked like an oversized crow, with her tangle of hair and ragged dress. She sighed and went to have a talk with the landlady. She’d have to tell her about a new lodger anyway.

“Got a maid ‘ave yew ma’am? Well thas good. Old widder like yersel’ needs a young bod to run round doin’ the chores. Course the rent, the rent but oh mercy! It’s that little wretch! Well that explains her presence at least. But she’s a scrap of a thing. Where’d you pick this one up? The reform school?”

Jenny had started up at the voice as the cloaked figure of the lizard woman came back in.

“Yew sure about ‘er ma’am? She’ll be arf-inchin’ all yer money next thing you knows.” the landlady stage-whispered out the side of her mouth. Jenny’s face set into a displeased stubborn look. “Well I’ll not charge ye two lodger rent until she’s bin ‘ere a month. Prob’ly run off with any silver as soon as nothin’. I wouldn’t put yew out ma’am.” The landlady wandered back downstairs again.

Vastra looked at Jenny from inside her hood and watched as the young ape stuck her tongue out and made several rude gestures at the landlady’s retreating back. It made her grin widely. The little ape was spirited, made her tea, was warm…and not afraid. Perhaps the Doctor was right after all and she should keep this one. She considered it a little more seriously, her offer to the ape that it could stay here for now.

Jenny noticed the lizard woman watching and stopped hastily. “Weellllll, no call for ‘er to go round
casting asperdistras is there?"

She waited for a reply. *Vstra waited to try and understand precisely what Jenny had said.*

“Aspersions. And no, not really.”

“I mean, just cos I look all ragged ain’t no reason to accuse me of bein’ a lifter.”

“Says the ape who has already tried to pick my pockets.”

“Weel I din’ know you was snipe too did I. Thought you was some nit of a rich widder maybe. Sides I was on’y dippin’ cos the peelers were onna look out for a screw.”

The lizard woman hung her cloak back up. “I think even the TARDIS translation matrix is failing on that.”

“TARDIS?”

“Never mind.”

“So it ain’t right onna first butchers to say as I’m no good. S’all I’m sayin’.”

“No.”

Jenny slumped slightly and leaned on the windowsill, looking out at the less than salubrious view. Beyond the back yard, filled with weeds and a log pile were more backyards in similar conditions. “I ain’t no good though am I. Pinchin’ things, bein’ a runner for a gang, bein’ a snake, a screw, industrial school, reformatory school, workhouse, prison. On’y place I ain’t been is the asylum. You should kick me back out on the street, not buy clothes fer me.” She laughed a little forlornly.

“Why?” the lizard woman looked over at her.

“Might pinch all yer money.”

“Really?” her tone indicated boredom at the idea.

“Not really. But the gang might come back after me. Might kill yer fer ‘elpin’ me.”

She snorted. “I told you, I ate them.”

“You ate that lot. Say there’s more?”

A toothy smile appeared. “I certainly hope so.”

“You ain’t even scared? They’re the Tong Gang.”

“If they bother you that much, I’ll hunt down the rest of them too.”

“You’d do that?”

“Why not? It stops them being a problem and provides me with dinner for a few nights.”

Jenny felt strangely put out by that. The Lizard Woman wasn’t doing it for her. She just wanted food.

“Well then, that’s sorted.” The lizard woman seemed to take her silence for agreement.
“What is?” she shook herself.

“You can stay here.”

“What an’ warm yer bed?” she snarked, still feeling strangely hurt.

“You can sleep on the floor if you wish to.”

“What would I do?” Jenny didn’t think the lizard woman would let her stay just for nothing.

“Whatever it is that apes do. Talk and eat as it appears. The landlady believes you to be my maid, you could try doing that.” the lizard woman glanced around the flat after reclining on the pallet bed. There wasn’t a lot for a maid to do.

“Yer jus’ gonna let me stay ‘ere.” Now Jenny was confused.

“Feel free to leave at any time.” She picked up her book again.

“Gotta be kiddin’. Warm bed, food. Be a daftie to pass up on that.” Jenny hugged herself. A beat passed. “Why?”

Vasra gave up on any peace and quiet and set the book down. She walked over to sit on the windowsill. She had met this ape before. The Doctor had suggested her for a companion then. And Vasra was lonely, since leaving the circus. An ape could be useful in her current circumstances. And Jenny looked lonely too, staring out the window. What was it, this feeling? Pity? Empathy? A feeling of shared experience? Or was it the way that Jenny didn’t seem to mind the scales? Was she one of the “good” ones after all? Despite her apparently rather criminal past. She put her hand on Jenny’s shoulder and squeezed it as the Doctor had squeezed hers on numerous occasions. It seemed to be a comforting gesture among the apes. But she had no other answer to give her and she would have to deal with the Tong Gang it appeared, if she wanted to keep Jenny and to save herself too for that matter. The ape had indicated they would come after her for killing their men. Well it would provide some excitement for the evening she supposed.

Jenny stared after Vasra as the lizard woman walked back out the apartment. She hadn’t said anything and she didn’t return that night and Jenny curled up on the floor by the fire, wondering if she was out eating the rest of the Tong gang.
A Bath And A Blackett

Chapter Summary

The Doctor would be appalled, time progressing day to day like this

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She woke up to find herself in the bed, staring at the wall. She turned over in a flash and saw the back of the lizard woman’s head. Bed warmer. Right. She thought. She got up and dressed, making tea for the lizard woman and then slumped by the fire, hungry once more.

“Don’t forget to have a bath today. You’re beginning to stink.”

Jenny stuck her tongue out at the lizard woman who was now sat up in bed sipping tea, but collected a towel from the chest and departed for the room she’d seen with the tin tub.

The fire was already lit, presumably the landlady and she went out into the yard to the standcock to fill up the buckets to heat up.

It was still cold and she stared at the sky while she waited for them to fill up, wondering whether it would snow. The grey sky reminded her of the first time her and the lizard woman had crossed paths.

She put one bucket in large kettle on the fire and the other went straight into the tub. A bath was a lot of effort but the lizard woman’s comments might earn her a punch, which might result in Jenny getting eaten, so it was worth it.

She sighed as she stripped off her dress and corset, wincing as the action pulled on her wound.

“Which reminds me…” the lizard woman said from the doorway, causing Jenny to jump half a foot in the air. She hugged herself to try and cover up as the lizard woman advanced on her. “Really? There’s nothing there I haven’t seen before.” she quirked her head when Jenny just glowered at her. “As you wish. But stay still.”

Jenny couldn’t ever quite decide why she obeyed, standing still in only her drawers, why she trusted the lizard woman who ate people as she squatted before her, gently peeling back the dressing to inspect the wound the knife had made in her side.

“You were lucky.” The lizard woman told her. “They merely wished to make you bleed a little, not kill you. It is already healing.”

“Did yer afta stitch me?” Jenny peered down over her crossed arms to try and see it.

“No. Bathe. I will dress it again afterwards.”

The lizard woman left her and returned upstairs.

The bath was lukewarm at best but Jenny got the bar of soap from the mantelpiece and scrubbed
herself all over. The wound looked red and raw but clean at least. A miracle considering the knife, the miscreant and the alleyway she’d been attacked in.

After dressing in her drawers and wrapping a towel round her, she went back upstairs to find the lizard woman sat at the desk, writing what looked like a letter. It was hard to creep in a towel but Jenny was determined to pay the lizard woman back for walking in on her. “I’m ready.” She said loudly when she stood behind the lizard woman at last. It earned her a sideways glance and a raised eye ridge. Well it’d been worth a try.

The wound was cleaned with a liquid that made it sting and brought quick tears to Jenny’s eyes although she bit her tongue on every swear word she wanted to utter.

“Hold this.” The lizard woman placed a wad of something over the wound and Jenny pressed it down as she wound a bandage around her. Jenny felt a small little twitch as the lizard woman’s arms went round her but she put it down to fear. The lizard woman did eat people after all.

“There.” she tied it off in satisfaction and returned to her letter, disappearing to send it.

Jenny’s dress felt slightly grimy now she was clean but it was all she had. She emptied out the bath water into the yard, earning an approving glance from the landlady. She peered at the letters on the lizard woman’s desk, seeing if there was anything of interest, wondering who she’d been writing to.

Her stomach growled and she glanced at the small chest on the desk, her fingers itching slightly.

“Come here, ape.” That made twice she’d made Jenny jump and she was going to pay for it, Jenny swore on her flint. Still, she turned round and followed the lizard woman to the bed. “Sit.”

A little voice complained at Jenny obeying the curt commands but sit she did. The lizard woman turned her round roughly.

“I borrowed a brush from the landlady. Your hair is positively wild.” The lizard woman tugged it through sharply.

“OWW!!” Jenny started up and glared at her, tears in her eyes. “Fink it ‘urt less to be stabbed! Go gennel or give it me!” she held out her hand for the brush.

The lizard woman blinked.

“’ow’d you feel if’n I jus’ came up an’ ripped yer scales off?”

“Gentle.”

“Yes!”

“Hmph. Very well.” Jenny realised that she wasn’t about to release the brush and with a sigh plopped down on the floor again.

“What am I? A doll you fancy playin’ with?” She sighed again as her hair got tugged and pulled, still quite harshly but not enough to bring tears.


After about ten minutes of having her head jerked round Jenny stood up and grabbed the brush, running back to the fire to slowly comb through it and brush the tangles out, scowling at the lizard woman as she did.
Lacking anything to secure it with she left it loose and threw the clumps of hair into the fire, watching them burn.

“Ape!”

Jenny lifted her eyes from the fire but otherwise ignored it.

“Human then. Come here.”

Jenny approached more warily this time. “Whatchoo want now?”

“Can you read?” the lizard woman was holding out a book.

“Read?” Jenny took it and looked down on it. She was sure she could once but school seemed a long time ago. She took it and stared at the letters.

“Do you not know how to?” there was that contemptuous tone again.

Jenny shrugged and made an attempt.

“Stop! Stop. By the Goddess, are all apes as uneducated as you? How on Earth has your species survived?”

Jenny clammed up but she grabbed her wrist and sat her down on the bed.

“You know your letters? The letters of this language? Yes?”

Jenny nodded.

“Try again.”

In halting attempts, Jenny tried again. She didn’t quite comprehend what she was reading, it seemed devilish complicated but she tried.

“Do you know what you’re saying?”

She shook her head, memories of being hauled to the front of the class in the Schools and the sharp sting of a ruler across her knuckles to echoing laughter resurfaced and held her silent and downcast even as she felt the urge to clap the lizard woman one round the head.

The lizard woman retrieved her book and sighed, waving to dismiss her. Jenny’s face went through several contortions and then she stormed out.

Alas, without any money she couldn’t buy food. It was tempting to steal something but something stopped her and she returned to the yard to drink water from the stopcock and sit despondently on the back doorstep, chewing her lip.

“Owh mercy!” the landlady cursed as she nearly fell over her. “Oh tis you. Well you clean up well enough don’t you! I ‘ope yor bein’ good to the lady. Trustin’ of ‘er to take the likes of you in.”

Jenny’s stomach growled and she didn’t particularly feel like being “good to the lady” at all but she said nothing.

“Fancy ‘elpin’ me with some chores around the yard?”

Jenny shrugged and took the proffered broom. Her frustration made her vigorous.
When she’d finished the landlady came back, nodded. “Well an’ I s’pose you ain’t so bad for a maid after all.” She paused. “I might have a bite of some soup on the hob if you fancy it.”

It was a peace offering and Jenny was hungry and the potato and leek soup was good. The landlady winked at her as she poured herself some gin. “A tot when you get to my age allus does you good. Want one?”

Jenny shook her head.

“You got a name?”

“Jenny Flint.” She didn’t see much point in lying.

“Marjorie Blackett. But you can call me Missus Blackett.” Another tot of gin was poured out and a wink thrown in Jenny’s direction. In a split second she decided she liked Missus Blackett after all. Even if she did drink gin like it was water. A grin was offered in return for the wink.

“You don’t speak much do yer.”

Jenny shrugged, causing a snort of laughter from Missus Blackett.

“Well, considerin’ the usual crew round ‘ere I can’t say as I’m against a nice bit of quiet. If yer ever need a job ter do, I wouldn’t say no to a bit of ‘elp around the place an’ I won’t charge yer rent. ‘ow does that sound?”

“Fair ‘nuff.”

“Usually got a nice pot o’ somethin’ boilin’ too. Gets a bit lonely before the evenin’ customers.”

Jenny nodded, acknowledging the offer. Well, if it all fell through with the lizard woman, she might have a place to stay and work at least.

She kept out of the lizard woman’s way for the rest of the day, hiding when she departed later in the evening.

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Vasta was a little affronted but assumed the ape had run away. It was disappointing but really what else could one expect of apes? You tried to help them and they responded ungratefully. And the ape had warned her of her criminal past. She’d had a hope but that was that. She was a little surprised that her chest of money hadn’t been diminished at the same time.

After she’d left, Jenny moved back upstairs, grabbed the book off the floor by the bed and curled up by the fire and sat trying to read it. It was some kind of story. The person in it seemed to have a rather rough time, much like Jenny trying to read. She gave up in the end and drifted off to sleep, gazing into the fire.

She would have been surprised at the quirk of the lizard woman’s head, seeing the ape (still there after all!) curled up with the book and at the softening of her eyes as she thought of getting some simpler books for it. The gentle way the lizard woman dressed her in a nightgown before lifting her into bed, still making sure the fire would burn the night, even with a bed warmer.
but I'm having fun experimenting with writing and researching the minutae of Victorian life (not to mention cockney slang) so the Doctor can go suck a sherbet fancy
Jenny wasn’t really surprised to find she was in the bed when she woke but this time she turned over to see the face of the lizard woman. Despite having seen it before, seeing it close up still startled her. Without those blue eyes, it seemed more distant. She resisted any urge to touch the scales.

In what was swiftly becoming routine she wriggled out without disturbing her and got up, making the lizard woman tea and leaving it on the floor by the bed. She collected her clothes and went to have a wash so as the lizard woman couldn’t make any more comments about stinking. As she stood upright in the tin bath tub, washing carefully around the bandage, there was a knock on the door.

“I got some nice bacon yesterday from the butchers, would you be fancyin’ a slice or two before you start yer chores?”

“Yes please Missus Blackett.” Jenny called out, not about to turn down some bacon despite her utter confusion over this reversal of treatment. “I dunno…” she muttered to herself. “Throws you out an’ then offers yer bacon. Threatens to eat yer an’ then gives you a bed an’ a place to stay. Some people jus’ can’t be consistent.”

There was an egg thrown in for good measure by the time Jenny clattered her way downstairs.

“You is a skinny little scrap aren’t yer.” Missus Blackett tutted as she sat awkwardly at the kitchen table. “Get yer jaws around that.”

“I ain’t little.” Jenny said through a mouthful of bacon that muffled her words enough that Missus Blackett didn’t hear, taking it as thanks instead.

“Thas alright dear, s’no skin off me, though I imagine it was off the pig.” She laughed to herself.

Despite herself, Jenny’s mouth quirked up into a grin.

Jenny’s mother had died when she was 4, giving birth to her sister and after that there had not been an abundance of caring mother figures in her life, but as she wolfed down breakfast without ceremony and with little table manners, it appeared Missus Blackett had decided to take up the role.

Jenny returned upstairs to empty the bath tub but it was already occupied by a lizard woman. She tripped over her dress hem in her haste to turn back round, not wanting to get accused of staring again.

“Ah. It’s you. Have you come to help me bathe?”
“Wot?? No! I came to empty the ol’ bath water is all!” Jenny felt her cheeks flame red.

“Well, if you insist.” She heard the lizard woman stand up and wrap a towel round her. With carefully averted eyes, Jenny walked past her to retrieve the bath tub and went to empty it out.

By the time she went back up to the flat, the lizard woman was decent again. Jenny wondered briefly why she didn’t just leave. Sure, hot food, a fire, a bed but she’d lived on the streets enough in her life that she wasn’t soft. She could always find some fresh game or adventure, especially if the Tong gang truly was done for.

“Come!” the lizard woman beckoned her, lifting a veil onto her head, instead of her usual cloak.

Maybe because the lizard woman felt like an adventure. Jenny looked at the veil critically as she followed the lizard woman. It didn’t exactly disguise anything.

“Don’t people notice?” she asked, on their way to wherever it was they were going.

“Notice what?”

“Weeeeelll…yer veil ain’t much use is it? See through as a window.” Jenny shrugged. The lizard woman stopped and Jenny walked into her back with a faint ‘oof’.

“You can see through it?” The lizard woman didn’t turn round, her voice wondering and stunned.

“Fink arf a London can see through that.”

“On the contrary, you are the first.” The reply baffled Jenny but they were walking again and Jenny wasn’t entirely sure where they were so she kept close to the lizard woman’s heels. They got some very odd stares again.

“You sure they can’t see through it?”

A bitter laugh. “Positive.”

“Only people seem to be starin’ somethin’ chronic.”

“Maybe they’re staring at you, a scruffy little ape tailing around.”

One more…one more ‘ape’ and thwack that was it, even if she did get eaten for it. She kept her silence and her temper for now as they reached a small book shop.

“I would like to purchase some children’s novellas.” The lizard woman told the proprietor as she strode through the front door with an air of grandeur.

“Right you are ma’am.”

Jenny stood stunned as several books were brought out, inspected, declared fit and bought and unceremoniously loaded into her arms.

Eventually they were full and she struggled with the packages as they made their way back to what Jenny was already thinking of as “home” despite herself.

“Thinkin’ of startin’ a library as a means fer money?” Jenny asked, a little out of breath as they reached the small attic room.

“Hmph. There.” The lizard woman gestured towards the packages Jenny was holding. “Something
simpler for you. Even you should be able to read those.” She said dismissively and curled up reading her own book.

Jenny stood in the middle of the room, her jaw hanging open, debating whether to throw the books at the lizard woman, whether the lizard woman was serious about her reading children’s books and what precisely to do next.

The lizard woman sighed at her and got back up. “These books.” She rested a finger on them. “They are yours.” She pointed at Jenny. “Read them.” She swirled away again back to the bed.

Pique at being ordered to read was overcome by innate curiosity and Jenny carefully piled the books up in a corner and sat reading one. It was still complicated as anything to read but at least had pictures in it. There was a small girl and bizarre animals having a tea party. Jenny had seen rats and the like but not the animals depicted in the books.

It was a little bit violent really and she didn’t think much of the young girl but she liked the idea of the tea party. She read that bit out loud without realising it and the lizard woman smiled at the description of the tea party and made her read it again, flushing at having been caught and still stumbling slightly over the words.

She tried to set up a tea party in the evening, having gone out and procured some pie and biscuits with a coin from the chest given to her. The lizard woman uncurled again and came to sit cross legged with her, which surprised her.

“You are playing.” she grinned, when questioned why.

“So?”

“I suspect you have not had much opportunity for ‘play’ before. It is essential for the development of the imagination.”

“I played.”

“What did you play?” the lizard woman asked, pouring out the tea.

“Pickin’ locks. Stones. Thas like marbles. Only wiv stones. Tag.”

“Tag?”

“Like…you chase after someone…and then when you catch ‘em and hit ‘em then they have to chase after you. I dunno. Weren’t…well like you said. Not a lot opportunity for it. Not in the Schools or on the streets. Too busy tryin’ ter survive.” Jenny shrugged, suddenly not as keen on playing. It seemed paradoxically both immature and above her level.

“As long as you do not disturb the landlady you can play as much as you want.” The lizard woman sipped her tea.

“I ain’t little y’know. You an’ Missus Blackett both, you treat me like a kid.”

“So? Should play stop when one becomes fully grown?”

“…dunno. I ain’t never seen no adults play.”

“So many negatives in one sentence. I’m amazed. Am I not an adult?”

“Dun’ even knows what you are.” Jenny shrugged.
“I am a Silurian.” The…Silurian answered tartly, thrusting a cup into Jenny’s hands.

“Silurian.”

“Yes.” There was a pause. “My name is Vastra.”

“Vastra.” Jenny tried out the word on her tongue. She found she liked it. “Vastrraaaa.” She slurred the r’s and a’s.

“Do not say it like that.” Vastra looked affronted. “Although, if you are to be my maid, you should possibly call me ma’am or something similar.”

“Of course, me lady grace.” Jenny doffed a pretend hat in mock obeisance, looking back at the book to see what else the Tea Party should have but also to avoid Vastra’s glare. “Hm. Wonder if we could catch any mice to be the dormouse…”

Vastra laughed. “There are no mice around here. I shall take their place.”

Jenny stared at her strangely, a hulking great big lizard woman pretending to be a mouse. But it was fun. She was actually very good at it. Jenny tried her best to be the grandiose and mad hatter, waving her tea cup about violently and stifling her giggles. Fun. Playing. It was new.

Missus Blackett knocked on their door, wondering what all the thumping was about and Jenny threw Vastra’s veil at her and then let her in.

“We’re havin’ a tea party!”

“Yer makin’ more noise than me customers do when they’re soused is what you are.”

“Aw c’mon Missus Blackett. You gotta come ‘ave a cup o’ tea wiv us now!”

Jenny’s exuberance flustered the old woman and she somehow ended up sitting down with them on the floor and drinking tea.

“Though lord knows ‘ow I shall get me ol’ bones back up again.” She rolled her eyes.

_Vastra smiled behind her veil as she watched Jenny point out the requirements of a tea party. Somehow the little ape charmed the crotchety old landlady into being the March Hare and bouncing round the flat, complaining slightly that she didn’t know what people would think if they saw her. Vastra pondered this, wondering if all adult apes thought that fun was prohibited beyond drinking alcohol._

They played together a little longer, Missus Blackett regaling them with some tales of her childhood and then with a final “ooh me old bones” Missus Blackett departed downstairs again, thanking Jenny for the wonderful evening. “You made me feel quite young again.” She grinned.

Vastra followed soon after, once again dressed up in her peculiar outfit. Jenny was too energetic to sit down and read some more so she had another exploration of the apartment. Spartan though it was, it was also rather filthy. She sneaked into the bar, currently not at its busiest and asked Missus Blackett for something to clean with. Armed with a broom and some rags, she cleaned vigorously. After all, if she was going to be a maid, she should at least attempt to do something and it tired her out.

No carpets to beat though. She went to bed, deciding that it was simpler than having the …Vastra pick her up every time, with a grin and an idea. She vaguely remembered how to do it.
do what? a mystery.
By Hook, By Crook

Chapter Summary

Crochet was apparently very popular in the Victorian era. A short chapter and not very good due to tiredness.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jenny sat by the bed, already dressed, sipping her tea and waiting for Vastra to wake up for hers. After wrapping herself up in the covers, Vastra took the proffered cup. Jenny stared at her silently, waiting for the Silurian to wake up enough that she would be open to her suggestion.

“What is it ape?” Vastra asked eventually, unnerved by the silent gaze.

“I know you got me a lot of stuff already an’ I know we don’ ‘ave much money but…”

“You want something?”

“S’just s’a bit…bare this room an’ I was thinkin’ I learnt ‘ow to crochet in the reformatory an’ I was thinkin’ if you got me the ‘ooks an’ the wool I c’d make some stuff. Might cheer it up a bit.”

“Crochet.”

“Yeah s’like knitting but not really.”

“Knitting.”

“S’a way of makin’ things. You loops wool or thread together an’ it…” The look on Vastra’s face told Jenny that she did not understand in the slightest. “You know ‘ow clothes are made? S’a bit like that on’y you make rugs an’ stuff. Doilies.”

“Dollies??”

“Doilies. S’what they’re called. Fer…fer puttin’ on stuff.”

“And you require hooks?”

“A special kind of hook. An’ wool.”

There was a long pause as Vastra finished her tea and Jenny fidgeted.

“Very well. Where would we acquire such hooks?”

“I dunno really. A shop. We c’d arsk Missus Blackett, bet she’d know.”

After gaining directions from Missus Blackett as to the location of a haberdashery shop nearby, Jenny and Vastra set out together.

A little bell tinkled as they entered the shop and from the back, a woman appeared. She started to
greet them but Vastra cut her off.

“My maid wishes to acquire a…” Vastra paused and looked at Jenny. “A crochet.”

“’ook!” Jenny whispered.

“A crochet hook.”

The shop assistant looked at them oddly. “Well, we have a standard set here.” She brought them out and set them on the counter. “Would you be looking to buy wool as well?”

“Yes. A selection of wool as well.”

“And which colours would madam like?”

Jenny shrugged when Vastra looked at her. “Purple. And green. And black too I think.” Vastra answered.

It gained them another odd look, with a dash of suspicion but the assistant brought out a few bundles.

“Yes. That one.” Vastra pointed. “And that one. That one.” She went through picking out half a dozen colours, all shades of purple or green.

After a pile had appeared on the counter, the haggling began over the price for all of it. Jenny had seen and indeed done a bit of haggling in her time but Vastra didn’t appear to grasp the concept very well, insisting constantly on a much lower figure.

Even with Vastra’s terrible haggling skills, it became apparent that it would cost a little more than they could really afford. The shop assistant threatened to throw them out and went out the back to retrieve the manager. Jenny glanced at Vastra and then quietly picked up the hooks and several balls of wool, left the money Vastra had offered on the counter and nodded towards the door. Vastra caught on and they fled in silence.

“I’m not sure that was entirely legal.” Vastra commented after they got home.

“Story of me life.” Jenny shrugged, piling the wool on the floor and sitting down to the tricky business of remembering precisely how to crochet. It involved a great deal of cussing and Vastra, unable to concentrate on her book, gave up and squatted next to Jenny on the floor, watching intently.

By the end of the day, with a break for lunch and dinner, Jenny had a sizeable amount that was very badly done.

“You expect me to drape this about the place?” Vastra picked at one end of an uncertain shape, looking very unimpressed.

“Do what yer like.” Jenny snapped, throwing down her crochet hook in frustration that her idea had not been that successful. She stomped over to the bed and curled up under the covers.

The next day, Vastra disappeared out after a cup of tea and didn’t return all morning, leaving Jenny to try again in peace.

She came back at lunch time with a pie and a book on clothes and cotton.
“This is about weavin' you stupid lizard! Not crochet.” Jenny sighed in exasperation as she glanced at the cover.

“I was only trying to help.” Vastra sniffed, affronted and curled up on the bed with the book.

Jenny guiltily ate some of the pie and then returned to work with renewed vigour, determined to make something by the end of the day.

Halfway through the afternoon, Vastra snorted with laughter.

“Wot?” Jenny looked up, thinking she was laughing at her.

“There was once such a thing, used to spin thread, called a Spinning Jenny.” Vastra grinned and brought the book over to Jenny to prove it. Jenny grinned, put down her work and Vastra watched in mild amazement as Jenny proceeded to spin around the apartment, her long skirts and loose hair flying. The spinning made Jenny dizzy and she staggered into Vastra and then collapsed in a heap laughing. She looked up from the floor to catch Vastra watching her with a small smile which swiftly disappeared as Vastra caught her gaze.

It was late into the evening when Jenny triumphantly tied off her work.

“There!” She was about to tug it onto Vastra’s head and then remembered Vastra’s warning about touching her and merely held it out.

“What is it?” Vastra examined.

“S’a night cap. To keep yer head warm at night.”

Vastra gingerly put it on. It was large and floppy enough that it fitted over her head crests and fell in front of her eyes slightly.

“D’yer like it?” Jenny stood, twisting her hands into her dress nervously.

Vastra grinned in reply and wore it to bed every night after.

Chapter End Notes

Fic Title Drop! The Spinning Jenny is actually a thing used in the industry back in the 1700s.

Fic Title Explanation: I liked the idea of spinning a person, as in bringing together strands of their life to make a coherent thread and with the random knowledge of Spinning Jennies, it was too good not to use. And of course I had to bring it into the story.
“Come, ape, we must collect your clothes.” Vastra called to Jenny where she stood in front of the fire, attempting to do something with her hair.

“Not. An. Ape!” Jenny growled, abandoning her hair to stalk over to Vastra and wave the hairbrush under the Silurian’s snub nose. Vastra snapped her teeth, causing Jenny to instinctively hit out. Vastra stepped backwards and neatly jerked Jenny to the floor, knocking the breath from her. But Jenny had survived on the streets and Vastra soon joined her by way of a sure and swift tug to her ankle. With a snarl Vastra rolled and pinned her easily, despite Jenny’s fish like wriggling.

“Grrrghh!!” Jenny’s hand reached for Vastra’s head crests but the outcome that would’ve resulted from this action was never known for there was a knock at the door. They both froze and turned to look at it as a sorrowful man in a leather jacket walked in.

“Vastra!” he scolded as he saw them and she released Jenny, hastily getting to her feet. “Thought you didn’t eat children.”

“She started it.” Vastra sniffed.

“I never!” Jenny Flint leapt up to defend herself, her breath now recovered. “An’ I ain’t a child!” She brandished her hairbrush at the Doctor.

“You threatened me with a hairbrush.” Vastra rounded on her, relieving her of the item in question.

“Only cos you called me “ape” again! Dunno how many times!”

“Ape?” the man asked, looking from one to the other.

“Don’ you start!” Jenny, divested of her weapon, resorted to shaking her fist in warning.

“Wouldn’t dream of it. Hello again Jenny Flint. Still ‘ard as ‘em I see.”

Jenny dropped her fist in shock. And then her jaw dropped in shock too as she recognised the man. “Doctor?”

“Hello!” he waved. “She didn’t manage to scare you off after all then.”

“Not exactly.” Jenny fidgeted.

“Sounds like a story. Anyone for a spot of tea?”

Jenny nodded and went to get the cups, glancing at a scowling Vastra.
“So!” The Doctor said, sitting on the small stool that Vastra hauled out from under the desk for him and leaning back against the desk in the most relaxed fashion. She remained standing and Jenny crouched on the floor by the fire, monitoring the kettle. “What’s been happening? Still fighting I see?” He inspected his nails. “You’re like an old married couple!”

He grinned as the pair of them simultaneously glowered at him, wagging a finger between them. “See? You’re even in perfect sync.”

“Ain’t nuffin’ like it. She’s jus’ keepin’ me off the streets for a while.”

“She was in some trouble and I rescued her.” Vastra added.

The Doctor looked at Jenny oddly. “Ahh. You’re the mysterious match girl too are you? Have you solved the problem with the gang?” he turned to Vastra.

Vastra smiled smugly and licked her lips. “They won’t be bothering her again.”

“So what happened with you Vastra? I got most of the story but still. This is new. Offering charity?”

“It is…convenient. Having an ape around. I’m employing her as my maid.” Vastra shrugged.

“Pull the other one.” The Doctor grinned at Jenny’s indignation as she handed him his tea. “What’s this?” He hooked the toe of his boot through Jenny’s abandoned blanket. “Crochet? Gettin’ a bit domestic aren’t you Vastra? For a warrior?”

“It is hers.”

“Ahh.” The Doctor stopped taunting and got up, looking around to inspect the flat. He crouched by Jenny’s pile of books and examined them. “Alice in Wonderland. Wonderful book! You like it?” he asked Jenny.

“Yeah. We ‘ad a tea party like the one in it.”

“Was Vastra the Mad Hatter?” he grinned at her.

Jenny snorted into her tea and sniggered. Vastra seemed to have gone a darker shade of green and her blue eyes held fire.

“No. She were…the Dormouse.”

“You’re the one who keeps falling asleep.” Vastra stuck her tongue out. “How many times have I had to carry you to the bed now?”

“On’y cos you want a bed warmer! I slept on ‘arder places ‘n the floor. Stupid lizard!”

“Little ape!”

The Doctor grinned to himself, watching as they bickered. “Well this does seem a cosy set up.”

They both turned in unison to glower at him again.

“So! How about some food then ey? Run out and get us some Jenny could you? You look fair starved. Haven’t you been feeding her Vastra?”

Vastra snorted but gave her some money and she stepped out into the cold February air that made her breath cloud in front of her. She suspected he wanted to talk to Vastra alone, as he had done all those
years ago when she’d eavesdropped. This time she didn’t, granting them privacy and the pie shop was at least warmer than crouching on a doorstep.

“So, you decided to keep her after all then?” The Doctor asked, placing Alice in Wonderland carefully back on the pile and rising to his feet, dusting his trousers off.

“You suggested, a while ago, that I find a companion and this ape is not scared, nor does she stink quite as badly as the others.”

“So you said.”

“You think she is unsuitable?”

“Nah. I think she’s perfect fer you. Thought so the first time we all met.” He leaned against the desk once more. “But be careful ey Vastra?”

“Careful about what?”

“She’ll be yer companion, if she chooses to stay cos you can’t make ‘em in the end. She won’t be a pet or a toy. Or a maid. Or whatever else you’re thinking of her as. You let ‘er get away once. Don’t be stupid again.”

“I don’t know what you mean.” Vastra shrugged dismissively.

“Well if you don’t, I’m sure she’ll soon tell you. I’ll leave you two to it. But I’ll call again soon.”

“Of course. After all, we are friends.” Vastra smiled but she was unnerved slightly. What did he mean by “Don’t be stupid again.”

“Hm.” The Doctor grinned. “You’ve changed Vastra. Goin’ from eating apes to bein’ friends with ‘em? Jenny must be good for you.” He got up to walk out the door but popped his head back round for one final word. “But uh do try to keep the fighting to a minimum.” He winked and disappeared out the door.

The Doctor was just closing the door to the flat as Jenny came back up the stairs, bearing pie. He placed his hands on her shoulders and stopped her.

“Here. Listen, Jenny Flint. Vastra is important to me. An’ I care about her a lot. She’s one of me oldest friends and that means somethin’ when I say it, trust me. But I can’t be here all the time. She’d get annoyed at me and I’d get bored.” he shrugged. “So I want to ask you something. A favour, if you like.”

“Wot?” she eyed him suspiciously.

He grinned as he heard the door open behind him to reveal a piqued looking lizard. “Will you look after yer stupid Silurian for me an’ keep her out of trouble?”

Vastra snorted contemptuously and disappeared back inside the flat. Jenny stared seriously into the Doctor’s eyes. He stared back and despite his grin, seemed equally serious. “Alright.” She nodded once.

“Promise?” he waved a finger at her.

“I promise.”

“Fantastic!” he ruffled her hair. “Now be good. Both of yer!” he called loudly over his
“Especially to each other.” He grinned once more and slouched off whistling and jingling something in his pockets.

Jenny paused before going back into the attic room, wondering just what she’d gotten herself into and also since when was the Silurian hers? She opened the door to find Vastra standing behind it as if she’d been eavesdropping, not that Jenny could particularly judge. She twitched away, on edge, a strange disturbed restlessness. Jenny deposited her pie on the hearth and looked at it. Then at her books. And her crochet. And the nightgown that was crumpled at the bottom of their bed. Vastra, in their few days together, had given her quite a lot. And there were clothes on order for her too.

How did you even go about looking after a Silurian that ate people, Jenny considered, glancing at Vastra again as she ate her way through half a pie. The Silurian was ignoring her, sitting at her desk and staring at the small chest on it. And yet Jenny had promised, without a thought. Without a hesitation. She’d never made a promise before, not to anyone and she felt a small weight settle in her chest. She supposed it was what responsibility felt like.

A long awkward silence later, Vastra stood up suddenly.

“Come.” She gestured imperiously for Jenny to follow but at least didn’t call her ape. She must’ve been nervous about something Jenny noted for she wore both her cape and her veil as they walked out in silence.

Vastra didn’t say a word as they went to collect Jenny’s clothes, giving Jenny plenty of time to think through the few scenarios she could come up with where she could look after Vastra.

Still, her clothes were new and made for her and she was rather delighted not to have to trip on hems any more. It’d made moving silently almost impossible when she walking.

“Gaw don’ I look like a lady.” She grinned at Vastra once they’d returned home, spinning to make her skirts swish, trying to get Vastra to laugh. The Silurian merely smiled formally in return as Jenny stumbled, disappointed she hadn’t succeeded.

She went downstairs to see Missus Blackett who was appropriately admiring of her new dresses, plain though they were and spent the afternoon being taught how to put her hair up in a proper maid’s bun so that she could “look right proper smart!” as Missus Blackett exclaimed, taking Jenny up to her bedroom so she could see herself in the small spotted mirror.

Jenny peered at herself curiously. Wide brown eyes, curly black hair, that mole. She twitched her nose. She looked a bit respectable like this, all clean and tidy. Another gift from the ape-hating lizard woman.

But, Jenny pondered, as Vastra curled up with her back to her later on when they went to bed, it was rather odd that this ape-hating lizard would rescue one, give it gifts and share her bed with it, warmth or no warmth. Her lips bent into a small grin. Vastra had said a pet, a maid, someone to make her tea and keep her bed warm, but Jenny thought perhaps, just perhaps the lizard had taken a liking to her, surely must have, otherwise she’d’ve been eaten or back out on the streets long ago. She found herself liking Vastra at any rate. There was an awkward kindness, mixed with uncertainty covered by blustering bravado that was cute, in a lizard hungry for humans and disgusted by “apes” kind of way. The image of a hissing lizard woman in a grubby shift behind bars flashed in her mind. Possibly the disgust was understandable. Jenny’s heart twinged with guilt suddenly, at the thought she might have been cruel earlier, laughing at Vastra having played the dormouse. Playing was clearly important to Vastra and she’d laughed.

“Vastra…” she whispered as she turned over onto her back.
“Yes?” the Silurian didn’t move.

“I was on’y teasin’ earlier.”

“Yes.”

There was a silence. Jenny picked at the front of her nightgown.

“Vastra?”

“Yes…” came a little more tersely and wearily.

“I like me clothes.”

“Good.”

Another small silence. Jenny rolled onto her side, propping herself up on her elbow, not that she could see anything in the darkness.

“Vastra.”

“Yes?” came a snapped response from a head that finally turned to look at Jenny.

“I never said thanks for savin’ me life.”

“No.” A tone of indifference as the Silurian flopped her head back down.

“...thank you.”

“…You’re welcome Jenny.”

Jenny was about to drop off to sleep when it struck her that Vastra had just called her by her name for the first time. She grinned at the Silurian’s back and then shook her head at the fact that it pleased her so much, rolled over to mirror Vastra and promptly fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

I did not intend for that to be quite so adorable, if indeed it was adorable. If it wasn't, ignore this end note.
An Unmentioned Thing

Chapter Summary

Vastra smells blood

Chapter Notes

there is always a startling lack of mentioning in TV, films, literature etc how people who have periods deal with them in different eras and apocalyptic situations and I wasn't having that in this fanfic

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They settled into an easy routine. Jenny would wake, dress and bring Vastra tea before going out to procure food for the day. If she bought pie or anything with meat in it, Vastra would share a little with her but otherwise Jenny didn’t enquire too closely about Vastra’s dining habits. Jenny would then clean up (Vastra bought her a plate and a knife and fork which she clumsily learnt how to use although not with a great deal of etiquette) and dust the flat before chopping some wood for them, which built up her muscles nicely. She learned how to wash her clothes with help from Missus Blackett, who called her “a piss poor excuse for a maid” when she discovered Jenny wrangling with the mangle.

In the afternoons Jenny would try to crochet rough rugs for the flat or she would help Missus Blackett out and in the evenings she read voraciously and soon was reading Vastra’s books too. Vastra bought her a dictionary to stop the woman pestering her with a list of words every day but doubted that anything would improve that accent and didn’t comment on it.

And at night, Jenny would curl up in bed and Vastra would lie alongside her, always on the outer edge. Unless Vastra went out in which case Jenny would wake up the next morning to find her there.

24th February 1887 (a Thursday)

Even in such a short space of time, Vastra had become accustomed to their routine and was therefore surprised when she woke and Jenny was still curled up next to her, groaning slightly.

“Jenny?” her tongue flicked out automatically and to her surprise tasted blood in the air. “Jenny!” she turned the still groaning woman onto her back. “What’s wrong? Have your wounds re-opened?” She had re-dressed them but two days ago and they’d been healing fine.

“Leave off…” Jenny muttered, knocking Vastra’s hands away as Vastra tried to lift up her night gown. “It’s that bleedin’…ha lit’rally bleedin’ an’ all time thas all.” She massaged her stomach slightly.

“You are bleeding?” Vastra stared in confusion.

“Do lizards not do the whole bleedin’ thing?”
“…no. What do you do?”

“Do? I don’t do nuffin’. Maybe stick a rag up if it gets heavy.”

“You stick…rags up?”

“You were the one sayin’ you’d seen it all before. Ain’t you never met a woman?”

“And you don’t die??”

“No. Although some as will say they’d gladly kill durin’ it.” Jenny turned onto her stomach, groaning into her pillow.

“Does it hurt?”

“Yff.” Came the muffled reply.

“Can I do anything?”

“Nhh.”

“Would you like me to get some rags?”

Jenny stuck her head back up. “Well s’either that or I make a mess of the bed clothes.”

With a task to do at least, Vastra dressed swiftly. She tore up an old dress that was far too ragged to wear, washed the strips vigorously and then fashioned them into small wads.

Jenny had gone to relieve herself and come back and curled back up again.

Vastra gave her privacy after handing her a wad but hovered a little uncertainly.

*Jenny mostly ignored her, so she made tea and then went out to get food for the ape, for she didn’t look well at all.*

Jenny was surprised at being handed a cup of tea and even more surprised when Vastra came back with some fresh rolls from the bakery.

She ate them gratefully and then curled back up in bed, Vastra squatting by it. Jenny almost laughed, she looked like a cat or something, head tilted curiously. She wriggled to the side of the bed and leaned to look her directly in the eye.

“Yor bein’ a bit nice ent yer?”

“You are in pain. And bleeding.”

“S’what happens to us ‘umans. Well, the women ones. Means yer can have kids.”

“You’re going to have a child??” Vastra fell over backwards with a thump at the thought of a mewling ape cub.

“Nooooo.” Jenny sighed, flopping forward. “S’just that y’know…if you went with a bloke…it could happen.”

“Oh. I have never heard of any other creature having to suffer such a thing. It seems terrible.” She regained her squat stance.
“It ‘urts.”

“Where?”


“Hm. Stay on your front.” Vastra commanded as she stood up.

“Why?” Jenny asked but acquiesced all the same, arms still hanging off the edge of the bed. Vastra knelt carefully over her, resting on her heels and placed her hands on Jenny’s shoulders. She twitched. “Yer ‘ands are cold!”

“My apologies.” Vastra muttered tartly. She ran her hands firmly over Jenny’s shoulders and then began working down Jenny’s spine. There were a few grunts if she hit a tense spot but they turned into soft exhalations and even moans when she began massaging Jenny’s lower back. She felt the a…human relax beneath her, softening as if she were about to melt.

“Thas magic that is.”

“A massage.” Vastra corrected her. “They were commonly used to help recuperation from strains and injuries.”

“Magic.” Jenny sighed.

“Hm. It is barbaric if women have to endure this every month with no form of relief.” Vastra shook her head, moving her hands to Jenny’s sides. And got thrown on her back as Jenny suddenly convulsed.

“Whatever is the matter now?!” she asked affronted.

“That tickled!” Jenny clutched at her nightgown, glowering in equal amounts back.

“Hmph.” Vastra snorted and moved off the bed to make more tea.

Jenny sighed. Vastra, hearing it, moved awkwardly back. How strange that she should feel so protective and worried over the little ape…

“Did it help?”

“Hm?”

“The massage. Until I tickled you at least. It was not my intention.”

“Ain’t you ticklish?”

“Not that I am aware of, no.” Vastra sat on the edge of the bed. Later she realised she’d rather let herself in for what happened next.

Jenny grinned and grabbed her round the middle, twirling deft finger tips in circles on her sides. Vastra yelped and knocked Jenny backwards.

“Perfidious ape!” She snarled, pinning Jenny beneath her.

“You was the one who said you weren’t tickliyyEEP!” Jenny squealed as Vastra imitated the swirling movements. “Oi!” she gasped, trying not to laugh as she wrestled with the Silurian, trying to get her own back until they were both rather entangled in the bed sheets and breathless. And then
Jenny did something which Vastra found entirely captivating, and would do from that day forth. She laughed, so openly, so freely that Vastra found herself grinning. Jenny subsided into sniggers and turned to face Vastra who hastily wiped the grin off, but not before Jenny caught it.

“Well, I’m glad that has cheered you up at any rate.” She blustered, incredibly glad that no-one else had seen that. *Only imagine what her sisters would’ve said…playing like that with an ape!* “I’ll go and get you lunch shall I?” she fought herself free, grabbed her veil and swept grandly out the flat.

The smile on Jenny’s face faded into confusion but her lips quirked at the memory of Vastra yelping and that grin. Fun. That was fun. Playing. A quick cramp made her groan and she flopped backwards. At least this time she didn’t have to worry about finding a corner to curl up and bleed in. Vastra had even washed the rags! Luxury.

“I c’d get used ter this.” Jenny grinned, devouring half the pie Vastra had bought with ease, tucked back up in bed.

“I would suggest not.” Vastra sniffed, removing her veil and setting more tea ready. Jenny’s lip quirked and she tilted her head to regard the lizard woman.

“S’pose yer right. After all, when yer get bored o’ me an’ kick me back out on the streets, I won’t exactly be livin’ in the lap of luxury no more.”

“This is hardly the lap of luxury now.”

“True it ain’t. You said you wanted to live some of it tho. Ain’t you got no plans? What d’yer do fer money?”

“I…work in a circus.” Vastra admitted, determinedly not allowing shame to creep up on her. “Well, used to.”

Jenny remembered the circus and wondered if Vastra remembered her. “Why’d yer stop?”

“They had nonsensical ideas. I didn’t mind being in a cage, terrifying apes as they came through, but doing tricks with my tongue? Utterly disgusting.”

“Sounds awful.”

“It was a job. Being a criminal sounds awful.”

Jenny shrugged. “Ain’t much other employment for the likes of me. S’all I know really.”

There was an awkward silence.

“I meant what I said.” Vastra shifted uneasily.

“’bout what?”

“That you may live here. I don’t particularly care what else you do. But, if you care to, this can be your home. I won’t kick you out, even if I do get bored of you.”

Jenny eyed her knowingly. “Gotten to like me around ‘ave yer?”

Vastra snorted. “I wouldn’t go that far. The Doctor told me something once. He’d read it in a book. Those that we save, we are responsible for.”

“So this is some kind of obligation? You fink yer doin’ me a favour? I lived on the streets long
enough, I can get by well enough without you!” Jenny felt stung.

“Really? Then why is it I have had to save you! Twice now, remember.”

“So now I owe you, is that it?”

“And you think you are repaying that by staying here, eating through my money?” Vastra scoffed.

“If you want me to go, I can go fine enough.”

“I just said, ape, I will not kick you out. It is your own decision.”

They glowered at each other for a minute.

“I’m on’y stayin’ fer the food. An’ the bed.” And she had her promise to keep but she wasn’t about to tell Vastra that.

“Fine.”

A frosty silence was maintained between them for the rest of the day. It gave Jenny plenty of time to think about what they were going to do about money though. She’d peeked into Vastra’s box and it was looking a lot emptier than it had been. And if Vastra had quit the circus, well that meant they had no income whatsoever. Maybe that was how she could look after the Silurian? Get a job somewhere. Couldn’t be in an office but maybe in a factory? Something. A Silurian wasn’t exactly going to survive long on the streets or in a workhouse and Missus Blackett was kind but hardly in a position to give out charity herself, even if Jenny did help her with the chores.

With her head aching from thinking too much and her body cramping and in pain, Jenny decided she’d sort it out once this was finished and curled back up to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

as far as I can find out by researching, that's they did in the Victorian era. Rags or just lettin' it bleed.

Again not my best chapter due to being a sad Flintlock.
March began and Jenny was once more up and about, pondering about how to earn money. Her wounds fully healed, looking poor but honest in her clothes and second hand boots, she wondered if she couldn’t find work somewhere. But her search turned up nothing but skivvy jobs or maid work, most of which seemed to be live in and which she was slightly too old to do. She lacked any skills at cooking, lacked a decent education and, in her mind, anything but a talent for thieving. Maybe she could be a street seller again? But there was a left over fear of being recognised. Was the Tong gang really out of the way?

It bothered her and she annoyed Vastra by tossing and turning at night until the Silurian snapped at her and she stomped out and walked the streets for a little while.

The next day she looked inside the box of coins and saw it was practically empty. If Vastra had quit the circus then there was no more money coming in. A week later, they’d run out of wood, the little fireplace cold and ash-y. She felt Vastra shiver in the night and there wasn’t even tea in the morning.

Lacking any other ideas, Jenny lifted a purse, using it buy lunch and wood and depositing the rest in the box.

“Where did this come from?” Vastra asked one morning, coming home from a night wander to find a fire lit and food and money in the chest.

“Where d’yer think?” Jenny snorted, not glancing up from the book she was reading.

“You stole it.” The Silurian closed the box and stared at the wall

“You got any better ideas? Yer knew I was a tea leaf when yer took me in, wot did yer expect me to do when money got low? Get a nice job?”

Vastra didn’t answer and Jenny got up off the bed and walked out the door.

Lifting purses was a stop-gap, not an option that she could keep on doing. Using her new status as a respectable young woman, she enquired as to jobs going at an agency and found work in a small factory. It was exhausting and dangerous and the money was awful but it was money.

Once, walking home in the dark from a shift, an urchin grabbed her purse. She felt the shuffle but didn’t bother reacting. What goes round comes around, she thought and the purse hadn’t had much in it.

April began, warmer but wet and miserable. Jenny noticed that Vastra had become morose and withdrawn. She suspected that she was lonely, with Jenny working so much and also that she didn’t like being dependent upon an ape. It was Jenny’s wages that had paid the rent that month.
But it didn’t seem like a sulk. She just stopped talking. She didn’t ask Jenny about her work anymore, or set the fire for when Jenny came home or talk to her about the book she was reading.

And then one day mid-April Vastra didn’t get up. She was awake but didn’t move even to drink the tea Jenny put by the bed. Drinking her own tea, Jenny remembered the way her father would lie in bed, unmoving, after her mother had died. She went out to work and came back to the flat smelling strongly of gin and a passed out Silurian in bed. Her worry over Vastra surpassed her annoyance at her wages being spent on alcohol. She collected the bottles and made tea, watching Vastra anxiously all night, waiting for her to come round. She wanted to check Vastra’s temperature but the Silurian was cold anyway and she didn’t know the first thing about Silurian physiology. She made a mental note that perhaps she should learn and drifted off at the side of bed, next to the dead to the world lizard.

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It sounded like a cat having a fit whilst fighting another cat. It was angry and spitting and scared and hissing and ear-splitting and heart-wrenching and it woke Jenny up in an instant.

“Tch!” she tutted once she’d recovered. ‘Gone an’ given yerself a hangover ‘ave yer? Serves yer right!”

“Silence, Ape!” Vastra hissed. For the first words Vastra had spoken to her in weeks, they weren’t the best ones.

Jenny made tea but Vastra wasn’t paying attention, wailing quietly into her pillow. It brought back the memory of her father crying in his sleep and her brother wailing next to him and she shivered. “You alright? Bad dreams?” She was unnerved now and wondering if Missus Blackett had heard and was going to come investigate. “Vastra?” she held out a cup of tea in the hopes of distracting the Silurian.

“Don’t you dare!” Vastra hauled herself upright and rounded on Jenny, knocking the cup from her hand and Jenny swore as scalding liquid hit her hand. The cup shattered on the floor. “Call me. By that. Name! You do not have the right! APE!”

Angered and slightly terrified, Jenny fled, yelling over her shoulder “NOT AN APE!”

*Vastra snarled, tugging at her head crests in agitation. She was grieving, yes, for her sisters but a small spark of sorrow was added by the sound of a slammed door. She had done exactly what the Doctor had warned her not to. She had lost Jenny Flint; the laughter, the heat, the little ball of flame that span around the apartment. She still had something to lose it seemed. Her eyes filmed over and she lay on the floor, staring at the underside of the bed, feeling the cold and remembering.

“You alright my dear?” Missus Blackett called from her room as Jenny stomped down the stairs.

“’m fine. She was jus’ inna mood.” Jenny called back over her shoulder.

She shivered walking to work and not because of the still chilly air of April. It reminded her too much of her father’s fits of temper. Stupid lizard. But as much as it reminded her of her father, it also reminded her of the cause of her father’s temper. What was a Silurian doing all alone in a gin flat in London anyways? Working in a circus? Where was her family? She hadn’t really thought to ask.

“The Doctor told me once, if you save someone, you are responsible for them.”

The Doctor had worked in the circus too. Looking after her? What had the Doctor saved her from?
And who else had he been unable to save?

“Will you look after yer stupid Silurian for me?...Promise?”

Had the Doctor known? He must’ve done.

During her shift, she thought about it. But why her? How come it was suddenly her responsibility?

“If you save someone, you are responsible for them.”

What had she ever done to save Vastra? She’d been the one saved.

In the evening after work, where she got a swift back hand and a shouting for being late, Jenny bought some meat from the butchers and went to what she really did think of as home now.

“Va…ma’am?” she called softly as she opened the door, trying not to antagonise the Silurian. There was no response, so she slipped inside. It was dark and cold. She fumbled lighting the fire and a candle then looked for Vastra, finding her led on the floor by the bed.

She was cold. Jenny remembered the cold too. The way her sister had led in her arms.

“V…ma’am! Ma’am!!” she shook her but Vastra didn’t stir. Swearing under her breath, Jenny hauled the pallet bed as close to the fire as she dared, hoping Missus Blackett wouldn’t complain about the noise and then dragged Vastra into it. Kicking off her boots, she wrapped herself and the blankets around Vastra, rubbing her back and arms.

“C’mon, c’mon!” she whispered, willing the heat into her. After what felt like the longest ten minutes of Jenny’s life, the Silurian wriggled. She breathed a sigh of relief and tucked the blankets even tighter. The warmth made her sleepy and she dropped off herself without intending to.

**Vastra was confused. The cold had been coming for her, the cold was...gone. There was warmth, all encompassing, glorious, alive warmth. It felt like the sun. She opened her eyes to find herself staring straight at a black wall. It wasn’t just warmth, there was pressure. She wriggled and the pressure moved.**

“Nngh Vas…ma’am?” Jenny groaned.

“Jenny?” Vastra sat up, staring in amazement, shivering as she did so.

Jenny noticed and rubbing at her eyes, stumbled out of bed to stoke up the fire. Vastra sat in bed watching her, noticing the different position of the bed.

“You came back?”

That stopped the stoking for a moment. “’course.” The stoking resumed. “You stopped bein’ an idjit now?”

Vastra wished Jenny would look at her. It was hard to tell from behind a curtain of hair what she was thinking. “I…yes.”

Jenny spun round, poker still in her hand, making Vastra flinch slightly.

“Alright. Alright then. Help me move the bed back, if yer feelin’ up to it.”

Vastra nodded and together they shifted the bed back to its original position.
“I bought yer meat, if yer ‘ungry.” Jenny motioned towards the package she’d abandoned on the table, still not looking at Vastra.

“Why?” the Silurian asked, hesitating to eat it, famished as she was.

“’pparently if’n yer save someone, yer responsible fer ‘em.”

“And you think you have saved me?” Vastra scoffed.

“…I lost people y’know. I seen what it does, what it looks like, enough to know.”

“You could not save them.”

“No.”

“It was not your fault.”

“I guess not. But who else was there?”

“Hm.” Vastra almost smiled. “You remind me of the Doctor.”

“What I’m sayin’ is, don’ be thinkin’ that I’m jus’ gonna up an’ leave if yer get in a weird temper.”

“I see.”

“I ain’t goin’ anywhere.”

“I see.”

“I promised I’d look after yer.”

Vastra was silent.

“So I guess if you ain’t gonna kick me out an’ I ain’t leavin’ then I guess we’re sorta stuck with each other a bit.”

Vastra wasn’t entirely sure she was happy with that conclusion but at the same time, she was very glad Jenny was back. “Yes.” She ate her meat quietly. It was the first time Jenny had really seen her eating and she tried not to stare at the teeth that ripped the meat into shreds.

Vastra swallowed the last strip, noticing Jenny’s attempts not to watch. She stood up and walked over to the young woman who clenched her fists and teeth, tensing, chin up but resolutely not backing away. She smelt the raw meat on Vastra’s breath and swallowed.

“Are you afraid?”

“A little bit.” Curses, she hadn’t meant to admit that.

Vastra’s face fell slightly. She leaned over, and a mad thought entered Jenny’s head that the lizard woman meant to eat her. But Jenny saw the expression and all the tension left her just before a scaly forehead hit her shoulder.

“Thank you.”

They’d shared a bed every night for months, yet Jenny felt this was the most intimate Vastra had ever been with her.
“I’m sorry.” Hands suddenly clutched at the back of her dress. “I’m so sorry.”

Shock slowed Jenny’s response and she felt Vastra pull away before her arms snapped around the Silurian, hugging her as if she were trying to crush her, very careful not to touch the crests. She held on until the shudders and cries of grief lessened and finally stopped.

Chapter End Notes

The loss of your entire family would probably leave you with emotional scars that would come back to haunt, particularly if you then had to work in a circus to survive and probably didn’t have a great deal of time to process anything. And I wanted to explore that and these are sad times and I am an even sadder Flintlock than I was Monday (hence the lack of updates) so possibly this is a Look Ma I’m Projecting chapter. Apologies if it's bad or OOC because of this.
Chapter Summary

A hodgepodge of stuff really? I’m lacking in concentration so the next couple of chapters may skip through time like a TARDIS

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jenny didn’t go to work, nervous about leaving Vastra alone. Missus Blackett had loaned her a wicker chair and she sat in that, watching Vastra as she slept, only leaving her side to get food, pee and stoke up the fire. She drifted in and out of sleep, jerking awake at the slightest sound.

For three days Vastra led in bed asleep whilst Jenny watched. On the fourth day, Vastra poked her head above the blankets she’d snuggled down into and saw Jenny sat there, elbows resting on her knees, chin resting on her hands, watching her intently.

They stared at each other for a few moments.

“You alright?” Jenny tilted her head.

Vastra nodded, befuddled. “I believe so.”

Jenny got up to make tea and Vastra swathed herself up in the blankets and followed her.

“You look like some kind of blanket monster.” Jenny said when she turned round to see Vastra.

“You still cold?”

“Slightly.” Vastra plopped down with her back to the fire.

“Well, I gotta get to work, if I still gotta job after 3 days not goin’. Look afta yerself alright?” Jenny yawned, threw Vastra’s cloak around her shoulders and walked out.

As she’d predicted her boss was not entirely pleased that she hadn’t been in for three days and gave her what for. She used the excuse that there had been an illness in her family, that it was unavoidable. She was given a choice between the strap or a fine and having just lost 3 days wages she stood impassive for the strap, hiding the welt from Vastra.

She came home to find Vastra sitting in the battered wicker chair, holding a book listlessly, which Jenny took as progress.

The factory supervisor seemed to have it in for her now and twice more she was given the choice of the strap or a fine.

It was May Day when Vastra noticed.

Jenny had messed up a machine, costing valuable time and with rent due, she took the strap. Her wages were pitiful but she’d saved enough money to pay it, although she’d had to scrimp on the occasional meal. She trudged home in the evening, slipping on the wet cobbles, skinning her hands
and muddying her clothes. She lay face down on the pavement for a minute. She was cold and tired and hungry and the thought of a blank faced Silurian was not a cheering prospect. She checked her dress and sighed. It’d been new only a couple of months ago and now it was already tatty. Factories weren’t kind on clothes.

She was pleasantly surprised to find Vastra had been up and about; there was a fire lit and tea waiting to go with the pie Jenny had bought on the way home.

“Playin’ the good wife?” Jenny sniffled as she observed the tableau, dumping the pie on the hearth to keep warm.

Vastra looked up from the wicker chair. “I th…” she stopped abruptly as Jenny moved nearer the light. “What on earth happened?”

“Slipped.” Jenny grunted, struggling out of her wet clothes. Vastra stood to help her, hanging them over the stools and the desk by the fire to dry. She tried to help Jenny out of her underclothes too, despite protests and then stopped as she saw the fresh bruise across Jenny’s back.

“What you gonna watch an’ all?” she spat, noticing the Silurian following her, pouring the water into it and sloshing in the bucket of rain water in the corner. She shivered out of her under clothes and into the lukewarm water, wincing as she washed herself.

Quelling a surge of rage at “the factory super”, Vastra squatted by the tub and gently reached out to examine the gash on Jenny’s brow where she’d fallen.

“Does he beat you often?” she asked in a dangerous sotto voice.

“Nah. Only when I din’t go for a few days cos I was lookin’ after you. And today I messed up a job an’ ‘e got on about it. He wouldn’t ‘it me at all if I let ‘im feel me up the way ‘e does the rest. An’ I carn’t afford to take a fine.”

Vastra hissed. “Don’t go back.”

“Well an’ what’ll we do fer money then?” Jenny shook her head.

“I don’t know!” Vastra keened.

“Well then.”

“I could go back to the circus…”

“You try it!” Jenny snapped.

“If the alternative is you get beaten!” Vastra stood up.

“Fine! Fine. I’ll lift a few purses to tide us over an’ we’ll think of somethin’ different.” Jenny sighed, sinking down into the tub, her legs hanging over the side, too exhausted and in pain to argue further.
Vastra hesitantly picked up the rag Jenny had been using to wash and, sitting cross legged next to the tin tub, gently washed Jenny’s arms and legs. Jenny watched in amazement that the Silurian could be that gentle, shifting upright so Vastra could wash her back. The Silurian tutted at the knobbly outline of her spine.

“You are far too skinny, ape.” Jenny splashed water at her. “Human! Desist! How do you even wash this ridiculous mop?” She picked up the clump that was the remnants of Jenny’s bun and let it flop down again.

Jenny took the cloth from Vastra and washed her front and then took up the soap and massaged it into her hair, taking a chipped mug and pouring water all over her head.

Vastra caught on and assisted, taking great delight it seemed in dousing Jenny’s thoroughly.

“Fanks…” Jenny muttered, unsure whether Vastra was being charitable or playing. Although playing was a sign her spirits were recovering. But the Silurian held up a warm towel and wrapped it around her so she supposed she might be being nice after all.

Vastra took another look at the welt, made sure it was clean and then ordered her to bed.

Jenny woke the next morning, wondering whether she could sneak out to work without Vastra realising. Lifting things wasn’t a way to survive for long. Vastra stirred beside her.

“I would go back to the circus before I would see you hurt like that again, little ape.”

Jenny rolled over onto her side to face Vastra. “An’ I’d sooner handle a strap then see you inna cage, so what’ll we do then hm? Am I ter go out in the evenin’, out into the market, fingerin’ whatever I can?”

“I don’t like the idea of your stealing purses much better.”

“An I don’ like the idea of starvin’.” Jenny shrugged, throwing back the covers to get up. “So if that’s the only option we c’n agree on, I’d best be out there.”

“You could get caught.” Vastra sat up, shivering as she pulled the covers back around her.

“It is not sufficient.”

“Well an’ I am sorry fer that too.” Jenny said, piqued.

“We must come up with something else.”

Jenny sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. “I could go round the ‘ouses. Give us a bigger haul.”

“It is not sufficient.”

“Really, if you’re going to be so unambitious.” Vastra tutted.

“Well what’d’yer want me ter do, rob a bank??” Jenny snapped. And Vastra grinned at her. Jenny would come to recognise that grin over the years. It was the kind of grin that usually resulted in trouble and adventures and (in the future) aliens and spaceships. It was the grin of someone who had been plotting and was grinning because you’d just cottoned on.

“What a wonderful idea Jenny!” Vastra exclaimed, clapping her hands together. “We shall do that.” Jenny gaped at her. “Have you stolen from a bank before in your criminal history?”
“Well…yeah. The Tong gang did up a bank once an’ the cracker taught me ‘ow.”

“Perfect!”

Jenny was speechless as she watched Vastra dress.

“You feelin’ much better I take it?”

Vastra stopped.

“I mean wot was that all about anyways, if’n yer don’t mind an ape arskin’.”

“You mentioned you had lost people, enough to know what it looks like. Who did you lose?”

“Thought this was me arskin’.” Jenny muttered. “I lost me Ma when I was four, died givin’ birth to me sister Joanne, who din’t make it neither. Maggie…me sister Margaret she died when I was five in a cold winter. Thom died a few years after that. Influenza. Da’s inna workhouse, me other sister Megan got taken by me aunt and uncle an’ Albie, thas me brother, he disappeared one day. Some say he skipped out cos he couldn’t handle Da no more but I reckon somethin’ happened to him down the docks where ‘e worked. They do that sometimes, sell off kiddies to the boats an’ the like. An’ ‘e was in wiv a gang too down there so. All of me friends are mostly dead or disappeared. Gribble, ‘e got took by the cold. Gribble’s the one who give me me Flint. An’ there’s been a few others what dropped by the wayside over the years. Happens y’know. How ‘bout you?”

“My mother died when I was young, when a piece of equipment she was using to hunt beasts failed. My sisters were all slaughtered by apes, when they came across our resting place.”

“In April?”

“In April.” Vastra said no more and Jenny left to go find money for the day at least. Well, that would at least explain why she hated apes. Why she’d yelled at Jenny for calling her by her name. Jenny wondered, as she hadn’t for a while, how her sister was doing, whether her father had gotten out the workhouse, whether Jacob had escaped the Tong gang when she’d scarpered. She wasn’t naïve enough to think they wouldn’t have tried to track her down and Jacob had been her pair.

She also started thinking about how impossible it would be for her and Vastra to rob a bank but that started her thinking about how it could be possible. Even though she’d gaped at the original idea, her mind started thinking, plotting, planning…

Chapter End Notes

Yay Vastra’s back! Boo for sh*tty working conditions in factories in the Victorian era and the high mortality rate among the lower classes. Forward, to a bank robbery and more detailed Jenny Flint history?
“If we’re gonna rob a bank, we need practice, information an’ an awf’l lot of plannin’.” Jenny said firmly when she got back from her “walk” as Vastra called them, cheerfully depositing a few coins in the box. “Now I c’n think of a few places as would be easy enuff ter get into but…” she eyed the Silurian. “I don’t think you got nat’ral abilities as a thief.”

“I am a highly trained Silurian warrior!” Vastra snorted in affront.

“Yeah well thievin’ is a bit diff’rent from fightin’. Mainly as regards the noise level of the proceedin’s.”

“So train me.” Vastra waved her off. “What are you thinking?”

She was thinking that training a haughty Silurian Warrior to break into a bank was going to take a lot of effort and then some. Vastra could move silently enough, in a kind of squat hop on her hands and feet. The trouble turned out to be the dresses. They just weren’t silent and Vastra’s Silurian get up was distinctive enough to be memorable if they were seen.

“Reckon yor mate c’ld do us some trousers an’ the like?” Jenny asked one evening, studying a map of underground tunnels she’d drawn from memory. “They’d need ter be tight but flexible.”

“Like a cat suit, you mean.”

“A what?”

“Something the Doctor mentioned. But what you describe sounds similar enough to what the acrobats would wear that I’m sure George could come up with something for us. What is this map?” Vastra leaned over her shoulder, sipping a cup of tea.

“The gangs used disused tunnels fer stashin’ things, places ter sleep, hideouts an’ the like. S’a bit dangerous cos they ain’t kept up or nuffin’ but I reckon they c’ld be useful. C’ld dig through ter the bank vault or at the very least they’d be useful as a bolt hole.”

“The tunnels of the Underground.”
“You know about it?”

“You could say that. But I’ve never broken into anywhere before. I think I should practice somewhere.”

“You got somewhere in mind?” Jenny eyed Vastra suspiciously, particularly when she grinned that grin again.

“What would you say to paying a visit to your old boss from the factory?”

“An’ what would we steal from a factory like that’n?” Jenny snorted.

“I was thinking more…his house.”

Thus Jenny learned that Vastra had some very firm ideas about revenge. She persuaded the Silurian not to eat him though, that this would only lead to trouble and they were about to risk getting into enough of that as it was.

Digging through to the bank was impossible without a great deal of time, but the tunnels would serve as an escape route in their plan.

Vastra was an excellent climber, Jenny noted as she clung to the Silurian’s back as she scaled a wall. She stove in the window quietly, leaning over Vastra’s shoulder, remembering how Gribble had first taught her, when they’d set up together. She clambered up and dropped down into the carpeted hall, Vastra hauling herself through after. She took out guards with swift ease and Jenny got a glimpse of the highly trained warrior that Vastra had mentioned. The movements were so fluid it was like a dance. Down into the vaults, running barefoot through the halls, it was Jenny’s turn to shine. She’d looked up an old friend at a pawn shop and had acquired a new set of lock picks and they were made to perfection. With a little bit of grease to solve any squeaks of keys or hinges, they were through. The main safe was the trouble. Could she remember enough to crack it? She sweated in their new clothes, black and skin tight. Cat suits as Vastra had called them.

There was a noise in the distance and Vastra went to investigate.

“It was a guard. I suspect there will be more, particularly if they discover the others. Hurry!” The Silurian fell into a battle ready stance after she returned.

“Alright! Got it! Now c’mon!!” Jenny hissed.

They got the money. And got out, fleeing out a window and diving into the tunnels. They changed into the clothes they’d left there, stuffing the rest into a sack cloth bag that they dumped on the back of a rag cart they’d stolen from the factory after all.

They were silent all the way home, the only noise the clatter of the wheels on the cobbles as they tugged it behind them and their own laboured breathing. Jenny grinned, looking at their haul and then at Vastra.

_Vastra liked the way that Jenny’s eyes lit up. She truly was a bit of a criminal, wasn’t she? But of course, now was Vastra._

They repeated it twice but on the third time nearly got caught, Vastra’s tongue whipping out to stun the guards just in time and they didn’t stop until they’d safely scaled the drainpipe back into the attic flat.

“Think we might ‘ave enuff now?” Jenny gasped, lying on the floor to recover from the run.
“Possibly not for a life of indolent luxury but certainly enough for a high degree of comfort.” Vastra panted, doubled over herself. “Shall we agree to stop?”

“While we still lucky? Aye.” Jenny nodded, grasping the hand that was held down to her and staggering up right.

They went straight to the business of finding somewhere. The money they’d stolen was sufficient that they could afford to buy a nice house, furnish it and still have some money to live on. The story they’d given the agent was that Vastra was a widow who’d been left the money by a rich uncle who had died (Jenny had told her that rich uncles dying were a common source of unexpected windfall, she’d learned it in a song the dray man used to sing). With cash in hand and papers forged by a friend of the pawn shop owner, there were few questions asked. They’d found a nice little three story house, a little tall and thin but long enough. 13 Paternoster Row. Vastra liked the 13 because, as she put it, superstitious apes didn’t.

On the ground floor there was a medium living room and dining room at the front and a small back room, a large backroom, a cold room larder and a large kitchen area with a servant’s quarters out the back. There was a long-ish passageway through to the back of the house where there was a courtyard and a small stables. On the second floor there were two small bedrooms, a small room with a bath and a water closet in it and a large bedroom and on the third floor two small attic rooms.

Vastra spent a large amount lavishly getting the large backroom roofed over with glass, setting it up with large plants and wild flowers. She told Jenny it mimicked her home, the sun coming through the glass made it a hot house, steamy and fragrant.

Missus Blackett was very sorry to see them go once 13 Paternoster Row had been furnished enough that they could live there.

“Best lodgers I ever ‘ad.” She sniffed, taking a pull of gin.

“Aw we’ll come round an’ visit.” Jenny promised.

“Well, you be good to each other now. You’ll afta be a bit more respectable, bein’ a maid in a big house.” Missus Blackett clipped her fondly around the ear. “Get goin’ with yer. Glad I am that yer got some fortune.”

“We c’ld spare you some.” Jenny offered.

“Oh mercy, I’m set up well enough ‘ere. But it would be nice if yer c’ld remember enough to visit aye.”

Jenny got a firm hug and Vastra got a quick bow and a handshake and they were off, their small possessions loaded up onto the rag cart ready to transport to their new home. Missus Blackett insisted on them taking the wicker chair and Vastra, having grown fond of it, didn’t refuse.

Seeing as they were now to be living an easy life, every available space became filled with books. The passageways were lined with bookshelves, as was the dining room. The attics were filled with various sculptures and art pieces that Vastra collected randomly at markets as an ongoing project to ward off boredom.

Jenny was kept busy, the pretence that she was Vastra’s maid fitted well enough to almost be reality. 13 Paternoster Row took some cleaning. But for some reason, despite the fact there were three bedrooms and large fireplaces, not to mention servants quarters, neither Jenny nor Vastra mentioned
not sleeping in the same bed. Vastra had merely waltzed into the main bedroom, declared it to be theirs and that was about all the conversation that was had on the matter. It was just a larger bed, with a thick quilt although they didn’t really need it and soft pillows.

Jenny felt like she was being swallowed by a marshmallow the first night she slept in it. It was so hot. Too hot. She tossed and turned in her sleep as the stickiness and the heat reminded her.

The lady from along came to see to Mrs Flint when Jenny ran for her on her mother’s orders but she could tell as she watched the way the woman looked over her mother that something wasn’t right. The woman placed careful hands on Mrs Flint’s stomach as she went pale with pain. She turned to Jenny and ushered her into the kitchen. “You jus’ stay there wiv yer brother an’ sisters pet.”

Jenny hugged Margaret and Megan to her as she sat by the stove. It was warm but in the heat of the summer it was too warm. The woman boiled water there and went in and out with a bustle and a harried look. Thomas thudded around, bored, occasionally stopping to pick in the floorboards, going still when the cries of pain started in earnest, huddling close to Jenny when the shrieking began. The woman’s voice intermingled with it, soothing and yelling by turns. In the heat, the metallic tang stained the air.

Jenny was silent, as her brother wailed in fear and her sisters cried softly.

They sounded all the more loudly in the sudden silence from the back room.

She carefully shifted Margaret and Megan onto the floor and tiptoed in her light foot way to the door.

The woman was whispering to herself, sat back from the bed, holding a bundle. Jenny pushed the door open and came in; the woman seemed to be in a stupor for she didn’t stop her walking right up to the bed, where her mother lay pale and twisted. The smell of blood was almost overwhelming, a tangible stickiness. The sheets were drenched with it. She reached out and touched her mother’s hand, it was still warm and it suddenly clutched hers. Jenny jumped and nearly pissed herself at the touch.

“Ma?”

“S’alright me little one. Where’s me little one? Ohh…”

The woman looked up at the groan.

“What in hell?! Git out! This ain’t no place…” she trailed off sharp and stood up with a sigh. “You gotta nuvver lil daughter. Nuvver lil sister fer yer.” She nodded at Jenny as she placed the baby by their mother, and then took the small pile of coins on the bed side table. “Well that’s my job an’ done. The rest be up to you.” She walked out.

“What shall we call her Jenny? Another J name ey? Howz Joanne? We’ll call her Joanne. Yer father be home soon I ’spect. From work. They’ll all be back soon.” She sighed and the breath seemed to leave her all at once. Jenny half thought the bed would swallow her. But she merely sank back and lay still, exhausted.

“Ma?” she whispered after a while, daring to reach out and take her hand again. The baby…Joanne stirred and Jenny poked her, curious. “Joanne…”

She returned to the others. “Come on nah, come meetcha sister Joanne.” She carried Megan and Margaret through and they crawled up onto the bed. Margaret fell asleep next to her mother. Thomas
prodded Joanne much as Jenny had.

“She don’ play. She borin’.”

“She’s a babe, they don’ play. You nivver played.” Jenny pushed him out the way to sit on the edge of the bed.

“Ma’s col’.” Megan said, climbing into Jenny’s lap.

Jenny touched her mother’s hand again. Where it had been warm before, now it was clammy.

“She’s red dahn there.” Thomas pointed out. “She sick?”

“She just ‘ad a babe. S’what happens.” Jenny shrugged, remembering when Thom and Megan and Margaret had all been born.

Albie walked through the door whistling but stopped as he saw the tableau.

“What an’ she ‘ad the kid then?” he wandered over. “Ma. Ma!” he shook her and then jumped back as if burned.

“Woss wrong Albie?” Jenny turned to him.

“Jenny, youse takes the kids into the other room nah.” He pushed her upright. She stared at him sullenly.

“I ain’t leavin’.”

The room got crowded suddenly as Jess and Cathy came back too.

“Aw sweet hell Albie, what you abaht lettin’ ‘em in ‘ere?”

“They wuz in ‘ere when I came in an’ I tol’ ‘er to leave an’ she wouldna.” Albie shrugged.

“Git out!” Cathy pushed them all out the door. “Aw cry…aw cry…”

Jenny felt the heaviness of the heat and the smell then and she hugged Megan to her and followed Jess carrying Margaret and Albie dragging Thom.

Her father came home and then there was a bustle and men came and took away something wrapped in blankets and then a small bundle as well. She heard whisperings between Cathy and Jess. “She lost two twixt us and Jenny y’know.” “An’ Jenny was lucky to come out alive.” “Too much fer ‘er after Margaret.” “Too soon.” “What’ll ‘appen nah?”

She was hungry. That’s all she knew and too hot with all the other children huddled close around her by the stove, where the fire was still burning. Far too hot.

With a gasp she started upright or at least tried to. She struggled frantically out from under the heavy duvet, sweating and gasping for breath. She pulled her hair away from where it was sticking to her face and tried to calm down, pacing round the room. Tears mixed with the sweat and she darted from the room, down into the coolness of the kitchen, running to the sink in time to vomit.

The blood. The sight and smell of it. And the heat and the stickiness. It’d been so long ago. She hadn’t even really thought about it for so long. She shivered now, the sweat cooling her in the early
morning air.

“Jenny? Are you ill?” Vastra was wrapped up in several blankets and a woollen gown as she wandered into the kitchen, perturbed by Jenny’s pale appearance and the smell of sickness.

“Nah. I’m fine ma’am. Just a bad dream.” She washed the sink out and started to lay the fire in the hob. Vastra draped a blanket around her shoulders.

“What about?” she filled a kettle and sorted out the cups ready.

Jenny sat cross legged on the kitchen table. She’d fallen in love with it when she’d seen it, a big solid oak thing that didn’t shift easily. She snuggled into the blanket, feeling comfortably warm again now.

“Day me Ma died.” She said softly and told Vastra her dream.

“I felt so guilty y’know?” she sipped the tea that Vastra had made whilst she’d been talking.

“Because you were meant to have saved her?” Vastra was sat on a chair by the table, looking up at her.

“Cos I was responsible.”

“You were an infant yourself, how could you possibly be expected to…”

“Cos that’s how it works! In families like ours, that’s how it works. Whoever’s the eldest of any left in the house at any time, that’s who’s in charge. Don’t matter yer age.”

“You were a child! No-one could possibly…”

“I was still there. An’ no-one else was. An’ I could’ve, I dunno, I could’ve…” Jenny trailed off. “Done somethin’ different. Somethin’ right.”

“Such as what? A medical procedure? Suddenly learned the technology to build machines that could keep her alive?” Vastra said scornfully.

“But I was right there! An’ I couldn’t do anythin’! I was just…”

“Helpless.” Vastra finished for her and nearly got a belt round the head for it. “Would you deny it?” she eyed Jenny’s raised fist.

“You don’ know nothin’ alright?”

“I know what it is to grieve a mother.” Vastra replied quietly. “To feel helpless. Enough to know what it looks like.” She echoed Jenny’s words back at her. The young woman relaxed as she recognised them.

“You said she died huntin’ beasts.” Jenny prompted.

“Yes.”

“Were you there?”

“…yes. She had taken me out, as a trip. As a treat. We laid the devices, she made me climb into a tree whilst she brought it down. And then a part of the stunning equipment failed and it got free. Tore her to pieces. I sat frozen in the tree, just watching. There was nothing they could do for her. Not even machinery could bring her back. It was after that I decided I would be a warrior. So I would not
ever freeze ever again. So I could always fight, even if just in an attempt to save those I love.”

“Warrior?”

“It is one of the roles within a tribe. Scientist, Warrior, Poet. Although at that point, there were not many wars that needed a Warrior. She mainly kept away beasts and worked as a…hm…she travelled between tribes, to keep the peace through talks and negotiations. An ambassador. Our tribe prospered greatly because of her. A true Warrior knows there are many different ways to fight.” Vastra paused to look at Jenny. “What prompted your nightmare? Is today the day?”

“Nah. If I marked all the anniversaries of people dyin’ I’d never stop grievin’. Nah, it was just too hot. S’like sleepin’ in a bath of softened lard that bed is. Ain’t used to it is all.”

“Hm. Well we can buy a firmer mattress. And move the thicker cover into storage, at least until winter.”

“Won’t yer be cold?”

“Of course not. I have my little bed warmer after all.” Vastra grinned, standing up to ruffle Jenny’s hair with a blanket-covered hand.

Jenny hmphed and smoothed her static-y hair back down before starting breakfast.

Vastra was true to her word and had another mattress delivered that day and Jenny had no further nightmares.

Chapter End Notes

Hoo-RAH for the NHS!

The song Jenny referenced about uncles suddenly dying and leaving windfalls of fortune is Wotcher! Knocked ‘Em In The Old Kent Road, a song of my yoof and best sung by Stanley Holloway although Marlene Dietrich singing it is a wonder that I didn’t hear until last year and is well worth looking up.

TECH-nically it wasn’t written/performed until 1891/2 but bugger a few years in the Doctor Whoniverse. In this timeline, it’s already a popular music hall song sung by the lower classes wot frequent them.
Chapter Summary

An idea of Jenny's and also an introduction to Parker! (and his wife) I need a first name for her comment with suggestions if you like

Chapter Notes

An: So help me I’m quoting the Joker in my titles now, truly this fic is going off the rails.

For the weeks that it took them to fully settle in, all was mostly fine. But Jenny got slightly bored of the maid-like work, for 13 Paternoster Row took a little more maintenance than a small attic flat.
“Coulda stayed inna workhouse an’ done this.” She muttered as she scrubbed pans in the kitchen.

When Vastra bought a horse and cab, Jenny considered it the last straw. She threw her brush into the pail with a clang.

“Not that I mind ‘osses, I used to doss with ‘em when I worked wiv the dray man, but if you think I’m muckin’ out a stable as well as everythin’ you c’n get a new bed warmer!”

In a fit of diplomacy, Vastra placed an ad in the paper and eventually hired a man called Wesley Parker to help around the yard and care for the horse.

“It’ll make it easier for me to move about.” Vastra cajoled Jenny as the young woman moodily ate her dinner. “Certainly I’ll be less likely to be found out or questioned if I’m in a carriage than wandering the streets.”

“Still gotta do the ‘ousework though don’ I.”

“Well, Parker said his wife wouldn’t mind cleaning now and then.”

“Wot about Wesley? Wot if ‘e starts arskin’ questions?”

“I don’t think he’s the type.”

“An’ ‘ow we gonna afford to pay ‘im an’ ‘is wife if we ain’t got jobs? S’not like we c’n rely on our savings forever if we’re gonna be this extravagant.”

Vastra sighed and gave Jenny up for being in a bad mood. She suspected it might be boredom.

And Jenny was bored. Restless even at night, tossing and turning until Vastra told her firmly to either stop or go for a walk. She chose the latter, wandering London at night always soothed her, despite the amount of trouble she’d been in at times. She contemplated whether that was why it soothed her,
the risk of a situation arising.

The decrease in chores, what with Mrs Parker coming round to dust a couple of times a week and Parker looking after the horses and the yard, meant it was really only meals for herself, and if she fancied making something for Parker. Walking through the market, buying meat and vegetables, she felt her fingers twitch. But she truly was respectable now, even if it was based off robbing a bank. And she didn’t want to go to jail; even if Vastra didn’t need a bed warmer any more, she still depended on Jenny. She wouldn’t go as far as to call the Silurian a friend but they’d been partners in crime and that always counted for something.

Vastra too suffered from restlessness. She couldn’t well read all day, every day and if she went round the markets too much, they’d have no money left, not to mention room in the house. Jenny bought her blood from the butchers and cuts of meat so even hunting wasn’t necessary.

They lived in a three storey house and yet they seemed to get in under each other’s feet in a way they hadn’t when living in a small attic room. There were spats and flaring of tempers over ridiculous things, petty squabbles about a moved book or a misplaced cup of tea.

Vastra tried to make it up to Jenny by taking her out in the horse and carriage. Jenny stared out the window, fascinated by how different the world seemed from the height of the cab. The houses blurred together, people’s faces seemed to gape and then disappear into only brief glimpses. A feather, a hat, a purse. The cab jolted over the roads; Parker had just been told to drive to any nice spots he might know rather than any particular destination and then to take them all home.

They passed down a major street, full of bustling cafés. Jenny had a brief idea of visiting one with Vastra but her musings on the impossibility of the idea was interrupted by the sight of a wanted poster; in particular the sum of money underneath being offered as a reward. She undid the coach door and leapt down to grab it.

“Jenny!” Vastra darted up in alarm, calling for Parker to stop the carriage, which caused consternation on the busy street. “Jenny!! What are you do-” The young woman hooked herself back in and brandished it in Vastra’s face.

She grinned excitedly, closing the door behind her and animatedly pointing at the poster once more. “What about trackin’ ‘im down? Looks a villain.”

Vastra eyed the tatty poster disdainfully. “What?”

“Track ‘im down. Hand ‘im in fer the reward. We could do that. Trackin’ down criminals. Like you did with the Tong gang. Only we’d get money for it. An’ quite a bit too.”

“We don’t particularly need money you know; I know you’ve been worried but we-”

“Well not at the moment but it’s never good to rely on it an’ ‘sides we do need an occupation.”

“Tracking down criminals.”

Jenny was about to nod vigorously and then realised why Vastra was looking amused. “Well obviously not us! But like…other criminals. Dangerous ones. You c’d do it. You c’n fight n stuff right? An’ I can be scout, find stuff out, talk to people, like I used ter do fer the police an’ the gangs back in the day.” Vastra looked at the poster again. “You’d be ‘elpin’ people too. Cleanin’ up the streets. Women wouldn’t be snatched away no more. Harmless match girls wouldn’t be accosted down dark alleys.”

“Alright. We’ll look into it.” Vastra sighed, mostly because she found she couldn’t disappoint the
eagerness on Jenny’s face.

Jenny grinned and rolled up the poster. “I’ll see what I c’n find out then ma’am.”

“Be careful!” Vastra called after her as she leapt down from the carriage again. “Really…” she massaged her temples. Still, it was an intriguing idea. The Doctor had wanted her to help people and working in the circus hadn’t been enough, maybe this would impress him more?

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Jenny returned to 13 Paternoster Row, filthy and tired but triumphant. “I found out where they hide.” She grinned, writing down an address as Vastra tried to berate her on coming home at quite this hour of the night and looking like she’d been dancing in a sewer.

“And am I to go…find him?”

“Well try not to eat ‘im if you want the reward.” Jenny snarked as she stripped off her clothes ready for a bath.

“Well I suppose I’d better dress for battle then. Not that one could call an encounter with an ape battle.” Vastra tugged out the small trunk where she stored her Silurian outfit and changed into it, the light mail jangling slightly and catching Jenny’s attention.

“Wot is that?” She paused in letting her hair down out its bun.

“It is what Silurian warriors wear.”

“Oh.”

Vastra didn’t particularly want to expand on that subject and walked out.

“Be careful!” Jenny called after her. She felt a pang of worry but Vastra could take care of herself. And it was only one man.

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Still, she waited anxiously in the hallway, pacing back and forth, twisting her hands in her skirts until the door opened and Vastra came in.

“Are you alright?” she rushed to check for injuries but couldn’t see any obvious ones.

“I’m fine, Jenny.” Vastra fended off Jenny in order to shuck her cloak. “The man was exactly where you said he’d be and was hardly in a condition to fight. Really, you’d think a criminal would save some of the money from his exploits rather than just drink it away. Or at least buy a weapon.”

“Well where is ‘e then?”

“I dropped him off outside the police station.”

“At this time of night? But they’ll be closed! Though I suppose it is nearly mornin’” Jenny heard the chimes of the mantel clock and felt a sleepless night catch up with her.

“Well he’s securely tied up. And if it’s nearly morning then he won’t have to wait long to be arrested.”

“What if someone unties him?”
“I left a note.”

“You left a note?”

“Merely detailing that this was a particular criminal they had been looking for.”

“Tell me you didn’t sign it.”

“Only with the information that they could call me V.”

“V fer vigilante.” Jenny shook her head. “An’ what about the reward?”

“Hardly worth claiming. We were able to find him in one day. Besides, I suspect he’s not exactly the most wanted in all of London.” Vastra shrugged. “I almost feel guilty for having handed him over, he was so pitiful.”

“Guilty?”

“Well, sorry.”

“Sorry??”

“Almost.” Vastra shrugged. “Besides, are we not criminals? Should we tie ourselves up as well, hand ourselves in?”

“S’not the fact ‘e’s a criminal, it’s you feelin’ sorry fer a human.”

“Almost.” Vastra pointed out.

Jenny sighed. “Well it was a thought.”

“Hm. It is a thought that has merit. Although the experience was hardly a test of my abilities, I did like the hunting. I may have to join you on that part of the matter in the future.”

“In the future?”

“Did you not find it fun, running about London?”

“Wouldn’t say fun exactly…” Jenny recalled a couple of close calls with bully boys. Urchins were always a better source of information, though not always reliable, as she knew from being a runner herself.

“Well a thrill then. Not unpleasant.”

“It was hardly a test of my abilities either y’know. S’hardly ‘ard to go round bribin’ a few urchins an’ askin’ a few questions in a bar. Not at that time of night at any rate. They’d be more suspicious if I tried it durin’ the day.”

“Well then, we’ll have to find ourselves a better class of criminal, won’t we?” Vastra grinned.

Chapter End Notes

An: And a V for Vendetta reference too. Somebody stop me. (oh no that's a The Mask
reference. There is no end in sight.)
Calling On Scotland Yard

Chapter Summary

Introducing Gregson and an explanation as to how Vastra's veil can be so flipping see through and still nobody goes "Ooh would you look at that! A lizard lady wearing a veil!"

Chapter Notes

my apologies, I have been dastardly ill the past few days and thusly have been prevented from updating.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Not every criminal they tracked down ended up at Scotland Yard, either due to Vastra classing them as being too despicable and eating them or it turned out there was a reason behind their crimes. But enough turned up that the police put out a call mid-August, asking for the vigilante “V” to come forward.

“Perhaps it is time to introduce ourselves.” Vastra mused as she saw the notice in the paper. Jenny had brought it in to her along with a cup of tea where she was sat reclining in the wicker chair. It had become her favourite and had found a home in the plant room, as Jenny called it.

“Think we’d need to get some better clothes fer that, otherwise they might lock us up too. ‘Sides ‘ow d’you think they’d take a hooded lizard woman turnin’ up on their doorstep?” Jenny snorted into her own tea.

“I’d wear my veil.”

“The see through one?” Jenny asked sarcastically.

“I told you, only you have the ability to see through it.”

“Oh yeah? An’ ‘ow’d I manage to gain that then.” Vastra had never explained how that worked.

“I have not a clue, only that the Doctor can see through it also. I assume for a similar reason.”

“An’ what’s that?”

“You see what’s there, not what you expect to be there.”

There was a moment’s silence as Jenny digested this information.

“They might just want ter arrest you too, y’know.”

“That is a possibility.” Vastra mused, tapping her chin with the now refolded paper. “Perhaps you should go as a scout.”
“You what?”

“Go along. Say you might have information as to the whereabouts of this “V” and then see what
they say, ask what they intend to do with her. It is your talent, is it not? Finding out information?”

“An’ risk bein’ arrested again meself? No thanks.”

“Well, use one of your urchins then. You have a veritable army of them now.”

“If it is an army, s’an irregular one.” Jenny snorted.


“Weeeelll s’a bit stupid jus’ cookin’ fer me an’ Parker. I either has to go shoppin’ every day or the
food spoils that quick…” Jenny shifted uneasily in her seat.

“I don’t begrudge them any food you might hand out. I assume that’s why they help us after all.”

“Well we’re a safer bet than ‘elpin’ out the gangs.”

“We don’t drag them down dark alleyways you mean.”

Jenny hmphed. “I’ll see wot c’n be found out.” She said and walked off to see if there was anyone
coming for breakfast that day.

Vastra pondered that it might be an idea to extend their wardrobe, if they were going to maintain the
illusion of being respectable citizens.

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Cris considered himself Jenny’s second in command, on account of being the first urchin she’d given
a sovereign to and asked if he knew anything about anything. He called himself a gentleman of
leisure and Jenny didn’t enquire too closely as to how he went about being leisurely. He was wise
enough not to run with the gangs and street smart enough to follow Jenny back to Paternoster Row
without her noticing. After that, he’d always called round for breakfast if he had any tidbits and
gossip to add to the table in exchange for food. The main reason that the small gang of urchins
coming round for a meal had grown was because he’d brought them with him if he considered they
had valuable information to give.

He’d gained favour with Jenny for this action; she considered it honourable for him not to pass off the
information as his own and to give others the chance of a meal too. It was one of these, Boggin, a
scamp of a boot boy, who had come in the hope of a small snack to start the day with.

He looked up from where he was shining Parker’s shoes.

“’ullo Miss Jenny.” He winked. “Got anythin’ fer me?”

“Gotta job if you want it.”

“Oh aye?”

“Nip round Scotland Yard, passin’ yourself off as respectable enough that they wouldn’t dismiss you
out of hand an’ tell ‘em you have information pertainin’ to the identity of the vigilante “V” but as you
won’t say nuffin’ til you know what they got planned for ‘em. An’ use “them” an’ all. No point
givin’ ‘em any clues, though they don’t know what to do with ‘arf of ‘em I bet.”
“That all?” Boggin finished Parker’s shoes with a flourish of a rag and stood up.

“Tea an’ bread fer yer inside, further payment upon deliv’ry.” Jenny stood back to allow Boggin in and nodded at Parker.

“’e does a good job on a shoe that boy does. Don’t go gettin’ ‘im into any trouble.” Parker had a soft spot for the ragged band that joined him for his meals.

“’e gets into plenty enuff by ‘imself I’m sure as ‘e c’n take care of any.” Jenny shrugged. “You comin’ in fer breakfast?”

“Aye that I will.” Parker nodded and followed her into the kitchen.

In the evening, after a visit to George’s shop to order in some finer dresses, Jenny sat sulking a little in the armchair by the fire and Vastra lounged somewhat more at ease on the sofa, reading a book.

“Maids don’t dress in embroidered gowns.” Vastra reminded her, turning a page. It earned her a huff. “I thought you liked the colour black.”

“S’the style not the colour I don’ like. An’ the lace.”

“Has your urchin reported back yet?”

“’is name’s Boggin. An’ no.”

“Well, at least you don’t act like a maid. Take comfort in that.”

“An’ the same to you.” Jenny curled up even further into the armchair, sighing when she heard the knock at the back door. Well at least it got her away from the annoying lizard woman.

Boggin confirmed that an Inspector Gregson at Scotland Yard merely wished to speak to the vigilante and advise them to operate within the confines of the law and co-operate with further police investigations, rather than dropping criminals off willy-nilly as it was “causing Scotland Yard some bit of embarrassment”.

“Well then, I supposed we’d better call upon the Inspector, just as soon as George is ready with our new finery.”

“Your new finery.” Jenny muttered. Her maid dresses were to be well made and of a nice material but it didn’t stop them being maid dresses. And the boots were new and made of leather but that didn’t stop them being serviceable. Style was something Jenny didn’t particularly care about but it irked her that Vastra got to look nicer, just on account of how she could talk proper.

A week or so later, they had Parker drop them off outside Scotland Yard and walked in, Jenny following Vastra.

“’Allo missus, what can we do fer you?” a man at the desk asked her.

“My name…” Vastra said pointedly. “Is Madame Vastra. I am…a private investigator of sorts. Adventuring. An inspector here requested the presence of the vigilante dropping criminals on their doorstep. I thought I would acquiesce.”
The man laughed. “You?”

Vastra grinned and flipped her veil back. “Yes. Me.”

“Ma’am!” Jenny hissed. The man behind the desk ran off calling for Inspector Gregson.

“Yes Jenny?” Vastra tugged her veil down again.

Jenny went to make a What The Hell Do You Think You’re Doing gesture but Gregson came out at that point and she put her hands swiftly behind her back and stared at the floor with her jaw clenched in apprehension.

“Ah! Inspector. I believe you wished to see me.” Vastra proffered a hand which Gregson shook somewhat dubiously. “Madame Vastra. Private Detective and General Adventuress. Responsible for the increased rate of capture of organised criminals. Or not so organised as the case may be.”

Jenny rolled her eyes.

“Right. Yes. Well… why don’t you come into my office?” he offered his arm which Vastra ignored, sweeping in front of him. Jenny went to follow but the desk man stopped her.

“There’s a waitin’ room fer maids.” He pointed across the hallway.

Jenny cut her eyes at him and stalked back out to the carriage to wait with Parker, who was quietly smoking a cigarette.

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“Why didn’t you come with me to see the Inspector?” Vastra asked, a little later, as she climbed back into the carriage. Jenny snorted. Vastra raised an eye ridge at the return of sullenness but didn’t enquire further, even when Jenny stayed in the carriage every time Vastra went visiting Inspector Gregson.

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She gave up around mid-September after another frustrating visit had resulted in Jennystorming upstairs and finally asked “What is it?” She looked in from the bedroom doorway to find Jenny was already curled up at the farthest side of the bed. Vastra had learnt over the past few months that this was a sign Jenny was upset.

“Nuffin’.” There was sign number two.

“Are you sure?”

“I’m fine, ma’am.” And that was sign number three. Jenny only ever called her ma’am in their bedroom if she was upset, particularly if she was upset with Vastra.

Vastra smiled at the way she had learnt to read her little ape. Helped by the fact that sometimes her little ape was a little predictable at times. Her little ape… goodness, how possessive of her. She moved round the bed and crouched down at Jenny’s side of the bed. The brown eyes were dark and brooding and averted themselves from her gaze.

“They think I’m jus’ yer maid.” Jenny sighed as Vastra just continued to gaze at her. “I ‘elp out, don’ I?”

“Yes. The information you provide is instrumental to the arrests I make.”
“Like you couldn’t find it out.”

“I think the urchins would have a slightly harder time trusting me.” Vastra pointed out.

“Gregson does.”

“Gregson and his ilk are not used to a…”

“A guttersnipe.”

“Women of a certain class”

“Oh thank you.”

“Jenny. It makes sense to the world that you would be my maid.”

“Well maybe I don’ want the world to make sense!” Jenny flung back the covers, ready to storm out but Vastra stopped her.

“I know how you feel.”

“No you don’.”

“The world must see me as a respectable widow and you as my maid. Do you think if I were to turn up as the Silurian Warrior and you an ex-thief they would treat us half so well? They’d throw you in prison and me back in the circus. Apes require the world to make sense. Believe me. I know how you feel.”

“You get treated better fer bein’ the rich widow though. ‘sides you did show that desk man.”

“I informed Inspector Gregson it was a skin condition and that his man must have an over active imagination.”

“A skin condition? It’s yer skin!” Jenny said angrily.

“I know, Jenny, I know.” Vastra massaged her temples wearily. With a sigh she picked up her veil where it had been flung on a dressing chair. “Do you know what this is?”

“Yer veil.” Jenny sat down on the bed, kicking her feet in frustration.

“It’s a piece of technology, called a perception filter. When I wear it, all people see is an ape, a human woman, wearing a veil. That is all they know how to see, that is what must surely be there, in order for their world to continue making sense. And they need the world to make sense because if they thought for a second that it didn’t align with what they thought they knew, they’d go mad. Or become violent. It’s how apes work; the Doctor explained it to me when he gave it to me.”

Jenny couldn’t really argue with that. “Don’t make it right though.” She muttered.

“No. It doesn’.” She laid the veil gently in Jenny’s hands. “I thought once I would never be able to exist outside the circus, that I would never belong anywhere else but in a cage, in this ape-ridden world. I had lost all of my tribe, my family, my entire society; I thought I would never again be seen as what I am. I thought that I was alone, that no-one but the Doctor would ever even know what I was. I left the circus in a fit of anger at the tricks they asked of me but I knew I would have to go back, that that was the only life I could possibly live. And they knew that too.”

Jenny was looking at her now, tears in her eyes. Her hands clenched around the veil and they shook
in anger and Vastra took it back to save it from being torn in two.

“And then one night, I happened down a dark alley, saved a young ape woman from a gang and took her home. She turned out to be the very same ape child we’d rescued from death, the same ape who’d gone to pick my pockets and I’d threatened to eat them and all they did was bow. The same ape, the only ape I had ever met who saw what I was and wasn’t scared by it, or wanted to put me in a cage because of it. You didn’t even find it that impressive.” She grinned somewhat winningly at Jenny. “And now I have a place where I can be myself, in safety and in comfort, where I am acknowledged and accepted for who I am. I would wish for you to have the same. To the outside world, it makes sense that I am a rich widow and you are my maid, but here, be assured, I do not require you to be anything or anyone other than Jenny Flint.”

Vastra could be bleedin’ eloquent sometimes, Jenny mused, flushing slightly and awkwardly avoiding Vastra’s eyes.

The Silurian leaned forward with a sigh, gently resting her forehead on Jenny’s shoulder. “I am sorry, little ape, that this is the way it must be. But I am also grateful, that it does not have to be that way here.”

Jenny stood up and, being careful not to touch Vastra’s head crests, suddenly hugged Vastra hard, causing an ‘oof’ from the Silurian. “Not little…”

“Not an ape.” Vastra finished, with a satisfied smile. She didn’t particularly want to leave the warmth of the hug but then again they’d soon be in bed together and she moved away from Jenny to get dressed in her nightgown.

Jenny led back in bed, her arms draped over her eyes so she couldn’t be accused of staring and Vastra took the opportunity to slide over and tuck herself against Jenny’s side, causing a bemused grin.

“I’m cold.” Vastra offered as way of explanation as she draped an arm across Jenny’s midriff. Jenny looked at the fire and the thick covers and thought about the fact that it was September and still warm. It wasn’t exactly a plausible reason but she let her arm flop across the pillows rather than down at her side and went to sleep without arguing it, a small amount of her frustration having vanished.

Chapter End Notes

by the Goddess Vastra...silver tongued Silurian?
A History With Basements

Chapter Summary

Some more of Jenny’s history? *shrugs in a manner similar to Vastra when she tells Jenny “Art?” in Deep Breath* with basements?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was coming into autumn although the September was still warm. There was a basement to number 13 Paternoster Row that Vastra had taken as a training room but that Jenny never ventured into. She had a dislike of basements.

“You wouldn’t like basements neither if you had an ‘ist’ry with ‘em.” Jenny told Vastra when the Silurian asked why Jenny was so averse to helping her put some form of heating down there for the winter.

“You have a history with basements?”

March 1880

Jenny had stayed one more winter in the School, not keen on a winter on the streets and then ran away when they sent her out to be a skiv, nicking a pair of trousers and a shirt off the washing line to replace her own itchy dress. She was far too big now to be a snake for anyone and sat hungrily watching people pass in the street, wondering if she was still in practice enough to lift a purse.

“Oi! Yer on my patch! Beggar orf an’ find yer own yer wee varmint!” A clout around the back of the head woke her up from her daze. She jumped to her feet and swung back, remembering Albie’s teachings on how to dance and dodge in a fight. Her assailant was a boy, a few years older than her and taller and surprised to find the “wee varmint” fighting back so vigorously. His shock cost him a bloody nose and an elbow to his stomach. “Yer lil shit c’mere!” He wheezed, grabbing out at Jenny but she tripped him up and then sat on his back as he led on the floor, completely winded now.

“‘oo’d’yer fink you are, beltin’ sleepin’ girls round the ‘ead.” She told him off.

“Yer a girl??”

“An’ wot of it?”

He rolled over as Jenny let him up, leaning on his elbows to look up at her. “Blimey. Well it still don’t excuse you comin’ an’ takin’ a prime beggin’ spot orf a lad does it now?”

“Din’t know it was a prime beggin’ spot, did I? ‘ardly looks like one.” She snorted derisively.

They regarded each other in silence for a minute.

“I’m Gribble.” The boy held up a hand.

“Aye I will not be disagreein’ wiv that.” Gribble made a show out of massaging his ribs. She grinned and decided she liked him.

They sat down together, pretending to be brother and sister, a lie which remarkably got them a little more sympathy and they swapped life stories. Where Jenny had been a snake, Gribble had been a screw. After begging got a little harder as it got into the spring, they teamed up. Jenny taught Gribble how to wriggle in tight places and Gribble taught her how to stove in a window pane without glass smashing and all the places people hid keys to their houses and how to make and use a skeleton key if a little bit of hunting didn’t do the trick. They both agreed that the ragged houses sounded like far too much religion and chores and they preferred the freedom of moving around. They took turns in dipping for purses in order to pay for a room somewhere for a night.

They lent their talents on occasion to a gang, or acted as look out for a cut of the spoils, though this was not always forthcoming and sometimes they had to scarper fast to avoid a beating instead. But the winter was coming on hard and Jenny and Gribble decided that if they wanted a bit of money in the world to help them through it, they’d have to do a job by themselves.

For Jenny’s birthday Gribble gave her a flint, in a nod to how she always said she was “‘ard as ‘em” and they spent the day scoping out a house.

They were successful in getting what Gribble called “a bit of nice tin” but it needed turning into money. What they’d stolen before had always been food or money that didn’t require anything more than taking. They found a pawn shop, but they hadn’t realised that there were certain ones that wouldn’t question where items came from and some that operated within the boundaries of the law.

It was just their luck they picked one of the few that didn’t look the other way, particularly at a pair of scruffy urchins trying to fence silver plates and the like.

The pawn shop owner took them out to the back of his shop, under the pretence he’d like to take a closer look and then grabbed them both and shoved them down into his cellar to wait while he reported them to the police. They both tried desperately to pick the lock but found that they’d been outwitted. There was a bar across the door and there was nothing they could do but sit there in the cool darkness.

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“Gribble went to prison on account that he was old enough to go at 14 and I got sent to a Reformatory. Not only for thievin’ but they thought it was vulgar that I was dressin’ like a boy. A lady came to my trial and wrote an article about me, ‘ow I represented the moral ills of the lower classes an’ the like.”

“Truly infamous.” Vastra remarked, very much amused by this story. “And this is why you dislike basements so much?”

“Not just that.” Jenny curled up in the chair opposite Vastra’s. “It were when I’d got out of the Reformatory…”

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Jenny had spent a year and a half in the reformatory by the time a lady who’d come round to hire someone in the name of charity, decided that Jenny looked obedient enough that she could be transformed into a decent member of society.
She’d been quiet the past few months, ever since her friends had been taken away. The poke hole was enough to make anyone quiet. But the first night she spent in the lady’s house she picked the lock on her door, stole the lady’s purse and ran back onto the streets. She still had the flint Gribble had given her. He’d still be in prison of course but there wasn’t a thing she could do for him. The money in the purse was enough to buy rank lodgings for a while, even after buying a shirt, trousers and jacket from a shop. Her boots from the reformatory were good enough to do her for the summer. And it was a glorious summer of freedom that Jenny spent hanging with the mudlarks and other urchins by the docks.

But autumn followed and it was cold and Jenny was running out of money. Not wanting to risk another stint in a reformatory, and certainly not in a prison, she wondered if she couldn’t find her family. Her father was still in a workhouse by all probability and she had no idea what had happened to Cathy and Jess when they left but she remembered her aunt. She’d come to look after them after her father had broken down for a second time. She’d been a bit religious and moralistic but maybe that meant she’d take Jenny in as charity. She’d married a shop keeper; they’d taken Megan with her to be their child when they’d discovered they couldn’t have any. A little overconfident, seeing as they hadn’t taken her in as well even back then, Jenny tracked them down soon after her birthday.

“But when I got round there, they weren’t too pleased ter see me. They hadn’t taken me afore cos they knew I’d been hangin’ out with the mudlarks along with Albie and thought I’d be a bad influence. But apparently, I truly was a bit infamous. They’d seen the piece that lady’d written, bein’ religious types an’ the like, an’ they knew I’d been in a reformatory an’ ‘ow I’d nicked the purse off that lady and run away an’ me turnin’ up on their doorstep dressed in trousers again just confirmed everythin’ really. So they yelled at me ‘ow I was disgustin’ an’ the like, knocked me round the head an’ locked me in their cellar before callin’ the police on me. Twice that ‘appens you end up with a general distrust of any dark place that’s underground. Not to mention the pokeholes in the reformatory.”

“How did you escape?” Vastra was far less amused by this story.

“Well they din’t have a bar on the door an’ they din’t search me neither before throwin’ me down there, so I used a skeleton key I’d ‘ad made, grabbed some money from the till, cos if they was gonna get me arrested on account of bein’ a thief, then I thought I might as well live up to it, an’ was on me merry way before the police turned up to collar me.”

“You really weren’t lying about being a criminal.” Vastra wondered.

Jenny rolled her eyes. “Did tell yer.”

“So you never got to see your sister again, after they took her?” There was an undertone of empathy to Vastra’s voice.

“No.” Jenny said shortly.

And that was the end of that conversation.

But telling Vastra got Jenny thinking about her family. She didn’t really know what had happened to any of them. She knew Gribble had died of the cold, the first winter out of prison but what about the rest of her chosen family? Jacob. Lettie. Gracie. Not to mention her real family. She asked Cris the next morning to spread the word among the others; the names and descriptions.
There wasn’t a trace of Jess Flint so Jenny assumed she’d gotten married. Cathy Ashdown also didn’t crop up although there was a rumour of a divorce. Eventually a report came in from an escaped workhouse lad who told her that he’d known a Fred Flint that had died in the workhouse and was buried in a pauper’s grave somewhere.

She sat glumly on their bed the evening of this report. Vastra was out hunting. She thought about her father. The way her mother’s death had turned him into an alcoholic, how he’d turned violent, and then had just led there. Led there while Margaret had grown cold in her arms. And then Thom. She couldn’t exactly mourn him but it made her feel a pang of longing to track down her other family. And there was only one other route she had left to go down.

She thought about the basement, about the cold and dark. But she was respectable now, smart enough in her maid’s outfit and grown up. At the very least she might be able to see Megan. Even just a glimpse. She’d be 16 now. Maybe old enough to choose for herself to see her sister. If she remembered her. Jenny resolved to go the next day.

The shop was the same as she remembered it, although apparently freshly painted. Her hands clenched into involuntary fists and she realised she didn’t even know if they still owned it or even lived there. Of if they were even in. She raised her hand and knocked.

“Can I help you?” her aunt asked as she opened it. She looked the same as ever, stiff and upright, although confused. Clearly she didn’t recognise Jenny.

“It’s me. Jenny. Hello.” She found herself waving awkwardly, not unlike the Doctor and wondered briefly if she’d picked up the habit.

Her aunt stared at her for a long while, taking in her clothes but with a final suspicious glare let her inside.

“Well? I take it you don’t need money. Come to pay us back what you stole?”

Belatedly, Jenny realised she should’ve thought about what exactly she was going to say.

“I…I came to see you. I was thinkin’ y’see an’ I was just…in the area and I figgered…” she stammered out eventually.

Her uncle came in, having heard the knock and the voices. After a moment of stunned silence, he folded his arms. “Well, look who it is. I suppose we should be glad that at least you’re dressed properly these days.”

“What do you want?” her aunt asked.

“I was wonderin’, did ya ‘ear about Da?”

“What about my wastrel brother?”

“’e died. Inna workhouse.”

“Like the good for nothin’ drunk he was.” Her aunt spat. “It was as well we got Megan out of that house when we did.” She said to her husband.

“A family of layabouts and wastrels.” He sneered in reply. “And perverts and prostitutes.”
“I was never…” Jenny protested.

“Your sister.” Her aunt sniffed.

“Such a scandalous divorce. And then turned into a whore.”

“Are you talkin’ ‘bout Cathy? D’you know what ‘appened to ‘er?”

“Don’t talk to me in that tone!” Her uncle snarled and knocked her across the face. Jenny staggered backwards. “She ended up in an asylum. Just where you ought to be too! If you had any decency you’d hand yourself in!” he turned to his wife. “Get Megan.”

Jenny glowered at her uncle as her aunt went to fetch Megan, not giving him the satisfaction of rubbing her cheek. He stared back. This clearly wasn’t the best idea she’d ever had but if it meant she got to see Megan.

The young girl who walked in was confused, looking from her uncle to the young maid who stood in the kitchen, one cheek blazing red and twisting her apron nervously in her hands.

“Megan, this is Jenny.” Her aunt explained. Megan stared at her curiously.

“If you ever see her hangin’ round the house, or your school, or if she ever approaches you in the street, you come and tell us immediately alright?” her uncle took Megan by her shoulders. “She’s dangerous an’ a criminal. Don’t you ‘ave nothin’ to do with ‘er.”

The girl nodded slowly, now shocked and looking a little scared of Jenny.

Jenny blinked, horrified, unable to say a word even as her sister walked back out the kitchen with her aunt.

“And as for you, you disgustin’ little slattern.” She didn’t move fast enough, still stunned by what had happened and he grabbed her by the front of her dress. “Don’t think swannin’ back here in nice clothes will make us forget. Dressin’ like a boy! Reformatories! Prison! Consortin’ with women! And gangs after yer! We ‘eard it all! They came ‘ere lookin’ fer you!” he shoved her backwards towards the door. “The shame. I don’t know what got into your head to make you come but you come round here again and we’ll deal with you as we dealt with you last time.” He grabbed her arm but she wrenched herself free, tearing the sleeve of her dress. “Only this time we’ll be sure as to bar the door properly! Now get out!” he threw a plate at her. She ducked and it shattered against the wall behind her. “Get out of this house and don’t you dare ever think of comin’ near Megan again either!” he got a hold of her collar and held it tight. “She’ll have nothin’ to do with the likes of you, I promise you. Not now. Not ever!” he hauled her, struggling against him, to the front door and threw her out, slamming the door behind him. She stumbled on the step and hit her head on the sidewall. She felt blood but didn’t stop to investigate, didn’t even look back as she ran, cursing her stupidity and fighting back tears.

“Hoi! Did yer master get yer one?” a merchant called out, packing up his stall and laughed.

“Whore like you probably deserved it.” Another called out from a later street.

She didn’t cry. She very sternly didn’t cry. But she did slam the back door of Number 13, Paternoster Row, enough to make a scaly head turn, running upstairs to their room.

She stood stock still in the middle of it, her breathing ragged, grief and pain and anger warring within her as to which would surface and win.
“Jenny?” a concerned voice came from the door way. It made her want to cry and that made her angrier. She kicked out at the bed stead, grunting as she did so, ripping the sheets off but they got caught and as she struggled with them, her violent energy left her and she sank to the floor. “Jenny!”

Vastra approached her now there was no further sign of violence, taking in the mussed hair and the ripped sleeve. When Jenny turned, tears streaking through the blood on her face, and she saw the vicious cut on her temple, Vastra’s eyes widened and her hands clenched in rage.

“Who did this to you? Tell me and I shall hunt them down and devour them!” she snarled as she crouched down next to Jenny.

Jenny stared at her mute and sullen, sniffing and wiping her eyes. Vastra quirked her head, half amused at the stubbornness.

“Well, let’s get that cut seen to at least.” She stood up and held out a hand. Jenny looked at it in surprise but grasped it, staggering upright. She felt pathetic as Vastra led her to the bathroom, a supportive arm around her waist. She sat down on a chair by the sink, aware of her ripped sleeve and her face covered in blood, tears and probably snot. Some symbol of respectability she was.

Vastra didn’t ask her anything further as she tilted Jenny’s head to clean the cut on her temple, before handing the cloth to Jenny so she could wipe her face. Vastra brushed her hair smooth again before deftly bandaging the cut.

“I doubt it’s caused serious damage. Look at me.” Vastra put her fingertips under Jenny’s chin and peered into her eyes. “No. Doesn’t look like it. Any headaches? Nausea? Double vision?”

“No. Why?”

“You’ll be fine. Your dress is a different matter. I’ll take it along to George tomorrow. It won’t take him more than an hour to fix it.” Vastra fingered the torn seam thoughtfully. “And if you tell me who did it, it won’t take me more than an hour to eat him.” She grinned although Jenny wasn’t absolutely certain it was a joke.

“You don’ need to go eatin’ anyone.” She sighed and brushed past the Silurian.

“Why not?” Vastra mock pouted, following her back to their bedroom. Jenny pulled the torn dress off and got another out the wardrobe.

“You jus’ don’t has all.” She sat down on the bed with a sigh, dress across her knees. Vastra came to stand in front of her and she looked up at Vastra, all regal in her smart dress and scaled head held high but those clear blue eyes looking right at her. Almost as if she was looking right into her. Jenny’s heart thumped as it had once before and she shook her head to dispel the returning thought. You’re beautiful. She coughed and hugged her knees to her chest. “I went to see me aunt and uncle.”

“The same aunt and uncle who locked you in the basement?” there was no tone of joking now in Vastra’s voice. Only contempt.

“They’s the ones.”

“And it was they who hurt you?” And coldness.

“They pushed me an’ I fell into a wall. But I s’pose. Yes. I dunno.” Jenny stood up, waving a hand forlornly. “I asked the runners if they could snout out anythin’ about me family see. Da’s dead n buried. I thought I’d go tell ‘em, maybe see if they knew anythin’ ‘bout me older sisters. Jess and Cathy. Thought I might get to see Megan at the very least. I thought maybe I was a bit more
respective now.” She continued, looking at her dress. “But they called me a whore. They din’ e’en care ‘bout Da. Said it was just as well ‘e died. They tol’ my sister, Megan, if I ever came round again to tell ‘em and they’d get me locked up. Din’t even get to say a word to ‘er. Musta bin mad, thinkin’ they’d ‘elp me.” She pulled the dress over her head and started buttoning it. “Like me sister. They said Cathy’d got divorced. Came round to ‘em too but they kicked ‘er out. She became a street walker an’ ended up in an asylum. S’all I managed to get. But I’ll find ‘er.” Her fingers were trembling now, fumbling with the buttons. “I’ll search every asylum in London but I’ll find ‘er. All the places I bin, that were always the place I feared most. The on’y place you can’t git out of. Two of my mates went there just cos of the way they were. ‘e said I should be in an asylum too cos of the way I am…” the last bit was rushed out and the last sentence ended in a sob.

Vastra had stood in stunned silence throughout the story but hissed at the end of it.

“I shall eat him! Tell me where he is. I shall devour all of them!” she snarled.

Jenny looked round at that and laughed, sniffing and wiping her eyes. “Don’ be a stupid lizard. They ain’t worth it. Not like s’criminal or anythin’. I’m the criminal remember.” She looked down at her buttons and realised she’d done them up wrong and occupied herself fixing them.

“They hurt you.”

“An’ thas a crime worth death?”

“Yes!” Vastra looked a little shocked at that and Jenny’s face mirrored her in surprise at Vastra saying it so plainly. “Haven’t I always killed or maimed those who hurt you?” she blustered.

After a moment’s consideration, Jenny realised that yes, in actual fact she had. The entire Tong Gang just for starters. She shook her head, small grin appearing on her face.

“You stupid lizard.” She hugged Vastra tightly. “They ain’t worth it. They ain’t nuffin to me now.” She sighed, not quite having the courage to finish with Yor me family now. You n the urchins. Yor me family.

Vastra felt oddly as if she were the one being comforted and it annoyed her so she shook Jenny off, holding her gently by her arms to look at her properly.

“I will help you then. Find your sister, I mean.”

“You’d do that?” Jenny said in amazement.

“I am the Great Detective am I not? Not all the cases we take on are to do with desperate criminals.” Vastra grinned.

Jenny blinked and then grasped Vastra’s face in her hands and kissed her.

“Thank you ma’am!” She went to fling her arms around Vastra but the Silurian jerked away and stared at her.

“What on earth was that?”

Jenny’s eyes went wide and she froze as she suddenly realised precisely what she’d just done.

“Um it…it were a kiss. To say thanks an’ everythin’. Um. S’a human thing. Kissin’.”

“Hm.” Vastra looked slightly puzzled but shook it off. “Jenny, we are partners, we help each other.”
she stopped, uncertain how to make the point. “I will help you.” She reaffirmed. “But I…if you please do not go off into such situations by yourself again? Or if you insist upon it, at least inform me beforehand?” Vastra’s hand cupped Jenny’s chin. “If we find your sister, promise me you won’t go alone.”

Jenny nodded. “Thanks ma’am.” She got the point. She wanted to hug Vastra again but didn’t, feeling she’d pushed the boundaries a little far already.

But Vastra saw the little involuntary twitch, the hesitation. And there was the look in Jenny’s eyes. Of uncertainty and a small sadness. She didn’t like it. Not one bit. Jenny was laughter and cursing and heat, not this. So she gave Jenny a return bear hug, or rather a lizard hug, resting her cheek on Jenny’s hair, curious at the sensation against her scales. She felt the young woman relax into her. “Hm.” She vocalised, taking Jenny by the shoulders and pushing her backwards to observe her. Satisfied, she said “Now. Get some rest, but don’t sleep, in case the blow to your head was worse than it appears. I will return with food.”

Jenny stared, slightly bemused as the Silurian walked out the room with a swish but sat back down on the bed, hugging her knees to her chest once more, feeling little bursts of happiness that made her smile, despite the awfulness of the day’s events.

Vastra came back with food and as Jenny ate, they discussed how they might track down Cathy.

Chapter End Notes

Curds and wheeeyyyyyyyyyy. I feel mean but *shrugs in a manner similar to Vastra when she says "Art?" in Deep Breath* Fanfic?
Out

Chapter Summary

Several comings and goings

Chapter Notes

sorry for the lack of updates, a plethora of personal issues, a nice mixture of tragedies and joys, happened within the space of a week and consumed all of my attention that was not focused on work.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jenny and Vastra approached the asylum together, in slight trepidation. It had required a little grease in the form of money to track Cathy down and even more to ensure her release into Jenny and Vastra’s care. The not entirely untrue story was that Jenny was her sister and Vastra was a widow who ran a house for unfortunate women.

It was a strangely intimidating place, for all it looked nondescript. A well-dressed middle-aged man and an older woman in a faded dress were waiting outside the door. Jenny’s hand twitched towards Vastra’s at the sight. Vastra felt the slight brush and turned to Jenny, observing the clenched jaw.

“They will not take you. And if they did, I would get you out.” She promised, earning herself a grateful smile.

Inside, the asylum smelt rank, of old sweat and stale air. They were ordered to wait in a small room whilst Cathy was fetched out.

“And there is the small matter of the signing out.” The well-dressed man came back with a form. “I was unaware she had any other relatives.” He fished for information.

“Trouble in the family. I ain’t…I am not on talkin’ terms with my aunt an’ uncle. Hence it took a while to find ‘er. But we got a nice place for ‘er to come to.” Jenny stumbled over her words.

“Well, she’s quiet, doesn’t give us much trouble.”

“No doubt she shall flourish under my care.” Vastra interjected smoothly. “I am well-acquainted with rehabilitating young women into society.”

If the man hadn’t been there, Jenny would’ve given her a swift nudge for that but at that moment the door opened and the older woman brought in Cathy.

She was thin, as if she hadn’t eaten properly for a long time, with short cropped hair. She twitched at the sound of the door closing. She didn’t look anyone in the eye, but twisted her hands together in a repetitive motion. Vastra recognised it.

“Is it…is it really you Jenny?” she croaked.
“Yeah. Yeah it’s me. We’ve come to get you out.”

“What about our aunt…and uncle? I thought…”

“Well it don’t matter about them. Yor comin’ with us. S’all bin arranged. Madame ‘ere is gonna help look after you now.”

Cathy glanced at Vastra and then returned her gaze to the floor. “I see.”

“Well then, that’s everything. She had no belongings other than her clothes when she arrived, otherwise I would give them to you.”

“It is no matter.” Vastra waved the pair away. “I can provide everything she might require.”

“C’mon.” Jenny went to guide Cathy out the door, but she flinched at the touch. “Foller me then.” Jenny led the way, Cathy following her and Vastra bringing up the rear.

They said nothing more until they reached the cab, where Parker was waiting. Once inside, Jenny started trembling and grabbed Vastra’s hand, keeping a firm hold on it until she’d recovered. Vastra was surprised but said nothing and they sat in silence all the way to 13 Paternoster Row.

Jenny showed Cathy to the spare bedroom, mainly used as a storage room for more books.

“This’ll be where you sleep. I’ve got some old dresses an’ things fer you to wear til we get you some new ones at least.”

Cathy looked around the room as if it were a palace.

“The bathroom’s jus’ down there, if you want to take a bath. Or d’you want to eat?” Jenny and Vastra had planned how to get her out, but not precisely what to do once they had.

“I am…not hungry now. But…I would like…a bath?” Cathy spoke haltingly, as if she were expecting to be interrupted.

Jenny nodded and left her to it.

“She speaks weird. An’ she’s actin’ like this isn’t even real. As if she can’t quite believe it.”

“You told me you were always terrified of the asylum. If that is what it does to you, I can understand why. It is quite possible she thought she was there forever. The trauma must’ve impacted her. I’d give her time.”

“I don’ even think she really recognises me at all. S’just strange. She’s nuffin’ like I remember. Don’t think I ‘ardly recognise ‘er.”

Vastra sighed. “I imagine you’ve both been through a lot since you last saw each other.”

“Last time I saw ‘er was the day she walked out on us.” Jenny crossed her arms and slumped moodily. “Dunno what she done after that ‘cept that she got married. Some bloke called Ashdown.”

“Why don’t you ask her?” Vastra suggested.

Little by little, Cathy came to herself, telling snippets of her story to Jenny throughout the week.
She’d married a factory worker, Teddy Ashdown, just to get out of the house, tired of all her wages going straight to their father’s drink and having to look after all the little ones. Life had been fine for a good few years. They’d settled down, Cathy had had two children, a boy and a girl. She took in sewing after the youngest started school, to keep her busy. But her factory worker accused her of having affairs while he was out. He started drinking. Cathy found herself ten years later, looking after children and a drunkard, the very things she’d married to escape. So she left him, took the children with her. But she couldn’t find enough work and the children were too young really. Not yet old enough to leave school. She left them with a lady who had a house for caring for children of unfortunate women and she became a prostitute in a dress house. When a gentleman tried to tie her up and beat her, she fought him but the owner of the house didn’t defend her and she was kicked out. She tried to go to her uncle and aunt for help but they got her locked away as a mad woman. That was a year ago and she’d been there ever since. She didn’t know where her husband was or her children.

She gave Jenny the address of the house where she’d left the children but all Jenny was able to find out was that they’d been thrown out when there was no more money forthcoming from Cathy. She promised Cathy she’d ask the Irregulars and check out the workhouses.

Cathy had spent the week watching Jenny and saw how Jenny would look at the veiled lady. Jenny had told her she was a maid for this Madame Vastra but she didn’t act like it apart from helping around the house occasionally. Cathy tried to do a little as well but she was rather weaker than Jenny. She saw how casually they touched each other and discovered they slept in the same room and was horrified. She’d heard of such people of course, from prostitutes, about how some gentlemen would have kept Mistresses, kept whores. But a Madame? A lady? It made her very uncomfortable and awkward around them.

By the end of the week, she’d seen enough and felt recovered enough to leave. She asked Jenny about finding her new lodgings and Jenny supplied her with a list and also some suitable positions for jobs. Madame Vastra would provide her with references, if she used her married name, she would no doubt be successful.

“You’re welcome to stay ‘ere though.” Jenny offered as Cathy sat in the kitchen finishing breakfast, the morning of her leaving. “If yer need more time…”

“No! No. I am…quite recovered thank you.”

“Yer do look better at least. That wig George made up is decent.”

“I do. And I do feel better. But I…I couldn’t stay here. I don’t…I… I heard from our uncle how… some of the things. About you, I mean. And I met a woman named Lettie, who surprisingly knew you. She said you’d been lovers, which rather confirmed what he said. Is it true?” Cathy looked pained at the idea. _Vastra leaned in even closer where she had been eavesdropping. A lover?_

“You met Lettie?!” of all the things Jenny might’ve expected, that was not one of them.

“Yes. In…in the dress house.” Cathy lowered her voice. “Were you?”

“I’pose, in a way.” Jenny shrugged. _Vastra sniffed, intrigued as to who Lettie was._

“And you and the Madame?” Cathy’s voice was barely a whisper. _Whoever Lettie was, Vastra couldn’t hear what they were saying now._

That made Jenny splutter. “Me an’…” speech failed her.
“I…thank you kindly for your help.” Cathy cut across her anyway. “But I’d really rather get on my own way now. To be around people like you, I wouldn’t feel comfortable. I couldn’t. It’s not right. But thank you for getting me out the asylum.” Cathy nodded. She walked out of Paternoster Row with a small case of clothes, a job as a typist and a small apartment in a respectable enough part of town.

Jenny watched Cathy walk out on her for a second time but felt more sadness than resentment or anger.

“Well, here’s hopin’ this time yer life treats yer better.” She muttered to herself, trying not to feel the sting of a second rejection by her family. Although really, said a voice in her head, what was you expectin’? The way you are, who you are, what was you expectin’?

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“Who was Lettie?” Vastra asked, feigning casualness, the day after Cathy left. Jenny paused in handing her a cup of tea.

“Hm?”

“Your sister. She mentioned a woman named Lettie, a prostitute, that you were lovers.”

Jenny cut her eyes at Vastra. “Din’t yer mother tell yer s’rude to listen in? Sides, it weren’t nuffin’ like that.” she sighed and blew on her own tea. “We lived together for a bit. Pretended to be sisters to get better lodgings.”

“How did you meet?”

Jenny gave an unimpressed look at the interrogation.

“I’m merely curious.” Vastra shrugged in fake nonchalance.

“It was after you an’ the Doctor rescued me. The first time I mean. I’d hopped off seein’ as you’d threatened to eat me…” Jenny glowered at Vastra. “An’ I was crashin’ in a stable. Got found but the drayman give me a job, workin’ as a stable boy. Got food an’ to kip down wiv the ‘orses. It were a good deal. ’e took me to a pub one night an’ Lettie was workin’ there as a barmaid. Used to see ‘er quite regular an’ she invited me back to her place.”

“She was a prostitute yes?”

“Yes. Anyw…”

“And she invited you back?”

“Yes! Anyways, she said I stunk an’ I needed to take a bath…”

“Ha!” Vastra laughed, earning herself another glower and a rude gesture.

“So I did on’y…”

“You were a girl, not a boy.”

“She din’t seem that fusssed. She weren’t in a dress house like Cathy, she were an independent. So we lived together, I did me work, she did ‘ers, got a nice place. Then I got found out. Takin’ a bath at the stables. Drayman e’en sent the peelers round to us so we ‘ad to leave in an ‘urry.”
“And then?”

“What you want the ‘ole ‘ist’ry? Gonna need a lot more tea fer that.”

Vastra got up and put the kettle on.

“And then?” she repeated.

“I started up as a street seller, it leaves yer with some opportunities. Started misdirectin’ fer gangs whenever peelers came round askin’ questions. Jacob was me pair in that, used to curl up like mice together. Anyways, I got enough money on the side from that, me an’ Lettie got another place. A little attic room. I remember Lettie sayin’ “Bit posh fer the likes of us ey Jenny?” an’ laughin’ as we looked around. We shared, said as ‘ow we was sisters and used to doublin’ up. We din’t look nuffin alike but the landlady took the money an’ went on ‘er way. Anyways, while I was actin’ up to the peelers for…”

“Is that how you got involved with the Tong Gang? Is that why you left?” Vastra interrupted

“ Mostly.” Jenny said evasively.

“Another lover?”

“Nuffin’ like it!” Jenny flushed slightly. She waited until Vastra poured another cup of tea. “I ran into yer round about then. I’d started dressin’ like a boy again, Lettie’d taken me to this bar see? Fer me birthday. All full of these women dressed like blokes. It were a good ruse, switchin’ it up, keep the peelers confused. An’ to keep meself busy whilst I was waitin’ fer a job I used to pick pockets.”

“And you picked mine. I remember.”

“I…I tried to find yer again y’know. Twice you see a lizard woman, it intrigues yer.” Jenny laughed. “It were Lettie who found you in the end. At the circus. When I saw you in a cage I got right proper mad. Tried ter start an argy. Got duffed up for it though, protestin’ fer Lizard Liberty.” She laughed. “But I…”

“What?” Vastra’s head went back and her tea spilled on the table. “You were that ape too??”

“Not an ape but yes. Unless there were somebody else who did the same.” Jenny said exasperated. “Anyways, I went back that night to get you out but you got out jus’ fine by yourself so I…” Jenny shrugged. “I just left yer to it I guess.” Vastra’s tongue snicked out.

“You followed me. You were the one, when the Doctor and I were talking…”

Jenny shifted uncomfortably under Vastra’s intense glare. “I s’pose.”

“Well. Our paths have crossed quite a bit haven’t they Jenny Flint!” Jenny looked up but Vastra seemed more wondering than anything. “What happened after that?”

“Well, Lettie got a bit mad at me. Said I was stupid, riskin’ bein’ found out. Sent off somewhere. Then I did. I got caught by the peelers doin’ me switch act. They gave me a choice between prison and spyn’ on the gang so…I spied. But then the gang found out an’ I was in trouble. Me an’ Lettie split ways, I went to ground on the streets, ended up in the workhouse. Never seen Lettie since.”

“What happened in the workhouse? You mentioned being in one.” Vastra drained her cup and went to make more. She seemed intrigued and Jenny couldn’t seem to stop talking now it was all coming out.
“Well I met this girl in there an’ we left together. Set ourselves…”

“So there was another lover.” Jenny’s flush answered her. “You are attracted to women then, as a rule?”

Jenny fidgeted. “I s’pose. Yeah. Thas why me aunt and uncle don’ like me. It got round y’see. S’why Cathy left too. She don’ like it either.”

“I see.” Vastra watched as Jenny stared at her hands in silence. “Continue.”

“You want I should call witnesses?” Jenny snapped, jerking to her feet. “Woss it to you anyways? Why’re you so curious? You don’ like it either is that it? Wanna know everythin’ so as you c’n feel proper when yer kick me out too?”

“I merely wished to know. There’s no need to get upset.” Vastra sipped her tea.

“No need ter get upset?!” Jenny knocked her teacup over. “I’ve bin banned from seein’ one sister, under threat of the asylum, me other sister just walked out on me, again, fer about the same reason an’ the rest of me family are dead or disappeared! Then you start interrogatin’ me on me entire life an’ you think there ain’t no reason ter get upset?? You insensitive stupid BLOODY lizard.” Jenny’s face screwed up as she tried not to cry.

*Vastra was stunned as she watched Jenny stalk out and slam the door behind her. She sat back in her chair, staring intently at her tea, thinking on her own family and realising, with a small amount of guilt, that she might not have chosen the best time to be quite so inquisitive.*

Chapter End Notes

    oh Vastra...
Visitations

Chapter Summary

I wasn't happy so I tried to rework it. A fight and the Doctor returns.

Chapter Notes

You can’t spell tissues without issues. With guest appearances.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

For the first time since she’d met Jenny, Vastra was the first to go to bed. She had decided against tracking Jenny down and lay there. She thought of her own sisters, how they would frown upon her association with an ape. She imagined what they would say. “You let it sleep in the same bed as you?” “And you haven’t eaten it yet?” “What fun! A little pet!” But her sisters would never meet Jenny Flint, would never know that Jenny Flint was not just another ape. If they met her, they would treat her like any other ape. The thought riled Vastra and she snarled defensively at the ceiling. “Are you protecting it, Vastra?” “What makes it so special?”

“She is Jenny Flint.” Vastra hissed out loud at no-one, burrowing angrily beneath the covers. It made no difference, in the end. They were dead, apes had killed them. “She is what is good in them. And she must be protected.” She murmured, falling into an uneasy sleep.

Jenny was just putting the tea down in the plant room (Vastra had told her that the correct term would be conservatory but for Jenny it was always the plant room). She’d spent the night in the stables, not particularly wanting to sleep in the same bed as such a stupid Silurian but sleep had refreshed her and she felt like making peace.

Vastra stalked in, irate from a restless night, picking up her tea without a word. Jenny stood, twisting her hands in her apron nervously. She sensed Vastra was annoyed but wanted to ask her anyway. A question that she’d never even thought to ask, such a simple thing to know about someone.

“Out with it.” Vastra said curtly as she sat in her wicker chair and sipped her tea.

Jenny curled up, business-like, in the chair opposite. “When’s yer birthday?” she asked without further ado.

“My birthday?” Vastra blinked. Of all the things, that was not what she was expecting.

“My birthday?” Vastra blinked. Of all the things, that was not what she was expecting.

“Day you wuz born.”

“I know what one is. It’s just a very…random question.”

“Mine’s comin’ up soon. An’, well ain’t no-one gonna exactly be celebratin’ it…” Jenny had been thinking about that half the night. “…but it got me wonderin’ when yours was. An’ ‘ow Silurians celebrate ‘em I guess.”
“I am unsure when I was born in terms of an ape calendar. The seasons are different to when I was young. And we had different ways of marking time. I know how old I am. And I know when I first woke to this world. It was in April…” Vastra trailed off and stared into the distance. After last night, April was forefront in her mind.

“When yer sisters were killed?” Jenny finished, thinking back to the April they’d just spent together. The withdrawing, the sulks, the arguments and then finding a cold drunk lizard lying on the floor. She remembered Vastra’s few sentences on the subject. “What were they like? Were they all warriors like you or were they…”

“It is none of your business, ape!” Vastra hissed suddenly, shooting a rather venomous glare at Jenny that startled the young woman almost as much as being cut off.

Jenny sat curled up, frozen in a mix of disbelief and fury. It splintered when Jenny bolted upright, fists clenching and unclenching, her eyes narrowing as she made her decision. That was that.

It didn’t take her long to find Vastra again; the Silurian had retreated to the basement. Jenny had avoided it before but she stomped down there now, slamming the door shut behind her. She remembered, when they’d first started living together, wanting to hit Vastra. It was a puny feeling compared to this now. Vastra was going through a set of stances and didn’t even turn to look at Jenny as she stalked down the steps.

“None of my business? It’s none of my business?” she hissed. “I tol’ yer ‘arf me life story an’ yours is none of me business?!”

She’d reached Vastra now, who was still focussed on her exercises and ignoring her.

“You carn’t even tell me their na…OI!!” she reached out and slapped Vastra, as hard as she could, across the cheek.

Tears sprang to her eyes, those cheek ridges were bleedin’ ‘ard and she shook her hand vigorously to try and rid it of the stinging.

“Are you quite finished?” Vastra asked her coldly, finally turning to face her.

Jenny answered with a snarl and struck out again. Vastra managed to deflect most of her blows but she was used to more precision attacks. As a Warrior, she hadn’t fought much and the training was much more regulated. Jenny was fighting from the street and the street was dirty.

An elbow to the stomach as a foot hooked around hers to sweep the legs out from under her and Vastra ended up on her back on the floor and rather winded.

“Was I arskin’ that much ter know their names?” Jenny asked breathlessly, staring down at her. Vastra rolled upright without answering, merely blocking another blow. “Even jus’ how many?” She blocked that one too. “To know somethin’ about yer? Anythin’?” Two more blows in swift succession. Her attempt to block the second failed and it turned into a backhand across Jenny’s cheek.

Vastra gasped, feeling a rush of guilt and fear as the young woman sprawled on the floor of the basement. It was unintentional. She’d just been blocking the hits. After all, she was the punisher of those who hurt Jenny Flint. She protected Jenny Flint.

“Jenny!”

The young woman didn’t look at her as she got up slowly, carefully wiping the blood that was
trickling from her lip away with the back of her hand. The sight made Vastra shiver.

“Jenny…” Vastra reached out to inspect the injury her blow had caused but Jenny flinched away, breathing heavily from her exertions.

“An’ fer the last time…” She turned to glare at Vastra who was now hovering and then shoved her hard. “Not.” Shoved her backwards again, surprise registering somewhere that Vastra let her, that Vastra had let her attack so much and only defend. “An.” Shoved her back into the wall now.

“APE!”

Vastra stared at Jenny as if she’d never seen her before. The brown eyes, usually liquid and warm were almost black with fury. The lips, so often quirked into a grin or exasperation, held a snarl and teeth. Brown hair was escaping from the bun and sticking to the damp sheen of sweat on her forehead. As much as she’d annoyed Jenny yesterday, it seemed she’d really pissed her off this time.

“You ‘eard her, Vastra. She’s not an ape.” Both of them turned in synchronicity to glare at whoever had intruded. “Hello!” the Doctor waved from the doorway. “So what are you fighting over this time?” he asked as he made his way down the steps. “Still glaring I see.” He noted as both Jenny and Vastra stared at him in silence. “Jenny’s improved I’ll give her that. She nearly had you on the ropes, Vastra.”

Jenny snorted. “Not ‘ardly. She weren’t even fightin’ back or nuffin’.” The Doctor reached her and with a look asking for permission, inspected her split lip.

“Well you won’t have a shiner and all yer teeth are still there so I think you’ll be just fine, Jenny Flint. Put a cold cloth on it, no problems. Rose’ll keep you company.”

She felt the dismissal and nodded, walking up the steps without looking back at Vastra.

“C’mon. I’ve treated a few of these for me mates back ‘ome.” Rose took her by the hand and led her to the kitchen.

A cold cloth was quite soothing for her lip, and for her eyes which had ended up hot and itchy. Rose made her a cup of tea as best she could.

“Ain’t right, yer boss bein’ able to land one on you like that. But good on yer fer standing up to ‘er. Even if she is a lizard.”

Jenny snorted. “She ain’t me boss.” ‘sides she’d been the one who’d hit Vastra first. Her heart sank slightly in shame and she buried her face back in the cloth. Hardly better than her uncle.

“No?” Rose grinned. “Well they do say good friends make a good fight. I remember once me and Shareen, ooh we went at it like cats over this bloke…” Rose talked idly and Jenny found her a very comforting if completely unknown presence.

“So what happened?” The Doctor asked. “You ain’t been keepin’ her locked up down here have you?”

“Of course not!” Vastra spat, wincing slightly. The ape…the human could land a blow she’d give her that. “She attacked me.”

“What did you say to her for her to do that? Apart from callin’ her an ape I mean.”

Vastra sighed. “We were discussing her past yesterday. I…was a little inquisitive, I suppose.” She shrugged. “And today, she…asked about mine. About April. About my sisters. And I told her it was
none of her business.” She saw his expression. “Well it isn’t!” she blustered. “They are dead, what business can it possibly be of hers what they were like? What does it matter to her?”

The Doctor was silent. “Sometimes they make it their business. If you’re gonna be with ‘em, sometimes they need a bit more than just “hello I’m a lizard woman from the dawn of time, come live with me.” Well, after a bit at least. Usually they’re quite happy at the start.”

“I have told her some things.” Vastra said defensively. “How my mother died, how my sisters died. What is my past to her? It is lost!”

“Yeah well, there’ll always be questions you’d really rather not answer about the past.” The Doctor shrugged. “But they get intrigued about it anyway. It depends how much you value her as to how much you tell her.” He grinned. “And I know you value her. Lettin’ an ape do that to you? She’s well in isn’t she.”

Vastra snorted.

“Well at least apologise to her. For treatin’ her that way.” He nodded and moved towards the stairs.

“She attacked me!” Vastra protested.

“Well then, get her to apologise to you. Tell her that was out of order. Sort it out. Talk to each other!” The Doctor made gestures with his hands to imitate talking before turning to go.

“Doctor! There is…another thing…” Vastra ran after him. It’d caused some problems the past few months now and he travelled, might know something…

Rose talked a little about travelling with the Doctor. “Do you know Dickens? I met ‘im.” “It’s always a bit of an adventure though I’ll tell you.” “Anyways I’d better go find ‘im acutally. Nice meetin’ you Jenny.” Rose gave her a hug, whispering in her ear as she did. “Don’t be afraid to slap ‘er one again if she needs it.”

Half an hour or so later, Vastra walked into the kitchen and made tea in an awkward silence, occasionally sneaking glances at the a…human who held a cloth across their eyes in scrunched fists. She pushed a cup across the table to it but it didn’t move.

A sigh escaped her and she sat down. Part of her was incensed, to apologise to an ape! After being attacked by her too. Part of her was wracked with guilt, that she had hurt Jenny, as so many others had hurt Jenny. The rest was still thinking on the Doctor’s words. “Depends how much you value her…and I know you value her.”

She stared down at her own cup, hands folded in her lap. The scrape of china on wood alerted her and she looked up quickly to see Jenny watching her carefully over the rim.

She heaved another sigh and the words seemed quite easy really. “I’m sorry, Jenny.”

A flicker of surprise. The tea cup was set back down. “I’m sorry too. Din’t mean to go at you quite like that.”

“You fight well. For an…” Vastra nearly bit her tongue.

“Go on. Say it. Fer an ape.” Jenny leaned back and folded her arms, staring moodily at the tea cup.
“For someone untrained. I’m amazed the gang managed to put you to such trouble.”

Jenny stared at her queerly. It felt like a compliment. But she snorted. “I was ‘arf starved at the time. Anyways. Can’t fight arf like you do. You does it like yer dancin’ or somethin’. Could barely reach you.” In more ways than one, Jenny thought.

“I could teach you.” It came almost automatically. A peace offering and yet…something more also. She ignored the voice in her ear expressing horror at the thought of her teaching Silurian combat to an ape. The shock on Jenny’s face was worth it. She looked younger like that. More naive. And then, ah that magnificent little quirk of the lips into a grin. Vastra found herself automatically grinning back whenever she saw it these days.

“Aright then.” It was the way it spread forth and then was contained to make a little dimple at the side of her mouth. Vastra found it fascinating. It disappeared. “Did the Doctor tell yer to…”

“Goodness no. He’s a pacifist.” Vastra snorted. “It wouldn’t occur to him. But you help me with the cases we take on. It would be best if you were prepared before the time comes when you have to fight. Otherwise you might end up hurt.”

“And you might be too full to eat ‘em?” Jenny grinned at her. Vastra’s eyes flashed in ironic humour as she recalled saying that injuring Jenny was a crime deserving of death and devouring.

“It is always well to be prepared.”

Thus Jenny overcame her dislike of basements and began training alongside Vastra, going over poses and stances again and again. It was a little frustrating, there wasn’t any fighting at all and Vastra corrected her so continuously at every session, the Silurian was lucky not to get another slap, despite Jenny’s vow to herself that she wouldn’t go off like that again. But Vastra assured her that strength and agility had to be built up, and correct posture was vital to avoid injury so she went through all the exercises on alternate days. It burned her muscles enough that she could see what Vastra was driving at.

When she bled again at the end of September, Vastra gave her a small cup. She said the Doctor had given it to her.

“What do I do with it?” Jenny stared askance at the small rubber half circle in her palm.

“Put it up?” Vastra shrugged, earning her a very odd stare from Jenny.

But Jenny went off to try it anyway and when Vastra inquired as to how she was getting on, she said it worked well enough. Vastra didn’t ask for details.

And neither did Jenny any more. Not about April, or Vastra’s birthday, or what the Doctor had said. Vastra waited but the questions were not repeated. The Doctor had said talk but it seemed awkward to bring it up again, when they were getting along fairly peaceably.

Jenny didn’t even bring up the fact that it was her birthday in a week’s time and when Vastra got the letter it seemed awkward to tell her then.

“Ah! Jenny. I have something to tell you.” Vastra informed her as Jenny brought her tea in the morning.

“Woss that ma’am?”

“Read through this and tell me what you think.” Vastra handed her a letter and a case file. It was
from a company. Apparently, some trade in Egypt was going awry and there was talk of ancient
curses. “They saw my advert in the paper and they’ve asked me to go over there, to see what I can
find out. I suspect it might be dangerous.” She grinned and licked her lips.

“Yer goin’ to Egypt?” Jenny asked incredulously.

“Yes, as soon as possible. I must pack immediately. But I would value your thoughts before I go.”

Jenny stood dumbfounded, staring at the letter.

“Jenny?”

“Sounds hokey to me, ma’am. Prob’ly just some natives not ‘appy with the trade an’ stirrin’ up
trouble. ‘sides them businesses in Africa is rotten. Prob’ly illegal activity on the side of the traders.
I’d go after ‘em first rather than any trouble makers.” Jenny shrugged and handed the letter back.

“Hm!” Vastra looked at her appraisingly. “I shall take that into consideration.”

“Not everyone what the police calls a criminal is one. An’ not everyone what the police don’t chase
after is innocent. You know that.” Jenny glowered at her.

“Certainly.” Vastra nodded and swept back out to go and pack.

The question of whether or not Jenny was going with her stuck in Jenny’s throat. If she was, Vastra
would’ve said. Besides, if there was fighting to be done, Jenny was still on basic stances.

She accompanied Vastra to the station, got her bags sorted for her and then waved forlornly as the
train slipped out of sight, just two days before her birthday.

It was a strange thing, Jenny found, despite the fact that Vastra was cold-blooded so it shouldn’t
really have made a difference, but the bed was definitely colder without her in it.

Chapter End Notes

Ahh Jenny…
Jenny! In An Adventure With The Doctor

Chapter Summary

Jenny's first alien!

Chapter Notes

"What are we going to do today Doctor?"
"The same thing we do every day Jenny, STOP ALIEN PLOTS FROM TAKING OVER THE WORLD!"

See the end of the chapter for more notes

9th October 1887

Jenny led in bed, not getting up, figuring she deserved a lie in on her birthday. She wondered where Vastra was now, whether she’d be alright, how she’d cope with her veil. The guise of a widow worked as well as anything and she was meant to meet with a senior person within the company too. Not that that comforted Jenny much.

She was alone on her birthday, unable to see her family, unwanted by her family and feeling slightly abandoned by a stupid insensitive lizard woman that she hadn’t exactly been nice to either. Jenny Flint was ‘ard as ‘em but that was a little much. The room went blurry and she had to swallow a few times and sniff.

"Jenny? Vastra? Anyone home? Rose, nip along and check the bedrooms. I have got a sense of decorum."

"No you ain’t." She heard Rose laugh and scrambled upright, throwing a shawl around her nightgown as she looked out onto the landing.

"Wot’re you doin’ ‘ere?” she asked, peering over the banister to see Rose and the Doctor, still in the leather jacket and short cut.

"We came to visit!” he waved back. “Where’s yer sparrin’ partner then? Did you knock ‘er out?”

Even from that distance, Rose and the Doctor saw Jenny’s face fall. “She ain’t ‘ere. She’s in Egypt. On a case.”

“Oh.” The Doctor stared at her, as if searching for something. “And she left you behind?”

“Not like I’d be much use.” Jenny shrugged, coming down the stairs.

“I don’t believe that for a second.” The Doctor grinned. “In fact, it’s just as well she did, because we’ve got a case that we need the help of the Great Detective to solve.”

“She’s in Egypt, I jus’…”
“Nah. You. Brains behind the brawn!”

“Brains of the outfit!” Rose joined in.

“Vastra’s Pinky, you’re the brain.”

Rose fell about laughing. “One is a genius, the other’s insane.”

“Got to be Vastra for the latter. So. Get some clothes on and come and ‘elp us ey, o mighty genius Great Detective?”

She stared at their twin grins and then shook her head. It was slightly infectious. “I don’ understand nuffin of what you just said, but if I can ‘elp then I will.”

She hastily got bathed and dressed and found them in the kitchen, leaning against the table.

“So whatchoo need my ‘elp with?”

“We suspect that there is an evil alien about to kidnap a member of the royal family.”

“Fink we’re a bit below royalty ‘ere.” Jenny reminded.

“Then that’s where we’ll attack ‘em from.” The Doctor grinned. “Now come on. Let’s start investigating.”

They all ran full pelt through London.

“What did yer mean aliens anyway? Y’mean like forriner?” Jenny gasped when they paused to check their surroundings.

“Nah. Proper aliens! Down this way.” He led them down a tunnel, not unlike the ones Jenny and Vastra had used in their bank heists.

“Aliens…”

“From outer space!” Rose waved her hands spookily in the torch light.

“You think Vastra’s weird for bein’ a lizard lady, you should…”

“I don’ think Vastra’s weird fer bein’ a lizard lady!” Jenny protested hotly.

The Doctor stopped and looked back over his shoulder in mild surprise but gave her his biggest grin yet. “Well then, you should ‘ave no problems with the Kraal.”

“Told yer it’s always an adventure with ‘im.” Rose nudged her, moving past to stand beside him.

He looked around the tunnel with an air of great deliberation. “I met Vastra in a tunnel like this.” The Doctor mused. Jenny’s curiosity was piqued. She wondered if it had anything to do with April…

“Right. Where to next?” He asked Rose.

“You’re lost aren’t you? You’ve got us lost.” Rose folded her arms and glared. “Absolutely useless he is.” She turned to Jenny, gesturing at the Doctor in despair.

Jenny felt a gentle draft on her right cheek and shushed her. It came again, soft and chill. Not unlike a brush from Vastra’s hand. The thought made her flush and she shook her head. “Up ‘ere.” She pointed. “S’air flow. Must lead out somewhere.”
She took the lead and after a bit more trudging around in the murk, they came through a small hole into an abandoned warehouse. It was filled with an alien spaceship, the aliens themselves the Doctor confirmed were the Kraal and a terrified Prince, bound and gagged and about to be loaded on board.

“Aliens…” whispered Jenny to herself. “Right.”

They didn’t seem too happy at the sudden arrival of the Doctor but Jenny managed to fight them off. They didn’t seem that tough or good at fighting really, not hand to hand. Whilst they were occupied, the Doctor temporarily disabled their ship, Rose freed the Prince and dragged him out of the way, speechless and trembling and pointing a lot. The Doctor ended up talking a lot, practically dancing around and eventually after a mention of a Shadow Proclamation and how you couldn’t go around stealing royalty because your own royal family had died out and maybe you should consider becoming a republic, the Kraal agreed to leave peaceably enough, several of them wincing and staring at Jenny and then muttering to each other. The Doctor sent Jenny and Rose to escort the Prince back through the tunnels whilst he helped fix their ship again.

The Prince was disorientated enough that they just put him in a cab and sent him back to the palace, rather than try and explain anything.

The Doctor joined them a little while later as they sat waiting at the entrance to the tunnel.

“Was that alright though? Just sendin’ ‘im off like that?” Jenny asked.

“Probably best we don’t show up in person. You never know with History.” The Doctor winked. “By the way, you seem to have made quite an impression on the Kraal. They wanted to know the name of the Great Warrior who defended Earth.”

Jenny snorted. “What did yer tell ‘em?”

“I said that she was the mighty Jenny Flint, named after the toughest rock on the planet. They went off very impressed.”

“You tol’ a bunch of aliens my real name?!” Jenny was horrified.

“Think of it as the beginning of a beautiful intergalactic friendship!” Rose laughed.

“But they’ll be able ter find me if’n they knows me name.”

“It will be spoken across galaxies.” The Doctor reassured her, walking on ahead with Rose. Jenny followed in stunned silence.

After a while, Rose looked back sharply at Jenny who, now that all the excitement was over, was once more thinking a little wistfully about the fact it was her birthday.

“Yer alright?” Rose asked. “You seem a bit down.”

Jenny fidgeted, twisting her hands into her dress. She wished they were running again. Running didn’t allow for much talking.

“C’mon Flintlock, out with it.”

“Flintlock?” Jenny enquired.

“S’a type of pistol. And you’re a lock pick. It fits.” The Doctor grinned.

Jenny shook her head but eventually mumbled. “s’ me birthday is all.”
“What? Today?” the Doctor seemed startled and stopped in the middle of the street.

“Yep.”

Rose and the Doctor exchanged a significant look over her bowed head.

“Right then! What is there to do for fun in Victorian London?” The Doctor rubbed his hands together.

“Any good pubs where we can get rowdy?”

Jenny looked at them both queerly.

“To celebrate!” Rose exclaimed.

Jenny shrugged, looking off to the side. “I don’t really know any place. Anyways, fink I’d rather go ‘ome.”

The Doctor stared at her searchingly. “Alright.” He crossed his arms and they wandered on in silence, the Doctor and Rose carrying on a silent conversation through looks and eyebrows.

When they got back, the Doctor disappeared and Rose followed Jenny into the kitchen to make the tea.

“Does Vastra know?” Rose asked knowingly.

Jenny looked up in surprise. “No.”

“You miss ‘er don’t you.” A sympathetic expression appeared on her face.

A shrug.

“Wish she were ‘ere?”

A bitten lip.

“I just…s’ me birthday. Din’t think I’d be alone on it.”

Rose refrained from saying she hadn’t been. After all, when you weren’t with the person you wanted to be with, then you were alone and it didn’t matter how many people there were. “At least we ‘ad an adventure though yeah?”

“Yeah. An’ arf.” Jenny laughed. “Will they really speak my name across the galaxy?”

The Doctor came back in then. “For all time!” he replied having caught the question. “Right then! Here we are.” He laid down a present on the table and a cardboard box. Rose grinned at him.

“What?” Jenny looked at him puzzled.

“Present! And cake. Can’t have a birthday without cake.” He flipped open the box to reveal a rather sticky looking cake with icing on it spelling out Happy Birthday Jenny.

“Where’d you get this so quick?”

“It’s a secret. I know a few special bakers. Is the tea ready? Perfect.” He fished in a pocket for a few candles and set them alight with his sonic screwdriver.
“Woss that for?” Jenny asked.

“Ready Rose?”

“Ready!”

“Ready for what??” after a day filled with Kraal and royalty and names being spoken across galaxies, Jenny wouldn’t put anything past the pair of them.

“HHAAaaAPPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU! HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU! HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR JENNY! HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU!!!” they belted out in joyous abandon while Jenny stared slightly dumbfounded.

“Now blow ‘em out and make a wish!” the Doctor gestured.

“A wish?” she said weakly, still recovering.

“Yeah. Like, if you could wish for anything, what would you wish for?” Rose winked.

Jenny flushed but stared at the candles. Her wish for Vastra to be here was useless but…

“I wish I never ‘ave to be alone on me birthday again.” She said and blew out the candles.

There was a silence. “Did I do it wrong?” she looked at them.

“No! Nope. Not at all.” The Doctor grinned. “And your wish shall be granted. I promise.”

“‘ow you gonna make sure of that?” Jenny said sceptically.

“Because I will turn up for every single one of ‘em from this one onwards. And possibly a few in the past too.” He grinned and winked.

“Now fer presents!” Rose grasped the box and thrust it into her hand. She tugged on the knotted string until it gave way and then lifted the box lid up to reveal a beautiful blue embroidered waistcoat. Her eyes went wide as she lifted it out. She’d seen waistcoats like this on Toms back in the bar but not quite like this. She hugged it to her while she looked speechlessly at the Doctor and Rose.

“Try it on then!”

She took a deep breath and then put it on. It fitted perfectly, as if it had been tailored to her.

“Very sharp!” Rose nodded appreciatively.

Jenny’s face twisted but she was a Flint and ‘ard as ‘em.

She carefully put it back in the box and sat and had tea and cake with the Doctor and Rose. Eventually, worn out by the events of the day she fell asleep across the table.

She expected when she woke up the next day in bed, still fully dressed thankfully, that they’d have cleared off but there they were in the kitchen.

“Hello! Thought we’d wait ‘til you got up before we left. Say goodbye properly.” The Doctor waved at her as she came into the kitchen. “Birthday cake for breakfast. Got to be done.” He gestured at a plate with a slice on.
She nodded. Rose gave her a big squeezing hug. “Look after yerself yeah?”

Doctor clapped her on the shoulder. “See you in a year’s time then ey Jenny Flint?”

She nodded, feeling much cheered. “And don’t forget yer promise.” He waved his finger as he followed Rose out the door.

The next day she went out to buy some silk shirts to go with her waistcoat, feeling that it didn’t exactly go with her maid dresses. She sat down in the evening and wrote a letter to Vastra.

Dear Vastra,

Well and it’s been an interesting time here. The Doctor and Rose called in and solicited my help in a case. This alien race called the Kraal had landed in a sewer and had planned to kidnap Prince Bertie in order to make him their royal prince. I don’t think the Queen’d have been very impressed. But we stopped them and the Doctor convinced them to leave. After we left, some blokes in suits went in to the sewer to investigate it. I don’t think they were normal police. Not like the Inspector. They seemed a bit shady. We’ll have to watch out for them. Anyways, that’s all done with. He mentioned he met you in some tunnels, which got me a bit curious as to how you even met the Doctor? I realised that I don’t know that much about him except he’s your friend and you were in the circus together. And he’s always dressed the same. Except he changes his jumper. Is he some kind of traveller? Him and Rose Tyler? Rose I don’t think is from around here. They got me a beautiful blue waistcoat. I went out today to get some silk shirts to go with it and I remembered how I read that it’s so hot in Egypt that you shouldn’t wear clothes you wear in England so I got you some nice lightweight linen shirts. I feel like a proper dandy when I’m dressed up in mine. They got me a cake too and sang and made me blow out candles and make a wish. I wish you could’ve been there. Hope everything’s going well with the case and that you’re safe.

Jenny Flint

She packaged it off the next day to the address Vastra had said she would be staying at in Egypt and then went and trained, as she did every day when she wasn’t cleaning the place vigorously or reading everything she could find on Egypt. But no matter how busy she kept her days, the bed was still empty on one side and she missed Vastra.

She got a letter back eventually, which wasn’t very long but did at least describe some detail of how they met. There was no mention of when Vastra was coming home and Jenny found herself one morning staring out the window at nothing. She sat up very suddenly after realising that she’d read about women mooning over people in books and she was doing precisely that. A flicker of movement in the courtyard distracted her and she looked out to see Parker hop on top of their horse, technically called Alice but Parker always affectionately called her Old Girl.

Chapter End Notes

Professional help is being sought.

Anyone watch Pinky and the Brain?
Ride A Cock Horse

Chapter Summary

to Banbury Cross to see a fine lady upon a white horse!

Literally none of those things. A cock horse is a rocking horse as far as I know, Jenny Flint could possibly be a fine lady and Alice is a black horse...

Chapter Notes

A little chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jenny watched Parker with an interest as he rode around the courtyard grinning and it gave her an idea. Fighting was all very well but horse-riding…that would be useful too. She’d need trousers for that though. She bounded into the hall way, flung her cape around her and fixed her hat on, walking out into the street feeling much more cheerful.

“George!” she called as she walked into the shop and he came out from the back room.

“Ah! Hello Miss Jenny. Not with Vastra today ey?”

“She’s in Egypt. I need some trousers. For horse riding.” She explained hastily.

He blinked. “Jodphurs you mean. I think I might have some. One of the young men who used to do a rather spectacular horse riding act…alas he fell and broke his leg, left him unable to continue but yes…wait here ey?” he disappeared out the back again.

An hour and several cups of tea and stories about the circus later, Jenny left George’s shop with several pairs of beige jodphurs and a pair of boots that would be suitable for horse riding.

She dressed in them the moment she got home, along with a shirt and her waistcoat, feeling very dapper.

Parker had gone home for the day but she knew enough about saddling a horse from her time working with the drayman to get Alice ready.

“You an’ me, old girl.” She whispered, grinning. Alice merely flicked her ears and stood quietly as Jenny attempted to hop on aboard. It took a great deal of wriggling but Alice was a very patient horse.

Finally sat astride Alice, Jenny felt like she was on top of the world. She hadn’t realised horses were so tall when you sat on them. Clinging tightly with her legs she clicked Alice forward and then clung to her neck as Alice walked gently round the yard. A few times around and Jenny felt she’d got the hang of it and sat up straighter.
“Reckon this could work?” she asked Alice and got a comforting whicker in response.

Without a further thought, she urged Alice forward out the gate and into the street. All of her concentration was taken up with staying in the saddle so she missed the odd stares she was getting.

Her leg muscles were aching like mad by the time she returned to 13 Paternoster Row. Dismounting proved in more difficult than getting into the saddle and with a startled “Whoa!!” she fell off, landing with a jarring thump on her backside. “Oww!” she flopped backwards. Alice turned round and nuzzled her gently and Jenny patted the horse on her muzzle.

“Not bad for a first attempt?” she grinned, carefully getting back up again to lead the horse back into the stable, wondering if she could get Parker to give her some lessons at least in how to get on and off a horse with a decent amount of grace.

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“What would ye be wantin’ to ride an ‘oss fer Miss Jenny?” Parker asked when she approached him the next day.

“Same reason as you hopped on ‘er the other day I imagine. ‘Sides, could be useful.”

“In the chasin’ down of varmints that ye and the Madame do?”

“Even the occasional escapin’ it might come in handy.” She grinned.

With a sigh and a shake of his head, Parker showed her how to put her foot in a stirrup and stand in it while she swung her leg over.

“Well that were better.” He nodded encouragingly after the eleventh time she performed the manoeuvre. “Yer no longer haul yerself up like a potato sack.”

“Thanks.”

“Yer dismountin’ is still more fallin’ tho. S’a hop, like this.” He mounted Alice, who had been stood very peacefully with a nosebag on, while the practice had been going on. “Yer balance yer weight on this leg, swing t’other one an’ then…hop.” He jumped down, landing heavily but firmly on his two feet.

Jenny tried to replicate this but still ended up staggering. “Welll s’longer a way down fer me.” She muttered. “’ow’d you learn to ride anyways?”

“I wasn’t allus a city man, Miss Jenny.” He shrugged. “Grew up the son of a farm hand an’ even after a hard day’s work, there’d be time to ride an old ‘oss round a field fer a bit of fun.”

“What made yer come to London?”

“Ahh same as most country boys. Thought of a bit of extra tin, excitement.” He smiled. “An’ then I met the missus an’ that were that.”

“She din’t fancy the countryside then?”

“Nah, Miss Jenny. She’s perfectly ‘appy ‘ere an’ although sometimes I do miss the country, I wouldn’t ‘ave the ‘eart to arsk ‘er to leave.” Parker brushed Alice down.

“What about yer family?”
“Ooh mercy, me parents went to their graves long ago.”

“Din’t they say nuffin’ ‘bout you jus’ runnin’ off ter London?”

“They was appreciatin’ that there weren’t a lot of opportunities where we were livin’. Gave me some money to set meself up with an’ wished me luck is the most they said. Wrote them letters all the while an’ they came ter me weddin’ an’ I returned back fer their funerals.” He gave her one final brush and then put the blanket over her and turned her into the loose box. “Why? You got some beau out in the countryside?” he winked at her.

“Nah. Don’t know what I’d do outside London. Wouldn’t know where I was.”

“An’ yer family?” Parker had noticed Cathy’s brief stay.

Jenny shrugged as they went indoors and she set about making dinner. “They wouldn’t exactly wish me luck in anythin’.”

“Well it takes all sorts I s’pose.”

“They don’t approve of me cos of the way I live me life. Cos I done it differently. I ain’t respectable.”

Parker laughed heartily, sobering when he saw Jenny’s expression. “Well, I wouldn’t say as yer not respectable. You an’ the Madame been very good to me an’ I wouldn’t be as churlish as ter say a bad thing about yer. Yer fine enough people by me.”

Jenny’s mouth twitched. “Thanks Parker.”

“Yer welcome, Miss Jenny.”

“An’ thanks fer the ridin’ lessons.”

“Aye, we shall ‘ave ter find a nice patch o’ grass somewheres as you can learn to get Alice up to some speed. Though I shall aye warn yer, ye’ll be fallin’ off a lot at first. But if ye can get back up an’ on an’ not let it shake yer, we shall make an ‘oss woman of ye yet.”

Jenny did indeed fall off quite a lot and ended up with a considerable amount of bruises, but thankfully no broken bones. She wasn’t a natural horse woman but the exercises Vastra had set her were helping to build up the muscles in her legs as well that she gained a fair enough seat by the end of November.

Chapter End Notes

I know nothing about horses except what I read in Patricia Leitch’s Pony Stories so if things are wrong as they probably are in terms of horse riding techniques I apologise.
Returns and Riots

Chapter Summary

Yay! Vastra’s back!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vastra returned suddenly and unexpectedly, walking through the front door one evening in early December. Jenny rushed out at the sound, thinking someone was intruding and was confused when there was no-one there. “Jenny!” came a voice behind her and she turned. Elation filled her at the sound of her name in that voice and with a surprised “Vastra!” Jenny rushed at her, dove underneath the veil, hands clasping the edges, kissing Vastra in the heady relief of her being home and unhurt after so many weeks. Vastra staggered a little in surprise as Jenny hugged her.

“Hello to you too, little ape.”

Jenny let her go at that, awkward enough that she might’ve overstepped some boundary that she didn’t pick Vastra up on the “little ape”. She fiddled with Vastra’s luggage, picking it up to take it upstairs.

“That was kissing yes?” Vastra enquired, removing her veil carefully and hanging it up. Jenny froze on the first step of the stairs.

“Yes ma’am.” She didn’t turn around.

“Hm. What for this time? What have I done to deserve such thanks?” Vastra shook out her cloak to rid it out any travelling dust and mildew.

“They can be like a greetin’ too.” Jenny dropped the luggage in favour of twisting her hands into her apron. “There’s um lots of things. Reasons why. People kiss, I mean. But that was like a greetin’. A greetin’ kiss.” She turned round but stared at her feet, realising that it wasn’t exactly convincing.

“I saw such things as I was passing through France. This is customary in Britain too?”

“Between…between people who know each other. Who’re close. They um…they kiss. Particularly if they ain’t seen each other for a while. An’ then they suddenly see each other.” Jenny continued to stare at the floor, a skirt appearing in the periphery, aware that now Vastra was looking keenly at her, was standing right in front of her, was taking her head in both hands and lifting it up and…

Her eyes fluttered shut at the sensation of cool scaly lips and her hands reached out to clutch at Vastra’s dress and when Vastra released her, she found her breathing had become erratic.

“Hm. Not unpleasant.” Vastra mused, turning away to move into the plant room.

Jenny wasn’t sure if this was a compliment or not and, after gaping into thin air for a second, recovered herself and darted upstairs with the luggage.

She found Vastra in the plant room, her fingers steepled, eyes staring at the opposite wall. Jenny
brought her a cup of tea and went to retreat but Vastra asked her to stay. She sat down in the chair usually reserved for clients, knees hugged to her chest, talking about what had happened with the Doctor, the riots that had happened throughout London only a few weeks ago, a new story she’d found in a magazine called A Study In Scarlet by a Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Vastra returned the favour by filling her in on all the adventures of Egypt. She had hopes there was a clan of Silurians there, given the reactions and legends of the tribes she had met. After so long talking, Jenny was relaxed and felt the kisses were quite forgotten by Vastra; an ape oddity or custom that could be freely ignored.

But she couldn’t quite forget it herself, not when Vastra yawned and suggested they go to bed. It’d been weeks since she’d last shared a bed with Vastra and she fidgeted nervously instead of dressing in her nightgown.

“Whatever is the matter? You’ve been jumpy ever since I returned. What happened?”

“Nuffin’.”

“That bad hm?” Vastra crawled across the bed to stare up at her, eyes narrowing. “Did something happen with your family?” She grinned as Jenny looked at her in surprise. “I am trying to be a detective you know. And I have noticed that three things upset you. Being passed over because of your class, me or something to do with your family. And I’ve only been back for five minutes and I don’t think even I could upset you quite so swiftly.”

Jenny sighed. It wasn’t really what was bothering her but it would serve as a cover and she had been intending on asking Vastra’s help in the matter anyway.

“I saw me sister. At the riots.”

“Cathy?” Vastra was surprised.

“Nah. Jess.”

“Jess?”

“I had two older sisters.”

“I recall you mentioning the name now when you told me of the day your mother died. What was she doing there?”

“Protestin’ mainly. With this party called the…the Socialist something. I dunno. She got arrested for pullin’ a peeler off ‘is ‘oss.”

Vastra sighed. “Criminality runs in your family I see.”

“Oi.”

“Should we go speak to Gregson in the morning then? You would wish for her to be released? Or have you already tried?”

Jenny snorted derisively. “Like Gregson’d listen ter me.”

“Well I shall speak to him then, as soon as I’m rested.” Vastra assured her, wriggling back under the covers. “Which will happen a lot sooner if you stop standing around and get into bed.” She added as Jenny didn’t move.
Jenny very quietly and deliberately got dressed in her night gown, blew out the candle and then curled up at the edge of the bed and stared into the darkness for a long time.

She must’ve fallen asleep because she dreamed of cool scales and kisses. She woke up, rolled over and as usual Vastra wasn’t there. She huffed a breath out to release the small pang, realising that Vastra wasn’t back yet, burrowing her head under the covers.

“Jenny? Are you alright?” the quilt was gently tugged from her and a concerned scaly green face peered at her.

“Ma’am?” Jenny started upright into wakefulness. “You’re back!”

Vastra stared at her bemusedly. “You are surprised? I got back last night. Don’t you remember?”

“You weren’t ‘ere when I woke up.”

“I got up.” Vastra stared even harder at her tousle-haired sleep-fuddled human. “We’re going to see Gregson today. He’ll want a report on the Egypt case and I will ask him about your sister at the same time.”

“Yeah.” Jenny’s shoulders slumped. It wasn’t exactly the enthusiastic response Vastra was expecting.

“Jennyyyy…” Vastra drawled. “What is the matter?”

“Nuffin’.” Jenny shook her head, plucking at the covers.

Vastra frowned. It couldn’t be Gregson, if she hadn’t tried to see her sister. It couldn’t be her family, if she hadn’t even seen her sister yet. Which left, as she’d factored into the deductions last night, Vastra herself. Apparently she could upset her in that short a time.

“You may be a thief, Jenny Flint, but you are a terrible liar. ‘Nuffin’ was the matter last night and ‘Nuffin’ is the matter now and I’d quite like to know what ‘Nuffin’ is, if it is not your sister and not Gregson…”

Jenny closed her eyes when Vastra leaned to catch her gaze. This rather confirmed the matter to the Silurian.

“How is your training going?” Vastra asked in an attempt to at least get Jenny to talk to her.

“S’goin’ fine.”

“Are you looking forward to your birthday? You mentioned before I left that it was coming up soon.” Vastra racked her brains for something to talk about that hadn’t been covered in yesterday’s conversation.

“9th of October.” Jenny burrowed back under the covers.

“What about it?”

“Thas when me birthday is. 9th of October.”

“But that’s…” a rush of shame and sorrow went through Vastra, a combination that she could only call regret, as she realised that was nearly two months ago. It intensified when she realised precisely when the 9th of October had been. “But that was only two days after I…why didn’t you say
anything? I could’ve delayed going. Jenny!” she shook what she assumed was a shoulder. She had left the little ape alone. So soon as well after her family had left her. Well that explained why Jenny was upset with her.

“S’alright.” The lump gained a face, albeit one that was reddened. “That was the day the Doctor turned up. So I weren’t alone or nuffin’.” But she had been. She’d told Rose that. She’d been alone on her birthday. The Doctor and Rose were nice enough but Vastra was the closest thing she had to a family. Well, apart from Jess perhaps. Her face fell even further at that thought. After all, Cathy had walked out again. What was to stop Jess doing the same?

A head butt to her shoulder brought her attention back to a very sorrowful looking lizard staring at her.

“I will get Gregson to track down your sister and release her.” Vastra promised, moving off the bed and out the door with the determination and singlemindedness she had when she had a task to do.

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Gregson had been able to find no hint of a Jess Flint and Vastra returned home, more than a little dispirited. How was she going to cheer Jenny up now?

“Well there wouldn’t be.” Jenny shrugged, now dressed and sat at the kitchen table, when Vastra told her. “The Paternoster Irregulars couldn’t find anything either when I asked ‘em so I reckon she changed ‘er name long ago.”

“You could’ve told me!”

“You left that bleedin’ quickly.”

“Hmph.”

Armed with this information Vastra returned immediately and found there had been one Jessica arrested. A Jessica Blackett had imprisoned for attacking a police officer. Gregson took her to the jail, where she paid the fine and saw Jenny’s sister.

Cathy had not resembled Jenny in the slightest, being taller and more fair haired. But Jess Flint or Blackett was almost the twin of Jenny. Her dark hair was wild, her face rather dirty from jail and her eyes sparked at Vastra.

“’oo’re you then?” she asked, as soon as they were in Vastra’s carriage. “I don’ take no favours off’n no toffs.”

“I am not a toff, I am a private detective.” Vastra explained, keeping herself calm.

“I din’ do nuffin’ wrong. So I whacked a peeler, ain’t nuffin’ requires detectivin’.” Jess slumped moodily backward in the carriage chair and folded her arms. “You from one of the reform schools or summat? Bit bleedin’ later doncha think? On’y by about a decade.” She laughed bitterly.

“I am not from a reform school and I have no interest whatsoever in whatever multitude of crimes you have committed.” Vastra had thought she might like Jess but found herself aggravated by the attitude.

Jessica raised an eyebrow and stared suspiciously at her. But she was safe in the depths of her hood and behind the veil. “Awright yer stumped me. Woss this all about? Some charity fing? Gonna try an’ set me up as yer maid all nice n dandy?”
Really aggravated Vastra. She felt a twinge of annoyance. Is that what she’d done to Jenny? Was that what Jenny saw it as?

She merely replied “We’re here.” and stepped down from the carriage outside 13 Paternoster Row.

For some reason she hoped that Jenny wouldn’t call her ma’am and yet…she remembered Cathy’s reaction suddenly.

“Jenny!” she called as she entered the house, wishing she could sound less authoritarian. Behind her Jessica made a noise of surprise.

Jenny came out the kitchen, looking distinctly maid-like, which distinctly annoyed Vastra.

“So this is a Let’s Reform People As Maids thing is it?” Jessica’s arms folded.

Jenny flushed and stood wringing her towel between her hands.

“Jenny is my assistant.” Vastra spat, unable to contain herself any longer.

“So it’s you then I take it. Infamous Jenny Flint.” Vastra stopped herself from hissing at Jessica’s barbed tone but only just. “You workin’ as a maid for this toff?”

“Jenny is my assistant.” Vastra spat, unable to contain herself any longer.

“Balls.” Jessica laughed cynically. She stared at Vastra a while longer.

“I merely wished to reunite you with your sister.”

“I’m sure I’m grateful.” Jessica snorted. “Gawd, I can’t e’en believe it’s you really, cept you look the same gormless idjit as ever.”

“Surprised yer still remember what I look like.” Jenny bit back. “Seein’ as yer scarpered an’ left us to the wind when I were ‘ardly seven. An’ yer might be a bit grateful seein’ as ‘ow she got yer outta prison.”

“They weren’t keepin’ me there long anyways. Due to be all released after Christmas. An’ if all that meets me is that now I become ‘er nice lil maid like you I can do without favours.”

“Thought you left to be a maid, a nice little skiv for some rich family rather than look after yer own!”

“Yes.” Vastra replied, finding her voice again. She wasn’t sure whether she was amused or shocked at their bickering.

“Yeah an’ thas when I realised s’all work fer the likes of us an’ I decided to fight back a bit. ‘ow’d she e’en know where I was ey? You at the riots? You watchin’ from the sidelines, like everyone else, all safe in yer respectable maid’s uniform?” She laughed. “An’ you used ter be the worst of us, cept fer Albie. Mind you, you always was sellin’ anyone to the peelers for cash you was I ain’t surprised you’d sell yerself. Does your Mistress know about yer past?”

“Yes.” Vastra replied, finding her voice again. She wasn’t sure whether she was amused or shocked at their bickering.

Jenny and Vastra looked at each other, wondering simultaneously what Jessica would make of them robbing banks but figuring she probably wouldn’t be best pleased at that either.
“It’s not like that. She rescued me.” Jenny replied.

“Is that what she spun you as a tale? HA!”

“Nah you don’ understand. It weren’t nuffin’ like that! I was attacked an’ she rescued me. It weren’t from no reform school, though I been around some places, it were from a long dark alley.” Jenny took a step towards Jess.

“So what you stay with ‘er outta some twisted gratitude? Scrapin’ an’ bowin’? Bet you don’ e’en get paid do yer. You bin right fixed you ‘ave. You got any sense you’ll come along wiv me. I can set yer up independent like, yer own Mistress.”

“But…”

“You don’t owe ‘er nuffin’ neither do I. Gawd I don’ e’en know why I’m botherin’. You wanna stay an’ lick some widder’s boots fine. I got better things ter be doin’.”

“What like get arrested?” Jenny spat. “I tried that an’ I din’t like it much.” She and Jess were face to face now.

“At least I’m fightin’ back! Rather than playin’ dress up to rich bastards!” she pushed Jenny backwards.

“Jenny!” Vastra caught her by the arm as she stumbled, standing protectively in front of her, glowering at Jess. Jess looked at them as if a veil had been lifted. Her eyes widened.

“Ohhh. Is that what it’s like? Not jus’ a maid. Well that is a set-up. ‘ow’d she con yer into that?” Jess whistled.

“She din’t con me into nuffin’!” Jenny pushed back past Vastra, annoyed at the Silurian’s protectiveness.

“I’ve eard about ‘er sort. Tempt young kids in off’n the street with offers of a bed an’ a meal an’ then wham! Though usually they’re men.” Jessica shook her head. “You ‘ave bin put upon yer poor sod.”

With a snarl, Jenny grabbed her sister by the front of her dress, slamming her into the wall.

“Jenny!”

“Done a good number on yer, I’ll give ‘er that.” Jessica said breathlessly, struggling against Jenny’s grip.

“I chose ter stay with her. Yeah there was a bed an’ a meal in it but seein’ as she’d just rescued me from a bunch what probably did what you was insinuatin’, I was inclined to take the offer up. She killed the bastards what were about to do fer me, got Cathy out of an asylum an’ as generally bin lookin’ after me ever since. So don’t you dare. Ever. Imply. That I’ve bin put upon. Yeah, maybe we gotta be maid an’ Mistress in the eyes of the world cos the world don’t allow much else between the ‘igh class an’ lower class but don’t you ever talk like that about ‘er! She done fer me more’n you ever did, walkin’ out like that, leavin’ us all to fend fer oursels. Did yer know that Thom died? Did yer know Albie got picked? Did yer know Megan is livin’ with our bastard aunt and uncle an’ we can’t e’en see ‘er? Did yer know that Da died inna workhouse and Cathy ended up in an asylum? DID YER? DID YER KNOW I’D BE DEAD TOO BUT FOR ‘ER?!”

Jess had stopped struggling and was now looking at Jenny amazed.
“Don’ talk to me about ‘ow you’ve bin fightin’ cos you weren’t fightin’ fer us. You just…” Jenny ran out of words and let Jess go, stepping back.

Vastra wordlessly moved to her side. Jess noted the protective stance, the brush of hands and thought she could feel a glower.

She glowered back at the impenetrable veil.

“Oo are yer.” She tugged her dress straight again.

“I told you. I’m a private detective. And adventuress. My name is Madame Vastra.”

There was a silence.

“You ‘elp ‘er out do yer? Adventurin’ an’ the like?” Jess raised an eyebrow at Jenny.

“When I can…” Jenny shrugged.

“So yer…friends an’ the like.”

“…yes.” Jenny thought that “an’ the like” just about summed her and Vastra up.

There was a long silence.

“Fanks fer springin’ me.” Jessica sniffed, still not quite looking at Vastra.

“You’re welcome.” Vastra said a little sarcastically.

Jess brushed past them towards the kitchen and the back door. “This the servant’s way out I take it? I wouldn’t want to cause rumours or anythin’.” She called to Vastra.

“Jess!” Jenny pushed past Vastra, realising she was quite possibly about to lose another of her sisters.

Jess turned back to her sister, with a small smile. “Aw c’mon Jenny. I’m fightin’ fer socialism an’ yer I don’ e’en know what with the toffs. You can’t tell me Vastra don’ ‘ave money, look at the place. You made it plain yer ain’t comin’ away with me so don’t “Jess!” me. If she’s who yer choose then fine enough an’ I wish yer ‘appiness.”

“But…”

“I’m sure our two stories would make some interestin’ listenin’ to. An’ who knows one day when everythin’s calmed down but fer now? I can’t say as I care fer yer preference o’ company.” Jess nodded to both of them and slipped out the back door.

“JESS!” Jenny ran after her.

“Listen, kid. I ain’t no detective but I can tell yer never gonna choose a sister who rightly said I walked out on yer, though our useless arse of a father should’ve done some work lookin’ after yer and I don’t feel no shame over it, it weren’t my job, over ‘er ‘oo saved yer. We got diff’rent paths to be walkin’ at the moment. ‘Sides…she’s waitin’ fer yer.” Jess pointed over Jenny’s shoulder to where a cloaked figure was watching them from the doorstep in the gloom of the evening. Jenny turned to look and froze when she heard footsteps running away. Her heart dropped in her chest but she didn’t look behind to see the figure disappearing. She walked resolutely back across the court yard to the back door of 13 Paternoster Row where a cloaked figure, rather distressed by the melancholy crumpling in Jenny’s face, swept her into a hug right on the doorstep, regardless of who might be watching.
And Jess, having crept back to watch from the shadows, grinned slightly and wandered off at a more casual pace, whistling softly. She had her own battles she was fighting and always would be; it was her nature. But there was a small part of her that was glad that at least one of her family had found something more.

Chapter End Notes

Yay for Second Kiss!! The inspiration for the type of which was a very good piece of fanart which is Jenny diving under Vastra's veil for a kiss *goes off in search of it to link the artist* which I can't currently bloody find but if you look up Jenny Vastra Fanart Kiss it's about the third result. Thank you to that artist! If anyone knows who that is please let me know the image merely links to 99+ pages of tumblr and as much as 99+ pages of Vastra/Jenny posts sounds awesome, I have work tomorrow.

edit: http://critter-of-habit.tumblr.com/post/51083297638/jenny-made-the-first-move AS FAR AS I CAN TELL this is the original artist. I concur completely with Jenny making the first move.

The riots being referenced are the 1887 Bloody Sunday riot (If memory serves there’s another fanfic that mentions them also, possibly Compilation of Short Stories on Vastra and Jenny or something? which is an awesome fic. Shout out to that fic!?) The Socialist Democratic Federation apparently was involved (this is Wikipedia knowledge I was looking up the meaning of U2's Sunday Bloody Sunday and...there are a lot of Bloody Sundays, the 1887 one heads a long list) including one Annie Besant who I take to be the same as organised the 1888 Match Girl strike (the match factory being the only large scale industrial factory in London at the time if I recall my Wikipedia journeys in trying to find a factory for Jenny to work in). Jenny most likely would’ve been working from or for there during her time as a match girl, therefore I like to think she will support the strike when it happens in the future of this fic. It will probably involve a return of Jess as well who seems like the type to support it, being down with the Socialists. I think she may be more an anarchist Socialist League member rather than the SDF and probably ends up in some Tipping the Velvet-esque adventure and the like and then in her older age goes and becomes a Suffragette.

Weird Co-Incidence: I looked up the members list of the SDF (for lulz) and there’s this bloke called James Gribble. I thought I was just making up a name but apparently it is a real surname. Welp.

A Study In Scarlet by Arthur Conan Doyle got published in the November of 1887 in Beeton’s Christmas Annual and I think is the first Sherlock Holmes story. Seeing as The Secret Lives of Monsters infers that Arthur Conan Doyle ended up knowing Vastra and writing a story about an adventure with her (if not indeed directly basing the detective off of her but seeing as he wrote A Study In Scarlet in 1886 that’s not possible in this timeline), I had Jenny read it to start off their whole thing. ACD(C? XD) may or may not be making an appearance in this fic; I mean the Doctor Who Adventures comic makes it that they know Oscar Wilde (well really I imagine they would) so all is game but I will admit beyond the Hound of the Baskervilles, I know little about his works so possibly not except as brief mentions. Also apparently he got invited to the wedding but according to Moffat declined to attend and sent a hamper instead. I bet Oscar Wilde attended in person.
Wow this is a Sydney Padua length note. I’m a little impressed. Considering I swear I wrote in the initial summary of this fic that there would be next to no historical accuracy. Then again, wikipedia articles is hardly...

To the next chapter! Let me know if my quality of writing is failing abysmally.
Chapter Summary

In Which A Lot Of Time Is Spent Travelling

Chapter Notes

I’m going off Around The World In Eighty Days here in order to try and figure out how they got to Japan in Victorian Era times. Relying on Jules Verne probably means historical accuracy is out the window. Everything is out the window. The world has been defenestrated. Jenny and Vastra as both detectives and bank robbers (only real ones) fulfil the roles of Fix, Fogg and Passepartout admirably though, which made me laugh.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Strangely, the words of Jess that stuck most in Jenny’s mind were “bet you don’t e’en get paid”. Not that she was Vastra’s maid to get paid but the money they did have, was kept either in the bank or in Vastra’s old chest. Vastra never said she couldn’t have money or limited what Jenny took, but Jenny didn’t have any guarantees either. It troubled her. If she had to leave, could she survive on the streets again?

It was hard to imagine leaving with the Silurian lying snoring softly in the bed next to her. Jenny led on her side watching Vastra’s eyes flick as she dreamt, wondering what Vastra was dreaming of? How would she even go about broaching the subject? And what would she be asking a guarantee of?

Jenny’s restlessness resulted in Vastra being awake first once more.

13th December 1887

“Do you wish to train or are you staying in bed all day?” Vastra greeted her, pulling back the duvet to the accompaniment of Jenny groaning. “I see you’ve gotten lazy in my absence. This is the second time I have beaten you in rising…really!” she exclaimed as she overheard the curses Jenny was muttering. “Are you bleeding again?”

“No but you will be in a minute!” Jenny threw a pillow at her. Vastra caught it one hand.

“I doubt you’ve advanced that much that you could achieve that.” Vastra expertly fielded the second pillow and then dumped them down on Jenny’s head before walking out.

Jenny’s eyes narrowed and she dressed quickly in her jodhpurs and boots, silk shirt tails loose and the blue waistcoat unbuttoned. She felt like fighting now.

Vastra was relaxing in the plant room with a cup of tea when a wild-haired Jenny Flint appeared in the doorway.
“Well?” Jenny walked over and stood in front of Vastra, arms folded. “We trainin’ today or not?”

Vastra looked her slowly up and down. She felt a tugging sensation that she’d felt before when Jenny had kissed her.

“Oh!” Jenny was flushing under Vastra’s scrutiny.

“Very well.” Vastra shook herself and followed Jenny down to the basement.

Jenny’s progress impressed Vastra. The young woman’s movements had become sure and solid with strength behind them. She moved on to teaching the basic stances and movements of Silurian non-armed combat. Jenny’s strength was improving but her stamina was lacking and she ended up slumped against the cool basement wall.

“Don’t you ever sweat?” she panted, looking up at an infuriatingly cool looking Silurian.

“Sweat? Is that what you call it?” A tongue flicked out on instinct and tasted a bead from Jenny’s forehead, making her squeak.

“Oi! Bleedin’ ‘ell.” She clapped her hands to the now stinging spot.

“My apologies. Salty. Not unpleasant.”

“D’you mind?” Jenny stood up, piqued and Vastra fell back into a fighting stance with a grin. They were interrupted by the sound of a letter falling through the letter box.

“A letter?”

“You received my last one? I didn’t bother sending another; I knew I would be returning.” Vastra shrugged. They moved back upstairs to investigate.

“Ah. From the Doctor.” Vastra grinned, recognising the writing.

“What can ‘e want?” Jenny peered over Vastra’s arms to read it.

“He has a case for us! In Japan.”

“Japan! But you on’y jus’ got back from Egypt…” Jenny’s heart and face fell.

“A case is a case. As swiftly as one is solved, another arrives. We must pack immediately.” Vastra started for the stairs but stopped when she realised Jenny was still standing at the door. “I would have thought you’d be excited. A chance to try out your new outfit, test your skills. He recommends packing swords, we don’t have any but I’m sure we can pick some up over there.” She grinned as Jenny’s face changed from forlornness to puzzlement to realisation and then a huge grin to match Vastra’s, a hopeful grin. “And I can teach you basic blade combat on the way there.”

“You mean I’m comin’ with yer?”

“The Doctor specifically requests the Great Detective and her…” Vastra frowned suddenly, re-reading the letter, snorting before handing it to Jenny to peruse.

“I require the assistance of the Great Genius Detective and her Silu…” Jenny burst out laughing. “and her Silurian assistant.” She grinned at Vastra’s attempt at a haughty expression.

“I take it he was impressed with you, with your help in the defeat of the Kraal’s plot.”
“Musta bin ma’am.”

“Well, we’d better go and pack then.” Vastra shook her head in a mock huff. “Those trousers will do well for fighting but I think maid uniforms for the trip.”

Jenny rather reverently laid her clothes in a suitcase Vastra handed to her and they set off the next day, to catch a train to the port.

14th December 1887

The station was cold and felt grimy from soot and smoke but Jenny was used to that at least. She handed their luggage to the porter and went to find a compartment with Vastra. The Silurian was shivering slightly in the cold and wanted nothing more than to wrap herself around Jenny but in full view of the public that was impossible.

“Here.” Vastra gestured, opening the sliding door and locking it behind them, pulling down the blinds on the windows.

“Oi.” Jenny complained, moving to put them up again when she was ambushed from behind by Vastra.

“I’m c-c-cold.”

“Blimey! You are freezin’.” Jenny hastily wrapped her black cloak around Vastra, underneath Vastra’s own, effectively cocooning them. “‘ow’d you survive winters before me then?” she asked, rubbing Vastra’s back.

“Mostly in pain.” Vastra hissed. “When the circus was over and I had to find accommodation elsewhere, I’d sleep during the day; it was too cold at night.”

“Is that why you were wanderin’ round when yer found me?”

“Moving at least kept me warm and it’s easier to find dinner at night.” Vastra sighed in relief as Jenny’s body warmth permeated through her dress.

“Well there is that.” She’d lived with Vastra for a while now and was no longer perturbed at the thought of Vastra eating people but it was still gave her pause when Vastra referred to people as “dinner”. “You better now?”

Vastra grunted and didn’t let Jenny go.

“Shouldn’t we sit down at least? ‘fore the train starts off?”

“Oh very well.” Vastra sagged into a seat and sat there. She didn’t look as yellow as she did when she was cold but she still shivered pointedly. Jenny rolled her eyes, double checked the door was locked and then sat down heavily in Vastra’s lap. She could practically feel the Silurian’s smug smile as Vastra wrapped them both in the folds of her cloak.

Eventually even Vastra had to admit she was thoroughly warmed through and Jenny put the blinds up again. She’d never been on a train before and knelt on the upholstered seat to look out at the flying countryside, in a rather un-maid-like fashion but Vastra didn’t have the heart or the cares to remind her. The veil hid her grins. From anyone but Jenny.
“You said you met the Doctor on a train.” Jenny said, finally sitting back down to watch the world pass more casually.

“Yes, I did.” Vastra debated taking the bait. She’d not been forthcoming last time and her letter hadn’t exactly been brimming with details. “It is what I suppose I think of as my birthday. In April. The Doctor told me the year was 1861. I told you they were building the Underground train system. My aunt had put us to sleep but the systems had been damaged in the disaster. The rest of my clutch were awakened before me and slaughtered. I was lucky; they thought I was already dead.”

“An’ then you ate ‘em.” The rather gory image of Vastra crouching with half a human arm coming from her mouth was a hard one to erase.

“I…attacked with some frequency, enough to draw the Doctor’s attention. He saved me, in a way. He told me that if I continued, they would hunt me down and kill me. Or I could stop. And live. Which, according to him would be more fun. Which it most certainly wasn’t at first. Upon ascending to the surface, I was captured and sold to the circus.”

“What??” Jenny jerked upright and promptly fell over as the train lurched. “You never tol’ me that!” she rubbed her head, looking up at Vastra from her position of being sprawled on the apartment floor with a distraught expression.

“The Doctor paid for my freedom when he returned to check on me but I stayed anyway. Where else could I go? At the time it seemed it was either that or death. He wasn’t very pleased. That’s why he joined the circus, trying to convince me to leave, to try something else.” Vastra checked her “maid” over as she spoke.

“I shoulda stayed that time, shoulda got you out.”

“Do you honestly think I would’ve listened to an ape when I did not listen to the Doctor?”

Jenny snorted.

“Besides, did you not?” Vastra smiled enigmatically.

“Huh?”

“I’m no longer working for the circus am I?” Vastra stood up and brushed her dress off.

“…no.”

“And who supported me so that I did not have to return there?” she held out a hand and helped Jenny to her feet also.

“…me, I guess.”

“And who helped to acquire our current wealth?”

“…me, I s’pose.”

“You. You see? You succeeded where the Doctor failed after all. So there’s no need to sulk.” Vastra cupped Jenny’s head in her hands and gently kissed her, a difficult achievement on a swaying train.

“What was that for?” Another lurch from the train made Jenny sit down with a thump.

“Kisses are a way to say thank you, yes?” Vastra shrugged, sitting down a little more gracefully. After all, if the little ape was going to use that as an excuse then so was she.
“Fer what?”

“For saving me.” Vastra replied simply, leaning back and closing her eyes.

A small satisfied smile quirked Jenny’s lips. “Yer welcome.”

She returned to looking out the window once more but the landscape seemed less captivating than it had been before. “An’ I weren’t sulkin’.” She muttered under her breath.

If the train had captured Jenny’s attention the boat certainly did; a vast crowded steamer that was to take them to France. Their room was small and cramped, last minute ticket purchases allowed no luxury. There were two bunks, covered in white sheets and a blue blanket in an alcove with room underneath for storing luggage and a narrow space to walk in to get to them.

“It is only a short voyage at least.” Vastra mused as Jenny hauled their luggage in. “And it has a window.” She pointed to the small rectangle where dim light was streaming through.

It didn’t seem like a short voyage to Jenny who ended up bitterly seasick. Vastra was used to the motion but stayed with her, curled up close on the rather sagging bed, trying to distract her with stories of her previous journey to Egypt.

“Were you scared?” Jenny asked. “Travellin’ all that way by yerself?”

“It was a new experience.”

“But anythin’ could’ve happened! You coulda got caught again.”

“I had my veil. Remember, it is only you and the Doctor that can see through it. Well, and a tribe of people in Egypt. But they treated me very well.”

“Did they really think you was one of their gods come to life?”

“Who is to say I’m not?” Vastra grinned.

Jenny poked her for that.

December 16th – 19th 1887

They disembarked in France and took another train down through France and Italy, Jenny remaining in awe of it. As she remarked to Vastra, she’d never seen quite so much countryside in her life.

“Din’t know the ground could go so high. Or be so empty fer so long.”

“Have you never journeyed outside your country?”

“Never bin outside London.” Jenny told her. “What about you?”

“As a warrior I travelled extensively but this is…” Vastra gestured out the window. “New. Before Egypt I had never travelled far in the world of the apes. The Circus toured occasionally. Up and down Britain.”

“Not apes. What’s Britain like?”

“Apes are the same everywhere. Disgusting, gaping creatures with no manners.”
“Thanks!” Jenny snorted sarcastically.

“Well, the ones in Egypt were quite pleasant. I would introduce you, we’ll have to change ships there but alas time is of the essence. The Doctor said in his letter he was there in February.”

“February…” Jenny mused. “Wait we got another two months of travellin’?”

“Japan is half way around the world from Britain. And we’re travelling by steam not teleport.”

Jenny let out a long breath and closed her eyes. And they’d have to come all the way back too. But then imagine, said a voice in her head, if you hadn’t come. At least she was with Vastra this time.

19th – 21st December 1887

Jenny shivered at the sight of the roiling sea, gripping the railings until her knuckles were white. She wasn’t very much looking forward to another experience at sea. And a long one this time. Vastra annoyed her by standing easily on the heaving deck, walking about without stumbling at all.

And annoyed her even more by declaring “Ah! Egypt. I feel it was only yesterday.” When they arrived at Suez.

And being thoroughly at home in what had become rather stifling heat, when you’d been used to winters being freezing.

They caught another boat to cross the Red Sea, which at least had winds to bring a sense of coolness.

25th December 1887

Jenny was reminded of the fact it was Christmas only by other travellers wishing each other happy Christmas. Not that Christmas had always been a big event in her life but it was her first Christmas with Vastra and she was disappointed that it would be spent in a small cabin in the middle of an ocean when they finally had money that she could’ve made it special.

“Christmas.” Vastra quirked an eyebrow ridge when Jenny told her. She was led in their bunk reading a book, having become tired of, as she put it, being continuously surrounded by apes in such close quarters for so long.

“S’like a celebration. Meant to be all about the birth of Christ an’ the like.” Jenny sat on the floor opposite, her legs hugged to her chest. She’d stopped feeling sick but she still struggled to stand upright and still.

“I have read about him. I thought it was fiction?”

Jenny looked at her shocked. “Nah, s’like religion.”

“It’s very contradictory. The book that talks about it has some ridiculous ideas.”

“Yeah…well.”

“And so apes celebrate the birthday of someone who is now long dead, if they even existed in the first place.”

“Yeah. No! Not apes. But I s’pose. Sort of. In the reform school they made us sing hymns an’ pray a lot but we got a better dinner that day at least. Yer meant to give gifts an’ be with family but I dunno. Guess I don’t really believe in that stuff either.” Jenny shrugged.
“Gifts hm?” Vastra rolled onto her side. “And you give them to everyone?”

“Well ter friends, family. Special people.”

“So I would give a gift to you and you to me?”

“Well…yeah. I s’pose.” Jenny wondered briefly what category she’d fall into.

“What would you like?”

“Dunno. Ain’t never really ‘ad much in the way of gifts. The Doctor n Rose give me the waistcoat. An’ Gribble give me my flint.” She reached into her pocket where the flint always was and held it in her palm. Its edges were still sharp, even after years being in a pocket. “An’…” she faltered. She hadn’t thought of that for a while. Lettie giving her a kiss for her birthday.

“And?”

“Lettie give me a kiss once fer me birthday.” She flushed.

“A kiss.” Vastra repeated slowly. “They can be gifts too can they? What multi-faceted things they are.” She sat up, closing her book with a slap and hopping off the bunk to crouch in front of Jenny. “Well then. I know what I would like for my Christmas gift.”

“Huh?”

“A kiss.”

“Yeah but…” Jenny stopped, balancing the awkwardness of explaining human romantic relationships and the awkwardness of giving Vastra a kiss. Huffing out a breath, she leaned forward and gently pressed her lips against Vastra’s. Kissing Vastra was many things but awkward wasn’t one of them.

“Hmmm.” Vastra hummed, making Jenny’s lips tingle from the vibration. “I like your kisses little ape. They are so very warm.”

“Don’t Silurians kiss each other? And not an ape.”

_Vastra stared at the wall behind Jenny’s head, swiftly debating whether to explain the intricacies of Silurian mating rituals._ “No.” she said simply after a minute and moved back to the bed and her book.

Chapter End Notes

My initial estimate of how long it would take them to get Japan (pre-research) was entirely wrong, which you’d think having read ATWI80D and knowing it's set kind of in the Victorian Era although a few decades before VJE (Vastra Jenny Era) I would've been more clued in with the whole 80 days thing and would've left longer but no. And now they’re having their first Christmas together on a boat. This fic is becoming a runaway train on a broken track. But yay for kisses! (like Vastra hasn't lived in the human world long enough and read enough books to know damn well what they are. She just likes teasing Jenny.)
Moving Swiftly Through The Journey

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

28th December 1887

By the time they’d reached the Indian Ocean, Jenny felt she was beginning to gain her sea legs. She no longer felt sick or giddy and walked with confidence about the deck. Vastra had insisted on playing the elderly widow, walking arm in arm with Jenny, pretending to lean on her heavily as if she had difficulty walking.

“Otherwise you’ll have to walk behind me or whatever it is apes insist people of different classes do. It’s so wearisome.” Vastra sighed.

“Tellin’ me.” Jenny agreed wholeheartedly.

30th December 1887

A storm struck not 2 days out into the Indian Ocean and Vastra felt quite alarmed at how white Jenny went at the sight and sound of it.

She peered anxiously through the window of their new cabin, a small round porthole affair, at the rain lashing down. She tried not to be afraid as the ship creaked and shuddered under the battering it was taking but failed miserably.

A bang woke her in the middle of the night and she darted upright.

“Vastra?” she whispered but the Silurian was still asleep beside her. “Vastra!” she shook her awake.

“Mmf. What is it?”

“There was a bang.”

Vastra listened carefully for a moment. “Are you sure you weren’t dreaming?”

“No. It was that what woke me up!”

Vastra sighed. “I’m sure it was nothing Jenny.”

The bang came again. Jenny gasped and grabbed Vastra’s arm.

“D’yer think the ship is sinking?” she whispered.

“Well if it is, be comforted, we’ll go down together.” Vastra grinned sleepily at her, receiving a very unimpressed glare in return. Realising the young woman was genuinely terrified at the prospect she gently pulled Jenny into her arms. “Don’t worry. Silurians are very buoyant.”

“Well thas all fine fer you!” Jenny snapped.

“Can you not swim? Or at the very least float?”

“No!”
“Hm. I’ll have to teach you when we return.”

“An’ what about now?!” there was a flash of lightning.

*Vastra felt Jenny’s heartbeat racing, heard her breathing turn ragged.*

“We gotta get out!” Jenny scrambled over Vastra, half falling out the bunk, staggering to her feet as the ship pitched.

“Jenny!” Vastra followed her as she made for the door. “If we go out on deck now we’ll be washed overboard!” she hissed, holding Jenny from behind as the young woman struggled. She was baffled as to what had caused this. She let her go as a roll of thunder sounded and stood in front of the door to block her from going out on deck. Jenny paced around the small room like a caged animal.

“Lemme out. Lemme out!” she yelled.

“Alright.” Vastra said slowly, moving to leave the exit clear but Jenny didn’t dash out as she’d expected, just stared at Vastra, breathing heavily.

“I don’ like storms.”

“So I can see.”

“They put me in there an’ it was night an’ there was a storm.”

“A basement?” Vastra recalled Jenny’s dislike of them. Her eyes flicked around their cabin. It wasn’t the roomiest of accommodations.

“The pokehole.”

For some reason the name made Vastra shiver. “You mentioned them, at the reformatory…”

“A priesthole. A pokehole. It was where you got put if you were bad. A small hole they kept you in fer days without food.”

Vastra hissed at the idea.

“When I were at the reformatory I knew these two girls see? An’ they were…together like. An’ they were my friends. Only they got found out. The Mistress said they’d been sent off to the asylum fer bein’ like that. An’ when I asked ‘er why they’d got sent to the asylum fer it, she locked me in there. Tol’ me it’d teach me decency. On’y that night there was a storm an’…”

Vastra took a step towards her, torn between wanting to offer comfort and not wanting to scare her. Jenny solved the problem for her by flinging her arms round Vastra, squeezing the Silurian tightly enough to cause a slight ‘oof’.

“Remind me when we return,” Vastra said icily as she gently hugged Jenny in return, “to visit the place.”

Jenny sniffed. “Why, you gettin’ ‘ungry?”

“Well it’s been a long voyage!” *It got a weak laugh out of Jenny at least and the little ape moved away to curl up in bed again. Reformatories sounded as bad as the circus, she mused, climbing into bed beside her. Apes were barbarians to do that to their own young. She waited until she heard Jenny’s breathing even out before allowing herself to fall asleep once more.*
31st December 1887

“There. The storm is over and the ship quite intact.” Vastra said when Jenny woke the next morning. She gestured out the window where she was standing looking at the ocean.

“Yeah well, you’d get scared if you’d ever bin inna pokehole durin’ a storm.” Jenny grumbled, fighting her way out of the covers.

“I have no doubt. I merely meant it as a reassurance, not any slight on you.” Jenny’s shoulders still slumped as she sat on the edge of the bunk. “Dear Goddess, little ape. It is nothing to feel shame over.” Vastra sighed. “You know, when I was young…”

“I ain’t little.” Jenny kicked her feet moodily. “Nor an ape.”

“Alright.” Vastra stared at the ceiling, trying to think of a way to reassure her. “You remember April?”

“Yeah.”

“Well then. It is nothing to feel shame over.” She crouched down in front of Jenny, taking her hand. “Bad memories do that. They take over until you can think of nothing else, can see nothing else. Even though to someone who is not you, who cannot see what you are reliving in your head, it is incomprehensible why you are acting that way.”

“I knew why you were actin’ that way.” Jenny reminded her.

Vastra blinked. “So you did.” She tilted her head in acknowledgement. “Well, do you wish to go for a walk then?”

Jenny nodded and got up.

“You gonna eat everyone who ever did me a bad turn in me life then?” she asked as they promenaded the deck together, still unsure whether to be amused or horrified at Vastra’s sense of justice and her way of dealing it out.

“By the sounds of it, I wouldn’t go hungry for a while if I did.” Vastra was not impressed by the cruelties of the Victorian era. And yet the Doctor still tried to claim apes were worth saving. What hope the man had for everyone. Still, it was that hope that had saved her from being killed in a dark tunnel. Perhaps it had some merit after all.

1st January 1888

“How do Silurians mark time then?” Jenny had been explaining to Vastra about the New Year and why everyone had been celebrating and making a racket and was now curious as to the Silurian way. She placed a card down on the floor, where they were playing Beggar My Neighbour. Another maid on board had gifted her a pack of cards after Jenny had told her that Madame kept to their rooms a great deal due to ill health, saying at least she could keep herself amused with some Patience while she waited on the lady. Jenny’s varied upbringing had resulted in knowing quite a lot of card games and she was now teaching Vastra, who was losing every time and hadn’t worked out why yet.

“By the moon.” Vastra frowned as she placed a card down on top of Jenny’s. “The length of time it takes for the moon to go from a silver circle, through all the phases and return to the silver circle. The rest is more seasonal. The longest day, the shortest day. Turning into and coming out of the dark. The movement of the stars.” She sighed as once more she had to pay a penalty and lost.
“All nat’rl then.” Jenny collected up her cards with a studiously blank face.

“I suppose. It is hard to tell, the stars have changed much since I last saw them. Some have disappeared, others have been born. Silurians are long lived but to see a sky and know that the stars of your youth are now dust is…” Vastra trailed off, sounding quite melancholy but Jenny resisted the urge to try and comfort her. Previous attempts had not gone down well, despite the fact that Vastra was more than happy to comfort Jenny if she were upset.

They continued their card game in silence until Vastra realised why she was losing with quite such frequency at a game that should’ve had an element of equal chance, resulting in peals of laughter from Jenny. After which, Vastra indignantly demanded that she deal the cards in future.

10th January 1888

10 days later the ship sailed into port and they managed to catch the train across India. Vastra had become quite proficient at sharping, resulting in a deal between her and Jenny that neither would try it in the future, at least when they were playing against each other but that everyone else was fair game.

10th – 13th January 1888

It was only a short journey, but Jenny’s enthusiasm for trains was flagging in the heat and humidity. Vastra revelled in it, remarking that she wouldn’t mind coming to live in India permanently, it reminded her much of the winters in her youth.

“You c’n live ‘ere by yerself then.” Jenny grumbled, but the comment caught her attention and she asked Vastra more about her childhood. Vastra was still guarded in her answers but allowed the questions, describing the dense jungles and the underground cities. That at least lacked any personal detail.

13 – 27th January 1888

It took them two weeks to pass by Singapore, landing in Hong Kong near the end of January. Jenny had fully gained her sea legs and spent a lot of her time peering into the water over the railing. Vastra was quite sure this wasn’t appropriate behaviour for a maid either but although there were a few stares, no-one approached them as she sat on a small bench on the deck, annoyed at her veil for blocking the full heat of the sun. Basking in such heat was a pleasure now denied to her, except in certain circles in Egypt.

27th January 1888 - 3rd February 1888

A further week of travel by steam ship took them to Japan where they had to take small boat trips and cart rides to finally end up in Kyoto, where Vastra assured Jenny they would find…

9th February 1888

And there was the Doctor waving at them, standing out in his leather jacket. Beside him stood Rose, mostly fitting in and another man who was introduced as Captain Jack Harkness.

Chapter End Notes
Priest holes are a thing I read about in a book called Secret Chambers and Hiding Places which I picked up at the Old Library at uni cos it sounded all cool and mysterious.

Being locked in cupboards, isolated in rooms and/or denied food was a Victorian practice of punishment and discipline for children but isn't exactly confined to the era, as many alive today can testify.

Beggar My Neighbour is a pretty simple game but incredibly easy to lose very swiftly at. Jenny cheats by dealing crooked; thereby ensuring she has the majority of the penalty cards. I would’ve written the conversation resulting from Vastra realising what Jenny was doing but there are too many amusing variations. Unto your imagination...

Cap'n Jack Harkness!! Oh the next chapter is gonna be fun...
A Captain and Cybermen

Chapter Summary

unimaginative title is unimaginative

Chapter Notes

In the Brilliant whatever it is called Doctor Who Book 2012 there is a picture of Jenny and Vastra fighting Cybermen in what I take to be Japan, although I can’t read the inscription on it and it probably details something completely different. When the Doctor, Rose and Jack end up on Satellite 5 in the Series 1 finale the Doctor mentions having just been in Kyoto in like the 1300s so this happened with a bit of wobbly timey wimey.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Jenny!” Rose grinned broadly and ran up to hug her.

“I see you’ve acquired an addition to your entourage Doctor.” Vastra tilted her head enquiringly at the man standing behind them.

“Yep! Jenny, Vastra meet Captain Jack Harkness!”

“Enchanted.” He stepped forward, winked at Jenny and bowed at Vastra.

“Plenty of time for flirting later.” The Doctor admonished.

“I was saying hello!” he protested.

“Don’t you always.” Rose nudged him as she walked back to the Doctor’s side.

“If I might interrupt?” Vastra said somewhat testily. “You said you needed our assistance Doctor. We’ve travelled quite a long way.”

“You were the one said you wouldn’t step foot inside the TARDIS again unless it was to save me life. It’s not quite that desperate.” The Doctor beckoned them all to follow him. Jenny watched as Rose casually linked arms with him and they walked ahead. Jack offered his arm to Vastra who graciously took it. With a sigh, Jenny picked up their luggage and followed them to a small inn.

“We’re staying here for now. Looks like it might take a while.” Jack explained. “Your rooms are through here, ladies.” He slid back a door and gestured through it.

“We’re all together. Jack and the Doctor are next door.” Rose grabbed a suitcase and a carpet bag off Jenny and plopped them down inside.

Jenny dumped the second suitcase with them and looked around at a sparsely furnished room with three futons laid out on the floor.
“Right then! Now that you’re settled in, we’re tracking a strange electrical signal that originates somewhere around here.” The Doctor leaned through the doorway.

“Oi! Don’t you think they might want to rest first?” Rose pointed out.

“Jenny? Vastra? Rest or exploring?”

The futon was looking very inviting to Jenny but the Doctor’s energy was infectious and Vastra was already agreeing to the exploring.

“Come on then.” Rose sighed. “Not that we’ve found anythin’ in three days except a lot of trees. The locals are afraid to go into this one part of the woods, people have been disappearin’.”

“So naturally, that’s where we’ve been going.” Jack added.

The woods weren’t as dense as Jenny had been expecting although it wasn’t easy walking through them in a skirt and she was beginning to wish she’d worn her jodphurs instead. She had no idea how Vastra was managing. Still, her exercises meant she was fit enough to keep up. The Doctor was bounding ahead, holding some kind of device that was blinking intermittently.

“It’s definitely got to be in this area.” He stopped, tapping at the device.

“Not to harsh on you Doctor but you said that yesterday.” Jack stopped and leaned against a tree while the Doctor wandered around.

With a sigh, Jenny sat down on the path as the Doctor, Jack and Vastra stood together arguing in technical terms.

“Usually it’s a bit faster paced than this.” Rose sat down beside her.

“I dunno. There was a lot of trudgin’ through them tunnels.”

“An’ ‘e got us totally lost.”

“What’re we even lookin’ for?”

“Anythin’ out of the ordinary. Sometimes though, the Doctor can’t see the wood fer the trees. This one time in London…” Rose laughed. “He was lookin’ for this great big transmitter thing an’ it was right in front of ‘im. Looked at me three times before ‘e saw what I was pointin’ at.”

“Would that count as out of the ordinary?” Jenny pointed to a collection of small stone squares that looked like houses a little ways from them.

“They’re shrines accordin’ to the Doctor.” Rose shrugged.

“There’s somethin’ glowin’ in one of ‘em.”

Rose went very still and watched. She saw the flash of silver and red as Jenny said “See?”

“Doctor.” she called softly, not taking her eyes off the shrine. “Doctor!”

The softness of Rose’s voice caught the Doctor’s attention and he crouched by them.

Jenny pointed surreptitiously.

“Well done, Jenny Flint.” The Doctor whispered, moving slowly forward in his crouched position.
The silver thing wriggled again and he shot out a hand and caught it, dropping it almost immediately in surprise. “Nobody touch it!” he warned as it wriggled swiftly towards the path.

Jenny and Rose scrambled up as it came towards them.

“What is it??” Rose yelled as it homed in on her.

“It’s a…” The Doctor stopped as with a swift stomp, Jenny crushed it. “It was,” he corrected himself. “A cybermite. Which gives us some clue as to what we’re dealing with. Cybermen!”

They gathered round the squashed insect-like thing to peer at it.

“Shame you killed it. We could’ve used it to track down the main nest.” The Doctor brought out a silver stick that buzzed and shone blue when he pressed a button, scanning the remains.

“Well an’ I am sorry fer that.” Jenny huffed.

“Don’t listen to ‘im.” Rose shook her head as the Doctor took out a great spotted handkerchief and carefully picked the squashed creature. “I’m glad you killed it seein’ as it was comin’ for me.”

“Well, we should still be able to get some information.” The Doctor set off back down the path, muttering to himself.

“What was that stick thing ‘e was usin’?”

“A sonic screwdriver.” It was the first time Vastra had spoken to Jenny since they’d arrived.

“I used to have a sonic blaster.” Jack sighed. “But the Doctor blew up the factory and the batteries died.”

“Do I wanna ask?” Jenny turned to Rose.

“No.” she laughed, taking Jenny’s arm and following the Doctor. “’e should be thankin’ you, y’know. That’s the first headway we’ve made.”

“Mm. Well spotted Jenny.” Jack bounded alongside them.

_Vastra smiled quietly to herself as she made her way delicately behind them. It was the first time she’d seen Jenny talk like that, as if entirely comfortable. Even among the urchins, she was more a matriarch but it looked as if Jenny had found some friends._

It was getting on towards night by the time they got back to the inn, the Doctor and Jack immediately disappearing off somewhere to do analyses of the creature. Rose took Jenny to get some food, showing her how to use chopsticks.

“We must look a right sight.” Jenny wondered aloud as she gave in on chasing the last remaining noodles around the bowl. Rose drained the last of the broth from her bowl.

“Never mind. They have these gorgeous baths here. C’mon! I’ll show you.”

_A public bath house was a new concept for Jenny but she followed the rules of etiquette Rose told her and, after washing, found herself sitting rather self-consciously in a long tub with three other women who were chatting together quietly. They looked a little suspiciously at Rose and Jenny but otherwise left them alone._

“It’s gorgeous ain’t it. So relaxin’.” Rose sank even further into the water until only her head was
showing.

“S’bleedin’ hot is what it is.” Jenny slowly uncurled and let her muscles relax. “Vastra’d love it.”

“I dunno what the manager would say about a lizard woman. I thought I was gonna get in trouble cos I have a tattoo!” Rose laughed.

Jenny’s heart fell slightly as she realised even if they had brought Vastra with them, there was no way the Silurian could bathe in such a public place without causing uproar. Sometimes she got so used to Vastra, she forgot. She hugged her knees to her chest, thinking about whether Vastra used baths like this in her past. She could well imagine Silurians loving it. Vastra had a strange awkward pride in her body, Jenny had noticed. When they were training together, there was a playful quality to the way Vastra moved; far more naturally and freely than she did when walking along a street, which was usually done quite stiffly as if the posture wasn’t entirely comfortable.

“D’you reckon you could build somethin’ like this in a regular house?” Jenny wondered out loud.

“For Vastra?” Rose grinned.

“It’d be good fer after trainin’ as well.” Even in the heat, Jenny could still feel her cheeks warm up.

“I imagine so.” Rose shrugged, deciding not to tease Jenny further. “Bit of Victorian ingenuity an’ steam an’ all that.”

Jenny felt as if she was still steaming as they walked back to the inn, the bath had been that hot. They could hear the Doctor and Jack arguing and Rose sighed and went to find out what was going on, leaving Jenny to go into their room alone.

Vastra was curled up already in one of the futons. Jenny changed into her nightgown and then stopped. It didn’t feel right sliding into the empty futon but at the same time, she didn’t want to wake Vastra. Or face Rose’s teasing the next morning.

“Ma’am?” she whispered, to see if Vastra really was asleep. There was no answer and she reluctantly curled up in the spare futon.

She was about to drop off to sleep when she heard the rustle of someone getting up. She grinned to herself as she counted in her head and sure enough her cover was lifted up and a mildly disgruntled Silurian curled up alongside her. She heard a faint mutter of surprise; she was still very warm from the bath, but it turned into a grunt of satisfaction and she fell asleep to the muted sounds of arguing and the more gentle sound of Vastra breathing next to her ear.

10th February 1888

The next morning the Doctor hustled them all out the inn as soon as they’d finished breakfast.

“I think I’ve managed to get a signal on it.” He walked down the street with a device bleeping in his hand.

“Have you bin tinkerin’ all night?” Rose tutted.

“Can’t waste time.” The Doctor shrugged.

They ended up back in the woods again but both Jenny and Vastra had dressed in their fighting
outfits so it was easier to make their way through it.

Jenny had walked the streets of London many times in the dark but the darkness of the woods, even during the day, was creepy.

“I don’t like it either.” Rose whispered when she voiced this opinion. “I lived in London all me life too, I’m not used to nature.” She stepped on a twig and the crack made her jump and grab at Jenny’s arm. “See what I mean?”

“Either of you ladies need assistance?” Jack hung back to check on them.

“We’re fine Jack.” Rose grinned.

“Aha!” the Doctor shouted and ran ahead. “Found it!” he called and they ran to see what he was on about it.

There was a small hut built among the trees. It was simple, one room and in a state of disrepair.

“Hello? Hmph. Clearly no-one livin’ here.” The Doctor kicked at the leaves on the floor.

“An’ this is where the signal comes from?” Jenny remembered the Kraal. An alien signal coming from a dilapidated hut was not what she’d expected.

“S’what it says.” The Doctor tapped it again.

Jenny wandered back out; the hut was not quite big enough for five people to stay in comfortably. She wished she had some kind of weapon; a sonic blaster like Captain Jack had talked about. The hairs on the back of her neck were standing up. Something more than just a hut was out here. She made her way round the back of it and nearly screamed. The Kraal had not prepared her for the small pile of bodies, metal sprouting from their bodies. She staggered behind a tree and threw up.

“Jenny?” Jack had come to find her. “Oh hells.” He winced away at the sight of the pile.

“What is it?” Vastra followed, crouching down to study the bodies dispassionately. “Hm. Cybernetics implants. Gone very, very wrong.”

“Hey!” Rose noticed that Jenny was shaking uncontrollably. “Hey, it’s alright. C’mere.”

“Get some sugar in her.” The Doctor tossed Rose a bar of chocolate. “She’ll be fine. ‘ard as ‘em ey Jenny Flint?” he smiled in an attempt to reassure her.

“Yeah.” She said weakly, taking the unwrapped chocolate from Rose. “What ‘appened to ‘em?”

“Attempted upgrades by the looks. But there’s no equipment round here. Nothing at all.” The Doctor scratched his head.

Jack wrinkled his nose. “These are just the failures. This is their garbage dump.”

“So the main station is somewhere else?” Vastra had picked up a sword that was by one of the bodies. “Whoever these people were, they fought at least. This blade has scratches on it.”

“Not sure a samurai sword could get through the metal of a Cyberman.” The Doctor took it off her. “Hm. That’s interesting.”

“What is?”
“This isn’t right. This isn’t from this era.” He ran a finger over the hilt. “This is from about 500 years ago. Not now. What on earth is going on?”

“Well, we are in need of weapons.” Vastra picked up the rest.

“Didn’t do these guys much use.” Jack pointed out.

“Still, I was thinking of acquiring some swords. Jenny!” Vastra made her way over to where Jenny was standing. “What do you think? They are not unlike traditional Silurian blades. I could teach you to use one.”

“It must be a one way circuit…” The Doctor walked around them muttering. “S’no use. I’ll need the TARDIS. Right! Everyone back to the inn. Don’t worry Vastra.” The Doctor waved at her. “I won’t make you get in it.”

“Just as well.” She snorted.

“TARDIS?”

“No time to explain. Go off and practice sword fighting for the afternoon. Rose? Jack? May need your assistance.” He ran off back through the woods towards the town.

“Sorry.” Rose apologised and ran after him.

“Have fun ladies!” Jack saluted before darting off.

“What!” Jenny threw down the sword Vastra had handed her. “Brings us ‘arf way across the world and then just…”

Vastra sighed. “The man is infuriating sometimes. Still, we have not been able to train for a while. And we are already dressed for it. Shall we?” she grinned at Jenny, holding her sword in a ready position.

Cautiously Jenny picked up her sword and mimicked Vastra’s stance. She didn’t feel fully recovered from the sight of those bodies and wasn’t sure how long she’d last in a training session but she wasn’t about to let Vastra know that. Vastra, however, was gentle, teaching her stances, moves. The blade quickly became a weight in her hands and she felt her muscles strain against the slow precision of their training.

“Not bad, not bad.” Vastra mused an hour later. “How about speeding it up?”

Jenny glowered at her. She was dripping in sweat, her hair was sticking to her face and her arms felt like they were about to drop off. “How about stickin’ it up yer…”

She was interrupted by a low whine somewhere behind them.

“That sounds like a…” Vastra rushed back to where the hut was.

“Bleedin’ ‘ell.” Jenny groaned, dropping her sword and trying to stretch out the stiffness that was settling into her arms.

“JENNY!!” the sound of her name being screamed made her freeze.

“Vastra?” she whispered, grabbing up her sword again and forcing her tired legs into a sprint.

The Silurian was fighting against two metal men armed with long spears, her sword doing nothing
against them as the Doctor had predicted.

“HEY!!” Jenny yelled, running towards the fray and raising her sword. It wasn’t the most inspirational battle cry but it got the attention of one of the Cybermen who shot at her. She dodged the blast and brought her sword up to try and cut off its hand but her blade skittered across the metal in a shower of sparks. She looked into what she assumed were its eyes and shivered in fear.

“Del-ete. Del-ete. Your blade and battle skills are inferior. You are too weak to be upgraded. Del-ete.” It brandished a spear at her.

“You what?” Jenny spat, whacking it in the face with the hilt of her sword. It stumbled backwards and Vastra, who had now armed herself with two swords, cut through its spear with one of them as she brandished the other at the second Cyberman.

Jenny swung downwards with her sword, slicing at the back of the Cyberman, where there was exposed circuitry. It jerked mechanically, groaning its strange grating voice and then dropped to the ground. Vastra took note and kicked the second Cyberman to the ground, dealing with it in a similar fashion.

Waiting only to confirm the Cyberman was dealt with Vastra walked swiftly over to Jenny, divesting herself of her swords as she went.

“Jenny! Are you alright?” Vastra swiftly checked her young human over.

“I’m alright.” Jenny panted. “What are those things?” she gestured towards the fallen Cybermen with her sword.

“Cybermen, the Doctor said. Although what they are doing here in this era is anybody’s guess. Trying to upgrade samurai by the looks.” Vastra sighed and went to collect her swords. “I wonder whether the Doctor has found their main base?”

“Won’t he need our help? That was only two of ‘em and they were tough enough.”

“He’s fought against them enough times, I’m sure he knows what he’s up against. We should return to the inn and wait for him.”

There was a rustle behind them and they both turned, falling into defensive stances. A man came towards them, talking rapidly and bowing. He pointed at the hut and then at his paintbrushes which had fallen out of their box as he’d bowed.

“The owner of the hut, I take it.” Vastra quirked an eye ridge but bowed in reply. The man’s eyes went wide as he realised that Vastra wasn’t human herself and he ran off. “Apes.” Vastra shrugged in an attempt to be nonchalant. “They are never grateful.”

“I’m grateful you saved me life.” Jenny reminded her, stomping down the path back to the inn.

Vastra smiled slowly.

“I can tell.”

Jenny snorted.

“You did well today, little ape. I would not have been able to defeat two of them alone. Your swordsmanship needs to improve of course but considering you’d only just started training…”

“How about you shut up an’ I’ll ignore that last sentence hm?” There was no real anger in Jenny’s
voice, more resigned amusement. “An’ yer welcome.”

There was no sign of the Doctor or Rose or Jack when they got back to the inn. Jenny ate a hasty dinner and then left to have another bath, which pleased Vastra when she returned.

“I like these baths here; they make you so very warm.” The Silurian nuzzled Jenny’s back, sliding her arms around Jenny’s waist, hissing in annoyance as Jenny turned over to lie on her back.

“Where d’yer reckon the Doctor is?”

“No doubt getting into trouble.” Vastra hmphed as she once again tried to get comfortable, curled up against Jenny’s side.

“Ain’t you worried?” Jenny sat up. “E’s yer friend.”

“And without a form of time travel, currently inaccessible to me.” Vastra tugged at her nightgown in an attempt to get Jenny to lie back down again. “Sleep, little ape.”

Exhausted by the strenuous physical exercise of fighting Cybermen, Jenny forced herself to relax, hoping she wouldn’t have nightmares about the “failed upgrades” they’d seen dumped behind the hut.

Chapter End Notes

my apologies to any Japanese people reading for what is probably the largest amount of inaccuracies in one chapter in this fic so far. If I were a full time writer I’d do full time research but alas my best will have to do.
11th February 1888

The image of Vastra, overcome with metal, scorched through Jenny’s brain and she jerked awake.

“Vastra!”

“I am here, little ape.” The Silurian grunted sleepily.

Jenny sat up causing mutters of protest. A rather horrific thought had just occurred to her and really, it was the only conclusion possible.

“Vastra. Them cybermen. The Doctor and Jack were talkin’ about upgrades. How they’d tried to upgrade humans? What were they tryin’ to upgrade ‘em to?”

“Into other cybermen of course.” The tone of Jenny’s voice made Vastra sit up beside her.

“So them cybermen we killed yesterday, they were…”

“Human, originally. Jenny…” Vastra saw Jenny’s expression and read what the young woman had just realised. She grabbed Jenny’s arm. “Yes, human. Originally. But no longer. That is what the upgrade does. It makes them not human. You couldn’t have saved them. An upgrade has never been reversed. Never. The Doctor explained yesterday to me.”

“I killed ‘em.” Jenny said softly, distraught.

“Yes. You did. Those are hardly the first deaths you are responsible for.” Softness would not work, Vastra reasoned, better to be upfront. “If you wanted to merely save the lives of apes, should you not be killing me?”

“What?”

“I am responsible for numerous ape deaths. And eating them.”

“Yeah but…”

“If you are going to have exceptions to your rules, then your morality is flawed. And if it is flawed anyway, you might as well make yourself an exception to the rule. Console yourself; there are people who are alive today who are not cybermen because you killed them. As there are people alive and undamaged because of the criminals I have killed and eaten. As you are alive and undamaged because I killed the Tong gang."

Jenny sat, her jaw clenched but there was no real argument against any of Vastra’s points.

“You killed all them people down in the underground.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t you ever feel guilty about that?”
Vastra considered this question. “Are you going to claim they were innocent? Apes are…were food for my kind. You do not feel guilty when you eat a pie.”

“But we’re not apes.” Jenny protested.

“As I’ve learnt. But please do not expect me to embrace ape morality when it is so largely flawed itself.”

“So ‘ow come I got a free pass then?”

“My morality is flawed.”

“Huh?”

“You are an exception to the rule.”

“Why?”

“You are something good. Something human. And I like you little ape.” Vastra reached out and stroked her face.

“Thas no kind of reason!”

“Why not?” Vastra leaned towards her.

“Whoops! Hope I’m not interrupting anything!” Rose burst through the doorway. She was out of breath, her jacket was ripped and covered in black marks and there was soot on her cheeks.

“What happened?” Vastra got up hastily, leaving a red-faced Jenny on the futon.

“Well we found the base alright. The Doctor blew it up. S’why…” she gestured at her clothes as she dug in her bag to find a new jacket. “Bleedin’ expensive this was too.” She sighed, holding the old one up.

“As he does.”

“Anyways. Some of the cybermen escaped through the vortex to here. So we thought we’d come back, grab you and then head off to track them down. The Doctor doesn’t think they’ll get far without a cyber controller but they could still cause a lot of damage and it’ll be easier if there’re more of us. C’mon!”

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After a day spent tracking down the few stray cybermen who’d escaped, Jenny was certain of three things. One, Cybermen were definitively not human anymore. Two, Rose and the Doctor seemed to be together. She’d suspected as much but watching them move through the woods, second guessing each other, laughing and joking she was pretty certain that they were as together as you could be without openly declaring it. Three, Captain Jack Harkness flirted far too much with everyone but specifically far too much with Vastra who seemed far too happy about it. Not that Jenny Flint was jealous.

“He’s always like that, don’t worry.” Rose whispered to her when they stopped. The Doctor was scanning the area to check for any more signals and Vastra and Jack were talking a little ways off.

“Why should I worry?” Jenny snorted. “Makes a change her gettin’ along with a human.”
Rose grinned sympathetically. “Well I s’pose she don’t meet many that can see beyond the scales.”

“No.” Jenny replied soberly.

“s’ides you were the one she was about to snog this morning.”

“She weren’t doin’ nuffin’ of the sort!!”

“So you’ve never kissed or anythin’?” Rose teased.

“’ave you an’ the Doctor?” Jenny retaliated, causing Rose to look at the ground, scuffing it with her boots.

“We’re not like that.” she muttered, tucking a strand of hair back behind her ear.

“What’s goin’ on you two?” The Doctor bounded up to them. “All clear!” he waved the scanner at them. It was making despondent intermittent bleeps. “Oi! Jack! Vastra!”

“If you could, I’d be most grateful.” Jenny heard Vastra say as they walked to join the other three.

“Of course, Madame Vastra.” Jack winked at her. “Think nothing of it.”

“We headin’ back then?” Rose asked, nudging the Doctor with her arm.

“Headin’ off more like. Job done here.”

“Aw but it’s the Chinese New Year tomorrow!” Jack complained.

“So? We’re in Japan!” The Doctor said dismissively.

“It gets celebrated here too.” Rose reminded him.

“Not in this era.”

“So we could have our own celebration! Sure you could find some fireworks from somewhere!” Rose grinned at him, sticking her tongue out to the side.

“Fine.” He sighed. “But if we get arrested, I’m blamin’ you!” he waggled the sonic screwdriver in her face.

“It sounds intriguing.” Vastra commented. “I did not realise there were different New Years.”

“’ow can there be different New Years?”

“Ah, well you see…” Captain Jack spent the rest of the journey back to the inn explaining about lunar calendars.

“The Silurians use a similar calendar.” Vastra nodded wisely, causing Jenny to roll her eyes.

After yet another bath to get rid of the sweat and grime of chasing cybermen, Jenny sat on the futon waiting for Vastra to get changed.

“I wish you could come to the baths with us.”

“I think the apes would object to that, my dear.” Vastra gracefully donned the robe that Jack had
handed her.

“We c’ld build one. Back home. With steam an’ the like. Be brilliant fer winter.”

“By the time we get back home it’ll be spring.”

Jenny paused. The day after tomorrow would mark the first anniversary of her coming to live with Vastra and they were a month and a half away from home at least. Although she doubted Vastra had even made a note of the date anyway. She looked up at the Silurian and let out a puff of air, the beauty of the green scales striking her once more.

It was midnight and they had snuck back up to the artist’s shack in the woods. The Doctor had rigged something up out of what looked suspiciously like components from a cyberman’s arm blaster.

“Get ready to run.” He muttered and tapped the set up with his sonic screwdriver. It blasted streaks of red and white light high into the air, illuminating the woods for miles with a shrill whistling sound. Jenny gaped speechlessly at the sky as Jack and Rose danced, whooping. Vastra snuck up, embracing her from behind, shivering slightly. As the display finished, they heard shouting and raised voices from the woods around them.

“Whoops! Time to go!” Jack grabbed Rose’s hand and darted off. Vastra stared, panicked at Jenny and then drew the swords she’d strapped on over her robe.

“Oi! What d’you think you are? The Last Samurai?” the Doctor grabbed them off of her. “Come on!”

They arrived breathless and gasping back at the inn; hastily sneaking back to their rooms. Vastra held out her hand for the swords but the Doctor refused.

“You can’t have Japanese swords from the 1300’s in London in 1888. It’d be an anachronism.”

“Anna-what?” Jenny asked.

“Something out of time. Not meant to be there. I’m sure there’re plenty of other weapons for you to get hold of if that’s what you want.” He seemed put out and Vastra didn’t press this issue, retiring to their room to curl up in the futon. That surprised Jenny more than the Doctor’s attitude. The Silurian seemed rather attached to the swords and she was expecting Vastra to fight for them.

“What’re you lookin’ so glum for Jenny Flint? Don’t tell me you wanted swords too.” The Doctor groaned as he put them in his room.

“Nah. I ain’t that good with ‘em anyways.”

“Well what’s the problem then? You just helped saved the world!”

Jenny shrugged but the Doctor merely stood there in silence, an inquisitive look on his face and something about the silence dragged the answer from her.

“She missed me birthday. An’…an’ then we missed Christmas. And New Year. Travellin’ here. An’…an’ tomorrow’s the first anniversary of when I went ter live with ‘er an’…”
“And yer in Japan.” The Doctor finished.

“I ain’t sulkin’ about it.”

“’Course not.”

“She prob’ly don’ even care anyway.”

“She might not.”

“It don’ matter.”


“Do?” Sadness was dispelled by confusion as he walked off.

“Oof! I’m exhausted.” Rose returned from visiting the toilet. “C’mon Jenny. Time for bed.” She yawned and Jenny followed her into their room, sliding into the futon next to Vastra.

In the morning Jenny packed their things back into the carpet bag and suitcases. She debated asking Vastra to stay one more day to celebrate the anniversary here but they’d caused quite a ruckus yesterday with their fireworks and she didn’t think it was safe to. It was a shame; she quite liked Japan, cybermen aside. With a start, she thought about Parker and all the Paternoster Irregulars and how they were getting on. She should’ve given them more money to get through the winter. How had they even coped?

Vastra had already gone to meet the Doctor and Jack; Rose was now chivvying Jenny out the door with a suspicious grin on her face.

“Ah! Jenny! Ready to go?” the Doctor asked when they walked out.

“Go where? We leavin’ already?” she asked.

Captain Jack winked at her and then offered his arm to Vastra with a “My Lady”.

“Thank you Captain.” She took it graciously.

“Mm! See you soon Jenny!” Rose hugged Jenny.

“Huh?”

“Jenny?” Jack offered his other arm to her. She took it gingerly.

“Bye!” Rose waved at them.

“See you in a bit Jack.” The Doctor called, almost as a warning.

“We ain’t goin’ anywheeeeee…” Jenny felt her voice being lost in something and her words turned into a soundless scream. She clung to Jack’s arm and then WHOOMPF!!

They landed in a thin coat of snow in the yard of 13 Paternoster Row.
“Ugh. That is a very nasty form of time travel.” Vastra shook herself. “And we don’t have our luggage.”

“Ah!” Jack clicked his fingers. “I will be right back.” He disappeared. Jenny had been gaping round the yard but turned to gape at where Jack had been instead.

“Here we are!” Jack dropped the carpet bag and suitcases onto the cobbles. “Hope everything’s there. The…items you requested are in your suitcase.” Jack bowed formally to Vastra. “See you two ladies soon I hope.” He waved. Jenny saw him press something that looked like a bracelet this time before he disappeared.

There was a second’s silence and then Jenny let out a stream of expletives.

“Really!” Vastra looked at her in surprise.

“‘ow’d ‘e do that! ‘ow did we do that? What even is that thing?!”

“It’s a type of vortex manipulator I believe. The Doctor mentioned it.”

“Vortex?”

“The Time Vortex.”

“Ti…time…”

“I mentioned the Doctor travels in time yes?”

“Did you?”

“I must’ve done at some point.”

“So…we just…”

“Travelled in time, yes.” Vastra sniffed at the snow distastefully.

“Oh.”

“I wonder what date it is.” Vastra shivered and made her way indoors.

Annoyance at Vastra leaving her to carry their luggage again grounded Jenny back in reality and she collected it up and staggered after her.

Chapter End Notes

My google history reads “lunar calendar, Japanese toilets and cyber conversion” If I’m being tracked by governments or apps or what have you, they must be having fun.

I wonder what the date is…
The first thing Jenny noticed, depositing their bags in their bedroom, was that the place wasn’t even that dusty.

“We’ve been away fer months.” she remarked to Vastra, trailing a finger along the mantelpiece. “An’ ’ardly a layer. S’not like we left the place open fer Parker’s missus to clean.”

“Hmm.” Vastra hummed mysteriously. “We really must find out the date.”

“’ow’d’yer mean…” A suspicion was beginning to settle in Jenny’s mind. “We ain’t…” she followed Vastra back downstairs.

“Go and ask someone the date would you?”

“Wot just go out into the street an’ say excuse me what’s the date today?”

“Yes, that would do.”

“They’ll think I’m a nutter!”

Vastra raised an eye ridge at Jenny who glowered in return but duly went back out into the yard. She was in luck; Parker was in the stables grooming Alice. Still, even asking Parker was going to get her a funny look.

“Parker…”

“Hullo Miss Jenny. Thought you were meant to be away for some time yet! Did something go wrong for you to be back so soon?”

“How soon?”

“Wot?”

“Me head got scrambled with the travellin’.” And that wasn’t a lie, Jenny thought to herself. “Wot’s the date?”
“Bless yer it’s the 16th.”

“Of?”

“December, Miss Jenny.” Parker gave her the anticipated odd look. “Are you alright Miss Jenny? You’ve gone very pale all of a sudden. Miss…” he trailed off as he watched Jenny rush back inside. “Well it takes all sorts don’t it ey old girl.” He muttered as he went back to grooming Alice, who whickered in what Parker took as agreement.

“It’s only the bloody 16th of December!” Jenny yelled. “We’ve only bin gone two days… technically.”

“Ah.” Vastra had already settled into the sofa and was casually reading a book.

“Ah? Ah?? ‘ow does that even work? I’m meant ter be on a boat ter France ain’t I? Not stood in me own livin’ room! ‘ow can I be two places at once? An’ don’t say…”

“Time travel. If I were you, I’d just pretend that I’d been asleep for two days and had a very strange dream.”

Jenny gave Vastra her best unimpressed face. “Wot an’ just go back ter thinkin’ it’s only December?”

“Think of it this way. You get a second Christmas. Two of that ridiculous holiday of yours.” Vastra pointed out.

“It ain’t ridiculous!” Jenny stomped out.

She sat at the kitchen table waiting for the kettle to boil, thoughtfully staring into thin air. A second chance at Christmas. They could do it properly then. With a tree and everything. Everything a Christmas was meant to be; now they had the money. A small smile quirked her lips. Perhaps time travel was better than she’d given it credit for.

She deposited a cup of tea by Vastra, who was absorbed in her book and merely waved her hand in acknowledgement of Jenny’s declaration of going shopping. Jenny rolled her eyes, fetched down her cloak and went to see what she could buy.

“Wotcher Miss Jenny!” Jack, one of the Paternoster Irregulars, bounded up to her as she walked into the market. She knew he had some kind of business but didn’t ask exactly what he traded in. She suspected stolen goods. “Missed yer breakfasts the past coupla days I ‘ave. S’cold ain’t it?” he blew on his hands to emphasise the point.

“Yeah well, I’m back now ain’t I.” she grinned. “You bin keepin’ outta trouble?”

“Much as I can, Miss Jenny, much as I can. Wot you about in the market today then?”

“Christmas shoppin’.”

“Blimey, I ‘ave got in with the toffs ain’t I, Christmas shoppin’. Wot you buyin’?”

“Wot you sellin’ Jack?”

“Fer Christmas? Err…” he put his hands in his pockets as he thought about it. “Weeeellll I ain’t really got nuffin’ in the Christmas line as it were.”
“Not got any trees or nuffin’ in them pockets?”

Jack grinned. “I know a place yer could get one. Good price an’ all.”

“An’ would it die before New Year’s?”

Jack placed a hand on his heart in mock offence. “Now Miss Jenny it ain’t right goin’ about doubtin’ a chap like that! Nah. S’good stuff. Wot else you want then? I c’n get yer decorations too. Bulk buy of mistletoe.”

Jenny flushed at the thought. “Decorations would be good.”

“Gimme the tin an’ I c’n get ’em fer you, if yer like. All delivered to yer doorstep.” He grinned and doffed his hat.

“Wot a service.” Jenny handed him some money, knowing full well he’d probably take a cut out of it. “G’wan then, yer know where I live.”

He winked and ran off. “Be round fer breakfast tommorrer!” he shouted as he disappeared into the crowd.

Jenny shook her head and spent the rest of her shopping trip ordering in some meat and browsing through decorations. She’d never cooked Christmas dinner but it would be fun to try.

She found a place selling Christmas trees, picked one that looked small enough that she could decorate it without great problems and paid two pennies for the owner’s boy to drag it back to 13 Paternoster Row.

In her past, Jenny had only glanced briefly at the local sweet shop, knowing full well that such things were well beyond her economic grasp but now with a purse full of money, she grinned and walked inside, going a little wild and buying several of every type of sweet.

“’ere! Try a sherbet lemon.” Jenny handed a yellow sticky sweet to Vastra who was still curled up on the sofa.

The Silurian placed it gingerly in her mouth. “It’s very bitter.” She mouthed around it and then crunched.

“Nah yer suck…”

An unearthly screech rang out, a sound Jenny had never heard Vastra make before. Vastra spat the remains of the sweet onto the table without ceremony and hissed, washing her mouth out with a gulp of cold tea.

Jenny bit her lower lip in an attempt not to grin. “S’called sherbet.” She answered the unspoken question. “They put it in the middle. Yer meant to suck the sweet first not bite into it.”

“That. is awful.”

Jenny took pity and got a glass of water. “’ere. Wash it out with that.”

“Why would you even eat such a thing?” Vastra gulped the water gratefully. “I think it’s burnt a hole in my tongue.”
“No it ain’t neither.” Jenny grinned at the exaggeration. The sherbet was strong but not that strong.

“How do you know?” Vastra stuck her tongue out at Jenny.

“Well I definitely know now.”

“Apes are disgusting to eat such things.” Vastra said in a tone of finality and walked out the kitchen. Jenny sighed and popped a barley sugar in her mouth, still grinning slightly as she went to check whether her tree had arrived.

The Paternoster Irregulars who called round for breakfast the next day were not so displeased and Vastra watched in mild horror from the doorway as they scoffed all the sweets Jenny had bought between them, merely giggling at the tingling sensation the sherbet made on their tongue.

“They were meant ter be fer Christmas.” Jenny shook her head at them.

“Weelll never might make it ter Christmas, Miss Jenny. Might as well ‘ave ‘em now. As a deposit like. Insurance.” Jack winked at her. “I got yer decorations.” He nipped back out into the yard and dragged a small barrow into the kitchen.

“I ain’t bought a tree that big.”

“Nah but yer put it round the ‘ouse an’ the like doncha.” He tugged off a box and gave it to her. “They’re all ‘and made an’ everythin’.”

Jenny opened it dubiously to find painted wooden figurines and snowflakes on tatty bits of string.

“Well they’ll do.”

“’ave yer got yer tree yet?”

“Yeah it’s out in the yard.”

The urchins set up a chorus. “C’n we decorate it Miss Jenny?” “Aw g’wan!” “Can we can we?”

She dumped the box back in Jack’s hands. “You’re in charge. Don’t let ‘em wreck the ‘ouse. AN’ NONE OF YOUSE IS ALLOWED UPSTAIRS!” she yelled, as they disappeared.

“By all means, let loose a horde of ragged urchins in my house. Is that a Christmas tradition too?” Vastra came into the kitchen to get her morning tea now it was clear.

“Weeeelll s’a big ‘ouse. Saves me decoratin’ it don’t it. ‘Sides…s’my ‘ouse too ain’t it?”

The mild questioning tone of Jenny’s voice made Vastra’s head jerk up.

“Of course.” She blinked. “I didn’t mean…”

“S’good then.” Jenny plucked at her apron. “I’d best go supervise ‘em. An’ the tree needs draggin’ in.” she half ran out into the yard, called for Cris and Jack to help her.

_Vastra hastily hid in the larder as they hauled the tree through the kitchen into the living room, frowning in thought. The house was in her name obviously, the bank account was her name, the money, technically, was hers. But that questioning tone disturbed her. She remembered the feeling of aggravation she’d felt at Jess’s words._
“Jenny. I’m going out.” She called shortly as she grabbed her veil and cloak on her way down the hallway.

A bewildered Jenny appeared in the living room doorway. “You alright?”

“I’m fine.” Vastra nodded before slamming the front door on her way out.

A guilty looking Jack sidled up to Jenny. “Is she angry cos we’re makin’ noise?”

“Well if she is thas ‘er problem ain’t it! C’mon! Let’s get it finished.” Jenny shook her head but could understand if the noise was a bit much for Vastra. People in the house meant she would have to wear her veil after all. Her shoulders dropped. She’d forgotten again. How easy it was to forget sometimes that Vastra would alarm other people. That she had to hide. Hadn’t they said that here at least was a place they didn’t have to do that?

“Are you gonna get in ter trouble?” Cris noticed her shoulders dropping.

“If I do, I shall be givin’ trouble back.” Jenny shook herself. She’d apologise later. Once she’d figured out quite how to stop Jack from hanging the “bulk buy” of mistletoe in every doorway and hallway of 13 Paternoster Row!

Chapter End Notes

What is Vastra up to? A mystery.
The Paternoster Irregular Army

Chapter Summary

Minor introductions of the some of the Irregulars

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Having been unsuccessful in stopping Jack hanging all the mistletoe up (“Aw c’mon Miss Jenny she
carn’t remain a widder forever.”), and figuring that she hadn’t decorated a Christmas tree before so
she couldn’t claim a level of expertise in the matter, Jenny left them all to it in order to get lunch ready.

It wasn’t that she bought too much food but in a household of two, where one was a Silurian whose
eating habits were not conventional, there was always food left over and the Paternoster Irregulars
were not fussy. Thinking on Vastra’s eating habits as she munched on a roll, Jenny thought back on
their journey to Japan. Vastra had struggled, being unable to dine with the other travellers and there
was only so much meat Jenny could smuggle from the table. It had to have been the longest Vastra
had gone without eating someone since Jenny had known her. The thought made her laugh and then
frown at the fact she’d laughed. Her morality was flawed, Vastra was right.

“Penny fer ’em, Miss Jenny?” Parker asked as he came in from the stables, stamping his boots off.

“Not worth it.” She put down her roll and passed him a plate with some ham and bread on.

“Thankee. Our mistress is ver’ kind ter let ’n look after those scamps ain’t she.” He remarked,
hearing a sudden increase of noise from the living room as he was about to take a bite.

Jenny snorted.

“Now Miss Jenny, ain’t every mistress ‘d allow a set of urchins roamin’ round ‘er ‘ouse. Madame’s
very good to us.” He waggled a slice of bread at her.

“Yeah. She is.” Jenny sighed, toying with the crumbs of her roll. If I was just a maid, she thought to
herself, this’d be a bit of heaven.

“Where did ’arf of ‘em even come from anyways? More of ‘em appear every time I comes in from
the yard I’d swear it.”

*Cris had been the first. The Gentleman of Leisure who’d been quite happy to take a sovereign for
reporting on what he’d seen but honourable enough to bring others for the same reward. Jenny
hadn’t asked what he did but she’d lived on the streets enough to have a reasonable guess.

He’d brought Boggin, who had been a great help in one case. Gang runners would quite often use
going their boots cleaned as a way to keep idle in one place, waiting for information or a parcel.
And it was amazing how many adults forgot that the little urchins at their feet had ears. Parker had
taken a liking to Boggin and she suspected Boggin called as often on Mrs Parker as he did at
Paternoster Row. Well, Parker kept him steady at least.

Soljer was old to still be on the streets and not dead. He’d said he didn’t have a name but Soljer. His mother used to say that he was his mother’s little soljer and that was that then. She’d died of something, he didn’t know what. Just woke up to his mother cold in bed beside him and scurried before anyone turned up. He’d joined up briefly in the service of a gang as a snake but messed up his third job. He didn’t know whether the gang was still in jail. He’d been in a reform school, much the same as Jenny and had learned carpentry. After spending time with the mudlarks, he found driftwood enough to whittle shapes and carvings that he sold for a penny. He’d debated the army but had found Cris instead. He was quiet and stolid although he seemed to be enjoying himself placing Jack’s statues around the dining room.

Jack was a seller and was perfectly willing to add information to the things he sold when offered. And he was full of it too. Not just information on street news but he had an eye for recognising a weird and wonderful thing and an encyclopaedic memory. And he never stayed still; Jenny watched as he half danced into the kitchen to hang mistletoe in the doorways there. She was going to have a time explaining that one to Vastra, if the Silurian asked.

Ada and Dotty. Two young girls, not much older than Jenny had been when she’d first ended up on the streets. Ada’s mother had died in the workhouse and she’d escaped rather than do laundry. Dotty worked as a maid and had found her nicking food out the dustbin one morning. When Dotty lost her job after being found out stealing food for Ada, they’d set up their own little gang of three with Thrupp, who would usually act as distraction.

Thrupp, so called because of the lucky thrupenny bit she carried with her. She looked small; a scrap of a thing and Jenny could see how those big soulful eyes could very easily distract someone. But Jenny had seen her when she had stood in Jenny’s kitchen and stood tall and grinned as she casually walked about the place as if she owned it. Theatres would pay for such an acting talent, Jenny had thought on more than one occasion. Thrupp was self-confident and self-reliant and it didn’t seem as if she’d found a challenge yet she couldn’t overcome. Despite being the smallest of the gang size wise, she was older than Ada and Dotty by a few years but had evaded questions about her past.

“I asked her once why it was her that ran distraction; she’s more’n capable of lifting anything she wants. An’ s’not like Dotty or Ada couldn’t look suitably mournful. She just grinned and said “Aye well, use yer talents an’ gifts ey?” Jenny handed Parker a pear which he took gratefully.

“Don’ know how Madame trusts ‘em all roamin’ round the ‘ouse if most of ‘em are criminals. ‘Cept Boggin. He’s a good lad.” Parker took the knife off the cutting board to slice his pear up.

“None of ‘em are stupid enough to nick anythin’.” Jenny shrugged, rolling an apple in her hands.

“Don’t bite the ‘and that feeds hm?”

“sides, wot with Madame’s line of work, ‘avin’ an ‘and in the criminal classes is a bit necessary really.”

Parker looked at Jenny thoughtfully as he chewed the last of his pear. “An’ what about yerself Miss Jenny?” he asked when he’d finished. “‘ow’d you end up in ‘er service?”

Jenny took a gulp of tea so she didn’t have to answer. “S’pose I’d best check on ‘em all the same. They’re still kids after all.”
Parker stood up hastily. “Aye Miss Jenny, I know you said about yer family, ‘ow yer not on best terms, I didn’t mean anythin’ by it. You an’ Madame been ver’ good ter me an’ the wife an’ I’d not judge yer fer anythin’ much.”

She picked at a knot in the table top. “I done my time in places, on the streets. Lost most me family an’ friends along the way. Lost most everythin’.”

“Not everythin’ Miss Jenny.” Parker reminded her gently.

She nodded. “I gained some back this last year, s’ture. Enough to be grateful for. C’mon. I think they’re trying ter put the angel on the top of the tree. An’ they’ll burn the place down if they try an’ light the candles.”

They walked into the living room that was far less chaotic than the amount of noise would suggest. The Irregulars fell back from the tree where Cris was sat on Soljer’s shoulders, balancing precariously. He hopped down at Jenny’s expression and handed the small glass angel to her and they all stood in a small cluster, following at a safe distance as she inspected the house.

Soljer had meticulously arranged all the statues into little scenes on the mantel pieces and although Jenny wasn’t quite sure she understood all of them, they were still tasteful enough. He nodded at her praise and stood proudly as Cris patted him on the back. The mistletoe she supposed she would just have to explain and at least it smelled nice. The tree was a little haphazard but Thrupp’s expression defied any criticism. Dotty and Ada looked immensely satisfied with it.

“It’s grand, grand.” Parker assured them. “Never seen a better tree.”

“Just needs the angel but none of us are tall enough, not even Soljer.” Jack put his hands in his pockets and sighed. They all looked at Jenny.

“Well it ain’t like I’m bleedin’ tall enough.” She folded her arms and looked at Parker who she realised was not really much taller than herself.

“I’ve got an idea. Wait here.” He gestured excitedly and ran out.

There were many things Jenny was expecting, step ladders and the like, but it was not for Parker to walk back in leading Alice.

“Well there was an ‘oss in the nativity weren’t there?” he said at her expression. “Up yer get an’ pop it on then.”

She looked around at the crowd of awed and delighted faces staring at her. Thrupp was clapping delightedly and whooping. A chorus of “Gwan!”’s started up and she gave in. It was more difficult to mount a horse with no saddle and in a skirt but Alice stood steady for her as she scrambled up to sit side-without-a-saddle. Parker clicked the horse round while the urchins watched with baited breath as Jenny leaned forward and…

The door opened suddenly and Vastra and an unknown gentleman walked into the living room.

Jenny dropped the angel in surprise but Dotty caught it in a reflex response that caused gasps of approval from the other urchins. They looked round when they saw Jenny staring at the doorway and Parker looking desperate, as the oldest and therefore most responsible person there, trying to concoct an acceptable explanation for the scenario. At the sight of the gentleman, who was dressed in a pinstripe trousers and a tailcoat and wore a very dour expression, the urchins all scarpered. Dotty thrust the angel into Jenny’s hands and then followed Ada and Thrupp as they hopped it out the window which they fought to get open. The rest sidled with haste past Vastra who was still stood in
She was wearing her veil but Jenny could see right through it to her expression. In all their adventures together, she hadn’t yet seen Vastra look quite so questioning as to what on earth was going on.

“I have some business with you, Jenny. If you’re not otherwise occupied?”

“No! No…uh…no ma’am. We’re…we were just…” she hastily leapt off Alice but words failed her. Parker came to the rescue.

“We’re about finished ‘ere aye. Aye I’ll uh…I’ll just take Ali…ah the ‘oss I’ll jus’ be takin’ the ‘oss back to ‘er stable. Where she belongs. Aye. In the stable.” He nodded continuously as he spoke, gently taking Alice’s reins and leading her out through the house, leaving Jenny alone to face Vastra and the gentleman.

Chapter End Notes

Me too, Parker, me too. I have no acceptable explanation for that scenario either.
It was very hard to keep a straight and serious face whilst a horse clopped its way out through the pantry but Jenny managed it.

“So…so you wanted me ma’am? I mean you mentioned business? Is it a case?” she felt her hands wringing her apron and mentally cursed the nervous habit.

“No. Not as such. This is Mr Beecham. He is a solicitor. There are some matters to discuss and some papers that you will need to sign.”

A tingle of dread made its way up Jenny’s spine and she unconsciously hunched her shoulders as she followed Vastra into the dining room. It wasn’t ever used as a dining room, Jenny ate in the kitchen and Vastra ate wherever it was she ate. But there was a beautiful octagonal table which Vastra had bought and was one of the few pieces of furniture in the house that Jenny liked to polish; it had such a beautiful sheen to it.

“Sit.” Vastra gestured.

Jenny slid into the chair she’d indicated, setting the angel down on the table and watched as the solicitor pulled some papers out of his case and laid them out in front of her. Vastra sat down stiffly in the chair next to her. Jenny’s eyes flicked to the solicitor, who had retreated a little ways off and was now staring fixedly out the window.

“You have been in my service for quite some time now, Miss Flint and your loyalty is something I would not wish to see go unrewarded. Nor, in the event of my death, for you to have to search and scramble for another position. Therefore I wish to set up a bank account at my bank, into which I will deposit some small sum of money, and afterwards of course, your wages. It requires a form to be filled out, and your signature. Mr Beecham and I will act as character references.” Vastra held out a pen.

Jenny took a deep breath, after realising she hadn’t been breathing for the latter half of that speech, since the word “death”. “Wot?” was the only word that ended up coming out.

“A bank account. In your name. With money. Your money.”

“But…wot?”
Vastra rolled her eyes. “Mr Beecham. Would you mind giving us a moment? I fear my maid does not understand me correctly.”

He bowed and left, presumably to stare out of another window.

Vastra traced a line in the table, not quite catching Jenny’s eye. “It has come to my attention that everything…the house, the belongings, the bank account. They are all in my name.”

“Well they gotta be ain’t they? Be suspicious if they was in mine. People’d start arskin’ questions. A maid ownin’ stuff. Prob’y think I’d nicked it. Which in truth…”

“That does not mean you cannot have your own account.” Vastra interrupted her. “Once set up, half the money we own will be deposited into it. Equal sums. And any money we earn from our adventures, half of that too.”

Jenny gaped. She knew there was still a great deal of money. The idea of half of it being officially hers was rendering her temporarily speechless.

“But you need to fill out this form.” Vastra tapped the paper a little testily. “It is basic information.”

Still in silence, Jenny took the pen and carefully wrote out her name and details. Her handwriting looked untidy on the official printed document, her scrawl of a signature even more so. But it was real? It was going to be hers?

“Mr Beecham!”

“Yes Madame?”

“It is sorted. We will visit the bank this afternoon to finalise the account.”

“Certainly Madame. Now about the other matter. You wish, I believe, for your maid to own half the house, legally.”

“Yes.”

“I must impress upon you again that this is highly unusual…”

“I am a highly unusual person Mr Beecham.”

“That traditionally…”

“We do not hold tradition in high esteem in this household.”

“And that I have never even heard of such a situation between…”

“You have now.”

“And that…”

“You informed me it was possible.”

“It would be possible, with both of your agreements and signatures to become joint tenants. In equity of course, half each but yes.” Mr Beecham sighed wearily. Jenny got the distinct impression Vastra had been arguing with him. Arguing with Vastra could be difficult if you didn’t know how to do it, or if you didn’t have the stamina. “The document of joint ownership is simple enough; all it would require is both your signatures.”
“And you brought it with you?”

“As you requested Madame.” He gestured to one of the other pieces of paper in front of Jenny.

Jenny stopped flicking her eyes between the two of them and looked down again. Without hesitation Vastra leant over her, grabbed the pen and signed with a flourish where there were two spaces after elaborate script.

Jenny was slightly more wary and tried to read it but the wording confused her.

“I don’ understand wot it sez.”

“Miss ah…Flint? I believe? This document is a standard joint ownership agreement. That is, if you add your signature to it, you will then become joint tenant of this house. Half of it will be yours.” Mr Beecham said slowly. “See? The address is already filled in.”

“Which ‘alf?” Jenny said caustically as she took the proffered pen and signed her name once more. She didn’t appreciate being spoken to as if she were stupid.

“Legally. Not literally.”

“I’ll take the downstairs, s’got the kitchen.” She heard Vastra stifle a snort of laughter with a cough.

“And upon my death, my half of the house will go to Miss Flint?”

“Automatically, under the terms of the agreement.” Mr Beecham nodded.

“And finally, my will.” The Silurian tugged the pen gently out of Jenny’s grasp and signed the third piece of paper. “Upon my death all of my property, savings and belongings will become that of Miss Jenny Flint.”

“Exactly as we drew it up in my office, Madame, yes.” Mr Beecham walked up. “And I am now officially witnessing, along with your maid, the signing of the Will.”

Well that would explain the dour face, Jenny thought, biting her lip. Mr Beecham probably hadn’t been prepared for a determined Silurian coming into his office. And Vastra seemed very determined about this.

“Excellent! How wonderful to get it all sorted before lunch.” Vastra collected the documents off the table.

“Ah. Madame Vastra, it may be that it is better for me to keep hold of your will, in the event of accidents, and the tenancy agreement too, as your newly employed solicitor.”

Jenny saw Vastra’s eyes narrow but she nodded her head and stood up to hand them over before picking up the final piece of paper.

“And this reference should satisfy the bank as to Miss Flint’s character?”

“Certainly.” Mr Beecham sniffed, affronted. “I can assure you, Madame Vastra, I am a well-respected solicitor.”

“Indeed. Well that is all I require you for today. Thank you for your assistance.” She waved her hand to dismiss him.

He sniffed again, inclined his head and walked out.
Jenny watched, slightly dumbfounded still, as Vastra walked agitatedly around the table, ripping off her veil and discarding her cloak over the back of a chair as she did so. Vastra stalked out into the hallway and Jenny looked down at the form she’d filled out, and the character reference. This was slightly more legible than the joint tenant agreement had been and she snorted in amusement at the description of herself. Vastra stalked back in.

“What were you doing with the horse anyway? And why are there ridiculous bundles of plants hanging in every doorway? I thought you were going to decorate the house?”

“Thought you liked plants.” Jenny replied, standing up and collecting the pieces of paper together.

Vastra blinked in astonishment.

“And the horse? I wouldn’t expect anything better from you or the urchins…”

“Thank you.”

“But Parker?”

“It was Parker’s idea. None of us was tall enough to put the angel on the top of the tree.”

“Angel?”

Jenny nodded towards the small glass angel on the table. Vastra stalked over and picked it up, turning it every which way to examine it.

“An ape with wings?”

“An angel. They’re part of ‘eaven an’ god an’ the like.”

“And it sits on the top of the tree.”

“Yes.”

Jenny followed as Vastra swept from the room and watched from the living room doorway in amazement as the tall Silurian reached up and delicately balanced it on the topmost pointed branch.

“Like so?” she asked over her shoulder, standing back to examine the tree.

“Yeah. Like that.” Jenny smiled happily from the doorway.

Chapter End Notes

researching Victorian property law to see whether two independent women can co-own a house together resulted in trawling gov.uk and reading several property acts to determine about joint ownership but as far as I can tell, whereas this would be a highly unusual situation? legally I can’t find squat in any law says that they couldn’t co-own the house in the Victorian era at that time, considering the property acts that came into law in the late 1800s but before 1888. The legal jargon I had to read though…delightful.
Mistletoe and Wine

Chapter Summary

a substance the same colour as wine at any rate. Three chapters just on the 17th of December. Busy day this one…

Chapter Notes

30th chapter…

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“What was all that about anyway?” Jenny asked as Vastra turned to inspect Soljer’s displays. “Wills an’ the like. Co-ownership.” She had a feeling she knew what had inspired Vastra’s actions. It had been a thought nagging in the back of her head for a while but what with Japan there hadn’t really been time to address it.

“I told you that at least here, in this house, you were not required to be a maid, as society must see you. That we lived here as equals. And now we do. Legally.” Vastra trailed off. “What is the purpose of hanging it in doorways?”

Jenny looked up at the bunch of mistletoe hanging over her head and coughed. “S’mistletoe.”

“Yes?”

“Am I really gonna have a bank account? In my name? All of me own?”

“Yes. As soon as we visit the bank this afternoon.”

“An’ it’ll be mine.”

“All yours.”

Jenny sniffed and to her surprise realised she was crying.

“Jenny?” Vastra joined her in the doorway.

“’m sorry ma’am. S’just I ain’t never ‘ad nuffin’. Nuffin’ ‘cept me flint. Nuffin’ that was mine. An’ I mean all that money! An’ s’not like I needed it. I mean you din’t ‘ave to.”

Vastra handed her a handkerchief and Jenny blew her nose loudly in it.

“The Doctor once told me that whatever I was thinking of you as that I could not make you stay. And now you do not have to. You may leave and have money and do whatever you wish to.”

“I was never plannin’ on leavin’ or anythin’ like it! Just because…”
“But it clearly means a lot to you. To have something that is yours. A reassurance that no matter what happens, you will not have to go back to the streets or to working in a factory. Security. That is my gift to you this Christmas. I should have thought of it sooner.” Vastra frowned.

“S traditional.” Jenny said after an awkward silence, fiddling with the handkerchief. She felt nervous, knowing what Vastra would do upon being informed about mistletoe, and wanting it anyway.

“What is?”

“Mistletoe. You hang it up at Christmas time, well smore a New Year thing too. An’ then if a bloke finds himself beneath it with a woman…then they kiss.”

Vastra looked at the mistletoe and then at Jenny. “Does it have to be a “bloke”? she smirked.

“Traditionally but y’know…” Jenny shrugged, avoiding Vastra’s eyes.

“Well we do not hold tradition in high esteem in this household, as I told Mr Beecham.”

“Yeah. Well. No.”

“Hm.”

Jenny waited but Vastra merely kept smirking at her. She swore her heart stopped as she realised that Vastra was waiting for Jenny.

“C’n I kiss yer then?” a small part of her cringed. That was not exactly the way she’d intended to word it.

“By all means.” Vastra nodded her head, but the widening smirk belied her serious tone.

Deciding she’d get Vastra back for teasing her later, Jenny stood on tip toe and kissed the annoying Silurian gently. Vastra responded with more passion, keeping her lips pressed against Jenny’s. And in the heat of the moment, Jenny forgot and as Vastra’s arms went around her waist, Jenny’s hands reached up to clasp Vastra’s head, her fingers closing around the head crests…

“Ow!!” they swiftly clasped Jenny’s nose instead.

Vastra had jerked her head forward away from the touch and accidentally head butted Jenny on it.

“Jenny!” she exclaimed, releasing the young woman as she saw blood dripping from between Jenny’s fingers, mingling with tears.

Out of the blue, there was a knock at the door. Vastra turned, keening slightly in panic.

“Vastra? Jenny? Anyone about?” an unfamiliar voice called out. Jenny’s eyes went wide as they heard the door open and they stared at each other, frozen in alarm. *Who on earth would just walk into their house like that?*

Rose wandered past and spotted them, still stood in the doorway. “Oi! They’re here…oh my gawd! Are you alright? Doctor!!” she yelled over her shoulder as she noticed Jenny’s bleeding nose and Vastra’s panicked expression.

A thin man with gelled hair, dressed in a suit darted up to doorway. “What’s up? Oh! Vastra! What did you hit her for?” he gently pulled Jenny’s hands away, tilting her head back to inspect the nose.

She choked slightly as blood ran into her throat.
“Alright, alright. Sit down here, head forward, that’s it. Rose, go an’ get a wet cloth. There we go.” He guided her onto a chair and then squatted in front of her. “Should stop in a minute. Were you two fighting again?” he cast an angry glance at Vastra who was still standing in the doorway, shocked.

“Doctor?” Jenny gaped at the man in front of her, eyes wide.

“Hello!” he grinned and waved his hand. “I’m impressed!”

“You have regenerated then?” Vastra asked, coming back to her senses. “We only saw you… whenever it was. I would’ve thought…”

His face fell. “Things happen. You know how it is Vastra. One thing after another. After Japan… when is this anyways?”

“It is nearly Christmas here.” Vastra faltered.

“So you gave her a red nose to make her like Rudolph?” the Doctor waggled his eyebrows meaningfully.

Now Jenny was completely lost but Rose turned back up and pressed a cold cloth to her nose, soothing the pain in it.

“Don’t think it’s broken.” The Doctor inspected it once more. “So! What happened?”

Vastra glanced at Jenny and saw wariness. She didn’t exactly want to tell the Doctor herself, not being assured of his approval of…whatever it was they were.

“Oh c’mon. Surely you can tell me? What were you fightin’ about this time?”

“It were an accident.” Jenny said hurriedly. “I…startled ‘er is all. It were an accident.” She flushed underneath the cover of the towel and fell silent.

“Startled you?” the Doctor turned to Vastra who was steadily going a darker green.

“As have you with this new regeneration.” Vastra tilted her head pointedly and the Doctor fell silent, getting the hint.

“I’ll explain it over a cuppa shall I? Mind looking after Jenny while we sort out the kettle, Rose?” he threw the question over his shoulder as he left with Vastra for the kitchen.

“So?” he asked, sitting down at the large solid table.

“So?” Vastra shot back at him, concentrating on filling up the kettle so she didn’t have to look him in the eye.

“There was…a battle. With the Daleks. Rose saved my life. Took the power of the time vortex inside her and poof!” he gestured to indicate the sudden non-existence of the Daleks.

“But that should’ve killed her!”

“I took it out of her.”

“How?”

The Doctor shifted uncomfortably. “I…kissed her. She doesn’t remember. She doesn’t remember anything about it really. But even I couldn’t survive the Time Vortex so I had to regenerate. So?” he
asked again, having spilled his beans.

“I…we were discussing mistletoe and the tradition of it. And she asked to kiss me, well I…I wanted her to ask so…we kissed.” Vastra flushed a decided shade of dark green at the Doctor’s wondering expression. “We have kissed on several occasions before now.”

“What?”

“To thank me for my assistance in a case involving her sister and as a greeting when I returned from Egypt. She told me they could be many things. Even gifts. I kissed her as a Christmas present when she told me that, on the way to Japan.” Vastra explained.

“And what was the meaning of this one? Did she tell you that?”

“I am not completely ignorant of the ways of apes, Doctor.” Vastra slammed a tray down with slightly more vigour than necessary.

“So how did this time result in a bloody nose?” The Doctor asked. “And where’s your tea pot?”

“She…we…it’s just there. We were kissing and her hands brushed my crests.”

“And they’re sensitive.” The Doctor raised his eyebrows. “And your tea leaves?”

“My head jerked in surprise, that’s all.” Vastra handed him the tin. “The spoon is inside. Jenny keeps one in there.”

“Does she know?” he measured out four tea spoons into the pot.

“She knows not to touch them.”

“And will you let her touch them now? Will you tell her what that means? For Silurians?”

Vastra huffed. “I don’t know.”

“Would you like her to?” The Doctor asked curiously, watching his friend closely as she poured the now boiled water into the pot.

“I…don’t know.”

“Well, that’s something you can find out together. But remember…”

“I know. I cannot keep her if she does not wish to stay. I am aware.” Vastra sighed. The thought of Jenny Flint leaving was painful. The little ape had already said she wouldn’t, even with the assurance that if she did, she would not return to her previous state of poverty but there was still a fear.

She set cups and saucers on the tray and they made their way back to the living room.

Jenny took the cloth away from her eyes where she’d buried her entire face in it.

“Regeneration?” she looked baffled at Rose and the young woman explained.

“What? ‘ow is that even possible??”

“Don’t worry. My reaction was pretty much the same. You get used to it though. All the strange alien stuff. Travellin’ with ‘im.”

She felt a loss. She’d liked the old Doctor with his gruffness and Northern accent and big leather jacket. He’d saved her and always treated everything with a mild jokey-ness but he never felt like he’d hurt you. He’d always try and save you if he could. This one seemed slightly manic and on edge, never quite leaving you enough time to be still or to say anything. He flustered her.

“So…how did you startle Vastra enough to get a bloody nose? She must’ve given you a fair wallop.”

“I…’er ‘ead crests are sensitive, she tol’ me before not to touch ‘em but…me ‘and accidentally brushed against ‘em an’ it startled ‘er into jerkin’ ‘er ‘ead…” Jenny stopped abruptly. Rose was eyeing her a little too knowingly.

“Oh.” She said and glanced at the doorway, noticing the mistletoe. “I see.”

Jenny flushed crimson and racked her brains for another topic of conversation.

“What ‘appened to Captain Jack? Is ‘e still wiv yer?” Jenny realised with a jolt that in reality it’d barely been a day since he’d dropped them off in their courtyard.

“He…” Rose’s face fell. “He’s helpin’ to rebuild an…an empire. I think your nose ‘s stopped bleedin’.”

Why was there so much they couldn’t talk about plainly? Jenny pondered as she took the cloth away and then went to change her dress where it’d got spattered with blood.

When she returned the Doctor and Vastra had come back to the living room with tea and there was a more relaxed atmosphere. The Doctor and Rose were leaning side by side against the back of the sofa and Vastra was stood near the fireplace.

“Jenny!” she turned at the sound of her footsteps. “Are you alright?” she strode over and took Jenny’s head in her hands. For a wild moment, Jenny thought Vastra might kiss her again, in front of the Doctor and Rose and she struggled but Vastra was merely inspecting her nose.

“S’fine.” She reassured Vastra who sighed.

“I am sorry, Jenny.”

She shrugged. “I’m the bleedin’…ha, lit’rally was, idiot. You said not to touch ‘em.”

Vastra let her hands fall away, her eyes twitching to where the Doctor and Rose were. “So I did.” She bowed her head and then sat in the armchair by the fire. “So, Doctor, what is the reason for this visit? Do you have a case for us?”

“Nah. Just a social call really. Thought I’d introduce meself and me and Rose had a spare minute.” The Doctor shrugged, hopping over the back of the sofa to sit down on it. “All well here I take it, bloody noses notwithstanding.”

“Well enough.” Vastra glanced at Jenny, as if asking for confirmation.

“S’all alright.” Jenny nodded.

“How’s your waistcoat? Not wearing it?”
“Weelll s’more for special occasions. An’ fightin’ an’...” Jenny fiddled with her apron, staring at the ground. She could feel Rose staring at her sympathetically.

The clock suddenly struck the hour and they all jumped.

“Mercy! Is that the time? Well I suppose we’ll be off, let you get on with dinner or what have you.” The Doctor leapt up and tugged Rose after him. “See you Jenny! Vastra! Think on what I said.”

“Bye…” Jenny waved, stunned by both the sudden entrance and exit. She looked over at Vastra as the front door slammed. The Silurian was sat in her armchair by the fireplace, staring into the empty grate over steepled fingers.

Jenny’s brow furrowed, wondering what the Doctor had said but the action made her nose ache and she left Vastra to it in order to put another cold cloth on it.

Chapter End Notes

That was a lot less cute than I was planning. My apologies.
Jenny flopped down on the sofa opposite Vastra, laying the cloth across her nose. She shivered as the cold water dripped down her neck and inside the collar of her dress but the coolness eased the last of the stinging out of her nose. She massaged it gently with her finger tips, wondering if it would swell up. She could hardly go open a bank account with a nose that looked like a tomato. She’d struggle to live up to the character description the solicitor had written as it was. If she came in looking like a drunkard who’d been in a brawl…

“Does it hurt?” Vastra walked into her field of vision, peering down at her.

“Stings a lil bit.” Jenny replied, her voice muffled by the cloth.

“I am sorry Jenny.” Vastra said contritely.

Before Jenny could think of a reasonable response to this, the Doctor burst back through the door again, hand in hand with Rose. She was dressed in a completely different outfit that was shockingly revealing, at least to someone who’d spent their life in the Victorian era. Jenny didn’t quite know where to look.

“Yes. Hi again.” The Doctor waved at her, taking her expression to be shock at his sudden reappearance. “By the way, just to let you know, I may have annoyed the Queen.”

“The Queen?” Jenny let the cloth fall from her face as she stood up.

“Yes. As in she may have been banished us slightly from the empire.”

“Who’s the Queen?” Vastra turned to ask Jenny.

“You’ve been living in the Victorian era for how long now Vastra?” The Doctor tutted. “Queen Victoria. The Queen. Regent Princess everything. Anyway, there was an incident involving werewolves…”

“And mistletoe.” Rose winked at Jenny and stuck her tongue out the side of her mouth.

“Yes and…”

“A werewolf?” Jenny determinedly didn’t blush.

“Oh you’ll be fine, see? Plenty of mistletoe about the place…” The Doctor paused. “Why DO you have so much mistletoe…”

“The werewolf has gone now anyway. We defeated it but the Queen was not amused.” Rose was struggling not to laugh.
“Yes. And I lost that bet.” The Doctor tutted. “Anyways. Visiting might be a bit trick in the future but I’ll do me best! Oh! And watch out for Torchwood, Vastra. You’re not an alien but you never know.”

“Torchwood.”

“Mm. The Queen set it up oooh…what year is this? 1887? About 8 years ago now? More than enough time for it to start investigating. So I’d keep the scales under wraps if I were you.”

“Don’t I always?” Vastra sighed.

“No.” The Doctor pointed at Jenny. “You have a habit of getting them out to terrify apes.”

“I was never terrified!” Jenny objected. “And not an ape!!” she picked up the cloth and threw it at him.

“My point is,” he fielded it expertly onto the sofa arm, “even though you aren’t an alien, they’ll still think you’re an alien so just…just keep it among yourselves ey?” The Doctor tugged at his hair in exasperation. “Anyway. I can’t stay too long in case they decide to come and investigate me. If they know about the TARDIS they’ll have people out looking. Bye!” He grabbed Rose’s hand and they dashed out the door again.

In the stunned silence that followed, Vastra raised her eye ridges. “Well…” she turned to Jenny and was amused by the expression on her face.

“He could’ve told us sooner! What if they sent people round to the circus?? What if that bloke at Scotland yard tol’ people?? What about them men in suits who was investigatin’ the Kraal…”

“Jenny…”

“Maybe we oughta move. But where? She owns ‘arf the bleedin’ world.”

“Jenny.”

“I won’t let ‘em lock you up! I promised!”

Vastra almost laughed at the seriousness but then remembered Jenny’s fear of asylums. And her own memories of the circus. Jenny tugged her dress sleeve as she fell silent and she hugged the little ape to her, as much to comfort Jenny as herself.

“I believe if they wished to arrest me they would’ve done so before now. As the Doctor pointed out, I’m not exactly one to lie low.”

“But you’ll be careful? At Scotland Yard an’…”

“Yes.” She entwined her fingers with Jenny’s and squeezed reassuringly. “Now! I believe we have a bank account to set up hm?”

Parker still looked shamefaced and awkward as he readied the cab for them to go out.

“Is she mad at me, Miss Jenny?” he whispered to her as she went to follow Vastra into the cab.

“Wot f…oh! Nah. She was just a bit surprised is all. She don’t really get mad ‘bout things like that.” What with kisses and the Doctor’s visits, Jenny had nearly forgotten about the horse in the house.
incident. But it was true, she thought as Parker clicked Alice out the yard. Vastra didn’t really get angry at anything, apart from questions about her past and particularly evil criminals. Considering most people Jenny had known, Vastra was refreshingly free in her behaviour and took most things that were out of the ordinary in her stride. Jenny grinned to herself as she remembered a certain tea party. With a start, Jenny realised she hadn’t thought about Mrs Blackett for ages and resolved to go out the next day and buy her a present and visit. The name rang a bell; she’d heard it recently for all she’d forgotten. Blackett. That was the surname her sister had been using. Surely a co-incidence though.

The journey to the bank passed in silence, the rattle of the cab over the cobbles and the muffled noises of the street outside the only sound. Jenny was lost in her own thoughts. The decorations. The kiss. The Doctor. Torchwood. They’d only returned from Japan the day before and already so much had happened. She absentmindedly touched her lips, remembering the kiss. How Vastra had been waiting for her to ask. She wondered whether Vastra knew what kisses could also be. As the Doctor had remarked, Vastra had been living among humans for a while now. Or surviving might be a better term. Her own feelings on the matter she wasn’t about to examine any time soon. She liked kissing Vastra and she left it at that. But it intrigued her that Vastra seemed to like kissing her back. Her mind wandered on the subject and the thought of the Silurian’s tongue popped into her head.

“Are you alright?” Vastra asked, looking over upon hearing a faint squeak from Jenny. The young woman had gone very red. “Is it your nose?”

“No.” Jenny’s voice was strangely high-pitched.

“Then whatever is the matter?” Vastra’s brow furrowed.

“Nuffin’! Nuffin’. Just…was thinkin’. About everythin’.” Jenny coughed, trying to get her voice to sound normal again. That had been a thought. “I mean, s’just excitin’. Y’know. A bank account.”

Vastra blinked, noticing a strange desperation in Jenny’s eyes that begged to be believed. “Well, we’re almost there.” She’d question the ape on it later on.

The cab drew round the final corner and then there was the bank. Jenny recognised it from having come with Vastra to set up the Silurian’s account, with the papers and references forged by the friend of the pawn shop owner. The large reception area, with wilting potted plants, the heavy scent of the wooden desks and the squeak of leather seats mixing with the low tones of conversation and the scratching of pens. But now she was here for herself, not merely a shadowy figure of a maid, accompanying her mistress. They left Parker minding the cab and walked in, Jenny clutching the paperwork.

Vastra sailed up to the front desk, all confidence and haughtiness. The clerk bowed and although terribly confused at their request didn’t dare argue or comment. Jenny smothered a grin, thinking back to the solicitor and how even he had been steamrollered by Vastra. She wondered whether Inspector Gregson had had a similar experience upon first meeting the vigilante who dropped criminals off on his doorstep. Jenny had only met him the once (and had refused to meet him again after her treatment by the man at the counter) but he didn’t seem strong-willed enough to stand up to Vastra in full flow.

The clerk handed over a small book with her details written in it in a tidy but cramped handwriting style. “You will need that if you wish to make a withdrawal or to close the account. If you could sign here?” she duly leaned over and made her scrawl of a signature. “Excellent. And then again in the book please. Your name is now in a ledger and that is that.” The clerk smiled nervously at Vastra, who inclined her head in return.
“Excellent. I believe that is all for today then.”

“Good! Good. Thank you for your custom. I hope uh that this has all been to your satisfaction.” He eyed Jenny somewhat warily, still trying to decipher how this young maid with a reddened nose had managed to secure half the savings of a rich widow. It seemed like something that would happen in a novel or a magazine series.

“Yes.” She nodded, clasping the book to her.

“Well I hope your experience banking with us is an agreeable one.” He smiled somewhat falsely and waved as they walked out.

Jenny sagged into the cab seat opposite Vastra and then opened the book they’d given her. She had to stifle a second squeak at the amount of money in the account.

“You sure this is only arf?” she waved the book at Vastra, who took it delicately.

“Yes. Half each, as promised.”

“S’a lot fer ‘arf.”

“Do you not recall how much we…” Vastra’s eyes looked up to the cab seat above her head suddenly. “…acquired?”

“Yeah but I thought most of it went on the house an’ fixin’ it up.”

“Some of it yes. Remind me to teach you sums as well as reading at some point.”

Jenny snatched her book back and scowled at Vastra. “I c’n count jus’ fine thank you. I just ain’t used to such big numbers.”

Vastra nodded in acknowledgement, not wishing to argue the point further. It had been a long day and she was tired and hungry.

Jenny watched the Silurian sink back in the seat and stood up to lean out the window. “Oi Parker!”

“Yes Miss Jenny?”

“Mind stoppin’ off at the butchers on our way home? Meat fer dinner an’ the like.”

“Right you are, Miss Jenny.” Parker twitched the reins to guide Alice down another street.

Vastra looked at her quizzically.

“You starts goin’ yellow when yer hungry.” Jenny opened her bank book again to look at the number in it.

“Hm. Thank you.”

After a quick visit to the butchers and the pie shop, they returned to 13 Paternoster Row. Parker went off quite cheerfully with one pie and a joint of meat back to his home; Jenny reassuring him that she’d wipe down Alice. It gave her an excuse to not be in the kitchen while Vastra ate. It wasn’t that she minded, but it wasn’t exactly a spectator event either and she knew the Silurian valued the privacy.
After Alice was settled into her nosebag, Jenny returned to the house to get her own dinner finally. The lunch she’d grabbed with Parker seemed a long time ago now and she yawned as she lit the lamps in the kitchen, scoffing down half the pie quickly and putting the rest in the larder.

She was leaning back in her chair, feeling full and warm when Vastra appeared in the doorway, glancing up at the mistletoe that hung there.

“You alright?”

“I was waiting for you.”

“Fer what? You fancy a card game or somethin’?” Jenny was confused.

Vastra grinned at her. “No. I was reading poetry.”

“Poetry?”

“Mm. I came across a very interesting poem.”

“And you want to spout it at me? Could’ve done that while I was eatin’.” Jenny rocked her chair back onto two legs.

“It’s by a man named Leigh Hunt.”

“Good fer ‘im. Go on then, woss it about.” She placed her hands behind her head with a small smile. Vastra reading to her or quoting poetry was one of her favourite pastimes.

“A kiss.”

The chair returned to four legs with a small bang. “A kiss.”

“Mm. From a woman named Jenny.”

Jenny eyed the Silurian where she was leaning against the door frame, gazing at the mistletoe.

“You got one of them already today.” She pointed out, fiddling with her cutlery.

“Different bunch of mistletoe.” Vastra countered. “And I didn’t realise there was a limit.”

Jenny couldn’t think of an argument against that. Her mind was struck by the fact that Jack had hung mistletoe all over the house. 13 Paternoster Row wasn’t that big but there were still quite a few doorways downstairs. The Silurian was teasing her. Or challenging her. But she couldn’t take them down either, that would be as good as admitting defeat in that case.

She stood up suddenly and strode to where Vastra was waiting. If Vastra wanted a kiss, then she’d get one. Jenny Flint was not about to back down. She tugged at Vastra’s dress to get her to lean down and kissed her soundly, Vastra responding in kind.

“’ow’d it go then?” Jenny whispered, a little breathlessly, as they stopped.

“The kiss? Oh, that was quite…”

“The poem!” Jenny cut her off, noticing that Vastra’s triangular scale on her forehead had gone a shade of orange.

“Hm.” Vastra hummed in her throat. “Jenny kissed me when we met, jumping from the chair she sat
in; time, you thief, who love to get sweets into your list, put that in: say I'm weary, say I'm sad, say that health and wealth have missed me, say I'm growing old, but add, Jenny kissed me.”

“They never wrote that.”

“I am gifted in many things, Jenny Flint; poetry writing is not one of them. I believe it is a form known as a rondeau. Look it up if you don’t believe me. The book is on the arm of my chair.” Vastra gestured towards the living room.

Still suspecting that Vastra was pulling her leg, Jenny went to investigate. But sure enough there was a book and upon the page, the poem Vastra had just quoted. Jenny would’ve blushed but instead she felt strangely touched. That Vastra had read this and had come to find her, because it reminded the Silurian of her? She turned to Vastra who was now standing in the living room doorway beneath, as Jenny swiftly realised, a bunch of mistletoe.

She shot Vastra an unimpressed look but it was very half-hearted and amusement took over as she walked back across, stood on tiptoe to brush her lips against Vastra’s and then went to wash up as the Silurian disappeared upstairs.

It was only later when she went to bed, three kisses in two different doorways later, she noticed there were bunches of mistletoe upstairs too.

“I’ll kill that Jack! I told ‘em not to come upstairs!” she swore, about to reach up and take them down.

“Oh no, it wasn’t Jack.” Vastra called from the bedroom, having heard the cursing. “I found some spare that he’d left in a box so I put them up.”

Jenny’s hand froze, half closed around the bunch in the bathroom doorway. Well, it was going to be a fun Christmas. She grinned to herself. It wasn’t like she had a particular objection to the game.

Chapter End Notes

in which the author realises once again that they have little imagination when it comes to surnames. It’s a co-incidence. OR IS IT?? Having now pulled it as a gaff, I might have to do something with it.

The poem was a glorious accident. I was reading a book of poems and I came across it as I was writing this chapter and went “welp.” Checked it out, was written/published in 1838 so it had to go in after that. Too perfect.
Nosy Parkers and Sweet Nuffins

Chapter Summary

little bits of nothing really

Chapter Notes

I'm not sure about this chapter really

See the end of the chapter for more notes

18th December 1887

Despite the fact it was nearly Christmas, Vastra insisted on training, claiming they had gotten out of practice on the long trip to Japan. Jenny suspected it was more boredom; there were no cases for them to investigate. Even the urchins seemed restless when they came in for breakfast.

“Aye well, s’pose they like to feel they’re earnin’ their keep, same as the rest of us. Yon mistress is far too lenient with ‘em.” Parker replied when she told him about it at lunch.

“Maybe I should invent a case, just to keep ‘em busy.” She mused, wincing as she sat down. Vastra had not gone easy on her in the morning training session and she felt black and blue from ending on the floor so many times. The Silurian had gone out to procure some wooden swords they could use for sword practice but all Jenny could think of was that she’d end up with even more bruises.

“Ain’t you still lookin’ fer yer family?” Parker asked. “Could set ‘em off on that?”

“They found out about as much as they could last time.” Jenny sighed. She didn’t really want to think about her family this close to Christmas.

“Ain’t you gonna visit yer sisters?”

“Don’ even know where they are.” Jenny shrugged, staring at her plate. “An’ the other I can’t see any way, without risk of bein’ locked up.”

Parker looked at her pityingly. “Well make sure you spend Christmas with at least someone you love an’ who loves yer back.”

“I’ll invite the Irregulars round fer Christmas dinner then.” Jenny grinned at him. “They’re more me family these days than any of the rest.”

“Well, they’d probably appreciate the dinner.” Parker laughed. “What about yer Mistress, will she be headin’ off anywhere? Any family?”

“Your first name should be Nosy not Wesley.” Jenny collected up the dishes to put them in the sink. “She ain’t got no family wot’s alive ter visit.”
“Ahh.” Parker made a sympathetic noise. “Still, no friends? I never see anyone visitin’.”

“Closest she’s got is me.” Jenny answered, thinking that friends didn’t exactly cover whatever she and Vastra were.

“A sad way to be that is. The closest person to yer bein’ yer maid. Guess some things money can’t buy after all.”

“The penny philosopher.” Jenny grinned and flicked water at him. “You off back to yer wife now?”

“Aye. She said she’ll be around tomorrer to do some cleaning afore Christmas. Yer mistress is far too lenient on me an’ all. Some days I feel all I do is sit ‘ere eatin’ an’ talkin’ to you. Still, shan’t complain.” Parker got up and straightened his hat. “I’ll see you soon.”

“Bye Parker.” She waved a soapy hand.

After doing the dishes, Jenny found herself at a loose end. Parker had chopped enough wood to last them a few days, mucked out Alice’s stable and cleaned the cab. If Mrs Parker was coming round tomorrow to clean, there wasn’t much point doing that. She tried reading a book but couldn’t settle down to it; apparently it wasn’t just the Irregulars that were restless.

Even the shopping had been done yesterday. She threw the book in a chair in disgust at her inability to concentrate. There was one thing she hadn’t yet bought. A Christmas present for Vastra. The Silurian had asked for a kiss and gotten one but that was their first Christmas. Unable to find anything else to distract her, she threw on her cloak and hat and went to browse the shops for something.

She gazed at ornaments, peered shrewdly at books to see whether they already had them, contemplated a hunting knife but after glowers from the shopkeeper left in a hurry. She supposed maids weren’t meant to go around arming themselves. She wandered past a jewellery shop and then stopped. Vastra had never shown a particular interest in jewellery before, except brooches. She knew the colours Vastra liked from her clothes. Deep purples which offset her green scales, even if no-one could see them. Light greens and blues.

She walked into the shop, a little nervous, fingering her purse. Maids weren’t meant to go around buying jewellery either. She was studying a set of beads when the assistant came out from the back.

“Can I help you miss?” he seemed a little suspicious.

“Yes!” her voice came out louder due to her nerves. “Yes. My mistress asked me to buy some jewellery as a present for a friend.”

“Ah.” His eyes cleared as the world made sense again. “And you are looking for bead sets specifically? These lovely necklaces, made of jet, come with a pair of matching bracelets. They’re usually used for mourning of course, but I have an affinity for the stone. Black is always stylish don’t you think?”

“Yes.” Jenny wasn’t sure how to reply to that. “I think these will do then.”

He eyed her oddly, confused at such an easy sale but shrugged it off. “I shall go wrap them for you then. If you would like to come to the counter to pay?”

She followed him and laid her money on the counter, resisting the urge to twist her purse in her hands as he returned.
“There you are. Thank you for you purchase. I hope your mistress is satisfied.”

“Yes. Thank you.” She nodded and fled back out into the street. “Think it was less scary fightin’ cybermen.” She whispered to herself, clutching the parcel to her. She realised she was not far from George’s shop and decided to visit. He always offered her tea and she needed a cup after that. He laughed kindly at her when she regaled him of her shopping experience while he made them a small dinner. “Be assured, Miss Jenny, I will never treat you with suspicion here. You bought a present for Vastra ey?” he looked at her with sudden sharpness, setting out the dinner for her.

“Yeah. Well. She’s been good to me, ain’t she…” she muttered, piling up a fork with vegetables.

“It pleases me that she has found a friend. Even in the circus, people were afraid. Even her fellow performers. Some thought of her as an animal.” He smiled at Jenny’s scowl, slightly ruined by a bulging mouth full of ham. “I think you have been good to her. And for her. She was never one for the company of others.”

“What was she like at the circus?” Jenny asked, feeling slightly guilty for asking, having admonished Parker for the same nosiness.

“Angry.” George raised his arms and made his hands into claws, mock-snarling. “When they first captured her, she was truly terrifying for performances. Like a lion. She was always in her cage. A juggler bought her freedom and then they realised she could talk; they became close friends I believe. But still her performance was always about scaring people.”

“How did you become friends with her?”

“When she was first captured, they took her clothes, made her wear a shift. If you grip much tighter, you’ll break the china.” He relieved her of her tea cup that she’d been drinking from. “They gave them to me to get rid of, sell, modify ey? But I kept them. When she regained her freedom I returned them to her. No charge.” He waved his hand in the air. “She was grateful ey? I pitied her too much to be afraid of her. She disliked the pity, I think, but appreciated the lack of fear. You do not fear her either do you? I remember when you first came in, such a little scrap and now look. You could be a lady.”

She snorted round a final mouthful of food. “’ardly.”

“But even then, you were not afraid. You are a curiosity, Miss Jenny. I pitied her. You get angry and nearly break my crockery. Very curious ey?” he grinned. “Well, she is fond of you, I suppose it is natural you are fond of her. I hope she likes your present. I will have to think of something. I know she wears gloves, perhaps some nice gloves, to go with your bracelets ey? Tell her, I will call round this time. As a friend.” He got up and Jenny rose with him, nodding in recognition of the dismissal.

“Thanks fer the dinner.” She called as she collected her package. She headed home, still angry at the way the circus had treated Vastra. As angry as she had been when she’d first seen the Silurian in a cage.

The Silurian in question turned her head at the sound of the door slamming and hurried footsteps upstairs. She warily followed them.

Jenny heard her and hurriedly hid the present in the bottom of the wardrobe in one of the spare bedrooms, dashing back out into the corridor and making a show of removing her hat and cloak.

“Are you alright?” Vastra asked, remembering the last time Jenny had stormed upstairs. “You didn’t try and see your sister did you?” she moved closer to Jenny, checking for any bruises or marks on
her face.

“Nah. I was just…a bit restless I guess. Wot with no case an’ the like. So I went out fer a walk. Paid
George a visit.”

“Ah. George.” Vastra smiled, almost fondly. “He is keeping well?”

“Yeah. Said he’d call round to visit, fer Christmas.”

“How kind of him.” There was a sarcastic undertone that surprised Jenny.

“Well ‘e’s yer friend ain’t ‘e? S’what they do.”

“He has been my friend for many years now and not once has he visited me at Christmas.” Vastra
shrugged. “It matters little. I never paid much attention anyway. And I lodged in a different place
every time the circus was not on tour. He wouldn’t have been able to find me.”

“We was talkin’ about the circus. ‘bout how you became friends.” Jenny moved back downstairs to
hang up her coat and hat.

Vastra’s eyes glittered. “Ah. And is that why you stomped in like an angry bull is it?” she walked
down the last few steps and watched Jenny intently, her head tilted to one side. The young woman’s
entire body had tensed. “I told you before, did I not? You got me out. There is no need…”

“I ain’t sulkin’! ‘m flamin’ mad is what I am! It weren’t right…it ain’t right.” Jenny was crying now,
a mixture of upset and anger. “Why din’t you eat ‘em? You threaten to eat anyone does anythin’
against me. Why?”

“I told you before. It was my only source of income.” Vastra grinned suddenly. “Are you saying you
wish for me to eat them? Do you wish to hunt them down, even now? To echo your own reasons
against that…” she gently hugged Jenny to her. “They are “nuffin’” to me now.”

“Hmpfh.” Jenny hugged her back.

“Hm.” Vastra hummed. “It is strange to have someone cry for me.”

“What about the other Silurians? Din’t you ‘ave friends back then?” Jenny leant back to look up at
her.

“Silurians cannot cry.” Vastra shrugged.

“Wot? ’ow’d they show being sad then?”

Vastra made a wailing high pitched keen that made Jenny wince. She recognised it from Vastra’s
grief over her sisters.

“In answer to your question, yes I did have friends.” The Silurian moved away swiftly, heading for
the living room.

“’m sorry!” Jenny darted after her, grabbing her sleeve. “I din’t…” Vastra surprised her by stopping.
“Huh. I tol’ Parker off this mornin’ fer bein’ nosy. ’m sorry.”

“There’ll always be questions you’d really rather not answer about the past...” the Doctor’s words
echoed through Vastra’s mind. “It depends how much you value her as to how much you tell her...
and I know you value her.”
“Curiosity does not require an apology. It is just…long ago.” Vastra struggled to find the words. “I am unsure why you are curious about it.”

“Says the woman arskin’ me every bleedin’ question under the sun about my past!” Jenny pointed out tartly. “Is it that ‘ard to believe I’d take an interest back?”

“That depends on what your interest is. Apes have always been interested in me.”

Jenny fought to keep her temper. “Well I ain’t an ape. An’ I just want ter know more about yer. Just because. Like yer do when yer like someone. When yer…friends with ‘em. There ain’t nuffin’ sinister about it.”

“As a friend?” Vastra’s eyes glanced upwards towards the mistletoe in the living room doorway.

“I’d like ter think we’re at least that.” Jenny blustered, thrown by the question.

“At least?” Vastra seemed a little disappointed by the reply.

“Well I dunno. Don’t think there is a word…”

“Perhaps you are right.” Vastra cut across her, walking into the living room, abruptly ending the conversation.

Jenny groaned and went back upstairs to have a bath, suddenly overcome with exhaustion.

She ducked her head beneath the water, once she was in, feeling her body almost float, her hair fan out in the water around her. It was peaceful almost, but her lungs started aching eventually and she splashed upright again to wash herself. The heat of the water drained the tension from her quickly enough that she didn’t soak for long and got out, wrapping herself in a towel but leaving her hair to drip. She collected up her clothes, intending to get dressed in their bedroom and opened the bathroom door to find Vastra stood there. Grinning.

Jenny was puzzled but a suspicion made her glance up. Even in the bathroom doorway.

“I ain’t dressed!” she protested, suddenly highly aware that all she had round her was a towel.

“You apes and being naked.” Vastra rolled her eyes but moved out the way to let Jenny pass. “I have seen you like this more than a few times now.”

“Well fine then, if it’s nuffin’ to yer.” Jenny stood stubbornly beneath the mistletoe.

Vastra smiled. “Not “nuffin’” little ape.” She touched Jenny’s wet hair curiously as she stepped in front of her. “Never “nuffin’”.”

Vastra’s lips were cool against Jenny’s, the temperature difference accentuated by Jenny still being warm from the bath.

Jenny flushed but her lips quirked into a satisfied grin as Vastra walked down the hall into their bedroom. She could live with “Never “nuffin’”.”

Vastra was already dressed in her nightgown by the time Jenny followed her in, having stayed in the bathroom to dry off. She watched as Jenny, her back to the Silurian, changed into her own nightgown and then curled up around the young woman as she sat on the edge of the bed to dry her hair.

“You are always so warm after a bath. It’s rather delicious.” Jenny swore the Silurian was practically
purring. She’d compared Vastra to a cat before and this she took as further proof.

“I was thinkin’ of makin’ a Japanese style bath here. You’d like it. They’re so hot an’ you soak in ‘em fer that long.”

“Why would I need one of those when I can just hold you after you have a bath?” Vastra took the hairbrush Jenny offered her and sat up to brush the damp hair before plaiting it. She found hair ridiculous on other apes but Jenny’s was fun to play with.

“Well c’mon then.” Jenny sighed, wriggling beneath the covers and closing her eyes. She felt Vastra snake an arm across her midriff and relaxed into the familiar embrace.

Chapter End Notes

Awww…when did this fic become so fluffy? I should put some angst in perhaps. *evil author laugh*
The Paternoster Irregulars Solve A Mystery And A New One Presents Itself

Chapter Summary

Wot it says in the title

Chapter Notes

Sort of. It's becoming a trope of this fic, Jenny and Vastra being walked in on…

See the end of the chapter for more notes

19th December 1887

Jenny had spent a restless night. Even though being held by Vastra was usually comforting, she couldn’t settle; her thoughts whirling around what Vastra thought of her and what she felt about Vastra.

All she knew for certain was she was finding it increasingly difficult to stop kissing Vastra whenever they met under the mistletoe. She wondered what would happen if they kept it going all the way to Christmas. She felt a sudden Victorian urge to ask Vastra what her intentions were towards Jenny. The Silurian had professed to liking kissing and her huffy reaction to being declared “at least” friends suggested to Jenny that there might be something going on. But Jenny dismissed it. Whatever Vastra felt, it surely couldn’t overcome that big a dislike for humans in general, even if Jenny was an exception to the rule. She couldn’t be that big an exception.

The only thing that quieted the buzzing thoughts was when Vastra kissed her. Which she supposed was the reason why she kissed Vastra again under the kitchen doorway mistletoe.

And so, Jack walked jauntily into the kitchen of 13 Paternoster Row, thoughts intent on nothing but a hearty breakfast and froze as he saw Jenny and Vastra kissing, rather oblivious to anything around them, including him.

He would’ve backed slowly out the kitchen and left them to it, possibly grinning slightly to himself but Cris and Soljer chose that moment to walk in and he merely backed straight into them.

“What’s with you Jack?” Cris asked, surprised.

“Shh!!” he rounded on them.

Jenny started away from Vastra at the sound of Cris’s voice to find three Irregulars staring at her and Vastra. Her first thought was terror at having been seen, her second thought more terror at the realisation that Vastra wasn’t wearing her veil. There should’ve been words, explanations, but although her mouth was hanging open, nothing was coming out.

“So my mistletoe worked then?” Jack grinned guiltily.
Jenny blinked. No questions about a green lizard woman standing in the doorway?

“It’s nice to see you without your veil.” Soljer said in his slow way.

Even Vastra was surprised at that. The thought occurred to her that Jenny might not be the only ape out there who could see through her veil.

Cris laughed at their expressions. “We’re street creatures. We’re used to seein’ stuff wot other people just let their eyes slide over. We usually are that stuff. An’ you do hire us to find things out. We’s good at pickin’ up ‘ints an’ clues. So you c’n stop gawpin’ in the doorway like we’re the police an’ yer just got busted sellin’ light coins.”


“Not that this isn’t wunnerful but I’d find yer veil afore Parker comes in. Not that he ain’t a straight up gent but…well…he’s a straight up gent. Might give ‘im a bad turn.” Boggin had walked in to find Jenny and Vastra still standing in the doorway, frozen in amazement.

“I’m hungry too, come to think of it.” Vastra said airily.

“No eatin’ people we employ.” Jenny found her voice finally.

“Wos goin’ oh!” Dotty and Ada walked through the door together and stopped at the sight of Vastra.

“Finally realised we c’n see through the veil ‘as she?” Thrupp piped up from behind them.

“An’ then some.” Jack snorted.

“Eh?”

“Well you know ‘ow Jenny told us that she were this Madame Vastra’s maid?” Jack turned to explain.

“Aye.” Dotty nodded.

“An’ we thought nuffin’ of it, if you have got the scales of St George’s dragon, we thought you’d prob’ly need a maid.” Cris added.

“Aye.” Ada agreed.

“They ain’t just mistress an’ maid.” Soljer finished matter-of-factly.

“Oh.” Dotty and Ada said in unison.

“If you all want breakfast, you better shuttit right now.” Jenny waved a knife she’d been using to slice bread in their general direction. Despite the fact that apparently the Paternoster Irregulars could see through Vastra’s veil as well and they seemed to be nothing but accepting of finding her and Vastra kissing she felt like crying.

“Well it explains a lot.” Thrupp nodded wisely.

“Aye. No proper maid ’d keep ‘er position after bringin’ an ’oss into the house.” Ada reasoned.

“Well if I ain’t a proper maid then I guess I don’t ‘ave ter make you all breakfast.” Jenny slammed down her knife and stalked out past Vastra. Just before she slammed the front door shut she heard Jack ask in a guilty voice “Is she mad at us?” She didn’t wait to hear Vastra’s answer.
Vastra looked at the little urchin who’d walked in on them in the first place. He looked crestfallen.

“I shouldn’t ‘ave pulled the stunt with the mistletoe.” He stared at his shoes.

“Perhaps. Possibly I shouldn’t have either.” Vastra mused.

“I jus’ thought ‘ow it was gettin’ along to be Christmas.”

“Yes. Well.”

“She’ll come back though, won’t she?” the little ape was practically in tears. How shocking. This entire morning had been rather shocking really. The full gang of them had crowded into their kitchen by now, all looking suitably mournful and hungry.

“I hope so too.” Vastra grinned. “Does anyone know how to cook?”

Mrs Parker walked into a kitchen filled with chaos and black smoke.

“Ma’am?” she recognised the tall veiled figure, even if she hadn’t exactly spoken to her as such.

“Ah. Yes. Mrs Parker.” Vastra wondered briefly if Mrs Parker could see through her veil too. “We were attempting to make breakfast. Jenny is out at the moment.”

“Oh.”

“’ullo Mrs Parker!” Boggin waved. He was attempting to scrape some blackened eggs off the bottom of a pan. “I fink I need some more of yer cookin’ lessons.”

Mrs Parker shook her head. “If you c’n get all that clean again, I’m sure I c’n ‘elp you make somethin’ up. What is it everyone was wantin’?”

The urchins called out the most luxurious breakfasts they could possibly think of and under cover of the noise, Vastra sidled away. She hadn’t heard Jenny return yet and she was worried.

In hindsight, Jenny thought, striding down the street, she should’ve remembered. The Paternoster Irregulars came round nearly every morning these days; the cold weather making them hungry and grateful for the regular meals 13 Paternoster Row provided. But it wasn’t so much the fact they’d been discovered, as how everyone already seemed to know. The Irregulars could see through Vastra’s veil too? How many more people, walking around London, had seen Vastra? But Cris had said they were used to seeing the things no-one else noticed. Jenny herself had grown up, selling information. If you were in that business it was vital you saw everything in order to have information to sell. A brief flurry of worry struck her that the Irregulars might sell out Vastra but if they’d known this long it was unlikely. But they weren’t the only urchins in London, and there were those with far less scruples. Jenny knew that too, having been one of those. Her thoughts ended up a swirling mess once more.

She paused to buy a pie for breakfast, before walking down to the docks. They reminded her of Albie and usually soothed her. Today they merely served as a reminder of the family she’d lost.

“Wot would you think of all this Albie?” she sighed, taking a bite out the pie.

“I ain’t Albie.” A voice next to her piped up.
“No?” she turned to look at a scruffy heap of rags.

“Nah. Me name’s Peggy.”

“Short for Margaret?” The world was conspiring to remind her today it seemed.


“Sun’s still up.” Jenny noted.

“Might be longer’n you think. How many miles to Babylon?”

“Three score mile an’ ten. I only live on Paternoster Row.” Jenny answered the next line of the poem.

“You c’ld still get there quicker by candle light.”

“Fink me feet will carry me jus’ fine. But I’ll take a box anyways.” Jenny turned and slumped down beside Peggy. “Fancy some pie?” She noticed the urchin staring at it longingly.

“If yer a fool to offer ‘arf a pie to someone, I’ll take it.” The hand threw the box of matches into Jenny’s lap and snatched the proffered pie. A ragged hood was thrown back to reveal matted brown hair and a dirty face.

“You won’t sell many matches lookin’ like that.”

“There’s other things to be doin’ sides matches.” Peggy shrugged.

“You work fer a gang?”

“Might do. Woss it to you?”

“Fancy better work?”

“Such as?”

“Workin’ fer a slightly more scrupulous one.” Jenny replied honestly. “There’s breakfast every mornin’.”


“Flint. Albie Flint.” Rat mates sounded very dubious but it was always worth a try.

“An’ he was last seen in the vicinity of the docks was ‘e I take it? Wot with you moonin’ over the water an’ givin’ away perfectly good pie.”

“S’far as I know. This was years ago though. Don’t fink anyone will know. An’ I wasn’t moonin’ over ‘im. ‘e was me bruvver.”

“Oh. So who was yer moonin’ over then?”

“Who said anythin’ about moonin’?”

“Yer face.” Peggy finished off the pie with satisfaction. “Your loss of the pie though.”
Jenny tossed her a coin for the box of matches and stood up.

“Aye. Aye. You get back to ‘em. Or don’t. If you end up back ‘ere with more pie ter be ‘andin’ out s’all the better fer me.” Peggy shrugged.

“Call round fer breakfast if yer that ‘ungry.”

“We shall see. Woss yer name?”

“Jenny Flint. 13 Paternoster Row. I works there.”

“Ooh. Me lil rat mates got such tales to tell about that place.” Peggy cackled.

Jenny had met many people during her time on the streets, and off them in various institutions but Penny was taking the prize for the weirdest. “Well I’ll be seein’ yer then.” She nodded, trying to stay polite before turning to walk back onto the street.

“Be seein’ yer then.” Peggy sing-songed back at her but when Jenny turned back to answer, there was nothing but a few scraps of material where Peggy’s pile of rags had been.

Chapter End Notes

*X-Files theme plays*
How Many Miles To Babylon

Chapter Summary

I am coming to accept that I may not be a very good angst writer. Oh well. Practice makes perfect.

Chapter Notes

dee score miles and ten.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

19th December 1887

It was evening now and Jenny still hadn’t returned. Mrs Parker had long since gone home and the urchins dispersed to whatever their usual activities were. Surely Jenny hadn’t been that upset about it? Vastra had been pleased that the urchins had been so accepting. It’d increased her opinion of them, beyond just scavenging opportunists.

She stayed up as late as possible, attempting to read a book but midnight came and went and there was no sound but the mantelpiece clock. Perhaps something had happened and that was why Jenny hadn’t returned. Motivated by thoughts of a dark alley, Vastra flung her cloak on and walked out into the cold night air.

She shivered continuously, missing her bed warmer that had made wandering London at night unnecessary. She’d told Jenny she could leave, had given her the means but there was a rather large part of her that had been firmly convinced by Jenny’s insistence she wouldn’t. The only other possibility then was something had happened to Jenny.

Vastra gave up after a few hours, feeling her body shutting down from the cold and realising even if she wanted to look for Jenny, she had little idea where the young woman would’ve gone.

She curled up in front of the kitchen fire, hissing in pain as she built it back up again and warmth washed over her.

20th December 1887

The Paternoster Irregulars found her still curled up there the next morning. They were agitated and confused that Jenny hadn’t returned.

“Why’d she leave jus’ cos Jack saw you two kissin’?” Thrupp asked. Vastra didn’t have an answer for her.

Jack was inconsolable and Vastra had to prevent him tearing down every piece of mistletoe in the house.
“They are precious to me.” She explained gently. “Each one represents a kiss. And more kisses than that.”

“Yer love ‘er. An’ I spoiled it.” He sobbed even harder and Vastra left him to Cris and Soljer to calm down. Love after all might be going a bit far. Kissing was fun and she cared about Jenny, of course but… but Jenny was still an ape after all. Besides, Jenny had said “friends” and Vastra was not about to make a fool of herself. Not over an ape.

She sent the Paternoster Irregulars out in the end, telling them to search for Jenny. This was London after all; entirely possible something had happened. And the Irregulars would know more hiding places Jenny might go to.

She tried to catch up on some sleep but found it was impossible to sleep in a bed that was void of Jenny Flint. She laughed cynically at herself; she’d gotten far too used to her. She paced around the house but there was no word from the Irregulars and she curled up by the fire again; at least it was warm.

21st December 1887

The Irregulars returned in the morning, bursting into the kitchen with a rather foul smell following them.

“We found ‘er outside.” Cris was keeping a firm hold of what appeared to be rags in his fist. “She said Jenny said she could come fer breakfast and also that she might ‘ave some explainin’ ter do.” He scowled angrily.

The hood got tossed back and a grubby face appeared. It gave a slightly apologetic grin.

“I may or may not ‘ave made a slight error in that I may or may not ‘ave accidentally got Jenny Flint lost somewhere.”

The chair screeched against the flagstones and then clattered to the floor as Vastra stood up in one smooth jerk of a movement. Cris released his hold and the Paternoster Irregulars to a person backed off as she stalked towards the unfortunate Peggy.

“Where is she?” Vastra snarled, hauling Peggy aloft. “Where is she?!”

“Well the good news is she should be ‘ome soon. Quite soon in fact. On’y takes two days to walk three score mile an’ ten an’ that’s if ye dawdle. An’ she ‘ad me matches. The light should’ve guided her jus’ fine.”

“70 miles??”

“’ow many miles to Babylon?” Peggy sang nervously.

“Thas a nursery rhyme.” Ada spat. “Where is she really?”

“Well she should, with any luck, seein’ as ‘ow I din’t fancy bein’ murdered by a Silurian so I timed me entrance somewhat, be knockin’ on the door round about now. An’ I’d be grateful if neither of ye murdered me. Or ate me…”

Jenny stared at the empty space, and then turned a full circle looking to see where Peggy might’ve run to. Jenny considered herself good at being light of foot but clearly she’d just met a master.
there was a mystery, but she supposed it would get solved if Peggy did turn up for breakfast after all. She turned to leave once more but felt a prickle up her spine and whipped back round. The scraps of material seemed to be dancing in a whirlwind. Jenny shook herself. She’d seen such things before; the wind gathered and went in circles, nothing mysterious about it. She turned again and took a step forward…

And the world went dark.

Not the dark of a night on the streets but the dark of a cellar, the dark of a poke hole. The only thing she knew for sure was there was something solid beneath her feet. She knelt down and with trembling hands reached out around her. It was a road, cobble stones. They felt damp and mossy to touch but definitely cobble stones. She reached out further and they didn’t end. She inched slowly forward on her hands and knees and then remembered the matches she’d bought off Peggy. She fumbled for them in her pocket and struck one, the sudden glare making her wince.

Jenny Flint had fought Kraal, she’d fought Cybermen, and technically she was meant to be half way around the world right now. She could walk down a damn road to see where it went.

The match burnt her fingers and she dropped it. The packet Peggy had sold her was not a large one. Jenny gulped. Walking in the dark it was then.

It was difficult; the sliminess of the stones made her slip a lot and whenever she got too close to the edge of the road, she could practically feel the darkness push her back towards the centre.

She struck another match after a while but she couldn’t say how long that while had been. She’d travelled through time; perhaps she was now travelling through a place where time didn’t exist. She didn’t feel hungry or particularly tired, except of the darkness. She wanted to go home though. Maybe time wasn’t passing for her but what if it was in the real world? The thought of Vastra’s face when she didn’t return by evening hurried her footsteps into a run.

Running in heeled boots on slippery cobble stones was a bad idea, she mused, nursing scraped hands, a bloody knee and what felt like a twisted ankle. Slowly it was then.

She sang to herself to keep her spirits up, the nursery rhyme Peggy had quoted.

“How many miles to Babylon, three score mile and ten. Can I get there by candlelight, there an’ back again? Yes if yer feet are nimble an’ light, you c’n get there by candlelight. Ha. Not feelin’ very nimble an’ light o’ foot.” She grumbled. There was no pain here either and she walked on unimpeded by her foot.

She struck a third match when after an immeasurable amount of time she ran into what felt like a solid wooden wall.

“Wot??!” she exclaimed angrily, banging a fist against the darkness. She turned to look at the road behind her but it was the same as it had been. Apparently she’d reached as far as she could go. She turned back to the wall, holding the match up to it but even the match couldn’t penetrate the darkness. She pressed against it, shoved her whole body against it, turned and walked a little way back down the road to take a run up and was merely pushed back again as she had been whenever she’d gone too close to the edge of the road. She turned and slumped against it; it was solid enough she could rest her back on it.
It was very tempting to cry but she was Jenny Flint and ‘ard as ‘em. She sat there for a while, sternly
not crying and then got up. Even if she had to kick and scream at the darkness for an age, she would
not walk all the way back to the river. She turned and threw her best punch and staggered into the
darkness and out the other side, her fist striking against a door.

“Ow!!” she shook her hand. Pain existed again apparently, as her knees and her ankle also handed
her receipts.

The door opened and for a split second she wondered what excuses she’d have to come up with for
punching a random door somewhere when she found herself looking at Vastra, currently holding up
a pile of rags and the faces of all the Paternoster Irregulars.

“See? Told you. Right on time.” The rags wriggled out of Vastra’s suddenly limp grasp and darted
past Jenny. “Be seein’ yer then!”

“Jenny!!” The Irregulars reacted almost as one and raced out to greet her, tugging at her clothes and
hugging her, as if to reassure themselves that she was real. “You came back.”

“Why? ‘ow long I bin gone?” she asked, bewildered. It hadn’t felt that long.

“Two whole days!” Thrupp told her. The young urchin was currently hugging Jenny’s knees.

“Madame Vastra thought somethin’ ‘ad ‘appened to yer so she went out lookin’ an’ then we went
out lookin’ an’ then we found that pile an’ she said she’d got yer lost. Where was you lost in
London? We c’ldn’t find yer.” Cris’s tone of voice was almost accusing.

“Yeah an’ we’re good at findin’ people.”

“I dunno. It was just…two days?”

“Two whole days.” Thrupp nodded as Jenny disentangled herself and picked her up.

Jenny looked for Vastra for confirmation but the Silurian had disappeared back inside the house. The
Irregulars followed her gaze and fell silent.

“She missed yer.” Soljer told her solemnly.

“Wot an’ you all din’t?” Jenny teased them to cover her discomfort at Vastra’s silence.

“I missed yer Jenny.” Thrupp hugged her.

“Oi! I did too.” Ada complained.

“We all did.” Jack sighed.

“Bet yer missed the breakfast more’n me.” Jenny sniffed, setting Thrupp down and walking into the
kitchen.

“We missed you too!” Dotty exclaimed in mild affront.

As Jenny walked into the kitchen she staggered suddenly, leaning against the doorframe. Her head
felt like wool and she fought an urge to be sick; her stomach was churning that much. She looked
around at a sea of worried faces that blurred together and was vaguely aware of one of them yelling
for Vastra. Her last thought was “I ain’t gonna *faint* am I??”
“Well, not fainting in the Victorian style of it. Two days without sleep or food or water is all well and good if you’re travelling in an Underworld but they catch up with you in the real world.” A young black woman who had introduced herself as Martha informed her when she came to, lying well wrapped up in bed. “Here.” She handed Jenny a glass of water.

“Wot’s an Underworld?”

“Separate region of space and time, closed off from the rest of the universe, only accessible through certain rituals. In this case, thrice widdershins.” The Doctor sighed from the bedroom doorway. “Very traditional. I’ll look into it of course, but there won’t be a lot I can do I’m afraid.” He ran his fingers through his hair. “Closing it down might anger the owners of it. Vastra mentioned a Peggy?”

“She was right odd she was.”

“Coming from someone who knows me, that means something. Anyways! You’re up and about now. Vastra’s stopped having a heart attack. Your delightful band of Artful Dodgers is waiting to see you. We’d best be off. Coming Martha?”

“Yes. My work here is done.” Martha grinned reassuringly at her. “Make sure you rest up for the next few days, drink plenty of fluids. You should be fine. And your ankle is only twisted, so rest that too and you shouldn’t have a problem.”

Jenny nodded.

“Bye Jenny!” the Doctor waved.

“Hey wait! Where’s…Rose…” the question trailed off as she realised that the Doctor had gone and probably wouldn’t have answered it anyway. She sank back into the pillows with an uneasy sigh.

Chapter End Notes

Turn about thrice widdershins
Chapter Summary

The Blackett coincidence turns out to be slightly more mundane than previously anticipated. I had this whole "Mrs Blackett is running a secret socialist group out of her gin shop and Jess happens to be a member and they all take the surname Blackett to identify themselves to others" but that was a little far-fetched. They say. Writing a fanfic about crime fighting Victorian lesbians, one of whom is a fictional ancient being. Okay so that's what is really going on but Jess isn't going to tell her sister that. It is a secret socialist group after all.

Chapter Notes

That title is terrible. I am ashamed of myself. No-one told me chapter titles were that hard. I would've numbered them instead if I'd known.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

22nd December 1887

Having spent a very boring day resting in bed and being ignored by Vastra, even when the Silurian curled up beside her in bed at night, Jenny wanted out of 13 Paternoster Row for the day. Walking in the darkness of an Underworld for two days hadn’t been enough time for her to think about why she’d been so upset and now Vastra wasn’t talking to her. She left some food on the kitchen table for the Irregulars and then went to see Missus Blackett, as she’d originally planned.

She couldn’t think what to get her as a present as she pushed her way through the crowded market place to get to the gin shop. Luxury items would seem superfluous. In the end, Jenny bought a decent bottle of gin, figuring that she couldn’t go amiss there.

Missus Blackett was surprised to open her door to find Jenny standing there, looking awkward and upset, and immediately drew her into a large hug.

“Mercy an’ it has been a while! I swear your clothes ‘ave got even grander. An’ you’ve filled out too! ‘ow’s life amongst the posh people then?” She took the bottle of gin that Jenny proffered without preamble, admiring the intricate label on it as she walked back into the kitchen.

“Not bad.” Jenny shrugged, following her.

“As bad as that ey?” Missus Blackett moved to make some tea, revealing someone already sat, or rather moodily slumped, at the table.

“Did warn ‘er. Offered to set ‘er up like. No-one bleedin’ listens ter me.” The someone complained.
“Yes, yes alright dear.” Missus Blackett patted the young woman on the shoulder as she went outside to fill the kettle up from the stopcock. “She’s got us some nice gin at any rate, that should quieten you down.”

“Jess??” Not a co-incidence then. Jenny stood in stunned silence as her sister lounged in the battered wooden table observing her.

“In answer to the question yor currently too dumbfounded ter ask, me an’ Missus Blackett used ter work together. She were the cook where I was the skiv see?” Jess got up to examine the gin that Missus Blackett had left on the side. “Well, her old man died and left her a pile an’ this place. So Missus Blackett took it over. An’ I left cos I weren’t bein’ beaten about no more either. I helped out a bit, she let me stay in the attic til I got a better job an’ then I found me own place too.” She uncorked it and poured out a tot. “On’y I din’t wanna be known as Flint no more. So she said as I could take her name. Make out I was ‘er daughter. Came ter visit after yor lady released me, rantin’ about me stupid sister an’ surprised was I to learn you’d on’y been bleedin’ livin’ here for months. You an’ yer mistress.” Jess waved the glass in a vague acknowledgement. “Where’d she get the money from then, to set up all noble like?”

“She…inherited it.”

“Rich uncle was it? From Camberwell?” Jess grinned, downing the entire glass in one gulp. “Well if that’s what it’s called these days. Awright, awright.” She held up her hands to pacify Jenny. “No need to get in a snit about it. Not like I care.” She slumped back into her chair.

“You cared enough when we sprung yer.” Jenny was not above being equally moody as her sister.

“Thought you was livin’ wiv a toff din’t I? Din’t realise she started out so low did I. Circus performer Missus Blackett tol’ me.” Jess grinned and leaned across the table. “‘ow is yer lady friend doin’ these days?”

“I ‘ope you ain’t bein’ mean to each other. Christmas is a family time.” Missus Blackett prevented a minor brawl by coming back in with the kettle. “That bleedin’ stopcock’s allus gettin’ frozen.” She muttered to herself.

“Did puttin’ a bit of rag round it not work?” Jess frowned. “An’ nah. I was just politely enquirin’ as to ‘ow Madame Vastra was.”

“Ooh, yes. She doin’ alright up in that big ‘ouse? Must be some work fer you, keepin’ that clean.”

“She’s well.” Jenny shrugged and sat down in the chair opposite Jess.

An awkward silence fell.

“Wot does she do to keep hersel’ busy these days?” Missus Blackett tried.

“She’s an investigator. Travels a lot. Bin to Egypt. An’ Japan.”

“Bless my soul. Not bad fer goin’ up in the world, ey Jess. Tol’ you it were worth Jenny’s time stickin’ with ‘er, fer all yer ideas about class warfare.”

“I don’ think Jenny was precisely financially motivated in the stayin’ with ‘er.” Jess winked.

“Oh? Well tis nice that loyalty gets rewarded somewhere ain’t it.” Missus Blackett gave up after that and went out to buy some things for lunch.
There was another silence where Jenny glowered at the table and Jess got herself another gin.

“So wot ‘appened after I left anyway?” she asked quietly, swilling the clear liquid round. “I know things went down’ill. You mentioned Albie got taken?”

“Dunno that ‘e got taken. He disappeared one day. Never found out what ‘appened to ‘im. After that, our aunt came ter stay with us fer a bit.”

“That musta bin fun.”

“Aye.

“Bet she put paid to yer hangin’ out with the larks.”

“I ‘ad ter go ter school regular an’ everythin’. ” Jenny shook her head in mock despair. “She din’t stay that long. Got Da a job an’ was gone by spring. She came back an’ took Megan though. Adopted her as her own.”

“Surprised they din’t take you as well.” Jess said sarcastically. “You’da bin a wonderful daughter fer ‘em I imagine.”

“About as wonderful as you.” Jenny bit back.

“What about after that?”

“Thom died. Got the flu. Cholera. Somethin’. I dunno. Went cold in me arms, like Margaret. After that Da lost it again. We got kicked out an’ ‘e ended up in the workhouse, where ‘e lived til ‘e died far as I know.” Jenny shrugged.

“Don’t miss ‘im I take it then?”

“Not bleedin’ likely.”

“Din’t you go with ‘im?”

“Nah. Tried to find the mudlarks an’ got picked up by a peeler and ended up in a School. Thought maybe someone would come find me, get me out but…” Jess shifted slightly uncomfortably but Jenny merely shrugged. “It were alright. I survived.”

“It weren’t yer fault y’know. Thom dyin’. Or Maggie. Bleedin’ arsehole father.” Jess ran her fingers through her hair.

“I know.” Jenny replied quietly.

“‘ow’d you end up down an alley then?”

Jenny sighed. “Thas a long story.”

“You sayin’ we ain’t got time?”

“I engaged in various criminal activities, did my time in a Reform school, the workhouse an’ jail respectively. Due to me turnin’ on the gang an’ spyin’ fer the peelers, I got in a bit of an ‘assle wiv ‘em. An’ then she turned up.”

“Thas a short version.” Jess complained. “Don’ explain nuffin’.”
“Well, wot d’yer want to know?” Jenny was confused.

“Life. Details. Romance!”

Jess spun around the kitchen.

“There was a couple of women.”

“Ey ey.”

She plopped swiftly back down in her chair again, leaning across the table in exaggerated interest.

“I was workin’ with a drayman, after I got out the Reform School, where I got educated on such matters. Met this girl named Lettie down the pub. Lived with ‘er fer a bit. Then I got found out, where I was dressin’ as a boy.”

“Vulgar. I like it.”

“So we ‘ad ter move on. I got in with a gang. We…din’t see eye to eye over some things. An’ then I spied on the gang an’ ‘ad ter split in an ’urry. Left her behind.”

“Classy.”

Jenny paused to glower at her sister’s commentary.

“Anyways.” She began again sternly. “I couldn’t work or nuffin so I ended up in the workhouse where I met Gracie.”

“Girl number 2.”

Jenny rolled her eyes and gave up trying to non-verbally remonstrate Jess for it. “We spent one more winter then got out together an’ got jobs in this house. ‘er as a cook, me as a skiv.”


Jenny shifted in her seat. “I may ‘ave not…”

“Yer nicked stuff. An’ they caught yer. Bet that impressed the ladies.” Jess shook her head.

“Never saw ‘er again after the court case.” Jenny shrugged.

“Ahh.” Jess sighed in mock sympathy. “So you got out of jail an’ the gang tracked yer down?”

“One of their Mistresses in jail recognised me, put the word out.”

“An’ down a dark alley, Girl…well woman, Number 3 jus’ so ‘appened to stumble. Savin’ yer.”

Jenny nodded. Then shook her head. “She ain’t woman number 3!”

“I’ll believe yer, thousands wouldn’t.”

Jess idly rocked her chair back on two legs, aggravating Jenny after her continued assumptions and innuendos.

Missus Blackett once again subverted a family argument by walking back in with lunch. Not wishing to discuss much more of her past in front of Missus Blackett, the conversation returned to more light-
hearted topics and jokes, mostly between Missus Blackett and Jess.

The afternoon passed with Missus Blackett and Jess consuming most of the bottle of gin and all three of them playing cards together. Which Jenny won without even sharpening, due to the inebriated state of her fellow players. It was fun. Jenny thought to herself. Simple and fun. Like family. So why was there this strange little ache in her chest that made her want to go home? She stared at her cards. Was it because the bond between Missus Blackett and Jess was so clear? That was the family feeling. She didn't really belong there. Or possibly it was the inevitable side effect of being the only sober person in the room.

Jess walked Jenny home in the early evening, remarkably steady for someone who'd been drinking that much. Jenny tried to make her stay with Missus Blackett, nervous about Jess meeting Vastra in her current state.

“Small world ain’t it.” Jess sniffed in the cold winter air, attempting to start a personal conversation again. “I c’ld…always come round and visit sometime?” she offered. “If’n yer wife wouldn’t mind it, that is.”

“She ain’t my wife! Bleedin’ ‘ell.”

“Mistress then.” Jess huffed out a breath.

“She ain’t that either. I dunno what she is but…”

“You poor sod. Fallin’ in love an’ with that arrangement set up too, where yer go round pretendin’ ter be ‘er maid.” Jess thumped her on the shoulder comfortingly and then hastily backed away, remembering that it hurt to be shoved against a wall by Jenny Flint. And although they were walking down the main street, there were still shop fronts. With glass windows.

But Jenny merely stopped, staring down at the cobbles. “S’that seriously wot you fink I done?” she asked, unsure now whether Jess really was teasing her.

“Din’t yer?” Jess looked at her in surprise, having taken Jenny's refusal to acknowledge anything as more a riposte than a real denial of anything. “I mean it’s a swish set up but if she’s gi’en yer money now to be independent what else are yer stayin’ for? Witty conversation? She don’t seem the type.”

“You stayed with Missus Blackett.” Jenny argued.

“Aye, aye that I did. An’ when I got a fine new job, I moved out on me onesies. Got a nice little room down a street where people don’t piss on yer doorstep. That often.” Jess frowned at her insalubrious accommodations.

“It ain’t…it…” Jenny gave one last ditch effort.

“Ooh dearie me, she may have been ter Egypt but yor the one in denial ain’t yer.” Jess shook her head, grinning. “You poor bastard.”

“Well wot am I s’posed ter do?!” Jenny cried out. ”She’s a lizard woman! You fink she’d even…she ‘ates people like me! But I s’pose it’s bloody typical of all the people I c’ld go for…” she gave a small laugh.

“You know what you need Jenny Flint?” Jess clapped an arm around her shoulders, seeing as there was no sign of violence from her sister. “A drink. It’s Christmas. We’re two sisters celebrat…” she
stopped suddenly, mid gesture and turned to look at Jenny. “Wot do you mean lizard woman??”

Chapter End Notes

Well that’s going to be an interesting conversation…
The bar which Jenny and Jess ended up in was not the most reputable of establishments. A fist fight had already happened (Jess claimed it was over her) and several patrons been thrown out. Jenny was sure Missus Blackett’s gin bar was far less rowdy and the tom bar Lettie had taken her to, downright classy in comparison. They were currently seated at a small table near the bar which by the looks had been used as a knife rack and hadn’t seen the clean side of a cloth since it’d been placed there. And it wobbled.

Which wasn’t helping Jenny who was staring at her third pint trying to keep it in focus. She was amazed that Jess could be on her sixth pint when, with Missus Blackett’s help, she’d polished off the better half of a bottle of gin earlier. Still, the alcohol was perhaps subduing her reaction to Jenny’s story, which she told in full, with pauses only when Jess went to get more beer.

“Blimey…” Jess looked sadly into the bottom of the empty glass that had, up until quite recently, contained her sixth pint. “A Silurian ey.” She struggled with the ‘s’. “Don’t that beat all. ‘Splains the veil.” She gestured vaguely at her face and nearly poked herself in the eye.

“Yep. I c’n see through it. An’ some others.”

“Oh ho ain’t we fancy. My apologies that I am not so talented.” Jess huffed, glowering at her finger for its betrayal. “So along with this lizard woman…that you met in a circus and then later down an alley, there is this Doctor bloke,” the finger pointed at her “what travels in time an’ you…” it prodded her in the arm, making Jenny lose concentration on her pint. “You…are meant ter be in Japan. Right now. This precise moment.”

“On a boat there.”

“But yer her.”

“An’ there.”

There was a pause. The finger swayed gently, as if in a breeze before pointing down on the table.

“I have heard some drunken bollocks in my time, but that!” the finger returned its attention to Jenny. “That is impressive. An’ yer only on yer third pint.” Jess eyed it suspiciously.

“S’ttrue.”

“Din’t they teach yer how to drink in the reform school?” Jess asked in a mildly disgusted tone of voice.

“I stole it fer others, never touched it meself.” Jenny shrugged.
“Saint Jenny…” Jess snorted. “In love with a lizard. I take it back. Yer couldn’t make it up. Not after only three pints. Mus’ be true.”

“S’true.”

Jess stared very hard at the table for a few minutes and Jenny solved the issue of attempting to concentrate on her pint by downing it in one.

“Well then…” Jess said slowly and deliberately. “s’pose I’d better be gettin’ yer back to yer wife. Mistress. Both. Don’ want to get in trouble wiv ‘er either way. C’mon.” Jess hauled Jenny up from her chair. “An’ don’ you dare splat on the floor neither. This is a respectable essh…eh…eshstablishment, this is.”

Jenny might well have gone splat on the floor but it was a long way down and she currently didn’t feel she could reach it.

“My sister. The lightweight.” Jess snorted in disgust. “C’mon.” She half walked, half carried Jenny out into the night.

Jess hummed quietly as she walked as jauntily as a person can, when helping an inebriated person to walk. Her rhythm was constantly being spoiled by Jenny staggering or tripping on an uneven bit of flagstone. All the serious drunks were still in the pubs and the really serious drunks were in no condition to cause them trouble. There was a distant sound of an argument and some off-key singing somewhere down another street; apart from that it counted as quite a quiet night in London.

“S’not fair.” Jenny whispered after they’d walked a little way.

“Wot isn’t?”

“I love ‘er.”

“Ah. A confessional drunk.” Jess sighed. “Well at least yer not a violent one. Them’s the worse.” she felt Jenny heave and directed her towards the gutter.

“She’s a stupid…bleedin’…” Jenny wiped her mouth. “lizard.”

“So she’s not like…a human who’s just got a bit of problem. She’s an acutal diff’rent species…”

“Silurian.”

They staggered along in silence for a bit, the jaunty walk slowly disappearing until Jess halted altogether. “An’ you love ‘er.”

“Yep.” Jenny sniffed, a little sorrowfully.

“But she don’t know this I take it.”

“Not at this precise moment.”

“Aye an’ it’s prob’ly best she don’t get ter know at this precise moment either. Ain’t exactly romantic.”

“I c’n be romantic.”

“I don’t doubt but not wiv sick down yer dress. Blimey. An’ I’ve got to take you back to ‘er an’ somehow explain…” Jess paused, contemplating how exactly to explain, and also contemplating
explaining to a Silurian who reportedly ate people, the current situation. “Bugger that.” she concluded. “Yer comin’ back to mine.” Jess adjusted her grip and steered Jenny down a side street.

23rd December 1887

Jenny woke up with a groan and rolled over instinctively to search for Vastra and fell off the narrow bed she was in.

“An’ a good mornin’ ter you too. How’re yer hangin’?” Jess wandered over and handed her a cup of tea.

“Wot happened?” she croaked, her mouth felt like a rat had crawled into it and died. She washed it out with a gulp of tea.

“You, me dearest lightweight of a sister, got arf-rats an’ ended up declarin’ yer love to the heavens an’ I thought I’d bring yer back to mine, save yer the embarrassment of declarin’ it to ‘er.”

“I bin ‘ere all night??” Jenny said in horror, looking round at the shabby room she was in.

“Slept like a babe. I let yer have the bed. No need ter thank me.” Jess sipped her tea, resting against a rickety side table that was the only other piece of furniture apart from the bed.

“I gotta get back.” Jenny placed her tea down and stood up, scrunching up her eyes against the wave of dizziness that caused.

“Blimey, if you stayed out all night, yer can stay another ten minutes to have a cuppa an’ some breakfast. Ain’t like yer a real maid to be mindin’ yer job lost.” Jess guided her to sit back down on the bed and handed her the tea back.

“You don’ understand. She’ll be worried sick!”

“Thought she didn’t give a snot about “apes”,’ Jess waggled her eyebrows, clinking her tea cup against Jenny’s. “Drink up afore it gets cold.”

“She don’t.” Jenny took another gulp.

“Oh here.” Jess handed her a rag. “Cry baby.” Jenny flung it back in her face.

“Yer tea was bleedin’ hot! It made me eyes water.”

“I should ‘ope so. Don’t drink it so fast, yer ninny.”

“This where yer live then?” Jenny asked, looking once more around the room.

Jess followed her gaze. “S’not a patch on your posh place I’ll grant yer.”

The room was large but bare. Only a bed and a side table furnished it. It was clean enough; even the floorboards looked scrubbed, although lacking in polish. There was a fire place with a rod across for hooking a kettle on, and a chipped brown tea pot was sat on the flag stones. In the corner was a small suitcase with clothes spilling out of it.

“Ain’t you got a wardrobe?”

“Rent’s weekly.” Jess laughed. “I c’n always afford ter pay it mind but it don’t do ter get settled in a
place. Wardrobes.” She shook her head. “The work I do, it ain’t like they require pressed an’ starched.”

“What kinda work do you do?”

“Finished yer tea ‘ave yer? Better be gettin’ back to her indoors then ey, if yer so worried.” Jess stood up in a hurry, placing her tea on the side table and clapping her hands together. The noise made Jenny wince but when she stood up there was no further dizziness and she followed Jess out the door and down the stairs.

Jenny breathed a sigh of relief as Parker answered Jess’s wince-inducing knock on the back door.

“Hullo. Been wonderin’ where you were.” He nodded towards Jenny who hadn’t been hiding behind Jess while waiting to see who answered, not in the slightest.

“Hey up. I’m Jess. Jenny’s sister. Might’ve seen me about. We was catchin’ up on old times an’ the like an’ she ended up stayin’ over. Bit of a Christmas family get together. I deliver ‘er back safe though.” Jess tipped a wink and a lazy salute.

“Good to see her gettin’ together with her family.” Parker cracked a wide smile. “C’mon then Miss Jenny.”

She gave a fixed smile in return and ducked her head to walk past Jess into the kitchen.

“Where’s V…Madame Vastra?” Jenny asked awkwardly.

“Haven’t seen her.” Parker shrugged. “Not like I need to. I knows me job.” He returned to the wood he’d been stacking by the kitchen fire and then left with a coal scuttle to stoke up the fires.

Jenny winced in guilt. The fires were usually her first job in the mornings, particular in winter, to ward off the cold. She waved goodbye to Jess who stuck her tongue out cheerfully at her before striding off, leaving Jenny to face whatever there was to face.

She eventually found Vastra down in the cellar, training. The Silurian had managed to acquire a set of swords from somewhere; they looked suspiciously like the ones they’d fought with in Japan.

“Present from Captain Jack?” Jenny asked loudly from the bottom step, not wanting to get too near. “Still ignorin’ me then?” she sighed when Vastra didn’t respond.

The Silurian sheathed her sword and placed it gently on the rack with the other one before walking up to Jenny. Her tongue flicked out. “You stink, ape.” was her only comment before stalking past her up the steps.

Jenny rolled her eyes but conceded after a night spent drinking and being sick, she didn’t exactly smell of roses. She collected a towel and clean clothes from their bedroom but found that Vastra was already in the bathroom. Cursing softly under her breath, she went and found the tin tub in the stables and filled it with boiling water, locking the doors of the kitchen and hoping the Paternoster Irregulars had already had breakfast today.

A quick scrub and another cup of tea later, Jenny felt more like a human. Her dirty clothes went in the basket for her and Mrs Parker to wash on Monday. But there was another task that had to be
tackled first: talking to Vastra.

Chapter End Notes

…angst incoming. Next chapter. Author may or may not be suffering from Angst Avoidance.

ICONK (In Case Of Not Knowing) Arf-rats is not quite rat-arsed. Both are stages of inebriation.
Only Left With Smoke

Chapter Summary

In Which Nothing Goes Particularly Well

Chapter Notes

ver' nervy about this chapter due to angst hence the long wait before posting it (thanks for beta-readin' it durianmush! =D)

but I hope it's still good...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jenny found the Silurian in the plant room, leaning back in her wicker chair with her eyes closed, looking rather forlorn. Jenny sat carefully in the chair opposite, usually used by clients.

“I din’t mean ter be out all night.” she began. “I met Jess. She’s friends with Missus Blackett. Hence the surname. Which I wondered about. An’ we ended up goin’ drinkin’ an’…I ain’t used ter it so she took me back to ‘ers rather’n bother you, comin’ in at a late hour an’ everythin’.”

“I am neither your mistress nor your mother.” Vastra replied dismissively when Jenny stopped. “What you do with your time is of little concern to me.”

“Yeah but we’re still friends ain’t we? I shoulda tol’ yer. specially after I went missin’ before. Though e’en I don’ unnerstand wot ‘appened there. The Doctor mentioned an Underworld but I dunno what one really is. It din’t feel like two days when I was there.” She was rambling and Vastra still wasn’t looking at her. “I’m sorry if I worried yer is all.” Jenny got up with a sigh.

“I cannot recall that I ever told you what my plans were when we lived in the flat. Did you worry?” Vastra asked her as she walked towards the door.

“Not really. Figgered it was yer own business.” Jenny turned back and shrugged.

“Well then.”

“Well if it’s all so fine what are yer pissed about?” Jenny snapped

“A question I could well ask you!” Vastra finally opened her eyes and sat upright. “They were children. They were teasing. They were happy! What about that required you to storm out and disappear for two days? Jack was very upset.”

“I was in an Underworld! Whatever one of them is! I din’t disappear…”

“You still walked out!” Vastra surged to her feet. “I wouldn’t care if you went off to Scotland for a week without telling me but I’d like to know, as a friend, what caused you to be so upset in the first place!”
Jenny took a steadying breath because she still hadn’t really prepared an answer for that question.

“Was it the kissing?” Vastra’s voice trembled. “Why didn’t you tell me in that case? I would’ve stopped! I thought…Jenny?”

“Look, I dunno alright? It just did. Them bein’ all stupid about it.”

“Stupid?” Jenny thought the Irregulars’ acceptance was stupidity?

“It were only a bleedin’ kiss! They were actin’ like we…”

“Only?” All those precious kisses… “I see. Well I suppose that would anger you, something so trivial to you being taken seriously by others.” It was Vastra’s turn to storm out, past where Jenny stood unmoving.

She felt stunned by Vastra’s reaction. When she finally processed it, she swore under her breath. She’d been afraid. Terrified if Vastra thought it was in any way serious that the Silurian’s aversion to apes would cause her to retreat. It appeared, she thought as she sat back down in the chair, her head in her hands, that she’d misjudged the situation slightly.

It amazed her, a short while later, when her stomach grumbled. She was hungry despite everything. With a sigh of annoyance at her stomach, she got up and made her way to the kitchen. She was distracted by an unfamiliar scent in the house. Vastra couldn’t possibly be cooking could she? There was no sign of the Silurian in the kitchen. She tracked the scent down to the living room. The fire was lit and on top of the coals Parker had shovelled in was a small layer of ash that was collapsing into the grate. She frowned and looked at the doorway as if instinct told her what it’d been and her suspicions were confirmed by the lack of mistletoe in the doorway. She didn’t bother checking the rest of the house; Vastra was thorough in most everything she did. Jenny sank to her knees in front of the fire and her heart sank through the floor.

“Miss Jenny?” Parker came in with another scuttle of coal. “Are ye alright?”

“Yeah! I’m fine. Sorry Parker. I know I ain’t exactly bin attendin’ me duties the past coupla days.” She got up and dusted her skirt off.

“Well s’Christmas ain’t it Miss Jenny?” Parker patted her on the shoulder. “I think it the best thing in the world you see yer family. Be off mysel’ the next few days, spendin’ time with the missus.” He shovelled more coal on the fire, destroying the last vestiges of the thin layer of ash. “Why don’t yer go see Alice? I’m sure she’d appreciate the company an’ she could do with a walk out. If ye’ve had a few, s’always good to clear yer head the next day.” He raised his eyebrows knowingly.

“Thanks Parker. “ she nodded and left him to it. A day out riding wouldn’t do anything to clear the air but it would clear her head. She grabbed some bread and ham from the kitchen, checked the coast was clear upstairs to grab her jodphurs and then went out to the stables.

Alice whickered softly at it as she walked in and got changed.

“You an’ me ey?” Jenny laid her head against Alice’s flank. “You wouldn’t mess up I bet. If you loved someone. Bet you wouldn’t be afraid of nuffin’ would yer?” she moved to Alice’s head to put the bridle on and Alice head-butted her gently. “C’mon then.” She saddled the horse up and rode her out into the country before urging Alice into a gallop, the cold wintry air making her eyes stream at that speed.

She was careful to get back by dinner time, although there was still no sign of Vastra. Jenny went into their room but couldn’t face another night of Vastra ignoring her. Not after finding the remains
of the mistletoe. She collected her nightgown and a dress and went to sleep in the spare room. She looked at the wardrobe in the corner and knelt down; pulling out the box that contained the beads she’d bought Vastra. She ran her fingers over them before slamming the box shut and hugging it to her. It’d been a wish. A wish for a proper Christmas. She sniffed once or twice and then gave up and went to bed.

24th December 1887

It was Christmas Eve and Jenny was feeling completely miserable. But she’d promised the Irregulars a Christmas dinner that day and with her lack of experience in the matter that would no doubt take a while to cook up.

Jenny pondered as she went through the details of how precisely to dress a chicken how she could’ve been so senseless as to assume the kisses were nothing to Vastra. The Silurian had quoted a poem at her! She’d been practically courting her, in an awkward Silurian with little knowledge of human courtship way. She’d been so afraid of losing that, she’d been the one to retreat and lost it anyway. Vastra’s message by burning the mistletoe was quite clear to Jenny.

The Paternoster Irregulars arrived early but were happy enough to help out with the final chopping of vegetables. Jenny was cheerful as she greeted them in to the kitchen and they were relieved, having been afraid that there’d been arguments. She sat and ate with them, her lack of appetite disguised by them stuffing down food like no tomorrow. She entertained them with stories of where she’d been, of seeing her sister, though they exclaimed disbelief at the idea of an Underworld.

“Well I s’pose if there’s lizard women an’ the like, there could be underworlds.” Cris chewed on a bit of beef thoughtfully.

The logic sounded fair to the Irregulars.

“I got attacked by a giant dog yesterday. Reckon that’n was from an underworld.” Boggin interrupted.

“Bet it weren’t neither. Giant dogs don’t come from underworlds.” Jack argued.

“Ain’t there meant to be a dog guardin’ the gates of ‘ell?” Boggin complained. “Thas an underworld ain’t it.”

“No Christian belief, thas you.” Jack shook his head. “What is an underworld anyways? It carn’t be ‘ell.”

“Separate region of space and time, closed off from the rest of the universe, only accessible through certain rituals like turnin’ round thrice widdershins.” Jenny quoted the Doctor at them and they were suitably impressed. “An’ I din’t see no dogs neither.”

She waited nervously for a question about Vastra, but they seemed to be assuming that if she was cheerful, there was nothing wrong and she wasn’t about to disillusion them. Not before Christmas. And they were far too distracted by the amount of food on the table to notice the lack of mistletoe in the doorway.

In the evening, after waving goodbye to the Irregulars, she gazed at the Christmas tree, wondering if she should take it down. There didn’t seem much point now. But the Irregulars would notice that, even if they didn’t notice the mistletoe so she left it up. She hadn’t seen Vastra all day but she quietly
placed the present under the tree anyway before she snuffed out the candles for the night.

25th December 1887

It was still there when she stoked up the fires in the morning but it was still early and Vastra was never up at this hour. She missed Parker’s conversation, the Irregular’s chatter as she sat and had a lonely breakfast. The wood popped in the stove but that was about the only sound she could hear. She imagined if she’d not run away, what she and Vastra would be doing now. The warmth of her imaginings was in stark contrast to the cold silence of the day. She slumped across the sturdy kitchen table she liked so much and bit her lip. She refused to cry on Christmas Day.

Her reveries were interrupted by a knock on the front door but she heard footsteps on the stairs and stopped on her way to answer. She heard Vastra exclaim “Doctor!” and the two of them walk into the living room. Curiosity combined with a concern over what Vastra would tell him led her to press an ear up against the living room door once it’d been slammed shut.

“I take it you have come to tell me what happened to Rose?” Jenny heard Vastra ask. “I was surprised she did not accompany you when you turned up with Martha.”

“Who’s Martha? Wait, don’t tell me. Dunno who Martha is yet, must’ve got the dates wrong.”

“Doctor…”

“I…I lost her Vastra. Rose. She’s not dead! Just gone. But I was always going to, wasn’t I. That was inevitable. But ha. You pretend. You think maybe it’ll just go on and on and that it won’t really…”

“What will you do now?” Vastra’s voice sounded cold and distant.

“Go on, of course. Got to go on. I mean it’s me. Find someone else I suppose, the way it’s meant to be, this Martha out there waiting for me. And I’ve survived worse, let’s face it. But…” the Doctor sighed.

“But?”

“She was the only one, Vastra. Since long ago on Gallifrey in my youth. Ha! Me. In me youth. She…healed me. Made me better. After the Time War. Didn’t think I could get so much better. And now she’s gone.”

“Perhaps you should have been more careful, as you once told me.”

“Yeah well. Talking of which! You! What about you and Jenny?” The Doctor seemed to perk up a bit and Jenny winced, leaning closer against the door.

“What about us? We live here quite comfortably. We work together on cases, when they arise. There’s nothing more to tell.”

“Ohh c’mon Vastra. Livin’ with you is never that calm. ‘Sides you said you kissed her last time!”

Jenny’s listening intensified in a rather significant pause.

“She is an ape Doctor.”

“Yeah, well.” The Doctor sounded disappointed by the response. “Humans. They get to ya. Spend
half yer life savin’ ‘em if you’re not careful. Blimey, they need so much help but for some reason…”

There was another long silence but Jenny couldn’t see what was going on.

“All right!” The Doctor said eventually. “I’m bein’ rather depressing and it’s Christmas!” he was trying to be chirpy, Jenny thought as she heard him get up. “Judging by the present. For Jenny or from Jenny.”

“I don’t know. I did not place it there.” Vastra said indifferently.

“Must be for you then. Go on. Open it then.”

“Later.”

“I s’pose it’s best if you open it with Jenny here.”

There was another pause and Jenny wished she could see inside the room, see Vastra’s expression.

“Was it worth it Doctor? Being with Rose? If it was inevitable that you would lose her, was it worth it?” Vastra’s voice was filled with sorrow.

In the silence that followed Jenny moved away, not really wanting to hear the answer to that. For she’d just realised why precisely it was inevitable as part of their first ever conversation echoed back to her once more. “I’m two hundred and thirteen.” “And I’m nine hundred and thirteen. Can we act our ages?” Rose had said the Doctor regenerated. He didn’t grow old, he regenerated. He would’ve outlived her. If Vastra was equally as long lived, Jenny would die long before her, would turn to bones and if she was buried with the poor as was her lot and her coffin dug back up and burned, her bones turn to ash and smoke after that. Even if they did reconcile, if it wasn’t worth it…if Jenny wasn’t worth it.

Jenny went back up to the spare bedroom. She could still live here. Be a maid. Still help Vastra out. Or she could leave. She had that now. The door slammed and she watched from the window as the Doctor walk down the street, his shoulders bowed, off on his next adventure. She could go off on her next adventure.

Vastra had been her adventure and it appeared it was over.

Chapter End Notes

*Tenth Doctor voice* I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry. *normal voice* I was listening to Black Smoke by Ann Sophie hence the title.
Who Let The Dogs Out?

Chapter Summary

who who who who who (these aren’t becoming song fics honestly I’m just running out of ideas for chapter titles)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

26th December 1887

Jenny was sat in the kitchen eating breakfast, debating how precisely to tell Vastra she would leave when Vastra herself swept into the kitchen, brandishing a letter at her.

“We have a case. If you wish to assist me.” She said stiffly.

Jenny blinked at the sudden acknowledgement of her presence but nodded, curiosity overcoming surprise.

“There have been a series of attacks.” Vastra explained. “Violent but not fatal. Indeed, most report that they weren’t even wounded.” She glanced at the letter again.

“So why ‘and it to us? Though people gettin’ attacked an’ not bein’ ‘urt is strange I’ll give yer.” Jenny responded in kind. If Vastra was going to act as if nothing had happened, she’d go along.

“The attacker is reported as a large and terrifying dog that vanishes upon closer inspection. There has been no luck tracking it down.”

Jenny frowned. “Boggin said ‘e was attacked by a dog. We all laughed, thought he’d bin fillin’ up ter the knocker.”

“It may be that there have been more attacks that have not been reported.” Vastra shrugged. “But if your urchin has already seen it, he may be a good place to start investigating.”

“I’ll go see what I c’n find out then.” Jenny got up, fetched her cloak and walked out. The exchange had been business-like but at least Vastra was talking to her again.

She checked at Parker’s house to see whether Boggin was staying there but didn’t see him and ended up outside Jess’s flat instead.

“Blimey. Two visits at Christmas? I feel special.” Jess raised her eyebrows when she opened the door to find Jenny standing there. “What’s the occasion?”

“A case.” Jenny shrugged.

“Ah. I ain’t ‘eard or seen nuffin’ an’ I deny everythin’ an’ everyone wot claims I did.” Jess saw Jenny’s expression. “But I s’pose I c’ld walk about with yer fer a bit if yer in need of some company.”
They walked about London in silence, Jess waiting for Jenny to talk and being disappointed.

“Trouble with ‘er indoors?” she gave in and asked eventually.

“Wot?”

“Face like wet washin’. Take it she weren’t pleased about yer stayin’ out all night after all.”

“It weren’t that.”

“Oh?”

Jenny ended up telling Jess the whole story as they wandered, feeling relieved even if Jess’s expression was less than impressed.

Jess shook her head. “You ain’t arf a berk. Tell ‘er will yer? Either she loves yer an’ thas fine or she don’t an’ yer move on.”

“You don’t understand. She’s a Silurian.”

“Well unless they don’t ‘ave such a thing as love in Silurian Land, don’t make no diff’rence does it?”

“I don’ think she…”

“Oh shuttit wiv the excuses. I let yer jaw me ear of din’t I? I’ve gi’en yer my advice now put a sock in it.”

Jenny’s feet had guided her back to the Docks as they’d walked and she leaned against the railing once more, feeling slightly put out. It might seem simple enough but living with Vastra was anything but. Easy to say.

“So this is where time went wobbly fer yer ey?” Jess looked around her, feeling that she’d been slightly harsh on Jenny.

“Don’t turn round too many times is all I’m sayin’.” Jenny snorted.

“Why not ladies?”

They turned round, ignoring Jenny’s warning, to find a tall black man leaning idly against a railing. He spun around twice, his long red coat and his dreadlocks whirling as he did so.

“See? Nothing untoward.”

“’oo are you?” Jess asked, intrigued. “Is this the normal kind of person you run into on yer cases?” she stage-whispered to Jenny. “Might ‘ave ter come out with yer again.”

“I am the Marquis de Carabas.” He walked towards them, steepling his fingers and grinning. “And I come here as a messenger from a certain rat speaker, who now owes me a favour, to warn you that you might be in a bit of trouble. She’s doing the best she can to get you out of it but it might not be enough.” His expression was one of mock sorrow.

“Trouble?” Jenny sighed.

“Well we c’n ‘andle ourselves can’t we Jenny?” Jess returned his grin.

“Against that?” he pointed behind him, turned once more and disappeared.
Jess’s eyes went wide. “Bleedin’ ’ell.”

Jenny’s eyes went wider and grabbed her sister’s arm. “No, thas bleedin’ ‘ell!” she pointed to a huge snarling hound that had appeared at the end of the street. The case had tracked down Jenny this time, rather than the other way round. “RUN!!” she pulled her sister down the steps, dodging from a boat to another street.

They pelted back to Paternoster Row at full tilt, not even sparing breath to curse further.

“RUN!!” she pulled her sister down the steps, dodging from a boat to another street.

They pelted back to Paternoster Row at full tilt, not even sparing breath to curse further.

Slamming the back door behind them, they rested against it, gasping in air.

“What in the name o’ saints was that?!” Jess asked when she’d recovered slightly.

“I got no idea.” Jenny shook her head.

“Is this wot yer life is like? Yor cases that yer do?”

“Mostly. Sometimes it’s worse.”

“Worse??” Jess looked at her in alarm and disbelief.

“Well there were these things called Cybermen y’see an’…”

There was a thump against the door and they sprang away from it to see claws raking down it.

“Bugger that!!” Jess squeaked.

“The swords!” Jenny grabbed her arm once more and they fled to the basement, Jess nearly falling down the stairs in her haste.

Jenny grabbed the first sword of the rack, fumbling to get it out of its sheath. Jess looked at her in only mild surprise this time. She was learning a lot about her sister.

“Wot kind of person ‘as swords in their basement?!”

“People who go on adventures wot need swords.” Jenny pushed Jess behind her as the hound appeared in the doorway.

Now that it had them cornered it stalked very slowly down the steps towards them.

Jess let out a whimper. “Jenny…”

“She gulped, wielding the sword before her and praying to whatever deities she could think of.

It pounced from the bottom step and she dropped to the floor, rolling underneath it to strike with the sword at its underbelly. It yelped and sprang away from her. She scrambled to her feet as it circled her, snapping at her. Another leap which she dodged and drove the sword into its side. A yowl of pain this time as it pulled away, taking the sword with it.

“Jenny!!” Jess called out in fear, seeing her sister suddenly defenceless.

Jenny ignored her sister and watched the dog as it turned its head, trying to bite at the sword. While it was occupied she grabbed the other sword of the set, flinging the sheath to the side.

It lashed out at her with giant paws, trying to knock the blade from her hands, leaving deep gashes
along her arms and she cried out in pain before striking back, forcing it to retreat.

“Jenny?!” The sound of Vastra’s voice did distract her and the hound charged at her.

“Jenny!” Jess yelled again in warning.

Jenny looked back toward the hound and brought the sword up on instinct, falling back into one of the stances Vastra had taught her. Blood splattered her as the sword drove through the hound’s eye, helped by the hound’s own momentum. The body fell on top of her and she struggled frantically in an attempt to get out from underneath it. Jess darted out and tried to drag the hound off her but Vastra stopped her and with a heave pulled the body away before kneeling down to help Jenny up.

Jess was distracted from staring in awe at Vastra by a shimmer in the air above the body. Her brain saved itself from being overwhelmed by utterly failing to be impressed by the small figure in blue robes that appeared from the shimmer, despite the small blue flames licking up and down its arms. It bowed its head over the dog and then turned and looked at the three of them.

“You have killed my Hound, Jenny Flint.” Its voice was sorrowful.

“It was gonna kill me, wotcher expect me ter do!” Jenny snapped, adrenalin making her uncaring of shimmering blue people appearing out of thin air to judge her. She got to her feet, wincing at the sharp pain in her side. The hound had been heavy. “Wot you got against me ter go round settin’ that on me anyway?”

Jess blinked at Jenny casually answering it back with ease, as if she regularly met small balls of flame that set dogs on people.

“You trespassed on the Isle of Dogs, you walked the One Path through the swamp and yet you did not pay the toll.”

“You mean the underworld?”

“What a crude term. It is part of Below, not some hellish landscape.” The figure sniffed, a little fussily. It sounded like a fire popping on a wet piece of wood.

“Woss a Below?”

“A Below. A beneath. Under you. I am the Guardian of that territory, born of the swamp it was long ago. It is my responsibility to ensure its upkeep and you,” it pointed a flame of a finger at Jenny. “an Upworlder of all things… Of course, some silly little rat speaker came to me with a most compelling tale, claiming it was all her fault you stumbled onto the One Path, that you couldn’t possibly have known…” its eyes narrowed from round marbles to slits of flame. Jenny could feel the increase of heat from the glare. “You must be something special for her to risk that much. I am not an approachable person.” It grinned most unreassuringly, dripping small blue-ish green flames from its mouth that landed on the thankfully stone floor.

Jenny stayed silent, mentally re-assessing the strange figure. It wasn’t as large or terrifying as its hound but fire was a fire and the flames had rolled.

“She is.” Vastra surprised Jenny by speaking up and walking to stand in front of her.

“You vouch for her too?” The Guardian looked up at her, considering her for a moment. “I remember your race, little lizard. Your great cities were under the ground but even then they had a Below.”
Vastra suppressed a shudder at this unwelcome knowledge. She’d been entirely unaware of any “Below”s and if they were full of flickering fiery figures in blue robes that went round trying to kill people with dogs she was rather glad of that fact.

The Guardian was still staring at Vastra. It huffed a small cloud of steam and then flared until it was Vastra’s height.

Jenny heard a small whimper from the direction of Jess and pushed past Vastra to confront the Guardian.

“So you come ‘ere wantin’ a toll is that it? Well we got money. We c’n pay fine enough.” She glared up at it.

“I do not require money.” It crackled, its thin mouth twisted into a smile at the idea. “We do not use it Below. It is a barter system. One of exchange. Equal exchange. For a certain degree of equal. The toll would not have been much; some small useful item about your person, something irrelevant to you perhaps but Below, of vital significance. But you did not pay it. And ignorance is never an excuse. Now you must pay a fine enough.” It spat her words back at her.

“Or what?!”

“Or your soul will walk the One Path forever. And no amount of spinning widdershins will get you out.”

“Wot’d’yer want then?” Jenny’s jaw clenched as she tried to contain a rapidly growing fear.

“What I sent my hound out to retrieve. It was a Flint that trespassed into my world. Thus I decreed a Flint would be the payment.”

“No!”

It held up a hand to stop Vastra’s protest. “That is the price. Get in my way, Silurian, and I will cook you inside your scales and feed you to the rest of the dogs on the Isle.” Its eyes had flecks of soot burning in them now. It held out a hand to Jenny who stuffed hers in her pocket. “There are worse things than death.” It added, noting the gesture.

“Awright then.” Jess piped up from her corner. “Take me. I’mma Flint too y’know.” She walked in very small steps across the basement.

“She goes by the name o’ Blackett these days.” Jenny said hurriedly. “Don’t count.” She gave in and reached out a clenched fist towards the Guardian’s.

“Oi! I’m still a Flint…” Jess protested.

“Jenny!” Vastra’s voice broke but Jenny’s gaze did not falter as she opened her hand and dropped her flint onto its palm.

“Gribble give me that.” Jenny explained quietly in the stunned silence that followed. “I kept it all these years, as the on’y thing I really ‘ad to call mine.”

The Guardian stared at the small stone in its palm. “A flint.”

“You said yer fine was a flint, well there one is.” Jenny trembled as its gaze turned on her.

“clever.” It hissed, shrinking down to its original size. “I take your flint. You should find the Gribble you spoke of and thank them. Their gift has just saved your life.”

“’e died.” Jenny’s voice was quiet still, but it carried.

The Guardian looked up at her. “I see. Not just a flint then. Much like yourself.” It bowed to her. “Venture into my realm again without paying a suitable toll and I will set the rest of my dogs on you. Would you be able to fight them all I wonder?” It grinned, made a sound like a log splitting in two in a fire and disappeared.

Jenny stared at the spot where it’d been, her hand closing into an empty fist.

“Woo!!” Jess whooped, clapping fiercely. “Blimey! You sure pulled a fast’n on ol’ blue fire balls.” Relief made her swear inventively as she hugged Jenny. “Thought you was a goner. Thought I was a goner. Bleedin’ ‘ell!” She let Jenny go, expecting to see her sister grinning with relief, puzzled at the sight of tears.

Vastra hadn’t drawn a breath during the whole exchange with the Guardian and she let out a very long breath before stepping towards Jenny, aware as Jess was not just how much the flint meant to Jenny.

“I’m sorry.” She said gently, uncertain whether to offer comfort.

“I’ve lost me flint.” Jenny sobbed as, with no such uncertainty, she flung her arms around Vastra.

Vastra gasped at the suddenness, a little winded but she needed no second invitation to hold Jenny tightly to her. “At least I did not lose mine.” She whispered, keening softly as she buried her nose in Jenny’s hair.

Chapter End Notes

Arthur Conan Doyle got wind of this adventure and thusly the Hound of the Baskervilles was born. Well in this fic at any rate. But not for a while yet. I need to set up a suitable meeting for them…
“At least I did not lose mine.”

Jess overheard Vastra and snorted but turned it into a cough as Vastra looked up to glower at her.

“Right. Well. I know when I ain’t needed. If that’s sorted an’ case solved, hugs all round, I’ll be orf! Catch yer Jenny!” she made a show of hurrying towards the steps.

“’ey!” Jenny called out, breaking apart from Vastra, who let her go most reluctantly. “Thanks. Yer din’t need ter do that. Sayin’ you was a Flint too.”

“Yeah well.” Jess turned round, running her hand through her hair. “Jus’ try an’ not involve me in the future ey? You might be ‘appy livin’ with a lizard an’ fightin’ dogs but y’know me I like a quiet life.”

Jenny looked at her in utter disbelief.

“In comparison.” Jess amended. “Peelers are bleeders but at least they’re human an’ don’t grow inter 6 feet tall flames. I c’n fight human. I’ll leave the supernatural ter you if’n yer don’t mind.”

“Suits me.” Jenny agreed.

“An’ do me a favour an’ jus’ tell ‘er ey? Or at least talk to ‘er.” Jess leaned in and whispered. “Look on ‘er face is killin’ me ‘eart. Like a cat that got its nuts caught in the mangle.”

“I’ll do me best.” Jenny nodded awkwardly. The phrase sounded like one Mrs Blackett would use and it inspired odd images.

“Bleedin’ ‘ell. Well good luck.” Jess shook her head. “Got any toff liquor about the place?” she called out to Vastra over Jenny’s shoulder. “I need a stiff drink after that.”

“’fraid not. You’ll afta visit Missus Blackett.” Jenny guided her towards the stairs before Vastra could say anything.

“Fine. Fine. Nice meetin’ yer without yer veil on this time.” Jess waved once more to the both of
them and made her way out.

Jenny awkwardly turned to face Vastra. The Silurian’s expression was indeed a little downcast.

“Those cuts will need seeing to.” Vastra bustled over as she noticed Jenny looking at her. She took Jenny’s hands in hers, inspecting the long gouges on Jenny’s arms.

“Least ’e cleaned up after ’imself. Not e’en a spot o’ blood on the floor.” Jenny observed, her heart sinking at the return to the business-like manner.

“Just as well. I would have billed it for the cleaning.” Vastra sniffed, letting her go and walking up the stairs.

Jenny gave a small grin and followed Vastra into the kitchen. She set the kettle boiling for tea. It hadn’t been that long ago she’d been about to tell Vastra she was leaving…

“Another dress fer George to repair.” Jenny sighed, rolling up the sleeves, wincing as the material caught.

Vastra stared at a bottle she retrieved from the medicine box that sat on the top shelf in the cupboard. “Iodine. Truly primitive.” she tutted absentmindedly as she read the faded label out loud before collecting bandages from a small sack on the second shelf.

“Good enough.” Jenny shrugged. Vastra wetted a spare cloth with some and gestured for Jenny to sit down at the table, sitting down opposite her.

It stung as Vastra gently cleaned out the cuts with a look of intense concentration. Jenny wasn’t sure whether she was truly absorbed in her task or avoiding looking Jenny in the eye.

“They’re not as deep as they look.” Vastra informed her, deftly bandaging her arms.

“Guess a Warrior would know ‘ow ter treat wounds ey?” Jenny got up, flexing her arms to test for pain before moving to make the tea.

“Of course. I treated your other wounds, remember?”

Jenny’s hand automatically brushed against her abdomen, where there was a small scar as a memento to her altercation with the Tong Gang. “I remember.”

There was an awkward silence, which Jenny tried to fill with clattering china and noisy water pouring.

“I’m sorry.” Vastra was the first to break it.

“Wot?” Jenny turned her head, having not quite heard Vastra over her own noise.

“It hasn’t been a very cheerful Christmas. I know you wanted…”

“Yeah well.” Jenny interrupted her. “Me own bleedin’ fault weren’t it.” She sighed as she placed the lid on the teapot and swilled it.

“What did she tell you?” Vastra asked, curious as to what Jess had whispered before leaving.

“What did the Doctor tell you?” Jenny cut back.
“I asked first.”

“Jess? She was just sayin’ as how I should talk to yer. Think she got a bit annoyed at me. Said I should just tell the truth. Easy ter say that ain’t it. Makes it seem so simple. An’ maybe it is. But that don’t mean it ain’t hard. An’…scary.”

“Scarier than nearly losing your life?” Vastra was a little dismayed that Jenny found talking to her so terrifying.

“I c’n fight dogs an’ bog monsters.”

“If you could call that fighting.” Vastra pointed out. “Your sword action was terrible. We really must train further. I ordered some wooden swords to be made that we can practice with.”

“C’n we give it a rest? I don’ wanna be fightin’ yer no more.” Jenny banged the tea cups onto the table and then slumped in her chair. “I mean, fer today at least.” Jenny clarified, after seeing Vastra’s stricken expression.

“Of course.”

Jenny picked at her finger nails. “So what did the Doctor want?”

“He wished to inform me that he has just lost Rose, hence why she was not there in his previous visit, which he has yet to make.”

“Lost?”

“She’s not dead. She’s in another universe. He just can’t see her again. So for the sake of argument, lost.”

“Not ever?”

“Not ever.”

Jenny wiped at her eyes in annoyance at the tears falling from them but she’d liked Rose. And she’d liked the Doctor when he was with Rose. Vastra twitched only once in hesitation before standing up and leaning over Jenny, resting her head gently on Jenny’s shoulder. She took Jenny’s hand in hers and squeezed.

“I’m sorry, little ape.”

“Yeah well. She tol’ me stuff happened with the Doctor. S’not like I knew ‘er that well.” Jenny shrugged but Vastra merely pressed her forehead harder against Jenny’s shoulder. Jenny could feel her vibrating.

“Vastra?”

“I could have lost you! This morning, I…”

The small keen hurt her ears and the words floored her. “Would I ‘ave been worth it?” she whispered.

Vastra stood up with a jolt. “Eavesdropping again, I take it.” She glowered at Jenny.

“S’not like you were tellin’.” Jenny avoided her glare by picking up her cup of tea and taking a gulp. “What did ’e say? I din’t listen to ‘is answer.”
Vastra remembered. The Doctor had looked at her very carefully, almost like the Doctor again.

“Always. It’s…to get to meet people, to be with them, to share…everything! Adventures. It’s just when it’s over. You never think about it. Or you try not to. You try not to think about it. When you’re having that much fun. But to have that connection. Really. Always.”

“And Rose?”

The Doctor had sighed, slumping down in the chair. “Well it’s inevitable that you’ll lose everyone or be lost in the end.”

“Was it?”

He had looked at her so seriously, leaning forward on his knees, staring at her directly. “My answer will not be the same as yours Vastra.” His hands had clenched. “My journey with Rose is over. It can’t be an answer for you and Jenny. Do you think she’s worth it? Worth all that pain. All that hate. All the hiding and the arguments. All the times you won’t understand each other. You’re a Silurian. She’s a human. Some things just won’t work out the way either of you expect. Is she worth the pain then? Of knowing that? Is she worth it if she walks out? If she decides a human works better for her? Worth more than what your sisters would think? If they knew?”

She’d hissed, her face a snarl.

“I wasn’t careful. I should’ve been and I wasn’t. I was old, lost, alone. Not unlike you. And she made me better. But I wasn’t careful. So if she is worth it then that’s my advice to you. Be careful.”

He’d walked out after that. Not even a word of goodbye. She still didn’t quite understand. Be careful of Jenny? Be careful around Jenny? Be careful with Jenny? She’d reverted to being polite, keeping a safe and careful distance.

But Jenny had nearly gone. Nearly disappeared before her eyes, taken by something even Vastra had no knowledge of, away to another universe. It was unlikely she would’ve been able to follow. But there were other ways to lose Jenny Flint. In some respects, worse ways.

“He said it was always worth it. But that was his answer. Not mine.” Vastra heard the tiny catch in Jenny’s breath.

Jenny covered it by finishing her tea. “I c’n think of worse things than livin’ in separate universes.”

“Really?” Vastra collected her own tea, her voice calm and distant again.

“Wantin’ ter be with someone an’ they’re still alive an’ they’re still there, right in front of yer. You just ain’t together.”

“Yes. That is worse, in its own way.” Vastra sipped her tea thoughtfully, descending into silence. That was the prospect that had been facing her since Jenny had walked out the first time.

Jenny felt a sting of guilt, remembering that she’d been the one to walk out. “Look. I thought…I mean yer don’t like apes. I know that. You eat ‘em. I thought if the Irregulars an’ everyone else it seems, thought we was together, that you’d get upset or annoyed an’ you’d jus’ leave. I din’t think you wanted, y’know, but after I left I sort of.” She broke off, fiddling with her empty tea cup. “I mean you quoted poetry at me. Some women would kill fer that kind of romancing. You even said to ol’ blueballs that I was special…”

“You are special, Jenny Flint.” Vastra slammed her cup down on the table, spilling tea all over it,
having listened to Jenny with increasing dismay. “Not just as an ape, although you are. But to me. You are special to me.” Vastra turned away, covering her mouth with her gloved hands.

“Well why din’t you jus’ tell me then?? Instead of all this…stuff with the mistletoe an’…”

“Do not lecture me on not saying things!” Vastra spun round angrily. “Not if you…you called me your friend.” She stormed over to the teapot to pour more tea but forgot her cup and had to return to pick it up.

“What was I meant ter do? Confess to the ape-hating, ape-eatin’ lizard that an ape…” Jenny stopped, clenching her jaw against the words.

Vastra slowly turned to look at her, unheeding that her cup was currently over-flowing.

“Watch out you bleedin’ idiot!” Jenny leapt up when she noticed, grateful of an excuse to not finish that sentence just yet and grabbed a towel to mop it up. “Honestly.” She sighed.

Vastra gently placed the teapot back down and laid a hand on Jenny’s arm to stop her. Her head tilted to one side, silently questioning. “Honestly?”

Jenny felt as if time was stood still. She could feel two futures, three futures, more futures streaming out in front of her, running away from her. But there was a hand on her arm that was anchoring her back in the present. She gave a small almost inaudible gasp and then there was only one future.

“Honestly?” she looked up and looked Vastra directly in her blue eyes. “I love yer.” Her fingers dug into the tea towel but her voice surprised her by being steady.

Vastra released her and she turned away, fumbling around putting the kettle back on to boil and cleaning out the tea pot.

“Bugger!” The sudden curse startled Vastra out of her awed reverie at Jenny’s pronouncement.

“What is it?” Vastra blinked.

“We’re out of tea.” Jenny frowned into the empty tea leaves tin. “I’ll get some more.” She snapped the tin closed and strode out into the hallway.

“Jenny!” Vastra called after her but Jenny had already grabbed her cloak and slammed the door.

_Vastra went to follow but pulled up short, realising she didn’t have her veil on. She closed her eyes and sighed, resting her forehead against the door, her hand still resting on the doorknob. It came as an awkward reminder that she was still a Silurian. That would be another conversation. And Jenny was right, she supposed. That would require more tea._

Chapter End Notes

Every time. It’s always in the kitchen and always with tea.

Don’t worry. Next chapter is also convo heavy. And with tea. I’m running out of tea related activities tho; a situation I never thought I’d find myself in.
Chapter Summary

cos I might not say it back.

Chapter Notes

I'm not the happiest with this chapter but it's the best I think I can get it and I have plots that I want to write dam'nit.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Vistra strode idly from room to room as she waited for Jenny to return, reflecting back on the past few days. Part of her was glad Jenny had left; it gave her time to think of how to respond. The Doctor’s advice echoed in her mind. “You let ’er get away once. Don’t be stupid again…Be careful ey?” This time, if she was not careful, Jenny would leave. But there were things she had to make sure Jenny understood. Not least that if Vstra decided to be with her, the Silurian would be leaving much behind.

But in a way, hadn’t she already? Living with Jenny like this. The legal declarations. All those kisses. Vstra could not claim ignorance on the meaning of kisses within ape society; she knew precisely what she was doing kissing Jenny. And her society was a million years away or gone. And Jenny was…not gone. Just getting tea. Not gone. But she had been gone. Had so very nearly ended up gone.

Vstra keened nervously, moving back to the kitchen, agitatedly walking up and down the hallway. In the past, such conversations had not gone well and she was now anxious that she would, as the Doctor had warned her against, be stupid again.

Jenny dawdled over buying the tea. She hadn’t really expected Vstra to say it back but she’d expected some kind of response. Something. Even a refusal. The Silurian hadn’t even blustered. Using the tea as an excuse to escape was childish in a way, but she couldn’t have stood there waiting. She wondered if she’d finally disgusted Vstra. A part of her had been waiting for a while for that to happen. And apes already disgusted Vstra. An ape falling in love with her might well do it. But what about a Silurian falling in love with an ape? Vstra had read poetry at her. Kissed her. Jenny was an exception to Vstra’s rule; the Silurian had told her that in Japan. And she’d gotten upset at Jenny calling her a friend. Jenny had said quite truthfully there wasn’t really a word for what they were. She wondered briefly if there was a word in Silurian society. Perhaps she’d ask. But Vstra hated questions about Silurians, getting angry every time Jenny questioned her. Jenny had given up in the end and the Silurian never explained voluntarily.

That was Vstra’s problem, Jenny thought as she paid for the tin. She just did things. She never explained any of it. Vstra had the advantage of having lived among apes. Jenny still had no clue about how Silurian society worked. And even after nearly a year together, Jenny still struggled to read Vstra instinctively, hampered by a sheer lack of knowledge of where the Silurian was coming
The only thing she did know for certain was that, having watched Jenny walk out again, Vastra would be worried. So she hurried home.

Vastra was sitting stiffly at the kitchen table looking uncomfortable when Jenny burst through the door. The Silurian didn’t like upright chairs, she was a natural lounger. Jenny swallowed and moved into the kitchen. She’d rushed all the way back and hadn’t left any time for sorting out what she was going to say. At a loss she clattered around making tea once more. After all, she’d made her declaration; it was Vastra’s turn to say something. Maybe this time the Silurian would explain.

“Jenny.” Vastra said quietly, once Jenny was struggling to find things to clink.

“Yes?” Jenny turned round, nervously twisted a tea towel in her hands. She threw it onto the side in irritation but her hands merely twisted into her apron instead.

“Do you understand what that means?”

“What?”

“When you say that…”

Jenny went very still and narrowed her eyes. “What d’yer mean, do I understand?” she asked in cold, quiet voice.

“I am a Silurian. I am over two hundred years old.”

“I sort of gathered that, yeah.”

“I am not human, Jenny.”

“No! There was me thinkin’ you just had a skin problem.” Jenny bit back sarcastically.

“Jenny!” Vastra’s unexpectedly stern tone brought the young woman up sharp. “I need you to understand this.”

“I do!”

“Do you?” Vastra snorted.

“So yer different. So yer a Silurian. So what?” Jenny prodded, trying to get an explanation. Jess’s words came back to her. “Unless they don’t ‘ave love in Silurian Land.”

“So I am not an ape. I cannot love you in an ape way. And among Silurians, apes are little more than food.”

“I ain’t an ape.” Jenny said through gritted teeth.

“To them, you would be.”

“To them! And you?”

“I lived among Silurians for over two hundred years. I AM a Silurian.”
“Right.” Jenny spat, turning away from Vastra and gripping the sink edge with her hands. “Right. I think I understand now.”

“Don’t sulk! I’m trying to explain.”

“And you’ve made yerself pretty damn clear!” Jenny spun around, knocking a cup onto the floor in anger. “What more d’you want me to do? Listen to you endlessly recite all the reasons why Silurians hate apes so you can’t be with me? A simple thanks but no thanks woulda done! Yer don’t need to stand there like a statue of someone who got slapped in the face with a fish y’know? Jus’ cos an ape said they loved you.” She stormed towards the doorway, jaw clenched to stop herself from crying.

“It is not as simple as that!” Vastra cried out as she got up, her chair clattering to the flagstones as she grabbed Jenny’s arm. “I care about you. Deeply. But I have two hundred years telling me this,” she gestured between them, “is an abomination. I would be locked up, as your friends were locked up in an asylum for being together.”

“But you ain’t livin’ there no more.” Jenny shrugged her arm out of Vastra’s grasp. “This ain’t Silurian Land!”

“I know. But that is still a part of me.” Vastra covered her face with her hand. “You said it was scary. The idea of telling me. Because I am, and I quote, ‘an ape-eating, ape-hating lizard’. You said you love me. That part too?”

Jenny’s head jerked in surprise as she finally realised what Vastra was getting at. “Oh you stupid bloody lizard!” she almost laughed. “I’ve lived with yer nigh on a bleedin’ year now Vastra, s’not like I din’t know. An’ yeah it was scary. Not cos yer a lizard an’ I thought yer might eat me.” She stepped closer to Vastra, gently tugging down the Silurian’s arm and staring her in the eyes. “But cos I thought I’d lose yer. An’ thas the scariest thing in the world ter me, more’n dogs or Kraal or cybermen, the thought of losing you.”

“Oh.” Vastra blinked, attempting to look as if this were not news to her. The admission touched her deeply, more so in some ways than the confession of love.

“S’not like you tellin’ me that yer different and yer a Silurian and that you eat apes…s’hardly disillusionin’ me y’know? I still don’t know nuffin’ about Silurians, but I know that much about you at least. An’ I still don’t care. Like you said in Japan. My morality is flawed. You’re an exception to a rule.”

“It will still be different from what you are expecting. The differences…” Vastra began.

“‘old up.” Jenny held up her hands to stop Vastra. “Firstly, ‘oo says I’m expectin’ anythin’ let alone what I’m expectin’? And secondly, “will”?”

“Well, I mean any relationship would obviously…for Silurians, it is not…relationships do not happen the same way as they do for apes…”

And here was the bluster, thought Jenny. Her lips quirked. It was cute in a way.

“…partners can be as close as they wish to be, sex is based off of mutual attraction…”

Sex. Now there was a thought. Jenny’s mind wandered.

“…there is no linear progression involving marriage and children…”

“Wot?” The words jerked Jenny’s attention back to Vastra’s rambling. “Marriage?”
Something of her shock must’ve shown in her face for Vastra asked “You do not wish to be married?”

Jenny gaped wordlessly at Vastra as she tried to think of a response that didn’t include the word “no” but wasn’t exactly enthusiastic about the idea either.

“Maybe we should try y’know…courtin’ or somethin’ first.” Her voice had gone strangely high pitched again. “Fer a bit say. Try it out like. Y’know. Bein’ together. Officially. Sort of.” Her bluster wasn’t half as good as Vastra’s, she thought miserably.

“Oh! Courting. As in mating rituals?” Vastra’s expression cleared.

Something about the way Vastra said mating rituals reminded Jenny that she still didn’t know anything about Silurian society. “Possibly.” She hedged warily. “More like…we live together.”

“We already do that.”

“An’ y’know…share stuff.”

“We do that too. Legally now.”

“An’ we’re special to each other.”

“I have already told you that you are special to me.”

“Well then maybe we’ve bin steppin’ out fer the past year and never realised it.” Jenny said, piqued. “I mean there’s never really bin much…linear progression fer people like me either. Carn’t get married. Carn’t ‘ave kids. An’ it’s difficult livin’ together without raisin’ suspicion.”

“Hence the maid and mistress set up.”

“Yeah. So I ain’t got a clue is what I’m sayin’.” Jenny sighed, slumping forward slightly.

“Hm.” Vastra hummed. “In this…being together. Can there be kissing?”

“If you want.”

“No mistletoe?”

“You burnt it.”

“No excuses?”

“’ow about we kiss jus’ cos we like kissin’ each other.”

Vastra grinned. It was her “I’ve been plotting and you’ve just cottoned on” grin. “Yes.” She said, sticking her chin in the air. “I think that would be acceptable.”

Jenny got the feeling Vastra had been waiting for her to say that, as she’d been waiting for Jenny to voice the idea of robbing the bank, as she’d been waiting for Jenny to kiss her.

“D’yer like kissin’ me then?” It slipped out.

“As an ‘ape-hating lizard’ do you think I would if I didn’t?”

“So all this time…”
“I have lived among apes for a while now. Your excuses were…amusing.” Vastra was still grinning.

Jenny wanted to wipe it off her face. “You said that in Silurian society, people c’ld be as close or as far apart as they liked. With bein’ together, ‘ow close would yer like to be?” she asked, taking a step forward, thinking the Silurian would retreat and start blustering again.

*Vastra once again felt that strange tug within her. She stepped forward until she was almost touching Jenny and then leaned over and whispered in her ear*

“I would like to be very close indeed…little ape.” She stood upright to observe Jenny’s expression, her grin showing all her teeth.

It was Jenny’s turn to look somewhat akin to a statue of someone who’d been slapped in the face by a fish. Possibly something the size of shark. She tried to say something but her mouth had gone very dry all of a sudden. Sex had been a thought. A brief meander. But Vastra’s voice made into a vivid novel, the type that might get serialised in the Strand. Well not in the Strand. Not this type of novel. Jenny was a Flint and the way Vastra had whispered struck something within her that had started a small fire.

“Oh.” Her voice had gone strange again.

*Vastra must’ve misread her because the Silurian did retreat now. “Unless you do not wish to of course. I understand. I am not…human. There will be differences. And I…”*

Jenny tugged her close again, looking straight into Vastra’s blue eyes as she placed her hands gently on the Silurian’s cheeks.

“It’ll be you. That’ll do me.”

Chapter End Notes

Literally.
Last Ride Of The Day

Chapter Summary

Jenny an’ Vastra sittin’ in a tree K.I.S.S.I.N.G… I have no shame.

Chapter Notes

It’s still frickin’ Boxing Day but I promise this is the last chapter on it! Last Ride of the Day is a song by Nightwish. \m/ \m/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It’ll be you. That’ll do me.” Jenny stroked Vastra’s cheeks with her thumbs and then kissed her gently. “You tol’ me Silurians don’t kiss?”

“Not in this particular way no.” Vastra returned Jenny’s kiss. She had to credit apes for coming up with it.

“What do they do then?”

Vastra gently took Jenny’s hands from her cheeks; leaning back to look at her before placing them on her head crests, tensing at the sensation of warm fingers. It was something that hadn’t been covered in her education, the feelings that such warmth would elicit.

“There are many meanings to this.” She tried to keep her voice steady as Jenny stroked her head crests, amazed that Vastra would let her. “As with human kissing. A parent might comfort a child, a sibling might show affection or pride, a friend might greet. But it is also…in certain scenarios, sensual.” She uttered a low vibrating sound in the back of her throat as Jenny clasped her crest tips. “Jenny.”

“‘m sorry.” Jenny pulled her hands away, thinking Vastra had had enough. “You gonna kill me now?” she joked awkwardly.

Vastra blinked and then remembered. “I believe I would sooner rather kiss you.” She pulled Jenny back towards her and duly did so, highly amused at that ridiculously little tongue trying to tangle with hers.

Jenny had always felt a twitch when Vastra kissed her but this was something else. The small fire within was beginning to burn a little out of control. Her hands went to the front of Vastra’s dress, trying to undo the buttons, wanting the Silurian to be closer but Vastra pulled away sharply as she did so.

“What?” Jenny asked, a little out of breath and entirely confused by the reaction. Vastra had let her touch the Silurian’s crests after all. Her puzzlement was overcome with worry at the way Vastra was still retreating. “Vastra!” she went to move after her but Vastra hissed. She looked angry and scared and Jenny stopped, completely baffled as to why Vastra had reacted like that; after all, Vastra had
said that she wished to be close.

A phrase of Vastra’s echoed through her head. “It is incomprehensible why you are acting that way…” Vastra had said that that’s what bad memories did to people. Bile suddenly rose in her throat against the hurt and confusion at Vastra’s withdrawal.

“What…” she started to ask what had happened, what Vastra was reliving but another conversation drifted up from her memory. “When she was first captured, they took her clothes, made her wear a shift…”

Anger overrode all other emotions, tensing up her entire body, making hands into fists and setting her teeth chattering within a clenched jaw. But she forced herself to relax, afraid that Vastra would think she was angry at her. She stepped backwards, trying to keep her breathing calm but she was so angry. Was this what Vastra felt, whenever Jenny had told her of something that had happened? She could understand now why Vastra threatened to eat people who did anything wrong towards Jenny because Jenny wanted to kill the people at the circus.

“Vastra…” she called softly.

“Stay away from me, ape.” Vastra spat and stalked past her.

Jenny let her go, tried to let it go. It wasn’t her. Vastra wasn’t mad at her. All those other times, it hadn’t been her.

She let out a breath, and swilled out the tea that had gone cold, sweeping up the cup she’d smashed in her anger. There had been so many emotions in the past few minutes let alone the past few days. She tidied up for a few minutes then sat on the floor, hugging her knees and letting the tears roll unchecked. Jenny had always prided herself on being a Flint and ‘ard as ‘em but she felt better, lighter as she got up and washed her face. She took a few deep breaths to steady herself and went to find Vastra.

The Silurian was sat in the plant room with a box on her lap, staring up at the glass ceiling. Jenny recognised it the box in an instant but was puzzled as to why Vastra had chosen to bring it with her.

“The Doctor said I shouldn’t open it until you were here.” Her voice was distant, detached as she answered Jenny’s unspoken question, still gazing upwards.

Jenny shrugged and sat down in the opposite chair. “Well I’m ‘ere now ain’t I.”

“I didn’t…”

“I know.”

That got Vastra to look at her, a question now in her eyes.

“George tol’ me.” Jenny reminded her.

“Ah. Still…”

Jenny got up suddenly, cutting Vastra off with the motion. She stood, leaning over Vastra, her hands on the arms of the wicker chair. “C’n I kiss yer?”

Vastra gazed at her in silence, impenetrable blue eyes locked with slightly reddened brown ones.
“What would you do if I said no?”

“Go sit back down again.” Jenny shrugged.

“What would you feel, if I said no?”

Jenny sighed. “Sad. I dunno.” She stood upright again. “I jus’…I’m tired.” She swayed slightly, realising that what with fighting dogs and getting tea and arguing with Vastra she hadn’t eaten since breakfast and she wasn’t even sure what time it was now. It was ridiculous; living on the streets she’d sometimes gone days without food and now she was feeling dizzy because she’d skipped lunch.

“Jenny.” Vastra was stood up, steadying her, guiding her to sit down in the chair.

“I’m fine ma’am.” She protested weakly.

“Stay here. I will return with food.” Vastra studied her for a second, satisfying herself that it was merely hunger and not some adverse reaction to the scratches of the hound.

Some leftovers from the dinner she’d cooked for the Irregulars later and Jenny felt much better. Vastra had opened her present, pronounced it satisfactory and was now wearing it.

“I have a present for you too, little ape.” She informed Jenny, playing with the beads.

“Thought the bank account was the present.”

“No. That was just necessary.” Vastra grinned and held out a hand. It was that plotting grin again and Jenny sighed before taking it, wondering what her Silurian was up to now.

Vastra led her down into the basement. There was a small cupboard where she kept training equipment and this she opened and brought out something wrapped in velvet.

“Captain Jack. As you correctly surmised.” Vastra explained, whipping off the cover to reveal two swords, one long, one short. The sheaths sparkled in the candle light and Jenny’s eyes glittered equally as she picked up the short sword. “Of course, further training is absolutely necessary before you even think of…” Jenny pulled it out and examined it. “…using it. The short sword will probably be more suitable to your stature.” Vastra placed the other sword down on the table and came to stand behind Jenny, correcting her posture and her grip.

“Yer makin’ it very difficult to concentrate.” Jenny murmured, getting distracted by the sound of Vastra’s breath near her ear and the feel of cool fingers around her wrists.

“Well then perhaps we should put the sword away.” Vastra deftly relieved her of it and went to place it on the table with the other one.

Jenny followed her and leaned against the table. “So you don’ want to train today then?”

“You said you did not wish to fight me. Not today.” Vastra ran her fingers long the sheath; the cold of it mirroring her own cold touch. Annoyed, she withdrew her hand, staring at them. They’d seemed appropriate when she’d asked Captain Jack to have them made for her. But cold steel for Christmas was not the gift she wished to give Jenny now.

“What should we do instead then?”
Vastra looked sideways at Jenny. “Your seduction technique is as terrible as your sword action.”

Jenny threw Vastra her best unimpressed expression. “Still killed the dog wiv it din’t I?” she pointed out.

Vastra blinked and then let out a snort of laughter. “So you did. Very well, little ape.” She surprised Jenny by grabbing the young woman’s hand and tugging Jenny after her as she walked up the stairs out of the cellar.

“ere! You don’ ‘ave to…” Jenny tried to tell her, stunned at the sudden change of pace. “I’ll stop.”

“Would you like me to?” Vastra paused at the bottom of the stairs, releasing Jenny’s hand.

Jenny mentally cursed as she felt the heat rise in her cheeks. “No.” She slid her hand back into Vastra’s.

Vastra leaned over to whisper in her ear once more. “As I told you, little ape, I do wish to be closer.”

Chapter End Notes

There is an EXXXtended Version of this chapter but to keep the T rating on Spinning Jenny I have not included it here. Might post it as a separate PWP. Who wants it? (it's very awkward and not at all good but heyzo)

Edit: The EXXXtended Version is now up check out me page to find it.
Chapter Summary

42. Appropriate as today is Towel Day! Do you know where your towel is? (Vastra does. It's round Jenny Flint.) It's also the day of the Glorious Revolution of Treacle Mine Road. Truth! Justice! Freedom! Reasonably Priced Love! And a hard-boiled egg.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

*Vastra woke before Jenny, a rare occurrence. The young woman was still curled up beside her but the covers had slipped and Vastra could see the outlines of her shoulder blades and the muscles that had developed from their training. She reached out to trace them but her cold fingers made Jenny twitch and roll over.*

“Wot?” she asked drowsily.

“Nothing.” Vastra smiled.

Jenny looked at her for a while, trying to figure out if Vastra meant that or was teasing Jenny about her own use of “Nuffin”. “You cold?” she asked, wriggling over to wrap her arms around Vastra, snuggling further under the covers, feeling chilled herself with the cold morning air on her bare skin.

“No.”

“Hmph.” Jenny snorted in disbelief.

“You’re none too warm yourself.” Vastra pointed out, having seen the goosebumps on Jenny’s skin.

Jenny grunted but she was cold and snuggling into Vastra was doing nothing to preserve her body heat. She sat up, wiped at her eyes to rid them of sleep dust and then hauled a blanket around her to preserve some modesty as well as body heat.

*The action amused Vastra as she curled up in the remaining blankets and watched her little ape build up the fire, fascinated as she never had been before by the small actions this required. The absent-minded brushing the hair behind the ear, the arm stretching and shovelling coal, the annoyed brushing coal dust off the blanket. She committed them all to memory.*

Jenny glanced over to the bed, feeling Vastra’s eyes on her. The look of intense study in Vastra’s eyes reminded her of last night and the way the Silurian had gazed at her. It made her strangely uncomfortable, such frank observation.

“I’m goin’ fer a bath.” Jenny stood up suddenly, grabbed a towel and walked towards the door, still draped in the blanket.

“Is that an invitation?” Vastra quirked her head.

*The slammed bedroom door indicated a firm no. Vastra sighed. It seemed Jenny preferred non-verbal communication after all.*
By the time the Silurian made it downstairs, having finally abandoned the warmth of the blankets; Jenny was having breakfast with the urchins. Among them was a face Vastra recognised.

“You!” she spat, frozen in the doorway.

“Oi. I said she could. Invited her here in the first place din’t I.” Jenny said pointedly without looking at the Silurian. “Gonna be ‘elpin’ us out ain’t yer Peggy?” she handed the newest Irregular a hard-boiled egg.

Peggy nodded furiously.

“She got you lost!” Vastra snarled.

“I got found again.” Jenny shrugged. “So no eatin’ ‘er.”

Vastra’s head went back in surprise at the blasé attitude. Apparently apes could be matter of fact about being eaten but not about sex. She turned to glower at Peggy.

“I did say sorry.” Peggy piped up.

Jenny sighed as Vastra slammed the kitchen door behind her. Well she supposed she deserved that one for this morning. She’d been amazed at Peggy’s nerve, turning back up and asking for breakfast but she had invited Peggy to join them and someone who had a connection to Underworlds and Belows would be very handy if their cases took a supernatural turn.

After she’d sent the Irregulars off for a brief reconnoitre and induction for Peggy, she went down to the basement. Vastra would probably wish to train after all and Jenny wanted to look at those swords again. Something about the cool metal enticed her.

Vastra wasn’t in the basement when Jenny went down there, dressed in her best fighting outfit. She went immediately to the table and took the short sword, drawing it out of its sheath. It was heavy in her arms but the weight felt balanced, comfortable enough. She went through a few stances in slow motion; feeling a thrill at holding something so deadly. Her mind returned to Vastra. She shook her head but it seemed impossible to stop thinking of the Silurian today. And what they’d done. She returned to a basic stance, trying to focus but a small cough made her jump and nearly drop the blade.

“I thought we were training with wooden swords first.” Vastra looked at her, half amused, half severely unimpressed. “You are like a hatchling, wanting to use the ‘real swords’ from the start.” She relieved Jenny of the blade and placed it back on the rack before moving to the cupboard and taking out two wooden ones. “These are slightly heavier, but they will build up better strength and control.”

The wooden sword was a dead weight to Jenny, heavier and more cumbersome than her blade. Her eyes twitched longingly to the sword on the rack but the clack of Vastra’s sword against hers brought her attention back to the task at hand.

“Ready?” The brief question was all the warning she got before Vastra began.

That night Vastra curled up behind Jenny, expecting to sleep as they had the night before but the human winced away at her touch and she retreated; hurt and puzzled. But it was a clear enough communication. She pondered as she watched Jenny’s sleeping form what the ape was feeling. She
remembered Jenny’s shock when she’d woken in Vastra’s bed for the first time. Perhaps it was an ape thing. Despite their activities down alleys, they seemed very prudish. But she did not wish to make Jenny uncomfortable.

Vastra realised her mistake four days later on New Year’s Eve when she walked in on the little ape changing and saw long green-yellow bruises on her abdomen and across her ribs; the results of several days of unforgiving training by the Silurian. But Jenny hadn’t complained about being in pain and Vastra was shocked that the training had hurt the ape so badly. It’d been standard Silurian training.

“Jenny!” Vastra said reprovingly as she strode across the bedroom floor.

Jenny twitched and tried to cover herself up; not in any shame at Vastra walking in on her but to try and hide the bruises.

Vastra tugged her arms away impatiently, tutting as she inspected them.

“Do they hurt?”

Jenny shrugged and then winced as Vastra ran fingers over her ribs. “A lil bit.”

Vastra must’ve been practicing unimpressed glares because that was one to rival her own, Jenny thought.

“Tell me next time.” Vastra retrieved a small pot of some odious goo from her chest and instructed Jenny to hold her arms above her head as she smeared it on Jenny’s ribs. “I know you want to progress onto using the real swords as soon as possible but this,” she gestured with goo-covered fingers, “will not help you to that goal. You’re hardly progressing slowly that you need to worry. I did not realise apes bruised so easily.” Vastra sighed, feeling no small amount of guilt at having hurt Jenny.

Jenny was silent, struck by the fact that Vastra was so worried and also distracted by the feel of Vastra’s fingers.

“Jenny, communication is not only vital during…”

“I know.” Jenny cut her off, moving away to the wardrobe.

Vastra quirked her head having been left kneeling on the floor. “You do not like the word.”

“S’not somethin’ that gets mentioned that casually.”

“S’not somethin’ that gets mentioned that casually.”

“I see.” Vastra got up, brushing off her dress. “You are…ashamed?”

“No of you!” Jenny said hastily. “Never of you. But me…I mean, what am I even like ey? That I just…what does that make me?” She sighed and got dressed ready to go about her duties for the day. Parker was still on an extended holiday and the urchins were only willing to help out so much around the house. Or indeed were able to without making more of a mess.

Vastra sat on the bed, thinking. To act, consensually, on desire was a matter of fact thing for a Silurian but it seemed to an ape, it was something to be ashamed of, hidden away or treated with disgust.
And of course, with apes, they were meant to be married before sex happened, she remembered as she made tea for herself. Vastra had found that out when a member of the circus had had to go on emergency leave and then there had been a wedding. George had made the wedding clothes and had explained to Vastra what the fuss was about. But Jenny had said, for people like her, marriage was not something that could happen. Same sex unions were not allowed. The two friends of Jenny’s who had been locked up for being together. Vastra wondered whether the image of the asylum was haunting Jenny or whether it was more that they weren’t officially together. The Silurian sipped tea thoughtfully as she contemplated what she could do to reassure the ape. There was little she could do about the asylum. Bank accounts and legal assurances hadn’t done much it appeared to convince Jenny they were together. Her hand idly fingered her beads and a thought struck her. She grinned, calling out to Jenny that she was going out and flinging her veil on, walked out into the market.

Jenny wiped sweat from her forehead. Vastra had forbidden her to do much more than basic stretches and exercises but even they, done properly, were enough to work up a sweat. She hissed as she stretched her ribs. The goo had helped but they were still tender. She had a bath, wondering where Vastra had gone. The house seemed far too big with just one person in it. She’d noticed that when Vastra had gone to Egypt. How the space echoed and time echoed with it, minutes drawing out ever more slowly into hours. It had gotten dark a long while back and she hoped Vastra hadn’t got too cold.

The Silurian burst through the door, shivering violently and Jenny leapt up to guide her through to the living room fire, relieving her of a soaked cloak.

When she returned from hanging it up in the hallway she spotted a small parcel underneath the Christmas tree. Vastra flashed a toothy grin at her when she saw Jenny had noticed it.

“Wos that then? S’New Year’s Eve, not Christmas.” Jenny frowned.

“A present.” Vastra said in a light-hearted tone. She was freezing, a very pale shade of yellow but it had been worth it. If Jenny liked it.

“Another one? Thought the swords…”

“This is a special present. A better present than cold metal. Something warm.” Vastra gratefully took the blankets Jenny proffered and curled into them. The cloak she’d bought when they moved to Paternoster Row was a decent enough one and had kept most of the damp off her clothes that she didn’t need to change them.

“I like me swords.” Jenny protested. “If I ever get to use ‘em.”

“Patience, my dear.” Vastra rolled her eyes towards the ceiling. “Well?”

Jenny gave in and picked up the package, undoing it to reveal a small piece of flint on a cord of leather.

Mixed emotions filled her. Happiness at a piece of flint, sadness at the lost original piece, touched that Vastra had thought to buy her a new one but guilty knowing it wasn’t the same.

“I know this cannot replace your flint. That it had been on journeys with you that cannot be replaced.” The Silurian got up to stand by her. “But I wished to get you a new piece. For the new journeys. Together.” She quirked her head, an earnest expression on her face, hoping that Jenny understood.
Tears filled Jenny’s eyes and she flung her arms around Vastra, to the Silurian’s delight. Vastra hugged her back fiercely, causing a muffled squeak of pain from Jenny.

“Me ribs.” She explained, not releasing Vastra as the Silurian made to move away.

“Do you like it?” Vastra moved back, draping her blankets round Jenny as well.

“I love it. Thank you.”

Jenny’s voice was rather muffled by the blankets but Vastra still heard her and she grinned, smug and satisfied.

“I wished to give you something. To remind you that you are a Flint, as ever.” She explained. “But that this particular Flint…” she hooked a finger into the necklace and held the stone between her fingers. “…is mine.” She whispered, before kissing Jenny.

“Oi.” But Jenny couldn’t be that displeased at being called Vastra’s and kissed her back.

Jenny woke up in the middle of the night and looked down at the shadowy figure of the Silurian tucked into her side, head nuzzled against her breast, nose almost touching the flint around Jenny’s neck and a scaled hand clutching her nightgown. The human eating formidable warrior lizard woman looked…cute. The thought that only she got to see Vastra in such a defenceless state made her feel possessive. She pressed a cheek firmly against Vastra’s head crests.

“Mine.” She whispered.

Chapter End Notes

Akin to the seagulls in Finding Nemo… Mine.
Jenny woke up in the chilly morning and stared at the ceiling. The embers of the dying fire barely illuminated it. It was New Year’s day. The first of January 1888. Again.

It was a vast deal different to a year ago. Barely a month out of jail, sleeping in penny lodgings, shivering with both cold and fear and the exhaustion that came from constantly moving. She’d been thin and ill, begging when she couldn’t scrounge matches to sell, shaking too much to lift a purse and not get caught. The Tong Gang had been after her and she’d thought, in those dark times, that her days were numbered and it was a very small number. For if they hadn’t caught up with her, lack of food would have.

And now she had plentiful food, a house, money, security, safety and…Vastra. That was something she couldn’t have ever dreamt of. Why it was the lizard woman she’d fallen in love with she couldn’t figure out. She’d liked her, felt protective even and then well it sort of just happened. Vastra was precious to her. She peered at the scaly face, pressed a brief kiss against Vastra’s lips and shuffled out of bed, loathe to leave it but the fire needed seeing to and she probably could do with a bath. One blue eye opened and watched her stretch and yawn into a robe but closed again as Vastra burrowed further into the covers to soak up Jenny’s residual warmth.

Jenny looked at her body as she washed it; it’d grown strong and full, no hint of the near-starvation she’d endured. She bled almost regularly now; her body used to being fed regularly and well. She couldn’t remember if she was due; time travelling had messed it up. She hoped not.

Jenny went back to their room with a towel wrapped around her to dry off and get dressed. Despite the fact that the Silurian had seen it all before, Jenny was still apprehensive about being naked in front of her; there was something in the way the Silurian looked at her, a hunger in the eyes. Not that she thought Vastra wanted to eat her. Not in that way at any rate.

Vastra grumbled as Jenny sat down on the bed to dry her hair and slid out from under the covers to wrap herself around Jenny’s waist, the bed no longer warm.

Jenny wondered briefly whether the Silurian was actually attracted to her or merely liked her warmth. She stroked Vastra’s head crest gently, making Vastra hiss and twitch, nuzzling into her stomach still half asleep.

Jenny got a head butt to the stomach when she stopped and a sleepy aggrieved glare from Vastra.
“Yor like a cat…” Jenny murmured.

“I am nothing of the sort.” Vastra jerked awake and stalked across the bed to curl up under the covers once more.

Jenny finished dressing and then knelt down by the side of the bed, resting her arms on it. Her mouth twitched as she reached up and tugged gently on the spike of the central head crest. Vastra swiftly rolled over to glare at her and Jenny bit her lip to keep from grinning; the expression was so like a cat that had had its tail tugged.

To keep the scowl from becoming murderous she returned to stroking Vastra’s head crests. The Silurian clicked softly.

“I am still in no way like a cat.” She pointed out, in case Jenny decided to confuse the noise for purring.

“Cats don’ have scales fer starters.” Jenny nodded.

Vastra looked up to see a small smile on the ape’s face. The ape was teasing her! It was a new sensation; no-one had teased her in a long time. She hmphed and wiggled to the side of the bed, lying so that she was nose to nose with Jenny.

“You are happy.”

“S’not that rare a thing that it needs pointin’ out is it?”

“Mmm.” Vastra leaned in and kissed her. “I was more wondering the cause.”

Jenny laughed. “Yer a stupid lizard if you carn’t guess.”

Vastra blinked at her to convey her confusion. Jenny rolled her eyes, stood up and then straddled Vastra as the Silurian rolled onto her back.

It clicked suddenly as Jenny was about to lean down and kiss her.

“It makes you happy?” the question slipped out. She stared up at Jenny wonderingly.

“Well life’s a bit better than it was last year. Generally. That makes me happy too. But yeah.” Jenny laid down on the covers, beside Vastra, tucking into her side. “Bein’ with you makes me happy. An’ y’know,” she struggled with how precisely to phrase it. “bein’ with you. That makes me happy too.”

It was as well Jenny had closed her eyes as she’d snuggled against Vastra because the Silurian’s grin was very smug.

“What about you?”

The grin became a little fixed.

“Life is indeed far better than last year. I have not had a year without cages since before I woke in this time.” She felt the little ape go stiff with what she reasonably guessed was rage. “This life makes me happy.” She toyed with Jenny’s loose hair. “And bein’ with you, yes, makes me happy.”

“Does it? I mean it ain’t really much for you. An’…”

“I like watching you.” Vastra cut her off, shifting more upright in bed to look down at Jenny. “I like your body,” she rested a hand on Jenny’s waist, “and the way it tastes.” she licked Jenny’s neck,
making Jenny’s breath catch. “I like hearing you when I touch you. It is…nice.” Vastra finished lamely.

“Nice?”

“To bring someone pleasure through my touch. More than just being unafraid. You are…comfortable?” Vastra may not have liked Jenny’s uncertainties but she had her own pile of self-doubt.

“Wellll,” Jenny drawled. “Yor very comfortin’. At times. When you ain’t threatenin’ to eat me. Which you haven’t done fer a while now fer food I mean!” She’d heard the Silurian taking a breath to protest.

“Hm.” Vastra hummed. “I could quite happily. For breakfast.” The hand which had rested on Jenny’s waist moved to her buttons.

“OI!” Jenny sat upright hurriedly. “I’ve only just got dressed!”

“All the more fun getting undressed?” Vastra gave an unapologetic half shrug. “You don’t have to take it all off. You don’t have to take anything off at all.” She grinned and snapped her tongue out.

A silent war waged in Jenny Flint’s mind. One side lost.

By the time Jenny made it downstairs to the kitchen, there was a small gang of hungry urchins. They eyed her knowingly and she flushed. Their scrutiny made her feel as if Vastra’s touches were a visible thing that clung to her.

“Miss Peggy’s got a message fer you.” Cris piped up as she carefully avoided their gazes and silently went to make breakfast.

“Trouble she sez.” Thrupp piped up.

“Trouble?” Jenny looked for Peggy and found her peering round the back door.

“Is the lizard lady ‘ere?” Peggy asked furtively.

“She’s havin’ a bath.” Jenny shook her head. She had told Vastra not to eat Peggy but the urchin wasn’t to know that the Silurian obeyed Jenny’s orders in that respect, so her fear was understandable. But if anything Peggy looked more perturbed at her answer.

“You gotta warn ‘er! There’s men comin’. Men comin’ fer ‘er!”

A sharp bolt of fear went straight down Jenny’s spine and she froze, staring at Peggy, mouth dry and hand clutching the frying pan.

“What men?” Although she knew already.

“Peggy said it were…” Cris began uncertainly.

“S’Torchwood, Jenny Flint!” Peggy hissed urgently from the doorway. “Torchwood are comin’!”

Still grasping the frying pan, Jenny bolted out the room and up the stairs.

“VASTRA!!” she burst into their bedroom, having found the bathroom empty.
“Whatever is the matter?” The Silurian turned round, mildly alarmed to see Jenny brandishing a frying pan at her. She finished hanging Jenny’s beads around her neck.

“Torchwood! Peggy sez Torchwood are comin’. Fer you! She came to warn yer.”

Jenny had seen Vastra go pale with cold and hunger but not with fear. Not as pale as she was now. The Silurian’s face twisted into a snarl. “If I run, I will be hunted. I will not be hunted by apes.”

“Vastra!” Jenny caught her arm as she moved past her to the door. “I won’t let ‘em take yer. An’… an’ if they do, I’ll get yer out.”

It didn’t sound half so convincing when she said it, particularly when the only weapon she had about her was a frying pan, but the Silurian smiled gratefully anyway. The bell sounded and it made them both jump. Vastra looked pleadingly at Jenny.

“Yer veil. It might work. Pretend s’a case! Just a case! Thas all.”

Vastra nodded and went to get her veil. “I shall be waiting in the plant room then. If you would show them in.” With poise she did not feel, she placed her veil over her head.

Jenny nodded and went downstairs, depositing the frying pan in the kitchen. The urchins had scattered out the back door and she didn’t blame them. She felt like running too.

“I will not be hunted by apes.”

Jenny took a breath to try and steady her nerves but her hand was shaking as she answered the door. They’d been so happy…

There were two men, both in suits and bowler hats, one short and rather rotund, the other towering and tall. The first one glared at her through his glasses, the other was peering round disinterestedly. Mentally, Jenny gave him five minutes before he found something to pick up and fiddle with.

“We are here to see Madame Vastra.” The first man brought her attention back to him by holding out a card with an intricate ‘T’ on it and nothing else. “If you would be so kind as to show us through.”

Jenny swallowed, the tone of voice didn’t really allow for not showing them through. It was a demand, not a request and she obeyed, wordlessly leading them into the plant room. The obeisance annoyed her. She didn’t want to obey, she wanted to stop shaking, she wanted her sword and mostly she wanted to stand in front of Vastra with it, glowering death. Not standing off to one side, entirely without a weapon, not even a frying pan, staring at her feet. She felt a bit of a coward.

“Madame Vastra, I presume.” The first man’s voice was suddenly smooth and genteel; the change in tone riling Jenny, anger replacing fear. He bowed, taking off his hat and sat down in the chair. “I am…you may call me Mister Benson. I saw your advertisement in the paper and would like to employ yours services to help me, and my associates,” he gestured to the thickset man who was standing behind him, observing the flowers, “solve a little problem.”

Vastra and Jenny shared a glance; why would Torchwood be hiring them? Had Peggy got it wrong?

“There is a certain woman, of a certain type of woman who has managed to gain possession of an item which belongs to us. And we would like it back.”

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“There is a certain woman, of a certain type of woman who has managed to gain possession of an item which belongs to us. And we would like it back.”

“And what is this item gentlemen?” Vastra interrupted the man.

“A locket. Of gold. It was mistakenly given away, without the true…value of it being known. Unfortunately, such is the nature of the…establishment which this woman runs that we would be at a disadvantage if we were to…approach her in person.” Significant pauses littered his sentences.
“Thus we would like you to recover it for us.” The gentleman held a hand up and the second man wandered over to place a piece of paper in his hand. “The address.”

He handed it to Vastra who still looked puzzled but Jenny cottoned on. She’d heard of that sort of thing before from Lettie; rich men visiting such “establishments” and accidents happening, slip-ups, mistakes that had to be covered up. Although why Torchwood would be interested and why they needed her and Vastra to help with that she couldn’t fathom.

“Any assistance you could give us would of course be rewarded. If you are reticent yourself about visiting such areas, I’m sure your…maid would not have such a problem.”

Vastra saw Jenny’s hand clench and her expression became stony but it merely added to her confusion.

“And how should I persuade this woman to return the item, if she wishes to keep it?” Vastra asked, somewhat exasperated now her fear was receding. Jenny’s advice seemed prophetic; it seemed it was just another case.

“We rely upon your imagination and skill. If you fail, at least investigate, as you claim to be able to do. It will be an adventure for you, will it not?”

The gentleman in the chair rose, placing his bowler hat back on his head.

“And if I refuse?”

He stared at her for a moment and then leaned towards her. “That would not be wise of someone in your position, Madame Vastra.” His voice had turned low and menacing, not a hint of courtesy left. “And I think you are intelligent enough to be wise.” He gave a curt nod before gesturing for the other man to follow him as he walked out the door.

Chapter End Notes

Excuse the levels of horn
'Round Her Neck She Wore A Golden Locket Pt 2

Chapter Summary

New Year’s Day is swiftly becoming as eventful as Boxing Day

Chapter Notes

repost as I had some revisions to make

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Vastra and Jenny both were left frozen, staring at the door. Jenny relaxed first, letting out a slow whistle.

“You *stupid* bloody lizard!” she shouted once she’d taken another breath. “What did you go sayin’ you’d refuse the case for? They know about us! Might’ve taken yer away right then and there!”

“They know about me.” Vastra corrected delicately, placing down the address on the small table before rising and removing her veil to place it over the back of the chair. “I do not believe they consider us an “us”. You have nothing to fear.”

There was a very frosty silence and Vastra closed her eyes and smiled bitterly to herself.

“Well if I got nuffin’ to fear I may as well start investigatin’ then.” It was as cold and polite as Jenny could manage with her accent.

“*Jenny!” well at least the ape stopped. That counted as progress surely, Vastra thought to herself.

“On’y the loss of you!” she was even coming back over to Vastra. “Not money or the house or my position or anythin’ but the loss of you!”

Vastra had expected a slap but the ape was clinging to her, crying, really crying and it stunned her once again that an ape would cry for her.

“I was so scared. So scared.” Jenny’s voice was muffled. “I thought they wuz comin’ to take you an’ I din’t know that I’d be able ter stop ‘em. You stupid lizard!”

*Vastra hugged her tightly back. “I was scared too, little ape.” She confessed.*

“I know. ‘m sorry.” Jenny let her go, wiping at her eyes with a sleeve. She felt guilty at her outburst now, having felt Vastra tremble with fear.

“I fear we have to take this case.” Vastra sighed, handing her a handkerchief. “They will not be pushed on such a matter.”

“Then I’ll start investigatin’. Sooner it’s done, sooner they can sod off.” Jenny blew her nose violently, swept up the piece of paper and walked out.
“Jenny!” Vastra called out, involuntarily. She didn’t want the ape to leave her alone quite so soon after that. Even if Jenny wasn’t sure she was strong enough, Vastra had a feeling that if anything did threaten her, Jenny would go, well, ape. Such courage the brown eyes held as they stared back at Vastra, confused at the Silurian’s silence, waiting for further instructions. They melted as realisation filled them and Jenny walked back to her, stood on tiptoe and kissed her. It filled Vastra with a little courage, enough to let the ape leave her.

Jenny’s suspicions were confirmed as she approached the address that had been scrawled on the paper. It’d required getting a few odd looks from passers-by and muttering but she’d gained directions to it.

On the outside, it looked enough like a respectable house; built of bricks that weren’t even worn or mossy, plenty of rooms judging by the amount of windows but Jenny saw the discrete entrance, the small bell above the rather shabby wooden door with a strong bolt. The peeling sign offering rooms “for the night.” And there was a bully boy leaning casually against the wall beside the bell and smoking. He didn’t look armed but with his size he wouldn’t have to be. He eyed her as she walked past, looking out the corner of her eye.

Well there was nothing else for it. She turned, strode purposefully up to the back door and knocked.

He looked at her.

“I’ve come fer a job.” She explained, keeping her eyes on the door.

“You don’ look like yer need money.” He raked a gaze over her maid’s dress. It was made of slightly finer material than her first dresses had been. George had bought it in specially to make them for her. She’d tried to stop him adding the irritating lace cuffs and collar but he’d said they’d make her look more of a lady’s maid. Apparently he’d been right.

“Bit of cash on the side never ‘urt.” Jenny shrugged. She remembered her fellow skivs from when she’d been working in the house with Grace sometimes taking a nightly constitutional, as they’d called it.

He snorted at her unrealistic story and banged a fist on the wall. “Someone ter see you Mrs Palmer.” He grumbled.

There was the clattering sound of a complicated lock being undone and the scrape of metal as the bolt was slid back. The door opened and Jenny wasn’t sure what exactly she’d been expecting but Lettie standing there looking at her in equal shock was not it. Cathy’s words rushed back to her as her brain desperately tried to find explanations for Lettie’s presence. “I met a woman in the dress house…called Lettie. She said she knew you…”

“Well!” Lettie was the first to break the silence, leaning against the door frame. Jenny was still gawping and hadn’t yet found the capacity to speak. “Jenny Flint. Here’s a face an’ lookin’ all togged up.”

Jenny cast a glance over Lettie; the rich red dress and the probably fake jewels, the outrageously piled up hair that was a shade rather too black for nature. Jenny sniffed and caught a whiff of harsh fragrance.

“Looks like we both gone up in the world.” Jenny replied, amazed at the steadiness of her voice after its brief absence.
“Aye. Well. I s’pose you’d best come in then. I take it you don’t really need a job.” Lettie winked at her as she stood back to let Jenny in. The woman had lost none of her ability to flirt it seemed. It was after all what had made her good at her job and had indeed caught Jenny Flint’s eye in the first place as she’d sat in a bar, clutching a half pint of weak ale.

“No.” She followed Lettie through a corridor into the kitchen. It was a tidy room; filled with pots and pans but well organised along two separate benches. At a large table in the middle of the room, two women were laughing bawdily over a finished meal.

“Be off now girls! Business to attend to.” Lettie shooed them away.

“Yes Mrs Palmer.” They sing-songed together and happily abandoned clearing up their mess, giggling as they fled.

“Mrs?” it was the first thing that came into her head as she looked around at all the neat cupboards on the walls. Lettie kept a good house, she’d give her that.

Lettie eyed her as she scraped the leftovers into the swill barrel in the corner. “In a way. It’s good for business. Better than Madame. I feel I’m a little young. Are you still Miss Flint?” she enquired, stacking the plates on the side.

“Technic’ly.” Jenny flushed at that.

“Ah.” Lettie grinned broadly as she flopped onto a battered arm chair by the stove, flinging her legs over the arm and folding her hands in her lap. “So. What’s your story? Judging by your expression, you didn’t come here for me. Nor for a job. What has my…establishment done to gain your attention? Would you like a go? I do keep a few girls for the purpose. You’d be surprised, the types that turn up you know.” Jenny’s expression told Lettie what she was digging for. “So. Verrrrry ‘technic’ly’ miss.” Lettie grinned. “You don’t have to glare. I shan’t offer again.”

“Your establishment?” Jenny asked, avoiding confirming anything.

“Oh well, I suppose if we’re swapping. But you’ll owe me a story back, ‘technic’ly’ Miss Jenny Flint.” Lettie nodded towards the chairs around the table. Jenny awkwardly sat down in one. “After you scarpered, and thank you for that darling, I ended up in here. Even the Tong Gang didn’t bother the bully boys. But the gent owned this place, such a sweetheart, left it to me when he passed on a few months ago. I was a…particular favourite of his, you know.” Lettie watched Jenny like a hawk for a reaction and was disappointed at the lack of one. “Met your sister, you know. She worked here for a bit.” Lettie stared at her hands, twiddling her thumbs.

“From what she tol’ me the owner weren’t such a ‘sweetheart’.” Jenny narrowed her eyes.

Lettie shifted and sat upright. “He was a bastard.” She said flatly. “Most men are. But I got the place. It’s mine now. After what I put up with, I’ve bleedin’ earned it too. It’s…better now. For a place of low virtue at any rate. If Cathy were still here…” Lettie paused and stood up, looking out the window from behind the lace curtains. “My boys know to sort out that type now. Anyone who tries any violence, out on their ear and their money robbed for their troubles.” She turned and gave a twirl. “Hence the new dress.” She struck a pose but Jenny’s eyes were caught by the flash of gold at her throat. They went wide as Jenny realised what it was, reminding Jenny of her purpose in coming. She made her decision there and then, standing and tugging Lettie away from the window, in case of anyone looking.

“Hoi Jenny Flint, I’ll turn you out on yer ear in a…” Lettie protested.
“Listen.” Jenny hissed, cutting her off. “Yer in trouble. Your boys I’m assumin’ took that…” she pointed to the locket, “off some gent but it’s slightly more important than some bit of jewellery. An’ the people that gent worked for want it back. Thas why I’m ‘ere.”

“It’s fake darling.” Lettie frowned at her, puzzled. “Tried to pawn it; got told it wasn’t worth the wages of the boy who did the gent for it. Why do you think I’m wearing it?” she shrugged. “And why do you care? Still a snout for the peelers are we? It’s verrrrry touching of you to warn me but my boys can handle them. If they want it so bad, they merely have to come ask.” She waved a hand and went to walk towards the door but Jenny grabbed her back again.

“S’not the peelers. It’s this…gang. Called Torchwood.”

“An’ you work for them now do you?” Lettie folded her arms.

“No! They…they’re after me too. Sort of.”

Lettie raised her eyebrows. “What’ve you gotten yourself into now Jenny Flint?” She shook her head. “And why does it always end up at my door?” she huffed and walked towards the set of stairs that led up to the main part of the house. Jenny darted round in front of her.

“S’not like that. I work fer an investigator. They…Torchwood came askin’ us to take this case. The sort of askin’ that…”

“Is asked with a knife?” Lettie finished. “I’ll forgive you for taking it then. But what on earth does this Torchwood want with a fake locket?” Her fingers toyed with it as she frowned. “And what do they want with you?”

“I don’t think it’s fake.” Jenny jabbed a finger at it. “An’ I don’t think the pawner thinks it is either. I reckon when your boys took it off whoever they did, Torchwood put out…a call you might say, arskin’ any pawner to come tell ‘em if someone tried to hock it. And whoever you rolled fer it gave Torchwood your address. An’ they gave it to me.” Jenny showed her the now rather crumpled piece of paper.

“I did wonder. Sounds like they’re as big as the Tong gang.” Lettie sighed, running a hand through her thick hair and dislodging its careful piling.

“Bigger. Much, much bigger. The Doctor said the Queen herself set it up.” Jenny told her.

Lettie gazed at her in amazement. “I should’ve known you’d be nothing but trouble turning up on my doorstep.”

“Not bleedin’ likely!” Lettie’s smooth tones dropped as she clutched at the locket. “An’ they go away an’ leave me in peace, no ‘arm done?” Lettie had been thinking it through as Jenny explained. “Oh you are still bleedin’ naïve Jenny Flint. Thought the Tong gang chasin’ after yer might’ve given you some sense. Those kind of people don’t leave yer alone.” There was no hint of any cultured accent now as Lettie snapped at Jenny.

Jenny breathed through her nose, aware that Lettie was one step away from throwing her out.
“I think,” she began in a low voice, forcing herself to be calm, “whatever that locket is, it’s much, much bigger’n some dress house. An’ if you give it back now, they might just consider you as not big enough to bother with. But if you don’t want to, then I suggest you bleedin’ well…” Jenny was interrupted by a bang on the door. It sounded heavy, even for a bully boy’s knock. More like the bully boy had just got thrown against it instead. “…run!” Jenny hissed, grabbing Lettie’s hand. “Is there another way out?”

A second thud resulted in the door splintering and it galvanised Lettie into action.

“Not as can be got out in a hurry. Through the window then! Like a customer who ain’t plannin’ on payin’ fer the ride!” Lettie tugged Jenny up the stairs and through the house. There were men standing at each window they came across and they fled into an upper bedroom.

“What are we gonna do?” Lettie cursed, clutching at Jenny, panicked now as the sound of more splintering wood and a heavy dull thud echoed up to them.

“Look! They don’ know what you look like right? Jus’ a description from a pawner and an address. So change! Now! Become just another of yer girls. An’ gimme that bleedin’ locket!” Jenny flung open a wardrobe and grabbed a nondescript grey dress from it.

“That’s Annie’s! She’ll go spare!”

“Wear it!” Jenny shoved it at her, grabbing the locket as Lettie lurched backwards and yanked hard enough to break the chain.

“Ow! Bleedin’ ‘ell Jenny Flint!” Lettie massaged the back of her neck.

“Do it!” Jenny hissed back, aware of the sound of firm voices calling out directions. “This place got an attic room? Hidin’ place? Hide!”

“What about you? An’ what about my girls?” Lettie had heard them too and half ripped her dress off before shoving it in a trunk. She struggled to get the grey dress on, being several sizes larger than the petite Annie.

Jenny ignored her and looked at the locket in her hand. It was still slightly warm from being round Lettie’s neck and it looked like costume jewellery. She ran a finger over the front and then clicked the hasp absentmindedly; her mind too busy thinking up an answer to Lettie’s question to tell her that doing so might not be a very good idea…

Lettie gazed in horror and disbelief at the space where Jenny Flint had vanished but the sounds of heavy footsteps and raised voices on the stairs brought her mind back to reality and she fled into the attic, wrenching open the hidden hatch where she kept all the real money and jewellery, curling herself up to hide with it, praying that her girls would be sensible enough to not cause trouble.

Chapter End Notes

Well that escalated quickly
As Lettie crouched among her ill-begotten wares, there was a shriek from downstairs from one of her girls. Her eyes narrowed; apparently they weren’t sensible. Or these men were louts. She’d bet on the second if she had to. Blaming Jenny for scaring her with talks of gangs, she flung open the hatch and shuffled quickly out. Pausing only to fasten the hatch securely once more and drag a couple of old suitcases over the top of it, she stomped back downstairs. Even without her bully boys, she’d sorted out men before.

She found the room where the raised voices were coming from without much hassle, paused a second to take a deep breath and then burst in.

“OI!” she yelled in her best Madame voice (even though she really was too young to be a Madame). “Woss goin’ on ‘ere?”

Abbie and Jemima were cowering in a corner away from three men. One of them, clearly a superior, turned to Lettie.

“Are you one of the…girls of this establishment?” he asked, noting the dishevelled hair.

“The hell I am. I’m…” Lettie faltered for only a second before deciding her story. “Jenny Flint. I’m investigatin’ this place. On your boss’s orders. ‘Sides whilst you’re pickin’ on these poor women, Lettie’s orf an’ scarpered. An’ taken yer damn locket wiv her. Ain’t you gonna get after ‘er then?” she folded her arms.

“The commander did say something about hiring an investigator, sir.” One of the other agents shuffled over to his officer.

“Oh yes. The Paternoster lot. That’s you is it?” The man eyed her ill-fitting grey dress distastefully. “Did you happen to see which way she went?”

“We had men at every window, sir, she couldn’t’ve gotten out that way.” The younger man interjected once more.

“No. She went through the attic space. There’s a small tunnel. Probably hopped along a few buildings and came out somewhere else.” Lettie shrugged.

The man in charge pinched his nose between his thumb and forefinger. “I see. Right lads!” he turned to his men. “Back downstairs. No need to er…linger here.” His eyes drifted over the hastily done up dress once more.
“I came undercover.” Lettie bit at him.

“And gave us away, making your services rather unnecessary at this point.” He stood over Lettie, trying to intimidate her. “You will be escorted back to your mistress and placed under guard. The Commander will have to deal with you and your indiscretion later. Frank! Take Miss Flint back to Paternoster Row.”

Lettie swallowed as Frank took her by the arm; Abbie and Jemima were looking at her very oddly but she’d gone a bit far to back out now. She tried to surreptitiously wink at them to reassure them.

“Nigel, you stay here in case Mrs Palmer decides to come back. The rest of you! Scatter and search the streets. She could be miles away by now…”

The voice of the officer trailed off as Frank took her down the stairs to a waiting cab.

“Bit mil’try ain’t it?” Lettie asked him as she was bundled inside.

“Paternoster Row please. Number 13 isn’t it?” Frank looked at her. She eyeballed him back but decided it wasn’t a test.

“Thas right.” She nodded. He seemed satisfied.

A short cab ride later and they were stood outside the tradesman’s entrance to 13 Paternoster Row and Lettie was sweating how she was going to explain to this investigator Jenny worked for without giving herself away.

Frank knocked on the door and a tall veiled woman opened it.

“Can I help you?” It was cultured and slightly Scottish.

“I’m with Torchwood. I’m here to place you and your maid under guard after she not only let the target slip away but also gave out classified information to the target. The Commander should be here shortly.”

Vastra eyed the man. He was short and stocky, a good head below her in height, and apparently unaware that if Torchwood wished to place a Silurian warrior under guard they really should send more men. And she had absolutely no idea who the ragged looking woman with the rouged cheeks was. Although she’d seen similar enough women on the streets at night to guess at her occupation. The realisation of precisely what kind of establishment Torchwood were investigating made her grin underneath her veil.

“Well you’d better come in then.” She stepped back to allow them in.

The torchwood agent shoved the young woman ahead of him and then strode into the kitchen. He managed to block Vastra’s first blow but the second caught him and he crumpled to the floor. She locked him in the larder.

Lettie blinked in horror. “What kind of investigatin’ do you do?” she squeaked.

“The kind that requires swords.” The lady ushered Lettie into the plant room and forced her into a chair before reclining back in a battered wicker chair. “Now, if you wouldn’t mind telling me, where is Jenny Flint?”

“Well…” Lettie took a breath. “It’s like this. She came to my house, said there was some to-do about Torchwood and my locket. And then Torchwood sort of stormed in. Took out my Charlie. And
Jenny suggested that we run. So we did. And I was just getting into this disguise and she… disappeared.”

“Disappeared?” the veiled lady’s tone held thunder.

“Well she just was holdin’ the locket. I dunno! I’d been wearin’ it fer days an’ it din’t do nuffin’ to me. She just went sort of…poof. Gone.”

“Gone.” The veiled lady stood up. “And then Torchwood found you? Why did they bring you here?”

“Well I hid. But then they started on my girls you see, so I had to go sort ‘em out. And I um…may have given my name as Jenny Flint. To trick ‘em, y’see.”

The veiled lady was glaring at her; Lettie could feel it even through the veil.

“I see.” She said in an icy voice. “Wait here.”

Lettie heard her call out for someone named Parker and a carriage, the sound of steps and open doors and then she returned. There were two large swords strapped to her back.

Well she had said the investigating she did required them. And, Lettie supposed, if gangs like Torchwood came asking questions with knives, you answered them with swords.

“You are coming with me.” A steely grip placed itself around her upper arm and she found herself unceremoniously dragged once more into a cab. “Now remind me.” The lady asked as they set off. “Where is this house of yours?”

Jenny felt what sounded like the smell of snow. It reminded her of the sensation of time travel but without the scent of the sound of someone falling on a pile of strawberries. She staggered on solid ground and opened her eyes again. She was standing in what looked like a large cupboard, lit by two torches in braziers. It was filled with the strangest devices she’d ever seen. She swore that bit of tubing was from a cyberman. There was a second golden locket on the table nearest her, which she picked up in her other hand. They tingled as she held them close together.

Grasping them tightly, in separate hands, she cautiously stepped down the narrow aisle made by two tables towards the vague outline of the door. She studied it as much as she could in the dim light. There didn’t seem to be any kind of catch or latch or keyhole, on this side at least. She raised a fist and knocked three times, resulting in a cut-off squeal and the sound of someone who’d just jumped about a foot sideways.

She knocked again. “Hello?”

“Hello?” said a voice that was trying a little too hard to be gruff.

“Can you let me out?”

There was a pause. “Who are you? Are you an alien?”

Torchwood. She was somewhere in Torchwood then. If they were expecting aliens, it had to be Torchwood.

“Jenny Flint. And I’m human.” Despite the gravity of the situation, Jenny was faintly amused at the
fact that she had to state that so much.

“What are yer doin’ locked inside a Torchwood vault then?”

“I got lost.”

“Ha! A likely story.”

“I was investigatin’ a locket. Your commander asked me to.”

There was another pause. “What do you know about my commander?”

“He wears a bowler hat.”

“Could be anyone that could.” There was a sniff.

“Well you c’n go an’ bleedin’ arsk ‘im if yer like!” Jenny snapped.

“Reckon I will then. Don’t go anywhere now! Haha!”

Torchwood, Jenny considered, did not hire guards for their sense of humour. She looked at the two lockets in her hand. There hadn’t been any sound of a second guard. The muffled squeal suggested the guard had been standing there for a while and had gotten bored, or was about to drop off. Torchwood must know what the locket did though, if they’d posted the guard on an off-chance.

Jenny dropped to her hands and knees and peered through the small gap underneath the door. No sign of any other guards, just a rather long corridor with other doors. She looked at the lockets again. Checking to see that it would easily fit, Jenny drew her hand back and flung one as hard as she could underneath the door, hearing it skitter along the flagstone floor. Then she took a breath and scrunched her face up in readiness and opened the second locket.

With another uncomfortable sensation, she found herself outside the room in the corridor; which was at least slightly better lit.

“A teleport.” She said aloud, to confirm it. Vastra had told her about teleports in Japan. She picked up the second locket, stuffed them both down the front of her dress. Hugging the wall, as Jacob had taught her to do when facing a potential fight against an unknown number of assailants; she crept along the corridor, wishing for her swords.

Lettie sat very nervously in the coach as it followed the directions she gave. Torchwood were not comfortable people to be around but neither was this woman.

“So…you’re an investigator then? Or an investigatoress?” she attempted to start a conversation.

“I prefer the term adventurer but yes.”

“Jenny said she works for you?”

“After a fashion.”

*Vastra noted the casualness with which the woman used Jenny’s name and decided to ask a few questions back.*

“I take it you are the proprietor of the…establishment that we were called to investigate.”
“Yes!” Lettie grasped at the faint thread of conversation. “Mrs Palmer. Lettie. If you like.”

“Lettie?”

The lady’s head went back; she seemed surprised.

“Jenny might’ve mentioned me? We…used to know each other. In the past.”

A stern silence was the only reply.

“Oh not like that!” Lettie gasped. “Oh she was nuffin’ in my line of work. No. We were acquaintances. Through the family.” Well that was almost true at least. “No. Jenny’s very…”

Lettie was saved from having to finish that sentence by their arrival at her house. She stepped down after the veiled lady and saw Charlie, slumped underneath the bell, looking the worse for wear and the man named Nigel having a cigarette beside him.

To his credit, Nigel didn’t run when a veiled figure stormed towards him with two swords strapped to its back. But this merely resulted in him being hauled aloft and the veil drawn back. It was one thing to hear about aliens, hear them described (the infamous Doctor had apparently looked human), even study the artefacts. But nothing had quite prepared him for the sight of radiant green scales and blue eyes that were burning with the question that was hissed in his face.

“Where is she?”

Chapter End Notes

Now I just have Christian Bale’s Batman interrogating the Joker in my head. *sigh*
‘Round Her Neck She Wore A Golden Locket Pt 4

Chapter Summary

recent events have left my heart heavy. Free hugs for you all with this chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jenny’s heartbeat hammered in her ears as she crept along the corridor. Her eyes scanned for a way out, places to hide but it was bare flat stone walls. The doors were all locked; she assumed there were other artefacts behind them. She knew it couldn’t be long until the unamusing guard returned with the commander. Despite the coolness, she felt sweat trickle down her spine. If this was Torchwood, where were all the other guards?

She reached a junction and took a right but it ended in a dead end with a rat who quivered its whiskers at her and squeaked before running off. She retraced her footsteps and took the left turning instead. It seemed very long and she wondered how big it was. It surely wasn’t possible to hide somewhere this big in London. Unless it was underground. She thought about the tube tunnels, how long they were; remembered the dark space of London Below and shivered.

She fought to control her breathing as she heard footsteps in the distance. Swearing under her breath, she shoved the locket under another door on her left and braced herself as she opened the other locket once more; silently hoping that she wouldn’t appear beside anything dangerous.

The room was lit by two torches and was filled with piles of what looked like junk, scrap bits of metal. She heaved a sigh of relief, collected the other locket and stood where the door would hide her if someone opened it. The footsteps came closer and passed her; no voices, just business-like dull thuds.

She looked around briefly for anything she could arm herself with but there was nothing and she knew enough now that a weapon she couldn’t use was a weapon that could be used against her. She unrolled her lock pick set and worked the door open. If they came looking for her, they might be looking for unlocked doors and it would buy her some time if they explored this room.

She took off her shoes and ran on stockinged feet along the corridor. There was a muffled shout of disconcertion; they’d discovered she wasn’t in the room then. She took the stairs at the end of the corridor two at a time, pausing at the top of them to listen with her ear against the door. She couldn’t hear anyone and the door wasn’t locked; she slipped easily through it into a courtyard, glad to see it empty.

“Mrs Palmer, I presume.”

She cursed under her breath as a hand closed about her arm. Apparently Torchwood was also aware of the hiding behind a door tactic. She didn’t fight as her hands were brought behind her back and manacled.

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Lettie watched from the side of the cab and felt only a little sorry for Nigel as he was pushed up against the wall with a sword at his throat.

“Where is she?” Vastra repeated.

“Who?” he squeaked, scrabbling at Vastra’s hand and resisting the urge to try and push the sword away from this throat.

“Jenny Flint!”

Nigel looked at Vastra as if she was deranged. “She’s right there.” He nodded behind Vastra with his head towards Lettie.

Vastra tilted her head to consider whether he was lying or foolish. “That is not Jenny Flint.”

Nigel glowered at Lettie who had been edging cautiously away and was now kneeling down to check Charlie over. “Oh.” He sniffed. “Then I don’t have the first clue where Jenny Flint is.”

“She disappeared holding your locket!” Vastra re-applied the pressure of her sword.

“It’s a teleport!” Nigel’s voice went up again. “It’s a teleport. She must’ve opened it. It’ll take her to Torchwood. The other one’s still there. In the vault.” Oh he was going to be in so much trouble for telling this lizard woman that.

“Lettie Palmer.” Vastra called out and Lettie hastened towards her, her eyes going wide in shocked recognition as she saw Vastra’s face when the Silurian turned towards her. “Torchwood will be after you. I suspect they will not stop. If I were you, I’d run.” The last word was hissed.

Lettie gulped but nodded, moving over to Charlie to help him inside. He sat on a chair in the kitchen holding his head and still looking woozy. Lettie left him there, bounding up the stairs to the attic room once more, her mind buzzing. It was the lizard woman from the circus. Jenny Flint was working for the lizard woman from the circus?? It alternated between a question and a statement as the phrase ran through her mind on repeat, even as she carefully redressed in a demure but well to do looking dress, packed her jewels inside a small bag and then left through the attic passage, as she’d told Torchwood she had. Lettie had escaped the Tong Gang; she could escape Torchwood. London was an easy place to hide in, with a little make-up and swift hair style change. She was sorry to see her house go, but among the jewels was the paperwork. She could sell up, find a new place and contact her girls. It was possible. She dropped down into the house three doors along and quietly let herself out into the back yard. Heaving herself over the back wall, she paused a moment. Jenny Flint worked for the lizard woman?? She shook her head, took a breath to centre herself and then strode forwards with all the purpose of a woman whose business was not anyone else’s but her own. The bank then, for the first stop. She wondered which surname she’d choose this time but more she wondered what chain of events had led to Jenny Flint and the lizard woman working together. Jenny Flint owed her that story.

Vastra meanwhile was still glaring at Nigel. “Where is Torchwood?”

“I can’t tell you that.” Nigel did his best to shake his head.

“Very well then.” Vastra let him go and raised her sword above her head.

“Wait!” Nigel panicked.
“Your commander wished to place me under guard.” Vastra looked at him disdainfully as she sheathed her sword. “He was not successful, as you can see. Here is my offer. Arrest me. Place me under your guard. Take me to Torchwood.”

“Or?” Nigel asked, somewhat bravely for an ape Vastra thought.

“There is no ‘or’.

Nigel considered the swords, considered he’d already told Vastra about the locket and considered that he might redeem himself for that if he showed up with a lizard woman who would be technically under arrest. Vastra saw in his eyes the moment he decided and grinned, showing all her teeth.

“We’ll take my cab shall we?”

It wasn’t the first cell Jenny had been in and it was far more comfortable than the one in jail. And it wasn’t a pokeyhole by any means. In fact it didn’t really seem to count as a cell so much as just another room for holding artefacts that hadn’t currently been filled up yet. Apart from the manacles. She clinked them dispassionately, having already managed to hook her legs through to bring them round to the front. It didn’t seem real that it was only that morning that they’d been so happy. Her stomach grumbled, reminding her that it was very real that it wasn’t morning any longer and that breakfast had been a long time ago and hadn’t really happened either.

She started upright as the door opened and the man who’d caught her came in. A guard placed a table and chairs in the centre of the room.

“Sit. Please. My name is Lieutenant Wilton.” He rested at ease in the chair with its back to the door. “I imagine you are hungry.” He gestured towards the bread and ham that the guard returned with.

Jenny hadn’t been prepared for hospitality but she took it, cautiously taking a bite of the bread.

“This is very simple, Mrs Palmer…” he stopped as she nearly choked on her bread.

“Wot?” she coughed, taking a deep swig of the water to clear her throat.


Jenny shook her head. “Jenny Flint.”

He laughed. “A very nice try, Mrs Palmer. But unfortunately for you, I have already met Jenny Flint. She is currently under arrest at her home for leaking information to you regarding Torchwood. And presumably about that locket, allowing you to escape. Unfortunately she must’ve failed to tell you that it would merely lead you here.”

Jenny’s jaw had been hanging open since he’d laughed but it snapped shut. If she ever found Lettie again, that woman was going to get what for.

“But I’m intrigued, Mrs Palmer, I will admit. How on earth did you escape the vault?”

“Cos I ain’t Mrs Palmer. I’m Jenny Flint and I’m a bleedin’ lock pick.”

“The door was locked when we discovered you were missing.”

“I locked it again after me.” Jenny shrugged.
“How clever of you Mrs Palmer. Presumably you utilised the same skills to hide from the Commander when he made his way down. But this time you left the door unlocked?”

“Thought you’d waste time lookin’ for me there. Give me a chance to escape.”

“A military mind. You’ve missed your calling Mrs Palmer, running a dress house in London.”

Jenny sighed. “I ain’t Mrs Palmer, I’m Jenny Flint. An’ if you don’t believe me, call yer bleedin’ Commander. He’s met me.”

Lieutenant Wilton’s eyes narrowed. “It matters little. If you were in the vault, then you have the locket. I require it back.” He held out his hand. Jenny hesitated. “You are a lowly whore Mrs Palmer!” he banged it on the table. “The person who gave it to you has conveniently disappeared; do not assume we would hesitate in letting you join him.”

“I ain’t Mrs Palmer!” Jenny yelled, terrified now, both for her and Lettie. She couldn’t think of a way to keep both of them safe but she wasn’t about to die for Lettie either. Her morality, it seemed, truly was flawed.

“There cannot be two of you.”

“Shows how much you know!” Jenny spat.

Lieutenant Wilton stood up and knocked on the door. The guard came in and removed the table and food. “If you are lying, it will be the worse for you.” He threatened her before walking out and slamming the door.

With a sigh Jenny slumped in her chair. The bread had done little to take the edge off her hunger. She debated picking the lock briefly but the door opened again soon enough. She scrambled to her feet as the Commander walked in. He wasn’t wearing his bowler hat today.

“She tells no lies, Lieutenant Wilton. This is indeed Jenny Flint.” The Commander nodded to her stiffly as he recognised her. Lieutenant Wilton tensed slightly and closed his eyes.

Jenny took one of the lockets from her dress and held it out to him. “I believe you wanted this back?”

He smiled humourlessly. “We did indeed. Congratulations on your success in this case. Your talents have not been exaggerated. And if this was the end of it…” he trailed off. “Alas, I hear disturbing reports that Jenny Flint, you in other words, revealed Torchwood to a stranger. That was not in the instructions we gave you. If you are Jenny Flint, then where is Lettie Palmer?”

Lieutenant Wilton coughed. “Well she must be the woman who claimed she was Jenny Flint, sir, in which case she’s under the guard of Frank…uh…Sergeant Bevan, sir. I sent him to watch over her and Madame Vastra until you could assess the situation and duly deal with them.”

The Commander turned very slowly to look at Wilton in utter disbelief.

“You sent one guard?”

“Well the others were required to search for…Lettie Palmer.” Wilton was getting confused, Jenny could tell. “Uh…we didn’t realise she was here. We’d been informed she’d taken off through the attic, sir. Besides,” Wilton was looking nervous now, “Madame Vastra’s only an old widow sir. Frank’s more than capable of handling that.”

The Commander’s jaw clenched, his nostrils flared as he breathed in deeply and he massaged his
temples with forefingers and a thumb.

“Tell me, Lieutenant Wilton, do you believe Torchwood is the kind of institute to harass old widows?”

“But I thought…”

“To send agents out to tail old widows and their maids half way across the world?”

“But she…”

“Lieutenant Wilton!” The Commander snapped and he jumped to attention.

“No sir. Not that kind of institute, sir. But sir…” he pleaded. “Who is she then? We thought she was just some old widow playing at it sir.”

“She’s got a higher arrest rate for petty criminals than most of the constables in London and you think she’s playing?” Jenny could see a vein going in the Commander’s temple.

“No sir.” Lieutenant Wilton visibly wilted.

Jenny sat watching the exchange with a small flicker of amusement even in the seriousness of her predicament. Wilton had sent one guard out to watch Vastra? The macabre thought crossed her mind that Sergeant Frank Bevan would be very lucky if he was still alive.

“Madame Vastra is a monitored threat who has suspected associations with the Doctor! The very same elusive prey that we seek to stop from invading our shores again!”

“She could still just be a harmless old widow.” Wilton protested sullenly.

The Commander took a sharp breath of air but what he planned to do with it was unknown for at that moment there was a knock on the door and a guard burst through it, out of breath and clearly panicked.

“Sir!” he gasped. “Think you’ll want to come see this sir. We’ve got aliens!”

Chapter End Notes

Guess who...
The Commander looked at his guard somewhat disdainfully. It reminded him that although he and his subordinate regularly investigated alien happenings, the rest of Torchwood didn’t really get out much and were very green behind the ears still.

“Aliens?”

“Well. Just one. And Nigel. It’s got Nigel hostage. It’s got swords!”

The Commander spun round at Jenny’s gasp. “Well. It looks like your mistress has come for you. Let’s not keep her waiting shall we?”

The guard goggled at Jenny. “Is she an alien too?”

“No.”

“Madame Vastra ain’t an alien either!” Jenny protested. “She was born on earth. Just...a long time ago.”

“I see.” The Commander replied flatly. “Bring her.” He told Wilton before walking out into the courtyard. Wilton grabbed Jenny’s arm and dragged her as he followed the Commander.

Vastra was indeed stood there, having been given entrance by more clearly bewildered guards, holding a sword at the throat of Nigel and sans her veil.

“Nigel.” The Commander said evenly.

“Sir.” Nigel went to nod back but decided against it.

“Jenny!” Vastra called out as she spotted Jenny. Her eyes narrowed at the sight of the manacles.

“Wilton. If you wouldn’t mind removing Miss Flint’s chains? I feel it would be conducive to a more convivial atmosphere.” The Commander had followed Vastra’s gaze. “And if you wouldn’t mind releasing the good sergeant?” he raised his eyebrows.
Vastra still glowered suspiciously but as Jenny’s manacles fell away she lowered her sword. Nigel made a very good attempt at not running away completely. Jenny heard him sigh in relief as he came to stand by Wilton.

“Now then, Madame Vastra. I believe we have much to discuss.”

“There is nothing for us to discuss.” Vastra snarled, raising her sword as she stalked over to him.

The Commander kept his cool even at sword point. “Your maid has returned the item in question to us. But there are several loose ends, alas. A woman has escaped with knowledge of Torchwood, given to her without permission by your maid. You and your maid now know where Torchwood headquarters are. And my other sergeant is still missing, one Frank Bevan, last known location: your address. You appear to have quite a keen and incisive mind, Madame Vastra, how would you propose resolving this? Without bloodshed.” He looked pointedly at the sword.

“Let us leave and I will release your sergeant. He is, at the moment, unharmed.” Vastra didn’t move her sword an inch.

“Lettie won’t be no problem. She just thinks Torchwood is another gang. Bit higher class of a gang but she’ll be more concerned about survivin’ in London then lookin’ out anywhere. She don’t even know about aliens or nuffin’. Not even what the locket did.” Jenny piped up.

The Commander looked at her disdainfully. “I suppose it would be a waste of resources, scouring London for one ordinary woman.” He turned his gaze back to Vastra. “As to your knowing the location of our headquarters, I shall have to ask the Commander in Chief. You will be escorted back to Paternoster Row, where you will both remain under guard. You can choose to escape, if you wish. I doubt you’d have much of a problem doing so. But bear in mind you are not as fortunate as Mrs Palmer; you would not so easily be able to fade into the masses of London, Madame Vastra.”

“’ow’d you know anyway?” Jenny voiced a question that had been annoying her. “I mean, you overheard me tellin’ Lettie about you, but none of you knew what I looked like?”

“Allow Torchwood some secrets please Miss Flint.” The Commander smiled condescendingly at her.

“You got some device like that locket what can listen in on a conversation then. But din’t bother to look through the window.” Jenny shook her head. “You wouldn’t survive long if you was a real gang.”

His head jerked in affront and he glowered at her. “Well I suppose to be quite such an exceptional thief taker; one must know the habits of thieves. And you do seem to be very well acquainted with their skill sets. We at Torchwood are used to investigating phenomena. Not whore houses.” He smiled nastily at her. “Why do you think we hired you?”

Jenny strode to Vastra’s side, grabbed Vastra’s sword off her and pointed it squarely between the Commander’s eyes.

“Jenny.” Vastra said gently in her ear, covering Jenny’s hand with her own and forcing her to lower the sword.

“Very sensible, Madame Vastra. Wilton, take Nigel and accompany these two back. I doubt they will give us any more trouble.

Whether Vastra guided her hand, or they moved together, or Vastra’s hand was merely taken along for the journey, Jenny was never able to tell afterwards. She only knew that the sword came up in
one swift turning gesture, slicing open the front of the Commander’s suit, including his belt. To his credit, he didn’t move an inch. Not even to retrieve his trousers when they fell to his ankles.

Vastra swiftly took the sword from Jenny and sheaved it before grabbing Jenny’s hand and striding across the courtyard, not daring to look back. She hastily arranged her veil as well as she could before they walked through the gate and over to where Parker was waiting nervously on top of their cab.

“Home, Parker.” Vastra said curtly, bundling Jenny in front of her.

“Right ma’am!” Parker urged Alice on.

There was silence apart from the rattling of the wheels over cobblestones. Jenny took a deep breath; she hadn’t taken a proper one since the sword had swung and promptly started laughing.

Vastra smiled and let out a small “ha.” She allowed Jenny to laugh herself out, recognising the release of sheer nerves.

“D’you think we’ll be in trouble?” Jenny asked, once she’d regained control.

“I suspect so.” Vastra sighed. Jenny’s face fell and her hand crept across to hold Vastra’s once more. Vastra smiled truly at that; the little ape was still trying to reassure her. “Well, if nothing else, we did not run.” She squeezed Jenny’s hand affectionately. “The Commander seems the real threat; the rest are rather lacking in any expertise as you pointed out.”

“Well I guess ‘e does work fer the Queen.”

“The mysterious Commander in Chief, no doubt. He probably reports directly to her.”

“Blimey.” Jenny sagged. “Fink I preferred the Christmas and New Year on the boat.”

“They were certainly quieter.” Vastra agreed before lapsing into silence for the rest of the journey.

When they returned to Paternoster Row, Vastra went in doors immediately, to divest herself of her swords. Jenny stayed to help Parker by grooming Alice. She wondered how much he knew now. How much he had seen. But he was uncharacteristically silent too.

“Parker?”

“Yes Miss Jenny?”

“You’re a bit quiet.”

He sighed and sat down on a hay bale. “Well after all that excitement. I realise you and Madame do somethin’ important these days, what with cases an’ the like, but high speed runs across London. Bit much on New Year’s Day ey?”

“Mm.” Jenny nodded in agreement. Her stomach was complaining bitterly that breakfast hadn’t happened and prison meals weren’t very filling and food wasn’t something on the list of things that there’d been a bit much of.

“I mean swords Miss Jenny!” He gestured.

Jenny looked at the man. He seemed visibly shaken and she wondered whether he’d want to retire.
“Sorry Parker. Din’t mean to get you involved in quite such a mess.” Jenny fiddled with Alice’s mane, feeling guilty.

“You and Madame have been very good to me.” He replied quietly.

“We’d still keep you around Parker. If you din’t want to drive the carriage no more. Plenty to do around the house in terms of fixin’ an’ lookin’ after Alice. Wood choppin’ an’ the like.” She offered.

Parker sat considering this. “Did I ever tell you, Miss Jenny, about my son Nicholas?”

“No.” Jenny frowned, wondering how she’d missed such a detail. She thought his liking for Boggin was in part because he didn’t have any children.

“He um…he isn’t the best of lads.” Parker sounded guilty. “He drives a cab. But he gets into trouble. For being drunk on the job y’see. Last place he was at turned him out. And well…he’s been at a bit of a loose end really. His wife didn’t take kindly to him losing his job. And I know it’d be a bit of an arskin’ and you an’ Madame have been that good to us already. But when he’s not in drink he’s a very steady hand with a horse. Can whip ‘em around London like nothin’. Was brought up to it y’see. If you wanted a driver to go on ‘igh speed chases on cobbles, he’s yer man.”

Jenny smothered a grin. “I’ll put it to Madame Vastra. After all, you’ve been very good to us too Parker. Puttin’ up with all sorts.”

“Well yer not the most conventional of ‘ouseholds no.” Parker nodded, but he was smiling and seemed a lot happier.

“As long as yer son don’t mind that.”

“Oh no Miss Jenny. We’ve brought ‘im up to be very acceptin’ of all kinds. Just likes ‘is drink a bit too much.” Parker sighed.

“C’mon. I’m finished with Alice. Want some dinner?”

“Aye, I’m famished meself Miss Jenny.” Parker got up off the hay bale and followed her indoors, leaving Alice munching her own nosebag.

Jenny opened the larder to find food and then shut it again swiftly.

“Fancy goin’ out to buy a pie Parker?”

“Cupboard a bit bare is it, Miss Jenny?” he called from the kitchen table.

“Somethin’ like that aye.” She walked to the chest in the dining room and handed him some money. “Get two. Nice deep ones. Lots of gravy.”

“Leave it ter me, Miss Jenny.” Parker tipped his hat and walked out the back door whistling.

Jenny waited until he’d shut the door behind him.

“VASTRRAAAAAA!!” she yelled, striding through the house.

“Yes my dear?” Vastra came downstairs in a hurry at the sound of Jenny’s voice.

“Why is there a man tied up in our larder?”
“Oh! Yes. I entirely forgot. That must be Frank.” Vastra mused. “I suppose I did promise I’d release him.” She followed Jenny back into the kitchen, delicately selected the largest knife from the rack and then opened the larder.

The man struggled against his bonds as he spotted the knife, but wordlessly. There was a large wad of material shoved in his mouth effectively gagging him.

Vastra waved the knife between his eyes, making him go cross-eyed.

“I will release you, as I promised. But tell your Commander not to interfere with the Paternoster Gang again.” With one smooth movement she cut the ropes holding him. He struggled upright, ripping the wad from his mouth, coughing and heaving as he did so. Vastra grinned at him, showing all of her teeth. “Run.”

Chapter End Notes

I will be Off Internet for the next two weeks! Sorry!
Jenny sat on the foot of their bed later on in the evening, staring thoughtfully at the ceiling. Frank had wisely scarpered. Parker had come back with pies and bread which had been gratefully scoffed by both of them. Vastra had requested to meet with his son, to interview him but otherwise seemed amenable to the plan. Not a bad end to the day, Jenny thought. Considering how the day had gone.

Vastra was already curled up in bed, exhausted by the day, watching Jenny, waiting for her to get changed and join her, wanting the comfort of Jenny’s warmth and physical presence. She saw the young woman fish something out of her dress and dangle it in the light of the candles. It glinted and at certain times appeared to have an aura around it.

“I wonder what these scratches mean.” Jenny mused, watching the locket spin in front of her nose, making her mildly cross-eyed.

“Jenny!” Vastra reprimanded. “I thought you had returned it to Torchwood!”

“I did. This is the second one. It were a teleport by the way.” She explained, as Vastra came to sit beside her. “Teleported me inside this room at Torchwood. Full of all these weird things.”

Vastra eyed her amused. “You still stole it.”

“Story of me life.” Jenny shrugged.

“They will be back for it.” Vastra reached out a hand and felt the same tingle Jenny had at touching the locket.

“They’ll be back anyways. They said so. Once they’ve complained to their Commander in Chief about us.” Jenny collected it back into her palm, moving off the bed.

“You are not afraid anymore?” Vastra asked, intrigued by the sudden lack of fear.

“Weeeellll apart from the Commander they seem a bit useless really. Din’t even have a proper dungeon to lock me in. All bluster an’ no fire as Lettie used to say.” Jenny walked over to the fireplace to deposit the locket on the mantelpiece.

A deafening silence filled the room.
“The Lettie who was a former lover of yours?”

Jenny tried not to grin at Vastra’s tone, keeping her eyes firmly fixed on the fire. They hadn’t been lovers more than just kissing and sharing a bed but Jenny couldn’t resist. “I s’pose we were lovers. In our own way.”

“Lettie Palmer.”

“I take it you met ‘er. In all the confusion of identities.” Jenny busied herself stoking up the fire for the night.

“Yes.”

“Weeeelllll s’all water under the bridge ain’t it. There’s no need ter sulk.” Jenny teased.

Vastra snorted and curled back up in bed.

Jenny smiled at the lump fondly as she got changed into her nightgown, sliding under the covers to spoon Vastra.

“Lettie was the one who took me to the circus y’know. When I saw you there.” Jenny draped an arm around Vastra’s waist.

“So you told me.” Vastra sniffed, remaining stiff and unyielding in Jenny’s embrace. “She is the type of person to enjoy such entertainment is she?”

“Did I ever tell you what she said?” Jenny shifted upright, leaning on one hand as the other tried to twine its fingers with Vastra’s.

“No.” Vastra shifted her hand away.

“We was walkin’ around an’ I weren’t very impressed with any of it really. But then she dragged me towards this tent with a sign outside sayin “Amazing Lizard Lady” and said ‘maybe this’ll be more yer style’.” Jenny paused, looking down. Vastra had closed her eyes but she got the feeling the Amazing Lizard Lady was listening intently. “I fink she was right about that.” Jenny leaned in and lowered her voice. “Fink you are more my style.”

How Vastra managed to make her smug grins practically audible, Jenny didn’t know. She felt the Silurian relax, wriggling backwards into Jenny with a final satisfied grunt, Jenny’s own smug grin melted into a content smile as she led back down again.

January 2nd 1888

Vastra was sat, slumped at the end of the sofa nearest the fire, reading. Occasionally she glanced up at Jenny who was curled up at the other end, her brow furrowed in concentration as she stared beyond the abandoned sewing in her hands.

“You are worried?” Vastra asked her eventually. The tension Jenny was exuding was beginning to affect her ability to focus on her book.

“Jus’ thinkin’. Think I might’ve bin a bit reckless.” Jenny sighed.

“Cutting the Torchwood Commander’s trousers down you mean?” Vastra raised an eye ridge in
amusement as the full realisation of what she’d done hit Jenny.

“Oh gawd. They’re gonna hang me…” she laughed nervously.

Vastria was about to answer in an attempt to reassure her when there was a knock at the door. Seeing as Jenny sat petrified, Vastria retrieved her veil and went to answer the door with an impending sense of doom.

Jenny heard raised voices from the hallway and surged to her feet in a panic. Before she could decide on fleeing or fighting, the Doctor burst through the door.

“Jenny! My favourite Flint! Hello! You remember Martha of course?” The Doctor jerked a thumb over his shoulder at the young black woman following him.

“Thought we’d call in, say Happy New Year!” she grinned.

“1888…ooof…” the Doctor ran his fingers through his hair and grimaced. “Gonna be a rough one. Can’t say any more.”

“No more disappearing acts down to underworlds then? No unexpected guests?” Martha asked, sitting on the arm of the sofa.

Vastria removed her veil, placing it over the back of it. “Well, in a way.”

“Sounds like a story. Is the kettle boiling?” The Doctor waggled his eyebrows.

Jenny took the hint and went out to the kitchen.

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After they’d regaled the Doctor with their story, Jenny retrieved the locket and handed it to him.

“What do those markin’s say on it?”

The Doctor turned it over in his thin fingers.

“Ahh. Bizarre to see them in locket form. Originally they were stones. It’s a teleportation device!”

“Yes we know that.” Jenny rolled her eyes.

“Ahh but this lovely beauty is one of a pair used by the infamous Space Pirate couple, All Dread Her, literal translation of her name and Silly Vest Wearer. Again. Very literal translation. They were lovers and they used the teleport device so that if ever they were separated they could teleport immediately to each other’s sides. Very romantic.”

“How did this Torchwood end up with them?” Martha asked, taking the locket off the Doctor.

The Doctor frowned. “I suspect through meddling. They meddle in the future. Any alien tech that comes to earth, they seize it. In the name of the British Empire!” he said sarcastically.

“An’ All…what ‘appened to the Space Pirates?” Jenny didn’t think she could really say those names.

The Doctor heaved a sigh. “Dead I’m afraid. Probably.”

Jenny shivered. “Torchwood?” Perhaps they were more organised than she gave them credit for. Or the Commander at least, and his deputy. She could well imagine them killing aliens.
He looked at her, saw the fear in her eyes. “Naahhh. Probably died on landing. Or gave it up? Maybe they split up after all those years. Who knows!” He grinned unreassuringly and gestured to Martha, who hastily gave the locket back to Jenny. “Come on! Best be off, if Torchwood’s sniffing around Paternoster Row. Might have to wait until my next regeneration to come back and visit. Cheerio!”

3rd of January 1888

Jenny had been looking nervously out the windows every few minutes and driving Vastra to distraction.

“I thought you weren’t afraid anymore. That they were nothing but incompetents.” Vastra asked, blocking Jenny’s way. “Where has all that bravado fled to?”

Jenny rolled her eyes and side-stepped Vastra. The chill of dread ran down her spine was a large carriage drew up outside Paternoster Row. She clutched at Vastra’s sleeve. “Ma’am…”

Vastra allowed herself to be tugged round in time to see a large figure in a cloak get out, accompanied by two men in dark suits. She recognised them as the two men who had visited them with the case. The Commander and his silent companion. Jenny hadn’t heard the man utter a word thus far. The Commander’s loquaciousness had made up for it. They looked up simultaneously at the window. Jenny and Vastra simultaneously moved away.

“Yer veil.”

“The door.” Vastra inclined her head before moving away.

Jenny’s jaw clenched as the inevitable knock came and she walked slowly down the hallway to answer it. The three of them swept past her into the conservatory where Vastra was waiting; reclining with apparent ease in her wicker chair.

“Jenny, would you make the tea? It appears we have a case.” She asked as Jenny followed them in. Jenny curtseyed, not really wanting to leave Vastra alone with the three of them.

The figure in the cloak held up a hand and the deputy commander grabbed at her arm to stop her. Jenny looked him steadfastly in his cold brown eyes but she could feel her whole body trembling and knew he could too.

“I require none of your pretences, Madame Vastra. I know very well what you are. Perhaps then, in mutual respect, we should both remove our disguises?” The hood fell back to reveal none other than Queen Victoria.

Vastra stood up and calmly lifted back her veil, standing haughty and proud a good foot above Queen Victoria. The Queen merely went to sit down, causing the Commander to swiftly manoeuvre the second wicker chair behind her with a speed and grace that belied his size.

“But your maid can certainly make us tea. Release her, Mister Vandemar. We have much to discuss.”

The deputy Commander released his pincer grip on Jenny’s arm and shoved her roughly towards the door. He spoke finally, in a cold, flat voice. “Off you pop.”
Chapter End Notes

Anyone who has read/watched Neverwhere feel absolutely free to freak out about the fact Croup and Vandemar are currently running Torchwood.

All Dread Her and Silly Vest Wearer are shout outs to Sophie Aldred (who played Ace McShane) and Sylvester McCoy (who played the 7th Doctor) but apart from that they are nothing to do with the Doctor. Space pirates! Everything needs space pirates. (Spoilers: They're still alive.)
‘Round Her Neck She Wore A Golden Locket FINAL PART I PROMISE

Chapter Summary

There may or may not be a wrap up chapter after this one but it will mostly be going into the next story arc! Or mushiness.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The deputy Commander followed her silently into the kitchen, looking around and sniffing the air. He had that air of looking for something. Hunting for something.

“You’ve got a rat problem.” He said eventually, in the same cold almost disinterested voice.

“Really.” Jenny threw him a sarcastic smile as she loaded up the tea tray, wishing the kettle would boil sooner. She hadn’t seen hide nor hair of a rat, though it wouldn’t surprise her if there were some about. A random thought floated across her mind; they ought to get a cat. Or maybe one of the Irregulars knew someone with a ratting terrier. The whistle of the kettle brought her mind back to the situation at hand. The deputy Commander, Vandemar the Queen had called him was stood staring at her blankly. It was a look Jenny would see again on the face of another before the year was out.

Hastily splashing the boiling water into the tea pot, she didn’t wait for the tea to brew before carrying the tray hastily back into the plant room, pushing past Vandemar with disdain. She poured the weak tea into the cups and handed one to Vastra, who locked eyes with her as she took the cup. The Silurian had gone a very light shade of green but her blues eyes steadied Jenny, who took the next cup to the Queen, wondering what had passed between Vastra and their guest in the short while she had been in the kitchen.

“You’re very brave aren’t you.” the Queen noted, as Jenny held it out. Jenny was pleased to see her hand didn’t shake too much.

“Thank you ma’am.” Jenny bowed her head and went to give Croup a cup. He waved her away.

“My associate and I do not require such refreshments at this time.” He smiled condescendingly.

“To what do we owe the honour of your presence, your Majesty?” Vastra asked, taking a sip of her own. Her nose twitched in disgust; it was not Jenny’s best made tea, and she placed the cup and saucer back on the table.

“To business then, Madame Vastra. It has been reported to me, in full,” the Queen paused to emphasise her point that yes, she knew everything that had happened, up to and including incidents with trousers. “the happenings at the very beginning of this year. As you have not fled the country, I can only assume you are therefore willing to face the consequences of your actions.” She took a sip of her tea, frowned and followed Vastra’s suit of placing it down beside her. “You need a better brand of tea, Madame Vastra. Of course you were successful in retrieving the locket, but breached the security of Torchwood twice in order to do so and launched an assault on the centre of operations. Such actions could well count as treason, for which there is no excuse, not even your alien nature.”
“She ain’t an alien!” half of Jenny cheered at her saying it, the other half really wished she had a vortex manipulator so she could go back in time and stop herself saying it. The Queen turned her shrewd eyes onto Jenny, wordlessly demanding that she explain the interruption. “She…she were born on earth just like you an’ me. Just a long time ago.”

“I see.” Queen Victoria’s expression gave nothing away as she returned her attention to Vastra. “You were born in Britain then?”

Vastra glanced at Jenny who nodded as vigorously as she could without actually moving her head. “Technically, yes. I was born in what is now Britain.” Vastra shifted in her seat.

“I see.” The Queen seemed to contemplate this information and then come to a decision. “If you were born in Britain, whatever time it was, this would make you a subject of the British Empire.”

Vastra eyed Jenny again, who communicated by a slightly pained facial expression that technically yes. “I suppose that would be true.”

“As my subject, you would naturally swear allegiance to the British Empire. To fight for its interests and mine.” It was a statement. Not a question.

“You would wish me to work for you?” Vastra’s blue eyes went wide as they looked to Jenny once more, who almost imperceptibly shook her head.

“For Torchwood. Your skills are lauded as formidable Madame Vastra, and your methods whilst crude, have proved effective. I am not accustomed to overlooking attacks against my institutions but in this case, I feel it would be beneficial to the both of us for you to work for us. I have noticed that several of your cases wander in the realm of the fantastical, even otherworldly. Egypt, spectral hound attacks, even the kidnapping of a certain royal personage…why do you keep looking at your maid?” Queen Victoria asked impatiently, having noticed Vastra’s glances. Both she and Jenny turned to look at the Queen. “You take counsel from your maid?” The Queen got up and walked imperiously over to Jenny who tensed so much she was incapable of stepping backwards.

“Jenny is…” Vastra saw Jenny’s frantic glare. “She assists me in my cases. She may be my maid but her insight and advice is invaluable to me.”

“I see.” The Queen said again, not taking her eyes off of Jenny. “And what is your advice in this case?”

“I don’t see as ‘ow we can work fer you ma’am.” Jenny replied faintly, unclenching her jaw.

In a flurry, the Queen spun round to face Vastra. “And on her advice you would refuse me? You hold her insight in such high esteem? I came here today to solicit your services, so useful to me in recent days, particularly now in light of your acknowledgement as a subject of the Crown and I did not expect a refusal.” Queen Victoria took a slow deep breath. “But it is no matter. You are foolish, Madame Vastra, to reveal your weakness, if you wish to negotiate.” The Queen gestured with her hand and the two men grabbed Jenny.

“NO!” Vastra leapt from her chair. Jenny struggled but the strength of the Commander and Vandemar was inhuman. Vandemar held her firmly by the arms from behind and the Commander rested his hand about her throat.

“You hold no power here, Madame Vastra.” Queen Victoria walked around the Plant room as she spoke. “And I require your services again; to solve another problem Torchwood has been struggling with. There is a man, if he is a man, of which I know you are an associate. He goes by the name of
Doctor. Tell me his whereabouts.” The Queen demanded, coming to a halt in front of Vastra.

“I don’t know!” Vastra was panic-stricken.

“Mr Croup.” The Queen called, sitting back down.

“He’s been here. I can smell ‘im.” Vandemar growled.

“He visits!” Vastra cried desperately. “But he travels. I wouldn’t know when or where he was.”

“And I don’t suppose you would have any viable means of communicating with him?” the Commander, Mr Croup, stepped lightly to stand between Vastra and the seated Queen Victoria.

“No. He just…turns up. Usually whenever there’s trouble.”

“To help out his friends? Such an admirable man, Mr Vandemar.”

“Admirable, Mr Croup.”

“I am ruminating on the possibility, Mr Vandemar, were we to hurt his little friends, whether he would consider that to be ‘trouble’?”

“He might, Mr Croup. He might.”

The cold grin on Mr Croup’s face reduced Vastra to a pale yellow and her thoughts turned to her sword. “Hurt the maid, Mr Vandemar.”

“No!”

Vandemar nodded once and twisted Jenny’s arm up behind her back. She went white and limp as something within her arm cracked.

“Jenny!!” Vastra darted forward to catch Jenny as he shoved her to the floor.

“Mister Vandemar!” Queen Victoria rebuked. “That was hardly necessary.”

“Sorry.” Vandemar shrugged.

Vastra paid them no attention, cradling Jenny in her lap.

“I’m fine, ma’am. I’m fine.” Jenny sought to reassure her, trying to hold back tears as she clutched her arm.

With a snarl, Vastra surged upright and stalked to the particularly tall plant as Jenny scrambled upright. Vastra drew out a long samurai word that had been concealed against the trunk. In a slick movement she drew it, pointing it at the Queen.

“This is treason!” Queen Victoria spat.

“I am not your subject!” Vastra hissed back.

“Should we kill her?” Vandemar asked.


“You stay away from her.” She snarled at him and he backed away mockingly.
“You are mistaken by the way, your majesty.” Mr Croup said in a fake friendly voice as he did so. “And Madame Vastra is quite correct. She is not committing treason. I do suppose however, having been so long in your employ; you might consider this as treason.” Croup gestured for Vandemar, who darted behind Queen Victoria’s chair, flicking out a short knife and bringing it round to hold at her throat. “I am afraid that whilst we have worked exceedingly hard in building up the Torchwood Institute, it has not been for your gain. Our true employer also seeks the Doctor and advised us that Torchwood might be the very way to find him. Although there we part ways in terms of ambition. You merely wish to capture him. Our true employer wishes that the Doctor be opportune exterminated. A far kinder gesture than a life of rotting away in the tower, don’t you think? For such a worthy foe.”

Vastra jerked forward. “He will not be caught so easily.”

Mr Croup tsked. “Mr Vandemar. It appears there is a queue awaiting your good attentions.”

“Fine by me, Mister Croup.” Vandemar shrugged. He stood up and as Vastra swung her blade at him, simply reached up and grabbed it, yanking it from her grasp and tossing it to the ground. The Silurian stared in horror; the man’s hands hadn’t even bled. She tried to gain a stance but was knocked flying across the room, hitting her head on a plant pot and folding to the floor.

“Jenny…” she tried desperately to focus. A loud scream (and it occurred to Vastra that she’d never heard Jenny really scream before) jolted her back to consciousness.

The man, Vandemar, if he was a man, had grabbed Jenny by her injured arm and was holding her off the ground by it.

“Jenny!” she fought her way back to her feet, swaying unsteadily. Mister Croup had done something to the Queen who was now sprawled on the floor, Jenny was fighting Mister Vandemar tooth and claw but to little avail. He was trying to pick up Vastra’s sword again but Jenny was squirming too much for him.

With a snarl, Vastra ran and launched herself onto Vandemar’s back, ripping into the flesh on his neck but he didn’t bleed from there either; merely tried to shrug her off as if she were an irritating fly. He succeeded in tugging her off with his spare hand and pushing her to the floor. She went to rejoin the fray but Mister Croup had picked up her blade and held against her throat.

“Enough!!” a voice called out and Vastra had never been so glad to hear it.

“Ah, Mssr Doctor. So glad am I that you got our invitation to this small soiree of ours.” Mister Croup said in an oily voice. “And you brought a friend. The more the merrier, do they not say Mister Vandemar?”

“That they do Mister Croup.”

“You put her down right now!” The Doctor pointed at Jenny, fury in his eyes.

“Let her go Mister Vandemar.”

“Right you are Mister Croup.” Vandemar let go and dropped Jenny unceremoniously on the floor.

“Martha!” The Doctor gestured to his companion who rushed over to help. Vastra dodged her own sword edge and gathered Jenny into her lap once more.

“It’s her arm.” Vastra keened as Martha slid to her knees beside them.
“Okay. Okay! Let me see.” Martha ran her fingers gently down Jenny’s arm. “Okay. It feels like a radius break. I’m gonna have to reduce it. Jenny?”

Vastra shook the young woman in her arms but Jenny didn’t respond. Her eyes were closed and her face white. “Here goes.” Martha winced and gently pulled Jenny’s arm, feeling the bone slide across one another. “Okay. That should do it.” She looked around desperately to find something to use for a splint and a sling and discovered that the Doctor, Croup and Vandemar had disappeared.

“What??” she stood up and looked around the plant room. Queen Victoria was slumped on the floor still, seemingly unconscious. One of the tall plants had had its pot smashed and was leaning at a bizarre angle, dirt and compost strewn all over the floor. But there was no sign of any of the three men. Deciding to deal with that later, Martha tore a couple of large twigs off a branch. “I need some material. Bandages. Rags!” she asked Vastra.

“There’s a sewing box in the living room.” Vastra told her, still shell-shocked.

“Okay. Stay there. I’ll splint her arm and then deal with…Queen Victoria.” Martha couldn’t quite believe the words even as she said them.

Jenny came round as Martha was gently tying off a makeshift sling around her neck.

“Heya. Back with us?” Martha smiled reassuringly. “There! That should do you. And don’t worry about Queen Victoria. She was mildly stunned and then played dead apparently. I’ve checked her over and there doesn’t seem to be any concussion.”

“Where’s the Doctor?” Jenny asked, struggling to get up.

“He is gone. We don’t know where.” Vastra answered, helping Jenny to her feet.

“What do we do now? Where’re those men? Who even were they?”

“Gone as well. And I suspect they were as alien as the beings Torchwood investigates.” Vastra sighed.

“Ironic.” Martha snorted.

There was a small cough and they all turned to see a very ruffled Queen Victoria standing there.

“You will take me back to the palace, immediately.” There was a fraught pause in which Queen Victoria had the displeasure of being on the receiving end of three simultaneous glowers. “Please.”

Martha looked at Vastra and Jenny but the two of them nodded. “Hold on a second. How is it going to look? A lizard woman, a black woman and a maid with an arm in a sling walk up to Buckingham Palace to drop off the Queen?”

“It does sound like a terrible attempt at humour.” Vastra agreed. “But alas, Parker is still on holiday.”

“I am afraid I relied upon those two creatures to take me back. It was meant to be a secret visit.”

“Oh a secret visit was it ma’am? Is that why your carriage has a big royal insignia on the side of it?” Jenny said caustically; the pain in her arm making her throw caution to the wind.

“You will take me back to Buckingham palace and deliver me into the hands of the guards there.” The Queen stated again, somewhat more frostily and with a glower of her own.

“And if we do…your majesty?” Vastra drew herself up to her full height.
“What do you mean?”

“Your institute has caused considerable harm to my…maid and my friends. I would ask for an assurance against Torchwood bothering us again.”

“You seek to bargain with me?” The Queen did not look amused.

“An agreement.” Vastra corrected. “We will continue to work for Scotland Yard and investigate any such cases as we are hired for. But we refuse to work with Torchwood. Now, or in the future. Particularly if your aim is to capture the Doctor.”

“The Doctor is a threat to my kingdom. I cannot ignore that.” the Queen shook her head.

“He has saved it as well! More times than you know.” Vastra cried.

“Oh I am aware, Madame Vastra.” Queen Victoria sighed. “Are you to hold me hostage then? Unless I agree with your terms?”

Jenny and Martha shared a look with Vastra. Locking a lieutenant in the larder was one thing; Queen Victoria, entirely another.

“Look, ma’am, its basic non-interference.” Martha piped up. “Vastra and Jenny won’t get in the way of your work, and you don’t bother them in the future regarding the Doctor. I mean, I think the Doctor’s capable of evading you with or without them. If he survives those two…” she faltered.

Queen Victoria sniffed in affront. “I cannot have aliens running around unchecked in my Empire.”

“She ain’t an alien!” Jenny rolled her eyes.

“Don’t roll your eyes at me, child. She declares herself not a subject of the British Empire.”

Vastra stopped Jenny from arguing back again. “If I did…”

“You do not declare yourself such. As your Queen, I declare you as such. Now take me back to my palace.” The Queen ordered.

There was a brief argument between Martha and Vastra as to whether Jenny should accompany them, which Vastra won on the principle that whilst a broken arm needed rest, if Croup and Vandemar returned to Paternoster Row to find Jenny alone, rest was not what would happen. It was therefore decided that Vastra and the Queen would ride in the Queen’s carriage, Vastra in her veil and carrying her sword. Martha, in a loaned cloak to cover up her more modern attire would ride with Jenny on the seat.

“How typical of a companion of the Doctor…” muttered the Queen as she walked out into the yard. “…to be so improperly dressed. There is another matter of course.” She turned to face the three women. “In part thanks to your assistance, we retrieved a stolen locket. However, it does seem as though Torchwood has been so foolish as to lose the other one. I don’t suppose the Great Detective and her assistant would know where it might be?”

Awkwardly, Jenny reached inside her dress with her left hand, trying not to nudge her arm, and brought out the second locket. Queen Victoria took it, holding it up to catch the light before swiftly disappearing it somewhere about her person.
“I suppose I shall have to put Lieutenant Wilton in charge of Torchwood now.” She sighed, as she climbed into the carriage.

The journey to the palace passed in silence until the Queen had to give orders for them to be allowed onto the grounds of the Palace. The guards converged on her to accompany her into the palace; not once did she look back. Servants came out to deal with the horses and carriage.

“Time to find out what happened to the Doctor then.” Jenny sighed as with Martha’s assistance she got down from the carriage top.

“He’ll be okay.” Martha reassured them as they were ushered hurriedly out onto the street.

“Against the likes of Mister Croup and Mister Vandemar?” Vastra raised her eye ridges. “I suspect even the Doctor will find that battle difficult.”

“S’not so much that they were tough or anythin’. S’just…you couldn’t ‘urt ‘em.” Jenny was aware that they made a very odd group as they started the long journey home. A veiled lady, a cloaked lady and a maid with an arm in a piece of old dress. She couldn’t think of a story to explain them.

It took them over an hour to get across London back to 13 Paternoster Row. Jenny was out of breath and felt sick from the pain in her arm. Walking over the uneven cobbles of London had not helped it.

“We’ve become too accustomed to Parker and the cab.” Vastra huffed slightly.

Martha looked at them in mock disgust. “You should try travelling with the Doctor. All the running about we do.”

“I’ve heard.” Vastra snorted as she let them all back into the house.

“Vastra!” A voice called out as they crowded into the hallway. “Jenny! Good. Martha. You’re back. What took you so long eh? I’ve been waiting nearly half an hour!”

“Doctor!” All three of them said in chorus.

“The one and only.” He grinned manically.

“But…’ow did you escape Croup an’ Vandemar?” Jenny goggled at him, not quite believing he was there.

His grin became a little fixed. “Ah well. Yes. They were employed by someone to track down and kill me. And I uhh…persuaded their employer not to kill me. Yet. Simple really. Ready to crack on Martha?”

“I’d like to put Jenny’s arm in a cast first.”

“In Victorian London?” The Doctor looked horrified.

“They did have them back then…now.” Martha shrugged.

“Right then Jenny Flint. Looks like you need a doctor!” The Doctor grinned. “I never get to say that without it meaning me.”

Martha frowned at him.

“What? We don’t want any anachronisms!” he argued. “If there’re doctors and plaster in this time, let them go to one. Besides I’m all out of plaster of Paris.” He wandered out the still open door, waving
at Jenny and Vastra over his shoulder.

“Ugh! Fine.” Martha threw her hands up in disgust. “Find a doctor. Get some plaster on it. Don’t use it for 3 weeks, rest it for 8 and it should be fine. It’s a simple fracture so it shouldn’t need amputation.” She winked at Jenny who looked horrified.

“8 weeks??” She’d barely begun training with the wooden swords.

“Unless you want to make it worse.” Martha scoffed. “Get thee to a doctor, go!”

She followed the Doctor out, leaving Jenny and Vastra in the midst of utter confusion.

Chapter End Notes

Yah me too…The end. OR IS IT??? (no no seriously it is though for the time being like yes absolutely. The end. Of this arc. This fic will never end I fear…….)
Don't Hold Me Like I'm Made Of Glass

Chapter Summary

long chapter? Vastra past! Whee.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Doctor and Martha had barely been gone out the front door for a moment when the doorbell rang at the back. Vastra thankfully had not yet removed her veil and was able to answer it to find a stern looking woman, carrying a brown doctor’s bag.

“You are Madame Vastra, I take it?” she asked officiously, stepping over the threshold without being invited in. “Two very curious people arrived at my door an hour ago, claiming there was a medical emergency here. Thusly being summoned, I have arrived. I am a physician. My name is Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.” She wiped her feet and grabbed Vastra’s hand to shake it.

Vastra bowed her head, a little bemused. The Doctor it appeared had been time travelling again. “My maid has broken her arm. I believe it requires plaster of Paris.”

“Show me the arm.” Elizabeth demanded, striding into the hallway. Jenny stepped forward. “Do you have a dining room or likewise a table?”

Jenny nodded and led her into the dining room where Elizabeth gestured at her to sit in a seat whilst she set her bag up on the table. Small vials and pots, a pestle and mortar, a large steel bowl all were brought out. Elizabeth removed the sling with care but Jenny gritted her teeth as the physician examined Jenny’s arm.

“Most professionally set.” Elizabeth nodded, her eyebrows raised in surprise. “This shouldn’t take too long. Rest your elbow on the table and hold your arm straight and steady.”

She mixed up the plaster of Paris, the powder for which she had in her bag, Vastra getting the water for her to fill the steel bowl. She laid strips of bandages around Jenny’s arm. Jenny hissed in pain as Elizabeth applied the plaster of Paris mixture liberally over them with a small brush, before wrapping more bandages and repeating the action.

“Right.” Elizabeth said decisively as she applied one final layer and began to clear away. “Leave that to dry for a few hours. 3 weeks with the cast on. Send for me again then and I shall remove it. But you will need to rest it a further 5 weeks from that. No strenuous activity, no matter what your employer says.” Elizabeth scowled at Vastra who had come to hover beside Jenny.

“She will not be over-taxed, I assure you.” Vastra inclined her head again.

Jenny looked at Vastra, faintly disgusted. No strenuous activity would mean curtailing sword practice. She wondered if doing some of the basic leg exercises and stances would count as over-taxing.

“And try not to get the plaster wet once it has dried. Be particularly careful when bathing.”
“I can assist her to ensure that doesn’t happen.” Vastra declared unthinkingly. Jenny stood on her foot, smiling fixedly at Elizabeth Anderson who looked between them oddly.

“That…would be helpful of you, I am sure. Most mistresses are not so understanding and it results in bad healing.” The physician said carefully. “I will leave some laudanum for pain relief. Even taking the utmost care, it will pain you. The laudanum will also help you sleep.” She drew a small bottle out of her bag and set it carefully on the table. “A teaspoon is the usual adult dose. I will see you in 3 weeks. You can pay me then. I can show myself out, thank you.” She snapped her bag closed and strode out.

Vastra snatched up the bottle, read the label, uncorked it and sniffed gingerly. “Laudanum.”

Jenny looked at her puzzled. “Yeah? Da used to give it us kids when we were sick. S’medicine.”

“It is not.” Vastra snorted in disgust, walking out the room with the bottle.

“Oi!” Jenny followed her into the kitchen where Vastra was pouring it down the sink. “Wot are you doin’?!”

“Making sure you aren’t poisoned any further by foolish doctors!”

“S’just laudanum.”

“It is opium and alcohol. The Goddess alone knows what your father was thinking.”

“Same as ever other parent I ‘spect.” Jenny went to fold her arms and winced. “An’ what were you on sayin’ you’d help me ‘ave a bath?”

“I have helped you before.” Vastra shrugged, putting the empty bottle on the top shelf.

“In private. Out there, mistresses don’t go round helpin’ their maids ‘ave baths.”

“How inconsiderate of them!” Vastra shouted suddenly. Jenny stood stunned by the abrupt raised voice, watching the Silurian stride back and forth across the kitchen in consternation.

“Woss wrong?”

“Nothing! Absolutely nothing.”

Such a blatant lie was another rarity from the Silurian but Jenny let her stalk upstairs without pushing the matter further. She was hungry. Alas cooking would probably count as strenuous activity so she satisfied herself with some ham and bread for lunch, hooking an apple out the bowl on the side. Vastra never touched fruit but Jenny had developed a taste for them.

Wondering who on earth going to do the washing up, Jenny left her plate in the sink and went upstairs to have a bath. It’d been yet another long day and she felt grimy for it. Her dress wouldn’t pull over the plaster so Jenny fetched a pair of scissors from the large sewing box that held her crochet hooks and cut the sleeve away, stepping out of the remains of her dress. Her corset gave her trouble but it was a front fastening one and she was able to unhook it with one hand eventually. She grabbed towels from the closet and made her way to the bathroom, her chemise and drawers not a problem.

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Their bathroom had been installed with very modern contrivances when they’d moved in. There was a flushable toilet although there was still an outhouse in the yard that Parker used. Vastra had insisted on the bath and Jenny found she liked the luxury of it. Turning on a tap and getting hot water was
something she had gotten used to very easily. She didn’t like the heavily scented washes however, preferring to stick with plain soap.

Bathing without getting her cast wet proved difficult. She hung the cast over the side of the bath and did the best she could but washing her hair was impossible and her body and arms didn’t quite contort enough to be able to single-handedly scrub her back.

Giving up, she relaxed, her arm resting against the wooden panelled edge as there was a knock at the door.

“I’m in ’ere.”

“May I enter?”

“Might as well. As you oft point out, ain’t nuffin’ you ain’t seen before.” Jenny reclined further into the bath as Vastra entered, dressed in her night gown. The Silurian crouched beside the bath, watching Jenny curiously.

“Do you need assistance?”

There was a pause. “I carn’t do me back properly.”

“Allow me?” Vastra asked and Jenny threw the wash cloth at her. “Really.” She caught it deftly and edged around to the end of the bath tub as Jenny leaned forward. She ran the wash cloth over Jenny’s shoulders, eye ridges drawn together. “Why is it you have no qualms about me assisting you in washing and yet you shy away when we are in bed?”

Jenny straightened. “Wot about you? You regularly used to go on about apes an’ us not likin’ to be naked, wandered around with yer scales out but I arsk to touch yer and…” she cut herself off. That was not what she was irritated about and she kicked herself mentally for taking out her frustration on Vastra.

The Silurian was still, cloth still pressed against Jenny’s back. With a sigh, Vastra rested her forehead between Jenny’s shoulder blades. Jenny sat there in the cooling water, waiting.

“When I was in the circus, I was captured initially, I told you on the train yes?”

“Aye.”

“And I believe George told you what they did to me.”

“’e said they took yer clothes.” For the first time Jenny considered Vastra’s strength. The way she’d held Jenny aloft the first time they’d met. What it would take to relieve Vastra of anything. To lock her in a cage.

Vastra felt the young woman tremble; Jenny was crying. Crying for her again.

“Would you like me to tell you what happened?” Jenny didn’t respond but Vastra began anyways, taking up the old chipped mug and pouring water over Jenny’s hair.

Vastra had been hunting in the tunnels for months now, evading women with handbags, policemen, trappers, soldiers and dogs. She had dragged her latest prey, some ape or other down a dark side
tunnel and was busy tearing into its flesh when she heard the sound of footsteps crunching on the bones that littered the tunnel floor.

A small blue light flickered over her briefly, accompanied by a strange humming noise.

“Hello.” The word came in Silurian, not English and threw Vastra completely.

“You…are not afraid of me?” Vastra’s voice was muffled by the piece of ape she’d been eating. She swallowed and tried again, feeling relief at speaking her native tongue out loud. “You do not smell of fear.”

The man lit a small lantern with the blue light and came closer to her, crouching down beside her. “What are you eating?” he asked. His Silurian had a Northern accent to it which she liked. Her family had originally been from the North.

“Ape. It’s a little tough. Would you care for some?”

He looked at her bemused. “Think I’ll pass, thank you. So. What’s a beautiful creature like you doing in a place like this?” When she didn’t respond he coughed awkwardly. “I know what you are. I know you belong to an intelligent species that once ruled this planet, if no more. It’s ruled by humans now. Apes. They’ll hunt you down, for killing their men.”

“They killed my sisters. Slaughtered them.”

The man shifted on his feet. “I know that too. You have every right to be angry. But anger is the shortest distance to a mistake. And I think it’d be a very big mistake for you to die down here, all alone. You’re not a mindless animal to be hunted down with dogs in the sewers and tunnels of London.”

Her eyes narrowed. “So what happens now?”

“Well.” He leant forward, resting his arms on his knees. “You can carry on fighting them. And you will die.”

She waited for him to continue. Even in her wrathful state, it didn’t sound like an enjoyable future.

“Or…” he grinned winningly at her. “You can live. Which may well be more fun.”

The grin did its job and if not fully charming Vastra, at the very least intrigued her.

He held out his hand and she took it, standing upright to face him.

“Try them out. The apes. You might get on better than you think. Even with the scales.” He made a gesture around his face. “I’ll have to leave you to it I’m afraid. Got to be off. In me TARDIS.”

“TARDIS?”

“Time and Relative Dimension In Space.”

“A time travel device?” Vastra was awed. He nodded and walked a little way through the tunnels to a blue box.

“It’s a police box. They uh…they won’t be around for a while I don’t think. Can’t remember.” He grinned again as he unlocked the doors. “Course you could always come with me if you like. I couldn’t take you back but I could take you forwards.”
Vastra halted as she was about to cross the threshold and looked at him properly. Her tongue snapped out. He looked...old. And alone. As she was. Haunted by a strange grief, as she was.

“I...do not think that would be wise.” She backed away.

He nodded, resigned. “Possibly not. I’m the Doctor by the way. What’s your name?”

“Vastra.”

“Be seein’ you then. Vastraaaa.” He winked and closed the door and she watched wide-eyed as with a whooshing, grinding noise the box disappeared from in front of her.

Vastra stood thinking for a long while in the gloom. She could not go back, but she could go forward. Perhaps there were other apes that were kind, as the Doctor had been.

She came up from the tunnels near the river where there was a multitude of brightly coloured tents clustered together. It was nearly dusk, the river and the air reeked of ape and refuse. She kept to the shadows, wandering furtively between the tents. One smelt of animals and she crept in to find locked cages. There were strange beasts inside them which she had never seen before. Other mammals. Even monkeys, chattering at her. Apes locked their ancestors in cages? She was appalled and turned to leave but ran straight into a group of apes.

They shouted at her, grabbing her and forcing her to the floor, pulling off her mask to gasps of horror. She struggled against them but one of them hit her around the head with a pail.

When she woke, she was in a cage, locked the same as the animals. A man was standing outside, watching her thoughtfully.

“We could make it an exhibition. The Amazing Lizard Lady!” he clapped his hands together. “Dress it in a gown of some sorts. I’ll sort out the advertising.” He motioned to his men who unlocked the cage warily. She stood proud and aloof as they grabbed her clothes from her and tugged a grubby shift over her head. She didn’t say a word as they retreated and locked the cage again. She had thought apes were barbarous and this was the proof. The Doctor had been wrong and she cursed her hopefulness. Her sisters were dead and her future was in a cage. She could fight, of course. She could eat them even, if they came to her cage again. She could wait, plot revenge but if escape from this cage merely led to another, what was the point? The Doctor had warned that way lay death. And Vastra, despite her current conditions, had no wish to die. It seemed the only way for her to survive in this ape filled world was like this. Resignation swallowed her whole as the chill of the night crept into her bones and she curled up in the bed of straw in the corner of the cage.

From that day forth she did not leave the cage. They fed up her through the bars as they did the lions, with chunks of raw meat which tasted sour. They took away dirty straw and replaced it by herding her with staffs to the back of the cage. The summer was tolerable, the first winter nearly killed her. Afterwards they gave her warmer bedding.

The first anniversary of April, she found herself almost glad that her sisters had perished, if the future they would have had was this one. She mourned by night, wailing softly after the circus men had gone home. Never before in her life had she felt so alone. Always there had been her clutch, her sisters, other Silurians around her. A Silurian alone meant death. She wondered why death hadn’t come for her.

She stayed in her cage for three years and in all that time she spoke to no-one. She hissed and snapped at the apes that passed in front of her but was wary of the staffs of the apes and crouched quietly whenever they came into her cage.
She saw another Doctor, she knew it was him, his scent was unmistakeable somehow. He looked…
younger. Dressed in a straw boater and a ridiculous pullover. A young woman was with him. He
stared at her horrified and later that night, the young woman snuck into the circus and blasted a
hole in her cage. The Doctor beckoned her out, reassuring her once more that he knew what she
was and that however she’d ended up there, he would rescue her. When she didn’t move the young
woman hopped into her cage and tried to drag her out, the Doctor begging her to hurry as the blast
from her “nitro-9” had alerted people within the vicinity.

Vastra hissed at being touched and chattered out a string of Silurian curses.

“I don’t understand!” the young woman cried helplessly, letting her go. “Why won’t she come
Doctor?”

The Doctor looked at her, eyes piercing her. “I will return for you. And that is a promise.” He
doffed his boater at her and then ran as men burst into the tent.

She watched them disinterestedly as they stared at her in amazement, swiftly ushering her into
another cage, confused at her composure.

“He did come back didn’t he. Like ‘e said ‘e would.” Jenny was now wrapped in several towels and
sat on their bed, the bath water long having grown cold.

“Yes, he turned up once more in a leather jacket, carrying the scent of grief. He bought my freedom.
The first night he took me inside the TARDIS, so that I would be able to understand and speak the
ape English. I duly informed him afterwards that I would only step inside the TARDIS again to save
his life. There is something...unnerving about having something so vast telepathically communicate
with you. They were rather amazed that I was intelligent. He stayed on for a while, as a juggler. I
believe you met him.” Vastra continued talking as she delicately combed Jenny’s damp hair.

Jenny nodded, causing a tut of irritation from Vastra, who held her head to still it once more.

“But even with my freedom, I was still in a cage, day after day, all the years I worked for the circus.
Everyone who came through, who saw me, they were afraid of me, or laughed at me, or were
disgusted by me. I was a spectacle.”

“Did something ‘appen?” Jenny turned round

Vastra had only ever seen those brown eyes hold so much fury once before. And that had been at
her.

“Occasionally some group of young men or other would come to the circus after it’d closed and try
and get in my tent. They usually got thrown out by the warders or the strong man. They wanted to
hunt me or kill me…I don’t know.” Vastra stared at her hands where they had fallen into her lap,
still holding the comb. “Once, I hadn’t yet left my cage and they came in, rattling the bars, jeering at
me. They tried the lock and found it open, they left it open for me after the Doctor freed me…” she
paused, distracted by a strange chattering sound. It was teeth rattling against one another in helpless
rage. “They were not as capable as the circus men and drunk no less. The ringmaster passed it off
that they’d broken into the lion cage when the police came to investigate.” Vastra smiled
humourlessly as she turned Jenny’s head again. “They didn’t want a scandal I suppose.” She began
combing once more.

“You ate ‘em?” Jenny asked flatly, more of a statement than a question.
“Yes.”

Jenny turned her head to the side, looked at Vastra out the corner of her eye, her expression unreadable and uttered just one word. “Good.” She looked back at the wall once more.

Vastra raised her eye ridges but remembered Jenny enquiring why she didn’t eat the circus people. Apparently the little ape’s morals truly were flawed. “And you?” she asked, curious if there was a similar awful story to Jenny’s aversion.

“Me?” Jenny looked puzzled. “Nuffin’ like that ‘appened. S’just…” she fiddled with the bed sheets with her left hand. “S’intimate y’know.”

“And a bath is not?”

“A bath is just washin’. An’ you only did me hair an’ back.”

“Rather than doing you?” Vastra grinned, flashing her teeth at Jenny. “But I suppose, even if it did raise Doctor Anderson’s eyebrows, it is at least explainable if someone walked in?” it was a shot in the dark and judging by the way Jenny’s shoulders slumped, an accurate one.

“I used to be look-out for me mates. The two girls in the reformatory. Whenever they wanted to be alone. The time they got caught, I wasn’t there. They were stupid. ‘ow c’n you explain it away when yer caught like that?”

“With the metaphorical and literal trousers down. And you think a pair of drawers would stop suspicion?” Vastra leaned in and whispered in Jenny’s ear.

“Not really, no.” Jenny shrugged.

“The last vestige? Of respectability?”

“I s’pose. I’d be completely vulnerable.”

“And you don’t trust me?”

Jenny laughed. “Yor a man-eatin’ lizard. An’ I trust yer with me life. S’the rest of the world I don’t trust.”

“How cynical.” Vastra mused, idly plaiting Jenny’s hair. She had learnt that it made Jenny’s hair go curly and she rather liked the brushing out the waves in the morning. When she’d finished, Jenny leaned back into Vastra’s lap with a soft sound of contentment.

“Jenny?” Vastra stroked Jenny’s hair, wondering if the ape would fall asleep on her.

“Mm. When you ‘old me like this, I feel so safe.” Jenny murmured.

Vastra tensed and moved off the bed.

“Oi!” Jenny slid off the bed, clutching the towels to her as she followed the Silurian. Vastra was hissing, tugging at her head crests, agitated, even more so than earlier in the kitchen.

“It is foolish.” Vastra muttered to herself.

“Wot is?”

“To feel safe. With me. To trust me with your life. I could not keep you safe.”
Jenny glanced at her arm in its cast. “I don’t think anyone could against the likes of Croup and Vandemar.”

“They hurt you!” Vastra cried. “To get to me!”

“So I make you vulnerable.” Jenny scoffed. “I c’n look after meself fine enough, y’know. ‘specially with all the trainin’ you’ve been givin’ me.”

“It wasn’t enough!”

“It never bleedin’ will be!” Jenny snapped back. “So learn to live with that. Unless you really are gonna eat everyone, learn to live with that!” she took a breath and walked over to Vastra. “Ain’t it enough? Just fer this time, this moment? Ter feel safe, with you.”

Vastra looked shamefaced at Jenny. “I would wish to keep you safe always.”

“That impossible.”

“In this moment then.” Vastra smiled sadly and gently held Jenny to her.

“You don’ hafta hold me like I’m made o’ glass.” Jenny grumbled and then promptly let out an ‘oof’ as Vastra squeezed her tightly in retaliation. “Ow! Careful of me arm!”

“Ha.” The smile became a grin.

Vastra held Jenny as the young woman slept, the broken arm cradled against Vastra's stomach with care. It’d taken a while for Jenny to be able to sleep; the pain had troubled her so. Vastra had stroked her head, wishing she could send soothing thoughts of sleep into Jenny’s mind. But she did not believe apes capable of telepathy and she did not wish to explain what such a connection might mean.

Chapter End Notes

Look Elizabeth Garrett Anderson up. Badass woman. But don't do opium or opium derivatives...
8 Weeks To Wait In Winter

Chapter Summary

Jenny gets bored again.

Slight spoilers if you've never read the Sally Lockhart series, partsics beyond Ruby in the Smoke.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

During the three weeks of January that Jenny’s arm was in cast for, Vastra learnt a vast deal more about her little ape. Some she’d already guessed; such as the fact that Jenny did not like to be idle for too long. It was somewhat of a re-run of when they’d first moved into 13 Paternoster Row. Only this time, Vastra struggled to find something to appease Jenny.

Rides in the cab jolted her arm too much even with Parker’s son’s most careful driving. He’d passed his interview well enough that he’d started his employ and was turning out to be a gruff person who didn’t seem overly interested in anything except horses and food. The Irregulars eyed with him with suspicion the first few times he sat in the corner, slicing chunks off a piece of cooked meat and eating them with his knife.

He had Parker’s same accepting nature and batted not an eyelid at the fact that a widow lived so close with her maid and investigated crimes and ran a small gang of street urchins to help them. He won Soljer over by giving him a new knife with which to whittle and after that the urchins took Cris’s lead in accepting him.

Vastra wouldn’t let Jenny train at first, even with her left hand. She compromised that Jenny could practice the basic stances, as that required leg work and could be done with a light weight stick rather than the heavy wooden swords. She sniffed and conceded that practicing with both hands would give Jenny an advantage in combat as well but watched like a hawk for any sign of pain at which she promptly made Jenny stretch and finished the session.

Jenny argued frequently as to what they would do if a case came up, or Croup and Vandemar returned. But Vastra countered that the Doctor had dealt with Croup and Vandemar and the New Year was currently turning out to be very quiet in so far as cases went, which merely increased Jenny’s grumpiness.

“I would have thought, following all the excitement, you’d be glad of a break!” Vastra commented as Jenny sulked in the living room chair, when even crocheting turned out to hurt her hand too much. But Vastra too was finding the quietness difficult to tolerate. It seemed all the criminals of London were having a lazy new year, or the police were being more efficient than usual.

Determined to do something, Jenny tried doing things with her left hand that she would normally do with her right and Vastra ended up watching, intrigued as Jenny tried left handed drawing, left handed cooking, left handed writing and left handed sewing.

The drawing was messy; Jenny hadn’t been the most artistic person beforehand. The hand writing
illegible, even more so than usual. The sewing turned out crooked and loose and the cooking Mrs Parker said she’d take over until Jenny recovered, coming in early to feed the Irregulars and make up something that could be easily reheated for dinner. Vastra, rather diplomatically for her, did not comment on any of this but merely encouraged Jenny in whatever happened to be her next project but after the attempt to sew her sleeves failed, Jenny rather gave up on it and resigned herself to boredom.

12th January 1888

To cheer her up, Vastra took her to see George, as several of her dresses now had a sleeve cut in two on them so she could get them over her cast and she would need new ones once the cast was removed.

“You been in the wars then ey Miss Jenny?” he commented as he measured her once more but neither Jenny or Vastra felt like explaining.

“Happened during a case.” was all Jenny offered. She hoped the dresses would have slightly less lace, but they were still first and foremost maid’s dresses. He made her caps as well.

“To play the part, it is well to look the part.” He told her as he draped a new apron over her head. “There. The most ordinary maid in London. But we know better ey?” he added hastily as he saw Jenny’s expression.

It didn’t improve Jenny’s mood but with the recent visit from Queen Victoria, she thought more on what would happen. Perhaps, after all, there was a certain amount of wisdom in it all. Being ordinary gave protection. Even with their cases, no-one thought much of a maid wending her way in and out of crowds, as if on errands. And people were always more careless around the invisible servants of society. She knew that from her times as an urchin and she knew it was what made the Irregulars so effective at their work as well.

“S’pose I should concentrate on calling you ma’am as well then.” Jenny sighed as they made their way home in the cab, Parker driving them for a change as they’d promised no high speed action.

“So long as you don’t call me that in the bedroom.” Vastra grinned and Jenny coughed, going red in the face.

“I’m just thinkin’.” She said, when she’d recovered.

“On your friends again? I suppose you are right. There are more things to be walked in on than just…”

“Right ma’am. If we’re gonna keep it as a ruse.” Jenny sighed. “People with cases come callin’ to the house after all.”

“The Irregulars know at least.” Vastra tried. “And the Doctor.”

“An’ ‘e don’t like it either does ‘e.” Jenny snorted as the cab pulled into the yard and she jumped down, striding indoors.

Vastra hurried after her and caught her in the hallway. “I think it would be fairer to say, he is thinking of himself, not this.”

“’ow’d yer mean?” Jenny flung her cloak onto its hook, holding out her left hand to take Vastra’s cloak off her as well.
“With Rose. He was foolish. He wasn’t honest.” Vastra hung it up herself. “When he first met us, he imagined friendship between us, not...he is wary of both of us getting hurt.”

“Croup and Vandemar. They ‘urt me. Cos it was that easy to figure out.” Jenny stared at the coat rack thoughtfully.

“I do not wish for you to be hurt again.” Vastra said in a quiet voice, thinking that that wasn’t precisely what the Doctor had been implying.

“Well then. S’pose I’d better keep up with the lace an’ ma’ams.” Jenny sighed.

Although she was agreeing to it, Vastra could sense that the young woman was far from happy with it as an arrangement. Her heart dropped slightly. She went to pull Jenny to her but the young woman moved away. A phrase echoed in Vastra’s mind. “Maybe I don’t want the world to make sense.” She could understand Jenny’s frustration now. But apes were violent if it didn’t. And Jenny had been hurt. It felt natural to seek Jenny out but if she made a habit of it, how much harder would it be to keep up the façade in public? How much was she willing to risk for Jenny’s safety? “I would go back to the circus before I would see you hurt like that again, little ape.” She had once told Jenny. But it felt a lot harder to say “I would rather not touch you than see you hurt like that again.” Easier to endure pain than to forego pleasure.

That night, Jenny deliberately stripped down to her drawers, and then as Vastra watched curiously from the bed, removed those too and straddled Vastra as she lay back. The Silurian caught on to her urgency and hunger, as if it were a tangible taste in the air. She had promised Jenny here at least. Complete vulnerability here then, to make up for the loss of closeness elsewhere.

19th January 1888

Despite such pleasant pastimes, Jenny finally had enough of being stuck indoors and, after a brief argument with Vastra, drifted aimlessly through the streets of London. She walked down Burton Street where she saw a small-ish shop declaring itself to be Garland & Lockhart, Photographers and an idea struck her head. She went in, bought half the shop on recommendation from the gentleman who was running it (who informed her the entire shop had been renovated after a fire had burnt the building) and spent an entire afternoon listening and watching intently as the equipment was demonstrated and she was regaled with the full history of the shop and its proprietors. She thought to herself that she would’ve liked to meet Sally Lockhart. She sounded the Adventurer type herself. And she’d made an unconventional lifestyle work out, with a few tragedies and mishaps.

Vastra raised her eye ridges when Jenny arrived home, looking slightly dusty but happier than she had been for the last two weeks. Whatever the ape had been doing it seemed to have worked.

20th January 1888

The next day, after half a dozen wooden boxes arrived at their back door, she followed Jenny into a small back room off the kitchen. The Paternoster Irregulars and Parker and his son were roped into carrying the boxes through.

Vastra had been considering making it her study; they didn’t really use it for anything but Jenny immediately started setting up equipment and storing chemicals and books on the welsh dresser in there. She hung a line from one side of the room to the other, enlisting Vastra’s help to tie it up.

Vastra did so wordlessly, until eventually Jenny seemed to have set up a small black box on a tripod with a black curtain hanging behind it. She ducked underneath, carefully holding her broken arm to her, and tugged on a piece of string with her left hand. There was a loud crack, a bright flash of light
that made Vastra recoil and then an acrid burning smell.

Jenny re-emerged looking victorious, her eyes shining with delight and then spent the rest of the day mixing chemicals, quite literally singlehandedly. Vastra left her to it, lurking in the background, poring over the books with a mild interest.

Finally, Jenny declared satisfaction and Vastra and the urchins gathered in the doorway as a sheet of paper was dipped first in one tray of clear liquid and then the others before being hung up on the line.

“It’s the Madame!” Thrupp was the first to see it.

“You took a picture of me. How flattering.” Vastra said drily.

“Welllll I tried drawin’ yer but that din’t turn out too well did it ma’am?” Jenny pointed out.

24th January 1888

A few days later they made the journey to Elizabeth Garrett Anderson’s New Hospital for Women and Children, where the physician removed Jenny’s cast with a vicious looking set of scissors.

Jenny marvelled at how light her arm felt but Vastra and Elizabeth both sternly reminded her there was another month to go before Jenny could start training again.

Her arm twinged more with the cast off, although she was glad to be able to wash it again as it had gotten itchy beneath the plaster of Paris.

13th February 1888

With only a week to go before Jenny could once again start training, the anniversary of their meeting came round. Again.

Vastra woke in the early afternoon to find a rather melancholy Jenny sat in their bedroom window, one leg hugged to her chest, the other dangling down off the windowsill, watching the snow from behind a curtain. She looked charmingly relaxed as the leg idly swung, her skirts in disarray.

“What’s wrong my dear?” she asked, coming to stand behind Jenny. She hissed in distaste at the snow, the cold was always her mortal enemy and had resulted in her unusual drowsiness. Jenny kept all the fires cheerfully blazing at least.

“Nuffin’.” Jenny shrugged, causing Vastra alarm, having learned that lesson already. She settled in the chair below the window, looking up at Jenny.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked firmly.

With a sigh and a slightly caught out look, Jenny replied “Snow.”

“It was snowing like this when we first met.”

“Mm.”

Vastra turned to her partner and stared at her. A year, and then a little extra time in Japan, had given her an ability to read Jenny Flint and Jenny Flint was currently not saying something. Besides, “Nuffin’” meant something big. “Out with it, my dear.”

Jenny suppressed a grin at Vastra’s persistence. “Bein’ on the street, snow killed you. But you’d still
play in it all the same. Jus’ like all the other kids. Build snowmen, have snowball fights. But afterwards you suffered for it. So it weren’t really fun. Ain’t no fun getting’ cold an’ wet on purpose, ‘less you can get warm again after.”

“And now you can? If you are wishing to play, by all means.” Vastra gestured outside.

Jenny eyed her. “I’m eighteen.”

“I told you before, play does not stop when you become an adult, and you are not yet fully grown.”

“Well you come and play then, if it’s so important.” The ‘not yet fully grown’ had stung.

“In the snow?” Vastra snorted.

“You can get warm again after.” Jenny’s glare challenged her.

The Silurian shuddered at the thought of getting so cold but if it meant Jenny played in the snow and cheered up a little.

“Well.” She wrapped herself up in her warmest clothes, even pulling on the crocheted hat Jenny had made for her over her head crests and stepped out into the snowy afternoon, as overcast and dark as if it were already evening. She huddled into herself as Jenny came out after her. She watched as Jenny stuck a tongue out to catch the flakes and followed suit, gasping at the coldness on her tongue.

She continued to watch as Jenny laboriously made a snowperson or at least a snow pile with another snow pile on top. She decided to help the woman with her artistic endeavours, feeling the snow freeze her hands and together they made a somewhat respectable snowperson to stand in the courtyard.

Jenny stamped her feet and blew on her hands as she stood back to observe their creation. Vastra’s teeth were chattering by this time and Jenny slid under her large cloak and wrapped it round both of them. Even through several layers of cold and damp clothes, Vastra could still feel the human’s heat and huddled towards it, her body already starting to shut down. Jenny manoeuvred in front of her and drew the Silurian’s arms about herself in an attempt to help. Judging by Vastra’s sigh, it was appreciated and she grinned.

“Come on, it’s bleedin’ freezin’.” She took Vastra’s hand and led her indoors, the Silurian barely able to move and keening in pain. The stairs were impossible so Jenny dragged her into the living room and stripped them both down to their chemises, ignoring the ache in her wrist from the cold. Vastra huddled in front of the fire, hissing and keening whilst Jenny ran upstairs to grab all the blankets she could find, hastily draping them around them both, creating a little fort against the cold. She cursed Vastra for not telling her and herself for not realising. With the fire to her back and Jenny’s back to her front, Vastra felt cocooned in a sudden influx of warmth.

“What if someone were to walk in now?” she murmured, drifting back from the loss of consciousness that had threatened her. They’d been so careful of late.

“I’d tell ‘em the truth. I let my stupid mistress get ‘erself too cold an’ I’m warmin’ ‘er up again.” Jenny snorted.

“I’ll have to get George to make me some fur lined cloaks for winter.” Vastra yawned.

Jenny waited for her to elaborate but felt Vastra’s breathing even out and realised she’d fallen asleep. She had no particular urge to move, her body creating warmth for her and she snuggled down more comfortably within the blankets, aware that her explanation would probably not hold up to any
scrutiny. She vacillated between caution, annoyance that such caution was necessary and the feeling of comfortable security that Vastra’s presence imbued her with. She remembered the twists and turns of Sally Lockhart’s story and in the warmth of the blankets and the embrace of Vastra, she settled for the latter feeling. She was with Vastra and that was enough. For now. A thought flared but was tamped down by drowsiness, although it was logged all the same. That Sally Lockhart had left it too late to marry her first lover.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone read Phillip Pullman’s Sally Lockhart series? Recognise Garland and Lockhart? XD They did a tv series of it with Billie Piper and Matt Smith co-incidentally.

Also, not that kind of snow.

Also, also, ooooooh. But that’s not coming for a while yet.
Chapter Summary

Another Surprise Guest

Chapter Notes

The author retains the right to overuse the “being walked in on” trope and regrets nothing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

14th February 1888

It felt lazy to not move upon waking but she felt safe and secure and thus nothing told her to move. Here in this cocoon of blankets, with a solid comforting presence to her back, she rose into a sleepy stupor.

Something nuzzled her hair.

“G’mornin’.” She yawned, blinking and trying to get up. Determined arms encircled her and pulled her closer. She grinned and wriggled around, causing clicks of annoyance. “We gotta get up at some point.” She looked pointedly into filmy blue eyes. They had been through this routine regularly over the last week as it had snowed almost continuously. A grunt was her only reply and the Silurian burrowed further into the blankets.

Jenny rolled her eyes and disentangled herself from the rather familiar argument, getting up to fix the fire and put some tea on. She felt slightly stiff from having slept on the floor. She laid out some coins on the table for the Irregulars to get their own breakfast. Parker and his wife had the day off, it being Valentine’s day, and Jenny wanted to retreat back to the pile of blankets. She hoped they were smart enough to take the coins as a Do Not Disturb sign.

When she came back with tea, Vastra was still invisible under the blankets and she delicately started peeling them away, folding them carefully into a neat pile as she did so. Half way through this task, a green scaled arm reached out and pulled about three of them back into the ‘fort’. Jenny glowered and began stripping them off faster, culminating in a tug of war between her and a still half buried Vastra over one particular blanket. Vastra let go suddenly and Jenny toppled over. She hissed in pain as her arm was jolted and flung the blanket from her. A blue eye was now visible, half annoyed, half amused. Jenny gently lifted the blanket off of Vastra’s head and was ambushed, rolled into the pile of blankets. She fought to extricate herself but had become entangled and flopped backwards with a sigh. Vastra nuzzled into her side, drifting back into a doze, and Jenny unconsciously reached down and stroked the Silurian’s head spikes as she would someone’s hair. She found herself unceremoniously pinned and froze. Vastra’s blue eyes blazed but not with anger and it was not fear that sent a jolt between Jenny’s legs.

She swallowed. “Well thas one way to get yer up then.” She joked, trying to control her breathing.
Vastra blinked the instinctive reaction from herself. Her eyes narrowed and she smirked, moving her hands to the floor and lowering herself on top of Jenny. “You were saying?” she hissed into Jenny’s ear.

To Vastra’s puzzled delight, Jenny threw her head back and laughed the same captivating laugh that Vastra had first heard just under a year ago.

“Was it that amusing?”

Jenny kissed her in reply, leaving Vastra completely baffled as the young woman got up, wrapping herself in a blanket in protection against the chilly air before wandering into the kitchen.

Vastra followed, a little put out by now. As Jenny shuffled about, making a pot of tea, Vastra caught her by the waist.

“You are happy?”

“Yes, I’m happy, you stupid lizard.” Jenny rolled her eyes that Vastra always asked it as a question. Surely she hadn’t been that grumpy because of her arm?

Vastra kissed her, tugging Jenny’s blanket open to come inside it, backing her against the table, lifting her on to it. She began kissing her way down Jenny’s neck and the young woman tilted her head back to allow Vastra more room. An idle thought floated across her mind that even the Paternoster Irregulars would take some explaining to if they walked in now, prompted by the sound of a voice and people walking down the corridor. An alarm warning went off in her head but her body was too busy responding to Vastra to pay attention to it.

“Do they never answer the door then OH MY GAWD!”

Such a loud shout jolted both Jenny and Vastra back into reality. Vastra looked up in surprise, her arms still holding a blanket round Jenny, who slid hastily off the table.

The red haired woman who had issued the shout had turned around and run right back into the Doctor who blushed as red as the woman’s hair.

“Whoops! Sorry Vastra. Jenny. I did knock but you never answer! One day I’ll just park the TARDIS right in your living room!”

“Doctor!” the red-haired woman thumped him

“Oh! Yes. This is Donna by the way. Donna Noble. Donna, this is Jenny Flint and Vastraoww!” he cried as she slapped him around the back of the head.

“You great flaming pillock.” She tutted and dragged him out the kitchen by his ear.

Jenny buried her head in Vastra’s shoulder with a groan. “’e don’t arf ‘ave timin’ that man…”

“Yes. Well shall we…”

“A blanket nest in front of the fire!” they heard the Doctor exclaim.

Jenny darted out the kitchen into the living room to find the Doctor examining the pile of blankets.

“It weren’t nuffin’ like that!” she told him hastily, grabbing a blanket off him. “We…went out in the snow an’ madame…Vastra, she got too cold.”
“So you made a blanket fort to warm her up again? Brilliant!” he grinned at her stupidly and she gave up.

Vastra came in, folding the blanket she’d had wrapped around her. “Are you going to help clear it up or not, Doctor?”

“Think I’ll leave it.” He flushed slightly and stood up. “Shall we make the tea?” he inclined his head towards the kitchen, raising an eyebrow in a hint. Vastra looked at Jenny and saw her watchful expression and then shook her head. She picked up another blanket and started to fold it calmly.

“If you wish to make a cup, I’m sure you know where the kitchen is.”

Jenny paused in folding the blanket she’d taken off of the Doctor to blink at Vastra. The Silurian always talked to the Doctor when he came.

“Right. Well, I’ll go put the kettle on.” The Doctor sauntered out.

Donna looked between them all.

“What was all that about?” she asked.

“We are old friends. Whenever we meet, we usually have so much to discuss.” Vastra explained.

“How old?” Donna asked, looking Vastra up and down, as if she thought the Silurian were a dinosaur.

“I am from a time before humanity even existed.” Vastra tried to stare down at Donna but the woman was nearly as tall as she was. Vastra was beginning to feel uncomfortable in just her chemise. In front of Jenny was one thing but now the haze of the morning had cleared, she was beginning to be aware that they had been foolish and reckless. She collected the pile of blankets and went upstairs.

“So... You and the Lizard from the Land before Time.” Donna commented as she shifted around to help Jenny fold up the rest of the blankets. Jenny went red which merely made Donna laugh.

“S’Alright. Travellin’ with ‘im you learn not to worry about species or age gaps. Age gaps become a bit of a non-thing what with time travel. I was engaged to some bloke who tried to off me for a giant spider. And then there was this romance between a space wasp and this woman. All goes down.” She waved it off. Jenny stared in mild awe at such a blasé attitude but decided that she liked Donna all the better for it. “Unless you’re an ancient being in disguise as well?”

Jenny shook her head. “Just a normal human.”

“Me too. Feel a bit special travelling with the Doctor though. You meet a lot of his companions?” Donna asked, a little furtively.

“A few.” Jenny shrugged. The other companions had not exactly met with the happiest of ends. She wondered if Donna knew anything about them. Clearly she knew there was a turnover rate.

“Go on adventures through Victorian London?” Donna wiggled her shoulders and laughed.

“A couple of times.”

“Any aliens in Victorian London then?” Donna asked, looking furtively around the living room.

“I met the Kraal once. With...” that had been the other Doctor. But the same Doctor. That still hurt Jenny’s head occasionally.
“Oh yeah? What were they like?” Donna skated over Jenny’s pause.

“They tried to kidnap a prince and then the Doctor convinced them to become a Republic instead. He told ‘em I was the greatest warrior on the planet an’ they went off believin’ it.” Jenny snorted.

Donna made a face of faux shock and awe. “I s’pose I’d better watch meself!” she laughed. “Who was that with then?”

“Rose.” The name did not come easily off of Jenny’s tongue and she busied herself smoothing down the blanket she’d just folded.

Donna’s face became serious. “Rose huh?”

Jenny nodded. She’d met Rose and liked her. And she understood that Rose was lost. But the rather hushed and serious tones her name got spoken in now didn’t suit the bubbly blonde-haired laughing woman she’d said goodbye to only a few months ago.

They folded up the remaining blankets in silence until the Doctor came back in with a tea tray as they were folding the last one and Vastra returned from upstairs, now fully dressed.

The four of them sat awkwardly in the living room until, realising that she was still in her chemise, Jenny excused herself to go get dressed. Donna followed her out, ostentatiously exclaiming a wish to see some Victorian fashion.

“They need to have their old timer natter right?” Donna whispered as they made their way upstairs.

“More tension in there than in a rubber band aimed at someone’s crotch.”

Jenny snorted with laughter. “e won’t be comfortable til ‘e’s ‘ad a chance to ‘ave a go an’ talk through everythin’. She agreed once she’d recovered.

“Ohhh. So Vastra’s like his therapist?” Donna followed her along the corridor, looking about her with interest.

“Therapist?” Jenny glanced over her shoulder.

“Someone you confess all your problems to and pay ‘em to listen.” Donna paused to inspect the books on the bookshelves that lined the corridor.

“I don’t think Vastra gets paid.” Jenny opened the door to their bedroom.

“Not that she needs it.” Donna followed her inside without hesitation, raising her eyes at the four poster bed they’d acquired. “Nice place you two got ‘ere.”

“Yeah.” Jenny sat down awkwardly at the foot of the bed.

“’ow’d you get the money to afford it?” Donna plopped down next to her, bouncing slightly to test the springs.

Jenny debated for a second but she trusted Donna. Besides, Donna seemed to have a knack for getting things out of people. “We robbed a few banks.” She stared at her feet.

Donna stared at her in impressed shock, real this time. “Right on Jenny Flint!” She held a hand up in the air and then had to explain about “high fives”. Jenny caught on and duly slapped the hand as hard as she could with her non-injured hand, making Donna wince and shake it.

Donna, Jenny decided, had no sense of propriety. She questioned people until they gave in and told
her everything, walked into people’s bedrooms without thinking, was impressed at bank robberies and didn’t mind as Jenny got dressed. She also chatted almost non-stop about her adventures with the Doctor but Jenny found them all fascinating.

“First time I met ‘im though, the very first adventure, I was about to be married an’ ‘e whisked me off as I was walkin’ down the aisle.”

“‘e never!” Jenny paused in doing up the eyelets on her corset. The Doctor really just didn’t seem the marrying kind.

“Well not quite but it put a halt to my wedding plans let me tell you! Just as well really. That was the bloke who threw me over for Spider From The Centre Of The Earth. So what about you and Lizard Woman?” Donna leaned backwards on the bed. “You married? Planning to?”

Jenny tried to imagine Vastra in a wedding dress and failed miserably. “Not yet.” She said after a while. “I think thas a bit in the future y’know?” The word didn’t surprise her as much as it had when Vastra had first said it. A fleeting spark of longing fired up for a second and then was gone.

“Well, I suppose in Victorian times, can’t really get married anyways can you.” Donna tutted and sighed.

“No.” Jenny agreed, fixing her hair in a bun once more.

“Reckon they’ve ‘ad long enough to natter now?”

“Bad luck if they ain’t. C’mon.” Jenny led Donna back downstairs again after a final brush to smooth her skirt.

When they walked back into the living room, Vastra was sitting rigidly, glowering at the Doctor who was tapping nervously on his cup. Apparently the natter hadn’t gone too well. The Doctor darted up off his chair at the sight of Donna.

“There you are Donna! Well, best be off. Places to see, people to do, things to be, something like that. Coming?” He had already rushed past them into the hallway.

“I guess I am.” Donna stared at him suspiciously. She gave Jenny a squeeze of a hug before following him out. “Bye Jenny.” She called over her shoulder with a wave.

Jenny turned to Vastra the moment she heard the door slam. “Wot was you glowerin’ at ‘im about?”

Vastra stalked past her and upstairs, slamming the bedroom door behind her.

Jenny took a deep breath and let it out slowly to quell her irritation. It was very tempting to cuss them both and do her own storming out. She hadn’t seen Jess in a while, perhaps it was time for a visit. But she was also hungry.

Jenny wondered what they’d argued about as she fried herself some bacon, sausage and eggs. Her and Vastra being together? She suspected the Doctor didn’t exactly approve. Or was it something else, like the whereabouts of Martha. As she was deciding whether to leave Vastra to it or follow her the Silurian stomped back downstairs again, flinging open the kitchen door.

“You alright ma’am?” Jenny asked lightly as she flipped her bacon over.
“I don’t care what that ridiculous man says! I am more than capable of making rational decisions.” Vastra spat, stalking around the kitchen.

“Like stormin’ upstairs an’ slammin’ the door y’mean ma’am?” Jenny managed to make it sound like an innocent question.

“I came back down!” Vastra turned in an affronted swirl of skirts to look at Jenny. Her head jerked back with a blink as she realised the young woman was teasing her.

“Wot was the Doctor so huffy about anyways?” Jenny emptied the contents of the frying pan onto a plate.

Vastra went a darker shade of green. “He warns me every time, that I should be more careful. Yet he never follows his own advice.”

“We ‘ave bin bein’ careful. Ain’t I bin sayin’ ma’am all the time? Wearin’ these ‘orrible lace-y dresses instead of me waistcoat? S’just our luck ‘e walks in the one time we…got a bit carried away.” Jenny sighed, sitting down to her breakfast.

“Snogging on the kitchen table was his description.” Vastra sniffed haughtily.

“What ‘appened with Martha anyways?” Jenny cut in hastily, her voice a tone higher than usual.

“She fell in love with him, he destroyed her entire life, she saved the world. Quite the norm it seems for a companion of the Doctor. Although at least she left him before she too was lost.” Vastra frowned.

There was a pause as Jenny digested this information and some bacon.

“Din’t ‘e offer you to be his companion?”

“Only the once, when we first met. I refused, quite wisely. The two of us are…too similar alas.”

Jenny frowned at a piece of egg on her fork, considering this comparison. “I don’ think you’re nuffin’ like ‘im.” She said decisively before eating the egg.

“No?” Vastra raised an eye ridge in surprise at the vehemence.

“Welllllll, fer all ‘is warnings to be careful, ‘e’s lost two of ‘is now. You still got me.” Jenny shoved her now empty plate away, folded her arms and stuck her chin up.

Usually Vastra’s smug smile annoyed Jenny, but this time the “cat that got the cream” look on Vastra’s face merely made her lips quirk in their customary grin too.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Jenny…one day you will meet River Song for the first time. I am so looking forward to that.
A Rat Problem

Chapter Summary

Another arc. I'll try and make this one shorter this time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Vastra decided she too wanted a cooked breakfast but after remembering the fiasco of the last time she’d tried to make breakfast with the Irregulars, wisely left it to Jenny. Jenny grumbled slightly about it but once, chatting to Mrs Parker, she’d been informed of the time “yon mistress tried to make breakfast once whilst you were away”. Jenny liked her frying pan. It was good for brandishing at people and she didn’t want a hole in it.

She tipped the sausage and bacon onto Vastra’s plate and the Silurian’s tongue shot out to grab a sausage and recoiled at the heat.

“Yes. It’s hot.” Jenny shook her head and then frowned in thought. “The Irregulars ain’t bin round yet.”

“Perhaps they know.” Vastra shrugged, taking the knife and fork Jenny handed to her with an air of contempt, as if she considered the utensils inferior.

“Know what?” Jenny went to the sink to start soaking the pan.

“That it is, according to the Doctor, Valentine’s Day.” Vastra winced as the knife scraped on the bottom of the plate.


“Mm. He apologised when I told him what date it was. But told me it was still no excuse for such reckless behaviour.” Vastra snorted and delicately picked up a slice of bacon and put it in her mouth whole.

“I don’ think we was that reckless.” Jenny slid back into her seat.

“Possibly a little. Imagine if Parker had walked in.”

Jenny froze, a look of mild terror on her face and Vastra continue eating her breakfast, observing the rictus with amusement.

“If’n the wind changes wiv yer face like that, it sticks y’know.” Peggy commented as she nonchalantly walked in. She’d been turning up with the Irregulars regularly since the escapade with the Hound from London Below. Jenny had noticed that the Irregulars treated her with a wary respect. Possibly something to do with her trained rat that sat on her shoulder and slept in her ragged coat and looked at people with a knowing expression. According to Peggy, when she’d finally introduced it, its name was Anagesic and had spouted off a number of strict rules. Namely, no touching, no stroking, utmost politeness in addressing and absolutely no screaming. Or throwing things.
The rat stared intently at Jenny for a second before bounding down Peggy’s arm onto the table, sitting at the edge of Vastra’s plate with its whiskers quivering. Vastra cautiously gave it a bit of sausage and it sat on its haunches and nibbled it politely.

Peggy tilted her head enquiringly and Jenny shook herself before getting up and taking Vastra’s now empty plate to the sink. Peggy slid into her vacated seat and spread her hands on the table top, entering into a glowering match with Vastra who, despite Peggy warning them about Torchwood, had still not really forgiven the urchin for getting Jenny lost. Neither the Doctor nor Peggy had explained further about Croup and Vandemar but the two hadn’t reappeared so Jenny left it at that.

“There.” Jenny leaned over and handed her a chunk of bread. “Got anythin’ for us?” the question was automatic rather than a serious enquiry. There had been a dearth of cases over the winter months, just as well with her arm still healing and being unable to train.

“Might have.” Peggy said mysteriously through a mouthful of bread. Her rat delicately picked up the crumbs that got sprayed as she did so and ate them.

Jenny and Vastra’s heads jerked in unison at that. Jenny was not the only one who had been bored.

“Might be a bit…Below you.” Peggy grinned and Jenny noticed that her front teeth were not too dissimilar to her rat’s.

“Below?”

“No.” Vastra said firmly, having caught the inference.

“You ain’t even ‘eard wot it is yet. S’a…sort of a missing persons case.”

“Who’s gone missin’?” Jenny asked, ignoring Vastra’s refusal.

“Dunno who it is. Just know they ain’t meant to be in London Below. Certain people there want ‘em out. Well you know what it’s like. Things in London Below that don’t like…visitors. Might draw attention. Thought you might be able to help out.”

“Why?”

“Bit infamous you is, killin’ one of the Isle Dogs.” Peggy waggled her eyebrows as she brushed crumbs off her sleeves for her rat. “Got some attenshun an’ respect. They values that sort of thing in Below.”

“We refuse the case.” Vastra interjected tartly. “Jenny’s arm is not yet fully recovered and I don’t trust anything to do with…Below.”

“You sure?” Peggy’s shoulders slumped. “Well I guess we wouldn’t be able to pay you or nuffin’ either. Fair, fair.” She collected Anagesic and skipped out.

“Oi!” Jenny called after her. “What’d’you refuse for?” She turned on Vastra.

“Exactly as I said. Your arm is not yet fully recovered to go off fighting dogs and goodness knows what else.”

Jenny went to say more but stopped as she noticed Vastra’s twitchiness. Something about Below unnerved Vastra. But still, the young woman disliked the idea of someone lost in that place, as she knew all too well the cost that could be incurred for trespassing there. She went to wash up and mull over how to convince Vastra to take the case when there was a flurry of knocks at the front door.
With a sigh, Jenny wiped her hands on a towel and went to answer it.

“Ah! Good day. Is Madame Vastra about this morning?” It was Gregson. Jenny was shocked; he’d never called on the house before. She hadn’t even known he knew where they lived.

“If you wait here in the hall a second, I’ll just go find ‘er.” Jenny beckoned him in and showed him through into the conservatory.

Vastra was already sat there, veil on. She’d heard the knocks.

“Ah! Madame Vastra. Thank god. We’ve um…well it’s rather important. There’s been a kidnapping. Well we suspect a kidnapping. It’s a little political. Do you know the Prime Minister?”

“Not intimately.”

“It’s his wife.” Gregson said dejectedly. “I’m under a bit of pressure on this one. I have no idea. Well perhaps if you see the scene you’d understand.”

He was sweating, Jenny noticed.

“If you wait a moment, Jenny and I will be out shortly.” Vastra waved him away.


Jenny resisted the urge to thump Gregson in the face for that. She settled for smiling demurely in return with just a hint of contempt as he nodded, bowed to Vastra and walked out, nervously twirling his bowler hat and wiping his forehead.

“Looks like you’ll be takin’ the case after all then.” Peggy poked her head from round the side of a potted plant.

Vastra hissed in alarm at the sudden reappearance.

“Before you go swannin’ off to see this crime scene, you’d best come with me. She’s in Below. But it’s a bit difficult you see. Might need the ‘elp of the Isle Dog Slayer on this one.”

“The Isle wot?”

“The Isle Dog Slayer. S’wot you’re known as in Below.” Peggy bowed mockingly.

Jenny contemplated the fact that she was picking up quite a few titles that she’d never be able to tell people about in regular conversation, what with the Kraal considering her the Great Warrior of Earth as well.

“You want me to go Below?” Vastra sniffed haughtily.

“Nah. Tis Lord Rat Speaker wants to speak to Jenny here. You won’t be needed.”

Vastra took off her veil to glower in a most affronted fashion at the scruffy urchin.

“Well you don’ like Below anyways. And Jenny’s bin before. And you could say as what she’s closer to it then you are. Got connections like. Anyways, this is person’l. I’ll look after ‘er don’t worry. Sides Gregson’s expectin’ you ain’t he. An’ thas how it works right? You be all respectable for the toffs an’ Jenny finds out stuff in the places wot they wouldn’t think to look.”

“I do slightly more than that.” Vastra said in icy tones as she stood up.
Peggy cowered slightly. “I know you does fightin’ too. I seen it. No need ter eat me.”

Jenny stepped in. “P’raps thas best ey? I’ll go find out wot she knows an’ you go meet with Gregson an’ we’ll meet back here.”

“Your arm is not even fully healed.”

“Me arm’s fine.”

“You haven’t trained for months!”

“I killed the Isle Dog with hardly a scrap of it. ‘Sides they ain’t gonna want a maid hangin’ round a Prime Minister’s house. Remember at Scotland Yard?”

Vastra looked Jenny in the eye, saw her determination in the lifted chin and gave up with a heavy sigh. She shot out an arm, lifted Peggy bodily off the ground and held her at eye level.

“If there is so much as one scratch…”

“You’ll eat me?” Peggy’s nose quivered and she hunched into her jacket.

“Not at first.” Vastra snarled.

“Vastra!” Jenny scolded the Silurian, who dropped Peggy, dusted her hands off and picked up her veil once more. Jenny grabbed her arm and pulled her close.

“I’ll be alright. Trust me.”

Vastra sighed again as she saw Jenny’s eyes light up. She’d seen them light up like that before, with that spirit of adventure, when they’d been robbing banks, when Jenny had first come up with the idea of tracking down criminals. She wanted to keep Jenny safe but she could tell that Jenny didn’t particularly want to be kept safe. She settled for a gentle press of her lips against Jenny’s and then walked out to join Gregson, flicking her veil so it settled properly about her shoulders.

Jenny didn’t quite rush to the basement but it was a very fast walk. She changed swiftly into her jodphurs and waistcoat, slinging her sword belt over her head to settle at her waist once more. The weight was comfortable and reassuring; Jenny felt as if she’d been missing a limb and now it had been reattached.

“Ver’ nice.” Peggy said, creeping up behind her once more and admiring her outfit. “I won’t tell ‘er you grinned at the thought of goin’ Below.” She grinned at Jenny’s outraged expression. “C’mon then.”

“How do we get to London Below anyway…” Jenny wasn’t about to fight with her guide as she got dragged back up the basement steps and out the back way of the kitchen onto the streets. For such a skinny scrap, Peggy could pull vehemently enough.

“Without gettin’ into trouble? I takes you to see Lord Rat Speaker. He…wants a word anyways.”

“Why does ‘e…”

“Ah!” Peggy cut her off and Jenny had to puzzle in silence as she was pulled along. She felt invisible in the company of Peggy. They moved like wraiths down back alleys and across rooftops. After climbing down an access ladder that Jenny thought was taking them into the sewers, they finally ended up in a subterranean room so dark Jenny couldn’t see her own hand. All she could hear was a
rustling sound and then a flare of a match blinded her.

After her eyes had recovered, she realised they were surrounded by rats in a large underground cavern. It was filthy and reeked and there were rats everywhere and people more ragged than Peggy were staring at her, looking up from fires. Some of them Jenny wasn’t sure were even human.

“Lord Rat Speaker!” Peggy called out to a shadowy figure sitting on a ledge above the whole scene. “I brought her.”

The figure rose up, its shadow lengthening up the wall before it gently hopped down. As it walked out of the shadows into the light of the fire, Jenny’s eyes went wide in recognition.

“Jenny. It’s been a long time.”

He was older, hair long, eyes piercing and bitter now in a face unshaven with haggard features but Jenny knew him in an instant. Even if she didn’t quite believe it.

“Albie??”

Chapter End Notes

OOHHHHHHHHH who saw that coming? Apart from generally everyone.
Jenny felt hot tears of shock and anger slide down her face as she stared at Albie, mouth agape. There were no tears in his eyes, only a resigned sorrow at her own, as he stared back at her. Anagesic darted from Peggy’s jacket pocket, scuttled across the floor and onto the platform. Albie bent to collect her and the rat wound its way up to his shoulder, where it sat like a monarch. Anagesic squeaked once and the rest of the rat speakers hastily looked to their fires or disappeared into dark holes that Jenny assumed were tunnels. The rats merely kept their beady eyes fixed on Jenny as Albie waited in silence.

“But you got taken.” Jenny said eventually, wiping her eyes on her sleeve. “You…”

“Yes.” His voice held no emotion about the fact.

“Yes.”

Who took yer?” Jenny asked, her rage mounting at the monosyllabic answers.

“The rats.” Albie replied simply.

“An’ you never thought to come back?” Jenny asked furiously. “Left yer family wonderin’ all these years wot ‘ad ‘appened to yer? Left us…” her voice broke.

Albie ducked his head, finally breaking his steady gaze and stared at his feet. Anagesic put a paw on his ear.

“I cannot.” His jaw clenched. “You cannot belong to both worlds.”

“So why dincha come back to ours?” Jenny folded her arms.

“I owed a debt to the rats.”

“Why what ‘appened?” The lack of detail in Albie’s answers was beginning to frustrate Jenny.

“That is a story for another time. When you do not have a case to deal with.” He smiled stiffly. “I fear it would draw unwelcome attention to Below, if the Prime Minister’s wife were lost here. And we in Below have all heard about your…exploits. So I sent Peggy to fetch you. We want you to act as the Upworlder's agent in this matter.”

“You sent Peggy…”

“Yes.”

A suspicion reared its head in Jenny’s mind, interrupting her acerbic answer. “When I met her at the
docks that time…” she narrowed her eyes.

“The case, Jenny. The Prime Minister’s wife.” Albie interrupted curtly. “Time enough for explanations later.” He smiled his stiff smile again, as if he were trying to be caring and failing. “I will not be able to offer you any protection. She has been taken by the Gold Hawks faction. They are in bitter dispute with the Ravens of the Court over territory. And what use is a rat against either? But I can offer you a path there. Do not stray from it.” His tone became stern.

“When you say Gold Hawks and Ravens…”

“Ravens. And Hawks. Big ones. Even bigger than the Isle Dogs.” Albie laughed humourlessly. “Don’t worry, they’re not made of gold. Feathers and flesh as any other bird. Mortal.” He said pointedly, nodding at Jenny’s sword. “Travel by boat down the Stamford Brook, it will take you into their territory. I will send Peggy with you as guide. She has yet to redeem herself for losing you to the Isle Path. This may be her opportunity.” Albie’s lips remained in a grin but his eyes narrowed.

Jenny turned to look at Peggy who visibly wilted in his glare. Jenny swung back to face Albie, her mouth open, to question, to chide, but he cut her off once more.

“Answers will have to wait.” Albie stepped forward urgently, looking down his nose at her. “You must not fail. Below must not draw further attention from the Above world. Croup and Vandemar did damage enough with Queen Victoria. An Isle Dog on the loose didn’t help matters either.” He cut his eyes at Peggy again. “It is a delicate situation.” He turned his attention back to Jenny. “I have no personal quarrel with the Gold Hawks. But they see no danger. They think claws and beaks enough to hold back an invasion from Above. From Torchwood. And there is an alley which Torchwood would find objection to if they investigated, but we in Below find it to our advantage to keep safe.”

“There’s more aliens in Below?!” Jenny wondered how many others were scattered around London. She was beginning to see Queen Victoria’s point in investigating them.

“The case, Jenny.” Albie glowered at her, lifted his chin at Peggy in a dismissal and turned in a flurry of rags to stalk off the ledge into darkness.

The rats hissed simultaneously, creating a roar that echoed sinisterly round the chamber and then all fled, apart from Anagesic who had leapt from Albie’s shoulder onto the ledge and was now scurrying across the deserted floor towards Peggy. Peggy collected it and tugged at Jenny’s sleeve, pulling her backwards down another tunnel leading off to who knew where.

“C’mon. If we want to take the Stamford Brook, we’ll need a boat. And for that we’ll need a favour. And I already owe a really big one to the Marquis fer warning you about the Hound.” Peggy sighed. “That sword might trade in for one at the Floating Market.” She eyed it appreciatively. “Or your waistcoat.”

“No.” Jenny said firmly.

“No? Hafta be the Sewer Folk then. I ‘ope you ain’t got a strong sense of smell.”

Jenny’s nose was already complaining about the rank air of Below. It handed in its resignation when Peggy took them to a small bridge across a tunnel. The smell made her eyes water as Peggy gestured and pointed with a group of what looked like people but Jenny couldn’t be entirely sure.

After about ten minutes, during which Jenny began to feel faint from not breathing properly, it being
the type of smell that left a taste in the mouth, Peggy declared that they had no boat to speak of but there was a raft. She pulled a small block of soap, slightly chewed by Anagesic, and handed it to the leader. It beckoned them to a large-ish pallet of wood, splintered at the edges.

Jenny looked at it doubtfully but Peggy ushered her on and she cautiously sat down on it. It lurched and she clutched at the edges, very determined not to fall into the vaguely liquid substance that the raft floated on. Peggy hopped on and let go the rope that had tied it to the bridge.

“Away we go.” She muttered.

Jenny didn’t say a word, consumed by her thoughts of Albie and Below, as the sludge around them carried them to another tunnel flowing with clearer water. She thought him a coward that he would send her as an envoy, to avoid starting a “quarrel” she supposed. He was nothing like the brother she remembered. But then she reviewed her memories of him. Albie was the boy who had introduced her to the mud larks, invited her to be a snake for a gang when he got too old to slither through open windows for them, who had been the worst of them, according to Jess. And it had been more than a decade since Albie had disappeared, everyone saying he’d run off to sea to get away from their father. A decade Below. Jenny shivered involuntarily.

“Shame they din’t ‘ave a paddle as well.” Peggy muttered as they banged off the wall, startling Jenny out of her reverie. The water had become clearer and was running more swiftly. Peggy was struggling to control their progress.

“What’s the Floating Market?” Jenny asked once they’d reached a calmer bit of water and could stop clinging quite so desperately to the raft.

“S’a market place ain’t it. In a different place each time. S’where you c’n buy stuff. Well I say buy. It’s a trade. Anythin’ useful for anythin’ useful but it’s each person decides what’s useful to his or herself. Most tis just what you pick up, what you scavenge.”

“Oh.” Jenny thought it sounded a lot like the world of the mudlarks and pickpockets. No wonder Albie had wanted to stay Below. She didn’t believe his excuse of owing the rats.

“Woulda been too late anyway if we went. The lady would’ve been etted up afore we finished the deal.” Peggy crouched a little lower on the raft and stilled, as a rat would upon noticing an owl fly overhead.

“The Hawks…eat people?” Jenny had never lived in the countryside to know much about the habits of hawks but the idea that there were birds that ate people was a shock.

“So does your wife before you sound so uppity about it.” Peggy pointed out.

Jenny opened her mouth but snapped it shut again. She settled for muttering “she ain’t my wife.”

“Matter of time.” Peggy waved her hand to dismiss the argument. The raft jolted and the hand speedily returned to the rope. “Must be nearly on Stamford Brook. Don’t worry it’ll calm down in a bit.”

“What do we do once we get there?”

“Slay a few hawks an’ rescue a lady.” Peggy grinned but her eyes were large and staring, panic-stricken. “Yor the big Isle Dog Slayer ain’tcha? No worries.”

Jenny thought back to the size of the hound, remembered suddenly how Albie had said “even bigger” and grasped her sword a little tighter, wondering how Vastra was getting on.
Vastra disliked the way that Gregson looked at her awkwardly on the cab ride there. She was used to his earnest stare, trying to make something out through the veil, having heard of her skin condition but it was annoying when close up as he sat across from her.

“Tell me the precise details of what happened.” She instructed him. Perhaps his prattle would distract her from wanting to eat him.

“Ah! Yes.” He seemed startled at the sudden conversation. “The Marchioness, the Prime Minister’s wife, was visiting a friend in Goldhawk Road. They walked down towards the river together through Ravenscourt Park. The friend stopped briefly, heard what she described as a beating of mighty wings, the cries of great birds fighting and she turned round to find the Marchioness gone. But you’ll see more when we get there. It’s only about an hour’s journey or so.”

Vastra sighed at the prospect. She missed her own cab. The police vehicle was not as comfortable and smelt of men.

The scene that met her in Ravenscourt Park was confusing. By the small pond, there were great scours in the earth, as if giant talons had raked across it. Strewn about the place were large golden feathers mingled with equally large black ones, as long as her arm. She picked one up and twirled it, raising it above her head and bringing it down with a whoosh. The air resistance was impressive.

“What is this place called again?” she looked about her.

“Ravenscourt Park.”

“And the road?”

“Goldhawk Road.” Inspector Gregson looked at her confused.

“A fight. A battle.” She pointed to the feathers. “Between giant golden hawks and ravens.”

“But that’s impossible!” The Inspector snorted.

“Do you have another solution?” Vastra asked, piqued.

“But I mean…I…they don’t exist. It’s…and what happened to the Marchioness?? Is this political? The Prime Minister is very worried. The Unionists have been…”

“Unionists?”

“The Irish…surely you heard about the riots last year?” the Inspector babbled. Vastra blocked him out, remembering Jenny talking about riots. Jess had been at them.

“A union between Ravens and Hawks.” She muttered to herself. It seemed nonsensical but she wondered what the Doctor would’ve made of it. “And the Marchioness…a hostage? Caught in the middle? Fallen through the cracks?” Vastra wished for a detector. If there had been a space time anomaly for example, if the fight had broken through certain boundaries.

She walked along the deep scores in the earth, almost wide enough that her boot could fit down them. The fight had been vicious. Over territory? This was all to do with Below, Peggy had intimated. One could not rule out anything in a land where blue flames could grow into people. But
no blood. The blood of the hound had disappeared, she remembered and she wondered if the Marchioness’s would have disappeared as well, or whether she was unharmed still. Vastra imagined telling the Prime Minister that his wife had been eaten by a giant golden hawk that resided beneath his capital city and laughed to herself.

“Well?” Gregson asked, a little impatiently.

“It’s political. But not human politics. A territorial dispute. I would need to speak to Jenny but alas, I have no way of getting Below.” Vastra stepped carefully towards what appeared to have been the centre of the battle, near to the edge of a pond. She kept her senses alert for any sense of an odd tingle but felt nothing. No pathway. No sliver of unreality to slip through. She hissed in frustration that she had not accompanied Jenny and Peggy and wondered again how Jenny was faring Below. After all, she could not trust the little urchin to keep Jenny safe.

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Stamford Brook was substantially calmer after a short waterfall and they drifted along in the gloom to the sound of trickling water, increasingly sodden and nervous.

“S’not underground or anything. The brook. It’s just Below. Don’t get quite as much light as it should.” Peggy explained as Jenny wondered out loud how they could see as well as they could when they were Below. “We gotta steal the sunlight.” She grinned. “Gets it secondhand.”

“Are we gettin’ close?” Jenny asked tersely, glad that she would not be fighting gigantic birds in the dark.

“Aye. We’re nearly in the Raven’s Court.”

“Ravens? I thought I was gonna be fightin’ hawks.”

“Might be fightin’ both if you ain’t careful. It’s an ‘istorical dispute over this territory, whether it’s Raven or Hawk.”

“So ‘ow’d this Marchioness get involved then?”

“Wrong place, wrong time. Like you. Slipped through the cracks. Bit of a to-do. Usually the people who do that, they don’t exactly get missed when they do.”

“I missed Albie.” Jenny interjected.

“The world miss him did it?” Peggy spat. “Would the world’ve missed you?”

“Vastra would’ve. An’ the urchins.”

“Yeah. Well.” Peggy sniffed.

“Did you know I was gonna get lost down there?”

Peggy shifted uncomfortably, giving Jenny her answer. “I was curious y’see. About why I was watchin’ yer. I did ask, y’know. About Albie. Lord Rat Speaker were a bit shocked to hear that name spoke by one of his own. I never knew it was ‘is name.”

“What happened with Albie?”
“Me know an’ tell Lord Rat Speaker’s intimate secrets?” Peggy scoffed. “‘e asked Anagesic to keep an eye on yer. An’ Gesic bein’ a particular friend of mine, I figgered I’d join ‘em. An’ after the lil cockup at the Docks, I figgered I’d join the Irregulars as an easier way to keep an eye on yer. They say you can’t ‘ave both worlds but the urchins run along the border of it. Easy enough to slip in with ‘em.”

“Vandemar said I ‘ad a rat problem.” Things were clicking slowly into place now for Jenny.

“Yeah well he would wouldn’t ‘e. The non-bleeder. Now shush. Ain’t wanna draw attention to ourselves. The Hawks don’t often get fresh meat. They’d be more’n ‘appy to add us to the Prime Minister’s wife. On’y the bleedin’ Prime Minister’s wife.” She tutted in anguish. “But can the bird brains see the risk? Oh noes. Why she afta fall through for anyways? All the Upworlders in the Upworld and she got to…”

“Shush.” Jenny said flatly in retaliation.

“Shush me! A bleedin’ upworlder shush me!” Peggy’s voice was shrill with fear and sounded all the louder.

There was a hiss that sounded more like a “shhhhh” from the lump in Peggy’s sleeve that was Anagesic and she swiftly withdrew into silence for the remainder of the journey.

They left the raft at the edge of the Brook and went forward on barefoot, as Jenny’s boots made a squelching noise from the water in them. She tied them to her sword belt. The ground was the dense damp earth of a riverbank and the occasional patch of grass, easy enough to walk on. Jenny kept a hand on her sword hilt as they crept along.

There was a sudden rustling to their left, accompanied by sharp clicks and snaps, as if a wind was blowing through a vast amount of loose paper. Peggy grasped her arm, tugging her low and fast past the dark observing eyes. Jenny felt Peggy’s hand tremble as it clutched at her, heard her breathing turn shaky and shallow and realised her companion was almost gone with terror. Jenny led them to a small hollow at the base of a tree and crouched there with Peggy.

“I’m just a rat speaker.” Peggy whispered as she twisted and turned round and round restlessly in the small space. “I’m gonna get etted. Thas ‘ow ‘e’s gonna make me pay fer the Docks.” Peggy let out a whimper. Jenny grabbed her arm but withdrew her hand with a hissed exclamation as she felt Peggy’s teeth close on her skin before the young Rat speaker fled along the bank, back towards where they’d left the raft.

“OI!” Jenny shouted in disbelief, darting out of the hollow after Peggy. She froze almost immediately that she left it, wincing at each echo of her voice that faded away to nothing. The hairs on her nape rose up and she drew her sword with a soft shing. Her own arm started trembling and her mouth went dry. Her breathing sounded loud in the stillness that surrounded her. A breeze ruffled the loose strands of her hair, tickling her. She froze, stopped even her breathing, listening intently but heard nothing to warn her of the mighty downdraft that knocked her off her feet. She rolled into a crouch position, spinning on her toes to find a shimmering Hawk folding its wings into its body in front of her. It was taller than Vastra, as large as Jenny imagined a dragon to be. Its feathers shone like fine jewellery, reflecting light in a way that would’ve been dazzling in full light, but even in the dimness of Below created an aura around the bird. It clacked its hooked beak before lowering its head to Jenny’s eye level.

Jenny stared unblinking, into an amber eye as large as her fist.
And Like A Thunderbolt She Falls

Chapter Notes

Anyone know Alfred Tennyson? Eagle in the poem not a hawk but same diff right? Right?

The Gold Hawks are based off the Ferruginous Hawks which are about the same size, give or take as the Common Raven, although heavier. And Ferruginous Hawks do sorta look like eagles...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jenny did not move an inch as the giant eye glanced her up and down. The long hooked beak that stretched out beside her did not move either but Jenny heard the words in her head.


“Pitiful.” There was another rush of wind and a second Hawk landed, jostling the first. There was a brief argument between the pair, giving Jenny time to collect her wits.

Her mouth was too dry to speak and she was unsure they would understand words anyway so she thought as defiantly as she could. “I’m here for the Marchioness.”

There was a harsh rasping sound. The first Hawk was laughing at her.

“Kirrah! You are funny! You are funny meat.” A giant talon gouged a line in the earth as its beak clacked. The amber eye withdrew and the Hawk stood to its full height, taller even than Vastra. It rustled its wings, puffing up its breast with laughter, stamping down its talon. The second hawk hissed in agreement. A third joined the pair and they stood, wing joint to wing joint, heads tilted, regarding her.

“I’ll fight yer for her.” It sounded ridiculous even to Jenny as the thought crossed her mind and she not surprised as harsh cries and hisses of laughter filled the air.

“Too funny. Too funny! Kirrah! Silence now!” The first Hawk snapped its beak at the other two. It spread its wings to their full impressive wing span, as wide as 13 Paternoster Row was long and the other two nudged each other until they felt that any blame for noise had been appropriately allocated on the other. “Take the meat to join the other.” The first Hawk gestured to third Hawk. “They can keep company. Perhaps more will follow and we shall have a feast.” It did a small shuffling dance and lowered its head to open its beak in Jenny’s face threateningly. She struck with her sword, leaving it vibrating in her hand as it clanged against the hard bone of beak. It retreated a little way but the second hawk had circled behind Jenny as she was distracted. She swung her sword as she spun to face it but the third hawk grabbed her in its beak, tearing a hole through her shirt and waistcoat to hoist her into the air by the fabric.

“Oi!” Jenny spat a stream of expletives at it, not bothering to think this time, as it stalked off along
the bank. “THAS MY WAISTCOAT YOU BASTARD!!” she swung her sword upright, over her shoulders and stabbed it in a nostril.

“Kyyaahhh!!” It screeched in pain and dropped her. “Why you! Such rude little meat.” It jerked its head, stabbing its beak at her as she lay winded on the ground. A giant claw tried to pin her down but she stood her sword up next to her and it stabbed right through the scaly skin of its talon. The resulting shriek left her ears filled with a tinny ringing and she shook her head to try and rid her mind of it as she staggered upright, feeling wet blood spatter on her face and clothes as the Hawk danced in pain, letting out soft cries of agony.

“Oh watch out!” A lady’s voice called out from far above her head, distorted by the ringing. Jenny didn’t have time to respond, still disorientated as she was, before she was knocked off her feet by a giant wing, her sword sent skittering. She felt her ribs gathering more bruises to add to the ones already there.

“What’s this? What’s this? Meat is bothering you now?” the second Hawk had come to find out what the noise was about and was laughing unkindly at its injured brethren.

“Call me meat!” Jenny allowed anger to replace pain and leapt from the crouched position she’d gained, grabbing at its chest. She closed her hands around fistfuls of feathers and tugged harshly.

“AWK! This meat truly is troublesome!” the second hawk preened in horror at its breast, keening at the stinging sensation left there. Jenny took advantage of its distraction to search for her sword, running low over the ground, her arms outstretched. Her right hand brushed against cold metal and she slid her fingers along until they found the hilt. She ignored her already aching wrist and brought the sword up in defence.

“Ca’ack! Stop worrying about your feathers and get the little meat!” The first Hawk joined them, clacking its beak disdainfully. “Cannot leave you two to anything.”

It hooked Jenny artfully by the tear in her waistcoat as she stooped to avoid its beak and tossed her high into the air, tumbling in a neat arc head over heels until she landed heavily in the middle of a pile of twigs and moss. She swiftly realised this was the Hawk’s nest and it already contained a cowering occupant.

“The Marchioness of Salisbury I take it.” Jenny stood up slowly, using her sword to help her up, stifling groans of pain. Her legs buckled but she managed to stagger to her feet, nearly losing her balance again on the uneven bottom of the nest. She realised she must look a sight to a lady, clothes torn and bloody and carrying a sword.

“Yes.” The lady affirmed cautiously. “Who might you be?”

“Jenny Flint, at yor service.” Jenny bowed ostentatiously. She rose up again to find a silence had fallen about them. The Marchioness was frozen, looking over Jenny’s shoulder. Jenny spun round to find the three hawks had recovered and were gathered round the nest. They looked a little more thoughtful than they had when she’d first seen them.

The first hawk bent its head into the nest to regard Jenny again. It clacked its beak.

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“Jenny Flint?” The tone of the thought was surprised and wary.

Peggy’s voice floated to the forefront of her mind. “Bit infamous you is”. Figuring that her reputation might be the only thing to get her out of this alive, Jenny grinned, manic with bravado. “Thas right. Otherwise known as the Isle Dog Slayer. The Kraal know me as the Great Warrior,
Defender of Earth. An’ I’ve come to collect the Marchioness an’ take ‘er ‘ome. There’s people missin’ ‘er.”

“It is the little trespasser. Who slayed a hound and tricked her way out of paying the toll.” The second Hawk explained as it bent near. The third hawk shuffled on its talons and hopped backwards from the nest, fluffing its feathers.

“What’s your toll?” Jenny Flinte asked out loud. “For safe passage for me and the Marchioness.”

“The meat would bargain with us!” There was a shocked clacking of beaks.

“It speaks true of being a warrior.” The third hawk waved its talon from its position of safety a few metres back, flicking drops of blood everywhere.

Jenny stood, watching, as the other two retreated to join it, huddling together. She didn’t think that whatever toll they came up with, she’d be able to pay it. There would be no trickery this time. She settled her sword more firmly in her hand, trying to flex out the rippling twinges of pain. Then again, fighting might not be an option either.

The first Hawk had its back to her in the huddle and an idea struck her. The other two might be cowed if this one was beaten, as it definitively appeared to be the leader.

“If this don’t work, then I’m sorry.” She whispered to the Marchioness who was looking at her in awe. She sheathed her sword, backed up to the edge of the nest and then pelted across it, as quickly as the uneven surface of branches and mud would allow her. She vaulted onto the side, using it as a spring step to launch herself as far as she could towards the Hawks.

She had judged it well, and slammed into the back of the first Hawk, knocking it off its talons with the remaining force of her jump, leaving it in a heap of feathers upon its breast. It flapped its wings, trying to regain its balance, squawking in annoyance as she used its feathers to haul herself up to its neck. She settled her legs over its wing shoulder joints, squeezing her legs around its neck as if it were Alice and she was riding it. Holding on to a clump of feathers in one hand, she dodged a beak as the Hawk twisted its neck to try and knock her off. With her other hand she drew her sword and brought it round against the Hawks’ throat, effectively stopping its attempts to dislodge her.

“Now…” she panted breathlessly, taking advantage of its stillness to settle herself in her position. “Let me an’ the Marchioness go.”

“Or what?” The Hawk hissed and raised its wings, the movement almost unseating Jenny.

Her answer was lost as the Hawk leapt forwards, picking up speed in an awkwardly gaited run, its wings beating swiftly and strongly. It bent its scaly knees and jerked upwards, the momentum from the run and the lift from its wings launching it skyward. Jenny’s scream was lost in the sound of the draughts the wings made as the Hawk rose slowly into the air, its powerful wings struggling to create enough force to carry Jenny and the Hawk. She resolutely kept her sword in her hand even as she flung both her arms around the Hawks’ throat to stop her from falling backwards as it flew.

A thought intruded into her fear. She was flying. The rushing wind made her eyes stream as the Hawk went higher and higher and it was cold! So cold. She risked a glance down and promptly vowed never to do that again. But the brief glimpse revealed to her the Brook, the nest, the pale oval of the Marchioness’s face, the Hawks and even, in the distance, the watchful Ravens, gathered to observe this strange battle.

The Hawk gave a cry of exasperation that she hadn’t fallen and circled higher. The motion of the
wings was unsettling and the slanted angle the Hawk was flying at as it circled nearly unseated her. Her hands were beginning to freeze, even protected as they were in some small measure by the Hawk’s feathers. Falling was only a matter of time it seemed. The move had been a really bad idea but the thrill of flying almost seemed worth it. For, despite the knowledge that her death was ever more imminent, the exhilaration was ousting fear.

The air filled with the sound of many beating wings; Jenny looked down to see several dark spots approaching them from the ground. The Hawk let out a defiant cry but the Ravens soon surrounded them. The four Ravens circled it like a mob, hesitant to attack. Probably because of her, Jenny reasoned, muttering a small prayer, her first since the Industrial school. As much as they were holding off, they wouldn’t for long, not with a chance to bring down one of the enemy. If her hours had seemed numbered before, now it seemed more a matter of minutes, for as the Hawk twisted and turned to avoid the stabbing beaks of the Ravens, Jenny slipped further and further, finally being dislodged by a twist of a wing.

The wind whistled too fast for her to draw breath enough to scream. She was a very long way up to be falling so far but not far enough up that the ground wasn’t coming towards her very, very quickly. She tried as much as she could to aim for the nest, her only hope that the twigs and moss would give enough cushioning to allow her to survive, breaking her fall a little. Jenny could see the Marchioness, white face upturned, her mouth a black O. She was going to die and what would happen to the lady? Or the Irregulars? Or Vastra? She thought a quick apology, wishing she could reach Vastra with her mind somehow to tell her.

She closed her eyes to rest them from the biting air and something knocked into her, sending her wheeling through the air. A large feathery body buffeted at her again, leaving her stunned, the ground was even closer now as a black shadow passed beneath her. She flung out a hand and grabbed hold of something, causing a caw of annoyance.

“I am no that large enough t’ fly wi’ ye!” the voice came into her head, sounding rather desperate but Jenny didn’t relinquish her grip. This time her scream was audible as together she and her saviour bird tumbled towards the nest. “Ye owe me a rilly biiigg favour fer this!” the voice came again, pained, as wings flapped desperately. “An’ t’rest of us fer rescuin’ ye.”

“I don’t neither!” Jenny yelled back over the bluster of the wind.

“T’ fall wi’ break ye through. Grab her as ye gae noo.” A sharp stabbing peck at her hand made her let go, the nest now a mere ten metres below her and approaching fast. She saw the Marchioness and flung out her hand, grabbing at her in the final second before she splashed…

The height of Jenny’s fall carried them far underwater and Jenny felt a stab of despair. She had no air left in her lungs. Her chest was burning but she kicked upwards anyway. She felt her stomach flip and twist and nearly vomited at the strange sensation of both travelling upwards and downwards at the same time. When the world seemed to have righted itself she looked up and the surface was close and dappled with strong light. Not borrowed light. Above light. London Above. She was being dragged down by the Marchioness held in one hand and her sword still in her other but she kicked fiercely with her legs as darkness crowded the edge of her vision. She couldn’t swim, she’d told Vastra, but she was learning now and fast.

Her head broke the surface and she gasped and choked her way through restarting her breathing, fighting all the time to get to shallow water but…this was shallow water. It was a pond. She staggered, fell backwards and looked about her. She was sat in a pond, clutching at a very disorientated Marchioness. Tugging the Marchioness with her, Jenny stumbled upright and out. She let go of the Marchioness’s hand but the lady clung tightly to hers, even as they stood dripping on
firm ground.

“Jenny?!”

Despite the disbelieving tone of voice, Jenny had never been so happy to hear it. Relief flooded through her at the final proof for her that she was back.

“V…” she went to collapse gratefully into Vastra but stopped short as she saw the Inspector standing just behind Vastra, looking equally as shocked and baffled. She coughed and straightened up. “Ma’am.” She nodded her head. “I got the Marchioness.” She held up the hand that had the Marchioness’s attached to it.

“I think that was the pond I fell in.” The Marchioness said weakly, looking behind her fearfully at the stretch of water.

“Madame!” Inspector Gregson darted forward, springing into action at the sound of a cultured voice. He took off his coat and flung it round her, leading her away towards the police cab as Jenny watched with mild disgust, Gregson waffling on about how glad her husband would be and asking what had happened without giving her a moment to answer. Jenny heard the Marchioness faintly say over him “I think I must’ve hit my head…” before she was bustled inside.

“Well I s’pose thas us walkin’ home again.” Jenny snorted as the cab pulled off. She turned as there was no reply to see Vastra, speechless and staring at her in mild shock. Jenny looked down at her torn clothes and the gashes on her arms from various beaks and talons. She opened her mouth to try and explain but gave up. “S’a long story.” She shrugged, looking back up at Vastra as she wiped her sword clean on a damp shirt tail before sheathing it.

“Did you have to kill anything this time?” Vastra asked, falling in beside Jenny as the young woman started her way across the park.

“No.”

“Give anything up?”

“No.”

“What happened to Peggy?” Vastra looked around as if the urchin would appear magically now that the extra observers had gone.

“What won’t happen to Peggy when I get ‘old of ‘er.” Jenny muttered, the memory of the Rat Speaker’s desertion coming back to her now she was no longer in danger.

“Who, or what, was the Lord Rat Speaker?” Vastra started another line of enquiry in an attempt to be tactful.

“Albie.”

Vastra stopped short but Jenny didn’t, continuing to stride along. *Albie was the name of Jenny’s brother who’d been… picked. Taken. That’s how Jenny had described it. Vastra hurried forward but walked beside Jenny in silence now, merely handing the young woman her cloak, despite the chill that bit at her from the February air. A young woman walking round London in torn men’s clothing was going to get questions asked.*

*Vastra kept the rest of her own questions to herself for now. Jenny clearly didn’t wish to talk about it at the current time. Vastra trusted Jenny would inform of her of all once she’d recovered. Vastra*
sighed, thinking that this was hardly a good way to spend their Valentine’s day. She resolved, once they’d eaten something and Jenny had bathed and dressed her wounds, to try and make it up to Jenny. The Doctor had talked about flowers, a box of chocolates, making promises she never intended to keep. But none of that seemed quite special enough for their first Valentine’s Day together. She had plenty of time to ponder the issue however. The walk from Ravenscourt Park to Paternoster Row took nearly two hours.

Chapter End Notes

No seriously it takes about that long. No cab would take them because water damage to upholstery is expensive and they didn’t have that much cash on them.
When they finally arrived home, after two hours of silence, Jenny hung up Vastra’s cloak and then immediately went upstairs. Vastra followed her to the bathroom.

“Do you need help?” Vastra offered cautiously, sensing a tension from Jenny.

“No.” Jenny shook her head as she took off her waistcoat, sighing at the rends in it before throwing it onto the chair, swiftly followed by the rest of her clothes. Vastra’s eyes widened out the deep gouges in Jenny’s back. “You gonna watch an’ all?”

Realising she was going to get no further detail from Jenny at the present moment, Vastra silently gathered up the pile of abandoned clothes and left to soak them.

_Vastra didn’t like being closed off from Jenny. She pondered making dinner but knew nothing of how to cook human food. And after her last disastrous attempt, causing Jenny more work was not exactly the way to cheer her up. She debated a pie from the nearby chophouse but didn’t want to leave Jenny alone._

_When she heard the bathroom door slam, she stepped quietly back upstairs. Jenny was sat on the bed, damp hair hanging loose, a towel loosely wrapped around her. She looked so melancholy Vastra almost keened in empathy. She tucked her head into the crook of Jenny’s neck instead, in an attempt to comfort her. Vastra took it as a small victory that Jenny leant her head against Vastra’s with a small sigh._

_They stayed like that for a long time._

_Jenny shivered suddenly and Vastra mentally rebuked herself for not making Jenny get dressed. She watched as Jenny moved away and dried herself off, frowning once more at the scores on Jenny’s back._

“I told that girl not one scratch…” she muttered, already contemplating vengeance on the little Ratspeaker.

Jenny snorted. “Ha!” it came out strange and high pitched.

“How’s your wrist?” Vastra inspected it after Jenny had pulled on a clean slip and drawers.

“S’fine.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

Jenny sat back down on the bed, staring into the distance. Vastra sat on the bed behind Jenny and got on with brushing her hair, drawing it back into a loose plait.

“You should eat something. I could get a pie?” Vastra suggested as she heard Jenny’s stomach give a small gurgle of discontent.

Jenny shook her head and shook herself out of her reverie, getting up and retrieving her corset, wincing as it tightened against her wounds.
Vastra was becoming concerned. “You should at least let me dress those.”

Jenny answered by pulling a dress on and buttoning it up to the neck, proving once again her adeptness at nonverbal communication.

“Jenny!” Vastra pleaded, reaching out her hand as if to grasp Jenny’s arm but Jenny brushed past her and sat down on the small vanity chair to pull on her boots. “You’re going out again? Where…” Vastra bit off the question and merely watched from the landing as Jenny clattered down the stairs and out the front door.

Jenny knew she’d been dismissive and that Vastra would be worried but the Silurian wouldn’t understand! And she didn’t want pity right now, she wanted…family. Broken, split up, banished from, dead or gone, there was only one member she could go to.

Jess opened her front door at the curt knock, took one look at Jenny’s face and let her in without a word. The room was as Spartan as ever. No badly crocheted rugs or tables overflowing with papers, no piles of books. Jess moved towards the fireplace as if to set a kettle boiling and then thought better of it. She reached under the bed and brought out a half empty bottle of gin, thrusting it into Jenny’s hands.

“Valentine’s day with Lizard Lady not work out?” Jess asked, forthright as ever, sprawling backwards onto the bed.

“You could say that.” Jenny uncorked the gin bottle.

“You need to kip ‘ere?” Jess patted the bed she was led on.

“No. Nuffin’ like that.”

“You bin in the wars again? Supernat’ral stuff?” Jess noticed the pained expression on Jenny’s face as she sat down at the end of the bed.

“Yeah.”

Jess frowned at her sister’s reticence but left her cradling the bottle of gin whilst she went to get food.

Jenny coughed as she took a swig. It burned and made her eyes water and she replaced the cork and set it to one side. She couldn’t get comfortable in the room, wandering about it aimlessly. There was nothing to pick up or fiddle with, no form of entertainment. Nothing to suggest a presence more than the battered suitcase. Jenny wondered what her sister did, the battles she was fighting. In the waning afternoon, she heard the sounds of London. People arguing, singing, glass smashing, animals, bustle. Did Jess feel as alone as Jenny did right now? Surrounded by the noise of life and alone in a shell of a room?

Jess returned with half a pie which she set in front of Jenny. “Enjoy. Spent good money on that. Now. What ‘as caused you to turn up on my doorstep, for I’ve noticed you never visit without a purpose.”

Jenny glowered at Jess. Her sister was hardly one to criticise Jenny’s lack of sisterly socialising, having walked out on them. But her mouth was full of pie and by the time she’d managed to chew through it, the urge to bite back had gone, replaced by the need to tell the purpose of her visit.

“Would you believe me if I said I saw Albie?” Jenny asked.
“Albie? Thought you said ‘e was taken.” She eyed Jenny suspiciously.

“He was. Taken Below.”

Jess shuddered involuntarily at the word. “The place wot that Hound came from?”

“The same.”

“Is…he alive?” Jess’s first macabre thought was that Jenny had seen his body.

“Very.” Jenny bit into the quarter that remained of her half of the pie.

“Oh.” Jess sat down beside her sister and opened the gin bottle she’d retrieved. “Is ‘e comin’ back?”

“No.”

“Oh.” Jess’s voice was expressionless. She took a long gulp of gin. “That’s nice of ‘im. Bastard.”

Jenny smiled, letting out a soft snort. Some of the tension drained from her as they fell into a more companionable silence. Jess didn’t ask for any more details. Albie was alive and wasn’t coming back. And Below was involved as well. She didn’t need any more than that. For whatever explanation there was, it wouldn’t change that.

“Why’d you leave?” Jenny asked all of a sudden.

Jess swore under her breath, having gotten lost in her own thoughts over Albie’s disappearance. “Christ’s sake. Why’d’yer think?”

“You din’t want to get stuck with us.” Jenny toyed with the leftover pie crust.

“As what precise good would I have done yer if I had stuck with yer ey?” Jess shouted, blowing up in a sudden rage that surprised Jenny. “Wot? You like ter dream you wouldn’t have ended up in the workhouse? On the streets? You tagged after Albie when you were bare able to walk, workin’ for the gangs with ‘im an’ you loved it.”

“I loved it?” Jenny leapt up, shoving her sister backwards. “I ended up in prison! I lived in fear of ‘em when I got out and you think I loved it? I was starvin’ on the streets, homeless…”

“What and you think if I’d stayed, set up a nice little house, you would’ve been a good little girl, gone to school? Not got into any trouble at all? Got a nice job on the street or as a skiv? Done what everyone told you? I mean cry alive Jenny e’en with a nice big house an’ chance at comfortable livin’ what do you do? Solve crimes with a bloody lizard woman, kill spectral hounds an’ get into fights with whatever unreal article you fought this time. And you robbed a few bleedin’ banks for the money ter pay for the ‘ouse in the first place!”

Jenny opened her mouth but she had no comeback so she shut it again.

Jess sighed heavily, taking another pull of gin. “I ‘ave no regrets. I bet Albie don’t either, the rotter.” She gave a small laugh then noticed Jenny’s stricken face. “An’ I imagine, once you’ve finished feelin’ all…abandoned by the world, you won’t either.” Jess said, a littler kindlier. “Now sod off back to yer wife an’ enjoy what’s left of Valentine’s day.” She grabbed Jenny by the shoulder and pulled her across the room, shoving her out the door and slamming it behind her.

The thought occurred to Jenny, after she’d recovered from her abrupt exodus, that Jess was probably upset herself, in her own way, about Albie not coming back. Her sister had probably made peace
with not seeing any of her family again, sacrificing them for whatever reason it was beyond not wishing to be stuck looking after children. But then Jenny had stumbled back into Jess’s life and indeed only seemed to visit her when she was having troubles. And now Albie had reappeared but wasn’t coming back.

The pull of family was strong for Jenny; it was why she’d visited her Uncle, why she’d rescued Cathy. Why she went to Jess when she was worried, having tracked her down. Why she was hurt that Albie had been distant, despite their closeness growing up. And she wondered briefly whether Jess, despite her cavalier attitude, felt that same pull.

Thoughts whirled in Jenny’s head. She needed a drink. Not gin. She found the pub Jess had taken her to and sat down with a tankard, trying to ignore the stares of the other patrons at a lone maid drinking a pint to herself.

She thought on Albie, trying to focus her thoughts. He’d always been careless, casual, almost manipulative as a child, encouraging Jenny to help him out, although as Jess had pointed out, Jenny had done so willingly enough. Was it that much a surprise he’d only be interested in her help now, rather than being a brother? But the thought crept in too that he’d still sent Anagesic to watch over her; had been furious when Peggy had gotten her lost Below, even by accident.

And Jess. She didn’t know a thing about Jess. Didn’t know what she’d been through, or even what she did, any more than Jess had when Vastra had sprung her from jail. Jenny had been too young to be truly close to any of her siblings. And their death and disappearances had left holes. Albie clearly didn’t want to come back. And Jess had shoved her out the door. A fresh wave of abandonment swept over Jenny and she felt the sting of the rejections by all her family.

“Yor me family now. You an’ the urchins.” The thought she had not dared voice to Vastra echoed in her mind. Vastra. Jenny had left her without a word, a worried and lost expression in her blue eyes. She stared at her tankard, wondering what on earth she was even doing here. Jess was right. Draining the last of the beer, she ran as fast as she dared over slush covered cobbles all the way back to Paternoster Row.

It seemed further than she remembered, and full of people getting in the way, muttering or shouting at her when she pushed through them, shoving her back when she slipped and fell into them. Jenny burst through the door, anxiously searching, unable to find her voice to call out but Vastra was suddenly there in front of her anyway, holding her steady by the arms as she caught her breath.

“Vastra was surprised as Jenny flung her arms around Vastra’s waist but held Jenny tightly anyway, a small, satisfied smile on her lips.”

“’m sorry.” Jenny muttered eventually, her voice muffled from her face being pressed against Vastra’s dress. “S’meant to be Valentine’s day.”

“We don’t seem to have much luck with holidays do we.” Vastra grinned down at her. Jenny looked distraught. “Well they’re only foolish ape traditions anyway.” Vastra rolled her eyes mockingly.

It was enough to make Jenny snort with laughter, disentangling from Vastra to wipe her eyes.

“Have you eaten?” Vastra asked gently, brushing her fingers against Jenny’s sleeve as Jenny moved past her into the living room, seeking the warmth of the fire to ward off the February chill she’d brought in with her from the streets.

“Yes.” Jenny nodded. The fire had burnt low and she knelt before it, picking up the poker to stoke it back to life.
“Then rest, my dear. Hmm?” Vastra laid a hand on her shoulder.

Jenny didn’t move, screwing up her eyes as they filled with tears once more.

“I spent…so long. Wonderin’ how they were all doin’. Whether they were alive. Thinkin’ about what they’d think. ‘specially him. An’ he doesn’t care. Not in a good way. He just…I mean, with Jess an’ Cathy they were older, we weren’t exactly close but me an’ Albie…”

“You looked up to him, I take it. As a brother.” Vastra shook the coal scuttle to check the amount in it.

“Yeah. We were always hangin’ round together. He introduced me to the mudlarks, to the gangs…” Jenny trailed off. It wasn’t exactly a shining description of someone to look up to.

Vastra looked faintly disgusted, peering down into the coal scuttle. “Well he sounds like an ideal brother.”

“He looked after me.” Jenny shrugged. “Wouldn’t’ve survived long without knowing what ‘e taught me. Would still be in the Industrial school. Wouldn’t’ve dared do ‘alf the things I ‘ave.”

“Such as robbing banks? You may have a point.” Vastra conceded, glancing around the living room with its multititudinous shelves and plush sofa and chairs. Jenny’s criminal past had led up to and had been instrumental in making their life as it was now, and their life now was exceedingly comfortable in comparison to what it had been.

Jenny felt her mind settle. Jess had been right about that too. Now she’d stopped feeling sorry for herself, she didn’t find much in her past to regret.

“What were your sisters like?” Jenny asked, relieving Vastra of the scuttle and shaking coal onto the fire.

The question caught Vastra off guard but she realised why Jenny was asking it. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, opened them, looked at Jenny. “They were older than me.” She began hesitantly. “But we were of the same gene chain. I think they were tolerant of me, as the youngest. Perhaps jealous of the time our mother spent with me. But they were proud. When I became a Warrior. Walked with them. Fought with them. They were not all Warriors. Some were Scientists, like my father. Some were Poets. Although it is not like human poetry. Silurian poetry is…mathematical. The beauty of a spiral. Things like that.”

“Did they hate apes too?”

“Apes were food to them.” Vastra sighed wearily. “And humans slaughtered them all before they had a chance to know them as anything else.” Jenny looked shamefaced. “I suppose they would be similarly appalled and disgusted at the propagation of apes across the planet, the same as I. They would struggle to understand that former prey had become the dominant species.”

“Did you have friends?” Jenny changed tack away from Vastra’s disgust at people.

“Yes.” Vastra didn’t volunteer any further information.

“Did you…” Jenny hesitated.

“No. I told you. A few brief forays, but nothing like this.” Vastra darkened, anticipating the next question.
“Wot, not in two hundred years?”

Vastra stared at Jenny unblinking. A small quirk of the lips betrayed the fact that Jenny was teasing her. “Bed!” She glowered.

Jenny put the scuttle down and stood up.

“Will you stay with me?” The vulnerability was as abrupt as the teasing had been.

“For two hundred years?” Vastra asked, wending her arms around Jenny’s waist, determined to get her own back.

“Don’t think I’ll live that long.” Jenny laughed.

Vastra’s face fell. Her heart thudded and her grip around Jenny tightened. Her teasing had backfired on her.

Jenny thoughts raced as the Silurian went still and quiet at the reality that had been spoken. They settled on the book she’d been reading, although she’d found it so humorous she’d ended up reading most of it aloud to Vastra. She remembered a line but couldn’t recall it exactly. But she remembered the sentiment clear enough. She grinned, a little wickedly. “Welllll I s’pose you never know. Could well out live yer. If hawks or hounds don’t get me any rate.”

A glut of conflicting emotions twisted Vastra’s face. Affront, worry, sheer disbelief and amazement at the ability to joke about death.

“Ha!” The emotions amalgamated into a scoff.

Jenny slumped into Vastra’s embrace, a little exhausted now by all the emotions of the day.

“Bed.” Vastra hummed and lifted Jenny into her arms.

“’ey!” Jenny protested.

“This is romantic, is it not? And it is Valentine’s day.” Vastra carried her all the way upstairs to their bedroom.

Jenny stood still in the middle of their room after Vastra set her down in order to retrieve her nightgown. Vastra turned to look at her and her heart tugged at the sight; Jenny looked so lonely all of a sudden.

She walked over to her, placing her fingers beneath Jenny’s chin to lift it, sliding her fingers down Jenny’s neck and beneath her collar until she found the slim piece of string she was looking for. She pulled it slowly until the flint at the end of it came into view, then, very deliberately raised it to her lips and kissed it gently. Tired appreciation of the gesture flooded Jenny’s eyes but the young woman didn’t move. Letting the Flint go, Vastra delicately began to undress her, with the same care she’d shown a ragged urchin a year and a day ago. She tenderly dressed the deep talon marks on Jenny’s back, Jenny too tired to even flinch at the iodine. Vastra drew a nightgown over Jenny’s head, the young woman falling into her, half asleep already in Vastra’s arms as she picked her up and led her on the bed. Vastra swiftly changed into her own nightgown before drawing the covers over the both of them, curling up behind her, holding her tightly in her arms. She crooned an unfamiliar song in Jenny’s ear, a soft lullaby in a strange language as Jenny fell fast asleep.
The quote Jenny is trying to remember is from Pride and Prejudice. "My dear, do not give way to such gloomy thoughts. Let us hope for better things. Let us flatter ourselves that I may be the survivor." Mr Bennet, Troll Dad Extraordinaire.
15th February 1888

There were times when Jenny would wake up to find that Vastra had not curled up around her as if she were a huggable bed warmer but instead had tugged as much of the blankets around her as she could, leaving Jenny lying, frustratingly cold, next to what could only be described as an oval shaped cocoon bearing no resemblance to a Silurian whatsoever. Not that this helped Vastra in her quest to keep warm in winter. Without a source of heat within the blankets, she inevitably ended up chilled by the morning.

Jenny would have re-wrapped the blankets round the both of them whenever she awoke to such a situation but Vastra also had the skill of so entangling the blankets and the duvet and the quilt that Jenny would find it futile to try and tug any of them free. For such cases, she kept a spare blanket underneath her side of the bed and would resignedly curl up under it as near to the cocoon as possible. Jenny had heard before of inconsiderate partners with cold feet and blanket hogging habits but she reckoned she had any complainant regarding those issues beat, with such a bed mate as Vastra.

Jenny was already twitching to wakefulness due to just such a circumstance of being left coverless, when there was a loud knock at the front door. She ignored it, grabbing her spare blanket and burying her head under the pillow with a grunt. She still felt exhausted after yesterday and was not ready to accept another case. The knock moved from a sharp rat-tat to a heavier and more insistent thump. Jenny felt the bed move as Vastra stirred and lifted the corner of the pillow to find an emerged Vastra watching her, blinking her eyes slowly.

There was one last stern knock and then no more.

“The Doctor was right.” Vastra said with a sigh. “We need a butler.”

“Maybe.” Jenny shivered her way deeper under the blanket. Vastra noticed and unwound a few of her own to give to Jenny. “I feel sore.”

“I imagine so.” Vastra made a note to check the gashes on Jenny’s back when they got up.

“Who d’yer think it was?”

“Inspector Gregson most likely. Come to report on yesterday.”

“Should’ve answered it.” Jenny sighed, throwing the covers away from her though she made no movement to get up.

“You need rest.” Vastra pulled the covers back up to Jenny’s neck, carefully shuffling under them to be closer to Jenny. Jenny looked at her oddly but snuggled into the blankets, making a cocoon of her own, around them both this time. She swiftly fell back into sleep.

They lay in, Vastra observing the smallest flicker of Jenny’s eyes whilst she slept. Vastra heard the back door being opened surreptitiously. Heard Parker go about the fires downstairs. Heard the urchins complaining at the lack of food or even money. These noises disappeared soon enough. Vastra assumed Parker had given them some.
A soft whinny as Parker took Alice out for her morning walk, the ringing sound of horse shoes on cobbles. A tuneless whistle from his son as he swept the stable and washed down the yard. Around midday, the clatter of Mrs Parker in the kitchen, cleaning up and making lunch. A soft conversation with her husband. A small laugh. Happiness. Togetherness.

Vastra led on her side, staring at Jenny’s slack face, listening to the steady breathing, content to let her little ape sleep.

A year was not a long time. Vastra had lived over 200 of them, although she’d never tell Jenny her real age. What did it matter? She wasn’t human anyway. But the last year seemed precious, in a way that the others did not. The years learning and training, with her mother, with her sisters. Fighting. With swords and words. She’d been different then. More skilful. Less childish. Reserved almost, within a society that demanded a degree of it. Silurians played, but Vastra felt more playful. As if she’d been opened up in some strange way, that for the previous 200 plus years she had not been. There were new and sudden urges. She supposed the apes would call that love.

Bonds between Silurians were rare. The strange connection of the mind, the gentle unfolding of the layers. Vastra pondered whether such a connection would be possible with an ape. And if so, why Jenny? Why herself? It was a strange and random occurrence.

Jenny woke up mid-afternoon and felt like she could still sleep another day but her bladder was insistent on being relieved. She gave in and shuffled her way out of bed for the toilet and a quick wash whilst Vastra got dressed. Afterward, Vastra checked her bandages but no blood had seeped through. The rest of the scratches looked clean and the bruises colourful. Having been given the all clear Jenny proceeded to get dressed.

At first she’d thought Vastra was staring as she did so; she wouldn’t put it past the Silurian. Then she thought Vastra was worried, was keeping an eye on her, watching for any sign of emotional upset or further physical injury. But Vastra still watched her and Jenny finally recognised the thought in the stare. Curiosity. That puzzled Jenny immensely. What on earth could the Silurian be finding curious? They’d lived with each other for over a year. Surely Vastra had studied her during that time? Enough for there to be little to be curious over. Intrigued beyond annoyance, Jenny mimicked the tilt of Vastra’s head.

“What are you thinkin’?”

“About the past.” Vastra answered, taking Jenny by surprise. Jenny had expected silence or deflection, not a simple answer.

“About how we met?” It had only been the anniversary of it a couple of days ago.

“No.” Vastra gave a small laugh. “These pasts do not exist.”

Jenny stared in complete confusion. “Wot…like time travel?”

“No.” Vastra drifted away to the window. “I told you before. That I thought my life would be lived out in a cage.”

Jenny couldn’t help the anger that tensed her body; it was instinctive.

“I am imagining ends, and looking back on the past. I see my life without the Doctor. Without disaster. I see a life lived out among Silurians and it is a fine life. I see my life cut short with my sisters; it is a fitting end. I see my life in a cage, growing older by the year and dying, when I am too old to work, alone. Perhaps the Doctor is there in the end. Perhaps I go back to be buried among my
ancestors. I see my life without you. Without the various meetings that gave me hope, that apes were not all alike, that there were a few, although they were all you.”

Jenny waited.

“I think I understand your feelings. About Albie and Jess. It’s instinctive, isn’t it?” Vastra’s voice wobbled. “To look to them, to family. I don’t believe I will ever stop seeking other Silurians, to see for the briefest of moments, glimpses of my society.”

Jenny felt her heart grow heavy at the thought of such loneliness. After all, she was still surrounded by other humans.

Vastra shook herself and huffed out a breath. “But now I see you. An ape who has not lived a tenth of my life. Who has renewed that life. Restarted it. And I would ask the same.”

“The same what?” Jenny was confused again.

“The same question. For you. To stay with me.” Vastra was still gazing out the window into the street.

Jenny couldn’t help but smile. Walking up behind Vastra, Jenny looped her arms around Vastra’s waist, resting her head on the Silurian’s back with a happy sigh. “‘Course.”

The knocking began again, and with an exhalation of exasperation and a roll of her eyes, Jenny let her arms fall, walked out the bedroom and down the stairs to answer it. But even the interruption could not remove Vastra’s satisfied grin as she retrieved her veil and followed Jenny down.

“Ah.” A grave looking man with a full and bushy beard stood there, Inspector Gregson hovering nervously behind him. “Is Madame Vastra in?”

“She is.” Jenny nodded, holding the door open. “If you’ll wait here a moment.” She gestured them into the conservatory but Vastra was ready, lounging in the wicker chair that Missus Blackett had given them, repaired once or twice in the interval since it had left the gin shop flat but still strong and still Vastra’s favourite.

“Gentlemen.” She inclined her veiled head. “What can I do for you today?”

“I merely wished to convey my thanks. For the rescue of my wife. I can’t make head nor tail of what went on, but she is safe, if a little shaken, and for that I am grateful.” The Prime Minister, for it was he, bowed stiffly.

“The thanks must go to my maid, Jenny. She journeyed to…the place where your wife was being held captive.” Vastra gestured towards Jenny.

“No!” Jenny shook her head disbelievingly. The Prime Minister raised his eyebrows and stared at her. “Um…it was like…a faction. Of a gang. They called themselves the Hawks.” Jenny spun a tale swiftly. “I think they gave her opium.”

The Prime Minister frowned. “And how did you come to be in the lake?”
“S’like…an underwater entrance. We escaped through it.” Well it wasn’t technically a lie. “I wouldn’t bother searching for it. It collapsed. The gang’s probably dead by now. Suffocated.” Jenny nodded.

“I see.” The Prime Minster was eyeing her very suspiciously but she held her ground. “It sounds like rather an adventure. I’m grateful.” He turned back to Vastra. “You will of course be rewarded, a not insubstantial sum.” He nodded and rose out the chair. “Gregson. If you would wait outside?”

The Inspector dithered and then beat a hasty retreat back into the hallway.

“Do you require something else of us?” Vastra shifted in her seat a little nervously.

“In my role as Prime Minister, I do have occasion to visit the Queen you know. Indeed, she recommended that I contact you through Gregson and Scotland Yard.”

“I see.”

“I would like the full story. If you wouldn’t mind. I doubt it is as banal as a simple gang abduction.”

“I don’t think that would be in the best interests.” Jenny interjected. “Your wife…she slipped through a gap she weren’t meant to. An’ there’s people on the other side of that gap, it’s best if you leave ‘em be. They weren’t lookin’ fer trouble. It was an accident.”

The Prime Minister walked over to stand directly in front of Jenny, looking down at her, her face still covered in scratches. His hand reached out and Vastra stood up abruptly. He took the warning and pulled it back. “It wouldn’t do you no good to get involved in it. You an’ the Queen c’n rule Above. But Below…” Jenny trailed off.

“You fought them then. My wife’s captors. Are you wounded?”

“A few scratches…” Jenny looked at Vastra a little helplessly. An investigation from Above into Below was precisely what Albie had been trying to avoid.

“You must be very brave. The Queen told me the same. The maid who defies, the maid who fights.”

“I does me best.” Jenny stuck her chin in the air.

“Mm. And you would give me an assurance that this…this Below will be of no further bother?”

“If they do, I think I c’n handle ‘em.” Jenny nodded.

“I shall make a note of it. Torchwood can put it in their files. If ever something arises claiming to be from Below, call on Jenny Flint.” The Prime Minister smiled, a little coldly. “Madame Vastra will see that the reward money reaches your pocket too?”

Jenny looked at Vastra again who was about to reassure the Prime Minister that this was indeed the case when some small bubble within Jenny broke. “‘ow about a favour?” she said quickly.

“A favour?” The Prime Minister looked at her askance.

“Yeah. Say you owe me a really big favour. It’s ‘ow Below works.”

“A really big favour.” He enunciated each word slowly and precisely.

They regarded each other for a long minute, during which Vastra did not draw breath, amazed at Jenny’s nerve.
“Very well then! I shall make a note of it for any as might succeed me as well. Owed to Miss Jenny Flint, one really big favour.” The Prime Minister repeated. He tucked his hat beneath one arm and then held out his hand. Jenny shook it. “Good day.” He gave a small bow before pivoting on his heel and walking swiftly out.

Jenny looked at Vastra a third time but the Silurian merely raised her eye ridges at such audacity. Jenny shrugged. “Can’t do no ‘arm to have the Prime Minister owe you a favour.”

“Particularly a really big one.” Vastra’s face was serious as she rose from her chair but her amused tone belied it. “I wonder if he’ll still pay us as well.”

“I dunno. Queen Victoria never did.” Jenny let out a nervous laughter.

“Isn’t it ironic, a Silurian from the ancient world and a maid are acquainted with the Queen and Prime Minister of Great Britain.” Vastra mused, considering whether it was too early for dinner, as she walked towards the kitchen.

“An’ enough they made note of us. We was specifically recommended after all.” Jenny nudged her.

“Our reputations precede us.” Vastra was about to laugh but she sobered at the thought that such attention might bring trouble, even as it brought more business. The Doctor had mentioned 1888 as a ‘rough one’. Still, she thought as she watched Jenny cut her off some meat from a joint before broiling the rest of it, she couldn’t imagine anything that they wouldn’t be able to overcome together.

Chapter End Notes

The Prime Minister at the time was one Robert Gascoyne-Cecil who was the Marquess of Salisbury. His wife, Georgina Alderson became Marchioness and it was she wot got kidnapped. Do visit Ravenscourt Park if you can. S’a nice one.
If it seems like Jenny’s training is suffering, it is a bit but then again if you’ve ever had a major injury and tried to do anything whilst it heals…

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

18th February 1888

It was a few days after the Prime Minister had paid his visit and Jenny was trying to go through a set of stances and stretches without re-opening the wounds on her back. It was proving an unsuccessful venture and at the sound of a rather furtive knock at the back door, she gave up and stormed up out the cellar to answer it.

Stood there in the slush that still lay on the ground after the snow before Valentine’s day was a smartly dressed young woman. Jenny took a closer look as she gazed at Jenny in awe and realised there were patches and mends. The clothes were smart enough but clearly this young woman wasn’t affluent. The young woman shivered and Jenny stood back and let her in. She moved swiftly past Jenny to the hob where the breakfast fire was still burning and barely stifled a small sigh of relief.

“Did the Irregulars send yer?” Jenny asked as she closed the door behind her, curious as to whether this was a slightly older informant than usual.

“The army?” the young woman turned back towards Jenny, looking horrified. “No.” She shook her head vigorously.

Jenny waited with an impatient expression for anything more but nothing was forthcoming.

“How c’n I help yer then?” she asked, making the young woman jump nervously. She stared at Jenny again, still dressed in her jodhpurs and loose shirt from training.

“Oh!” She startled herself out her reverie. “Yes! Yes. I’m looking for the Adventuress Detective?”

“Madame Vastra y’mean.” Jenny folded her arms. Vastra collected titles almost as much as Jenny did.

“Yes! Yes.”

Jenny rolled her eyes. “You got a case for her then.”

“Swallowing down several curses, Jenny beckoned for the young woman to follow her, ringing a small bell on the hallway mantelpiece as she did so to warn Vastra: Case Incoming.

Vastra was hastily seating herself in the wicker chair, veil thrown hastily on, when Jenny entered. Jenny saw the Silurian tilt her head curiously at Jenny bringing a case to her, when she was in quite such a state of dishevelment. Jenny knew she was being careless, knew she should’ve changed into her proper dress, before she ever answered the door but frustration at her injuries and their preventing
her from training made her defiant.

“This woman ’ere got a case fer you.”

Vastra’s eyes widened at the almost insolent tone. She blinked and smiled to herself behind the veil, switching her attention to the young woman who was edging nervously towards the chair.

“Have a seat.” Vastra gestured at it, to save her the agonies of a slow descent into it. The young woman gratefully plopped down in an instant. “And your name?”


“And the case?” Vastra took a small breath, beginning to understand why Jenny was staring fixedly at the opposite wall.

“Well you see…”

A good half an hour of ramblings and diversions later, Vastra took a deep breath and held up her hand. “Essentially, Mrs Fields, your husband is missing and you’d like us to find him.”

Harriet, who’d been interrupted mid-flow, nodded, folding her hands into her lap and tucking her chin into her chest to stare at them.

Jenny looked at Vastra and shook her head imperceptibly. No, this young lady was not going to be able to pay them. But something about the young woman’s demeanor had evoked Jenny Flint’s sympathy, overcoming her initial exasperation and she stared meaningfully at Vastra to prompt an affirmative answer.

“Very well. We will take the case.” Vastra stood up and gave a small nod, holding up a hand to cut off Harriet’s effusive thanks.

“I carn’t pay you very much…” Harriet tried again.

“We will take what you can afford.” Vastra waved her off. Jenny took Harriet gently by the arm and escorted her out back through the kitchen. She felt the young woman tremble.

“She ain’t all that scary y’know. Don’ worry.”

Harriet still looked entirely miserable even after Jenny’s reassurances they’d find her husband and Jenny got the strange feeling there was something that Harriet wasn’t telling them. Or it’d gotten lost in her convoluted story. She bid goodbye to Harriet and went through to the plant room, throwing herself into Harriet’s recently vacated chair.

“Sounds pretty simple. Bloke works on the railway as a fireman, decides to up and disappear. Could be anywhere in England by now.” Jenny leaned backwards and steepled her fingers, crossing her legs.

Vastra gave her a reproving look. “Well we will begin our investigation at the station. Undoubtedly someone will have seen him around his place of work. I suspect he’s been murdered.”

Jenny blinked at such a fatalistic prediction. “Maybe ’e were an alien an’ Torchwood got ‘im.”

“Maybe he slipped through the cracks and got eaten by an opportunistic hawk.”

Jenny sat forward. “Maybe…”
“Maybe we should begin our investigations.” Vastra raked her eyes over Jenny. “Which might require a change of attire?”

Jenny gave her a trademark unimpressed glare but heaved herself up out the chair. “Like I’m gonna remain clean snoopin’ round a train station anyways.” She muttered as she walked out the room to scrub up.

Their enquiries at the train station after a Joseph Fields found that he’d last been sighted on a train heading west. The porter at the office told them it wasn’t likely he’d been able to skip off anywhere without it being reported. A fireman was necessary on the trains to stoke the engines and refill it with water. “’less he skipped an’ someone replaced him. The train stops at Swindon for a relief break. Ten minutes. Coulda gone then.” He shrugged. “All I can tell yer I’m afraid.”

Vastra thanked him for his information and went to the ticket office to enquire about passage along the Great Western Railway to Swindon for the next day.

Having acquired a compartment for the mid-morning train, they returned home to pack, Jenny growing increasingly nervous.

“It’s a missing husband. What are we planning? Fighting him for her honour?” Vastra snorted as Jenny checked the smoothness of the draw of her sword from the sheath that evening. They were both dressed in their nightgowns but only Vastra was curled up in bed, watching Jenny agitatedly double check everything.

“I don’t think it’s as simple as that. Our cases ‘ardly ever are.” Jenny put the sword back in its case and sat down on the edge of the bed with an almost despondent sigh. Vastra wriggled over and curled up around Jenny’s waist, running her hand over the bandages on Jenny’s back and up through her hair, trying to relax her. “I jus’ get the feelin’ she ain’t told us somethin’. Somethin’ she knows. Or at least suspects.”

“Hm. She was particularly loquacious. Easy enough to disguise the truth when you’re babbling.” Vastra sat up, resting her head against Jenny’s shoulder, feeling the tension in the young woman’s body change at the contact. She gave a small smile as Jenny turned round to kiss her.

19th February 1888

The journey to Swindon was freezing, and Vastra a very pale green when the train duly stopped for the relief break as the porter had told them. They’d had to share their compartment which meant she couldn’t even hold Jenny to keep warm. The station was dingy and Vastra struggled to follow Jenny to the porter’s office, where they were rudely directed across the road to the Great Western Hotel, the porter enquiring as to whether they were blind.

The hotel was at least mildly warmer and Vastra walked gratefully to the fire in the hallway whilst Jenny enquired about a room. Her request for only one was met with raised eyebrows but Vastra turned around to inform the receptionist that her maid was accustomed to sleeping on the floor. Jenny gave a rather fixed grin towards the receptionist who looked at her sympathetically and then showed them upstairs to a small single bed room.
“Well this will be cosy.” Vastra examined the bed after the porter had left. It was a narrow and nothing like their double bed in 13 Paternoster Row.

“I ain’t sleepin’ on the floor.” Jenny scowled, turning round from looking out the window at the station.

Vastra grinned in return. “Wouldn’t dream of it my dear.”

Rolling her eyes towards the ceiling, Jenny unpacked their cases and then sat on the bed. It gave a tired jangle of springs.

“On second thoughts the floor might be more comfortable.” Jenny muttered.

Vastra was still shivering, so Jenny curled up with her on the bed whilst she ate the lunch she’d packed.

The surly porter was still on duty when they crossed back to the station to make enquiries about Joseph Fields.

“An’ if ‘e is a fireman ‘ow the bleedin’ ‘ell am I suppose to recognise ‘im? One sooty bastard looks like the rest.” the porter scoffed. Jenny gave him one of her best glowering smiles and slid a coin onto his desk. He brightened and became a little more cordial. “But as it ‘apens I did see one young fella skip off the train here with the coal dust still round ‘is eyes. Coulda been your man.” He swiped the coin up and turned his back on them.

“Well at least we’re in the right place.” Vastra commiserated as they walked off.

“Worse luck.” Jenny muttered. The porter was now bellowing at some unfortunate boy who was struggling with a case as big as he was. Swindon was not impressing her.

They returned to the hotel to ask directions to the nearest police station and was told there was only one, at the top of Eastcott Lane and to ask for George North. The receptionist stared at them with even more interest and looked as if he’d liked to have asked more questions but they duly thanked him and walked out before he could.

After a climb up a rather steep hill, they arrived at a stone house with the words County Constabulary over the entrance. Avoiding the children chasing each other around the yard in front, Jenny and Vastra walked into the reception area and up the front desk to enquire after George North.

“Super’s not in at the mo.” The man shrugged at them. “What might be yer business?”

“I am a private investigator from London. I’d like to ask for his assistance in a missing persons case.” Vastra told him grandly. “My name is Madame Vastra. And yours?”

He sighed. “Sergeant Rebbick at your service.” He sat back in his chair. “’oo you lookin’ for then.”

“A railway fireman by the name of Joseph Fields.”

“One of those railway workers is he?” Thomas said in the same tone as Vastra might’ve said “One of those apes is he?” “Bloody navvies are always more trouble than they’re worth.”

“We have reason to believe he may be in Swindon.”

“I’ll put ‘is name down to be passed around.” Thomas scribbled something on a piece of paper in
They walked all the way back to the hotel a little fed up of this case already, particularly as they weren’t getting paid. Enquiries with the porter at the Great Western Hotel revealed that he hadn’t seen anyone of Joseph’s description and thus could only assume he’d had friends in the area.

Jenny sorely missed the Irregulars now and made a note to always bring one along with her in the future. Leaving a grumpy Vastra shivering in the hotel room next to the fire, Jenny set off to find somewhere to have dinner. As she was munching on a pasty, she remembered the young lad who was being lambasted by the Porter and was in no doubt that a shilling might brighten his eye and refresh his memory, as it had done so many others.

The young boy was still struggling with the last of the baggage off a train when she came up to him and she let him finish his work to save him another tongue lashing before asking him about Joseph Fields.

“I saw ‘im I fink. He got off the train, coal dust all over and another bloke took ‘is place. Then he disappeared. Musta ‘ad a wash cos ‘e came back the cleaner f’r it.” The boy shrugged. “What you want to know for anyway?”

“I’m helpin’ a private investigator track ‘im down. His lady back in London’s missin’ ‘im.”

“In London!” The boy’s eyes went wide.

“You from around ‘ere then I take it?”

“Born an’ raised. I want to work on the engine when I’m older. Got a job ‘ere as a luggage boy figured it’d ‘elp. Ev’ryone round ‘ere works on the railway see. On’y good job there is. An’ you get healthcare an’ even a dentist. They looks at yer teeth.” He bared his own in a crooked smile. “Me da works on a farm.”

“Woss yer name?”

“Jim. Well James. But nobod calls me James.” The boy darted a look over his shoulder at the porter who was watching the train set back off.

“You reck’n you might be able to help me find out more Jim?” He looked at her a little suspiciously until she waved a guinea in front of him. His eyes went wide and he staggered.

“Find out anythin’ you want!” he nodded eagerly.

“Joseph Fields. Any known associates, current whereabouts, that sort of thing.” She switched the guinea for a shilling. “Down payment for yer.”

He took the shilling but eyed the guinea. “‘oo’re you then?”

Jenny thought about all the titles she’d acquired recently that she could introduce herself as and a spark of mischief lit her eyes up.

“I’m the assistant of the Great Detective. Also known as Isle Dog Slayer, Great Warrior of the Earth an’ Rider of the Golden ‘awk. But you c’n call me Jenny Flint.” She smiled her best smile at him.
His jaw dropped progressively further and further open throughout her introduction. “Any results or information, come find me at the Great Western or the police station.”

“Yuss m’m.” he said in hushed tones.

Jenny looked back as she exited the station. He hadn’t moved from the spot. She allowed herself a small grin before heading back to the hotel to warm up Vastra.

Chapter End Notes

Rebbick is a real person as is George North, they were a Sergeant and Superintendent at Swindon Police Station in 1881 and I am finding out more about Swindon then I would ever really care to know.
The A***hole Of The World

Chapter Notes

is what Swindon is according to Christopher's father, Ed, in The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Nighttime by Mark Haddon. The title of which incidentally is a quote from a Sherlock Holmes story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Vastra was not best pleased with Swindon. It was cold, even colder than London had been, and noisy, and people seemed more fascinated by a woman in a veil than they were in London. Consequently, after the first few walks around the town centre with Jenny, Vastra spent most of her time in the hotel room, huddled in blankets in their room by a roaring fire, reading books Jenny brought for her from the Mechanics Institute library.

Jenny could not find much more to occupy her time. She wandered around Swindon, when not keeping Vastra company or buying food for them both from the market hall. She visited Jim at the train station in the evenings when he’d finished his work, but neither he, nor the police had any news for them regarding Joseph Fields and his whereabouts. For want of other entertainment, she took Jim to an evening of entertainment at the Mechanic’s Institute, in aid of some society or other, leaving Vastra sulking in their room. It wasn’t very good in Jenny’s opinion but then again, she’d never really been to a theatre before. She wondered whether shows in London were better and made a note to visit a theatre to find out.

It was nearly March before Jim rushed to meet her outside the railway station one evening, with the most tenuous of news. But even the small titbit he had for her was better than nothing, after a week of sheer boredom that they weren’t even being paid for.

He collided with her in the dim lamplight, his face flushed with excitement. “’parently there’s someone else lookin’ for Joe Fields too. A navvy name of Matthew. He was askin’ round too, seein’ if anyone had seen him.” Jim gasped. “I reck’n Joe musta bin in debt to this Matthew an’ he’s done ‘im in fer it.”

Jenny rolled her eyes. “So ‘ow come ‘e’s arskin’ round to see where he is then?”

Jim’s face fell. “Well…it could be like…throwin’ people of the scent.”

Jenny stared at him until he looked suitably chastened then asked, “Whereabouts can I find this Matthew then?”

“In the foundry?” Jim shrugged. Jenny waited. “Should…should I go get ‘im fer you then Miss Jenny?”

She nodded, half mocking in her earnestness and he dashed off with an apologetic grin.

Jenny shivered as she listened to the sounds of the railway. The last train would soon be leaving and she saw Sergeant Rebbick wander into the station to see it off. Jim reappeared with a burly man in tow. He was covered in oil and grease and soot, which he was attempting to wipe off his hands with a rag. As it was as oily as he was, he merely succeeded in spreading the oil around some more. His
teeth seemed white against his dirty face as he flashed her a brief smile.

“Jim said you wanted ter see me? Whut c’n I do fer you then?” He gave up on cleaning his hands and shoved the rag into his back pocket once more.

“I’m the assistant of a Detective from London. We’re investigatin’ the disappearance of one Joseph Fields...” Jenny watched as Matthew’s face became guarded. He folded his arms across his chest and rocked on the balls of his feet.

“An’ what would you be wantin’ ter see me about? I dunno where ‘e is more’n the next man. Woss a detective from London doin’ ‘ere anyway? Why d’you care?”

“’is wife in particular is missin’ ‘im and has engaged our services.” Jenny gave a fixed smile.

“Wife?” Matthew frowned.

“Yes. She’d quite like ‘im back. An’ as you have been askin’ about his whereabouts too, I was thinkin’ perhaps we could join forces in gettin’ ‘im back to her.” Jenny suggested, raising her eyebrows.

Matthew shifted uncomfortably. “I ain’t seen ‘im in near two weeks. Sorry lady, carn’t ‘elp yer.” He turned hurriedly and stalked back into the rail yard.

“Oi!” Jenny called after him but he didn’t turn back. She gave a dispirited sigh, handed Jim his guinea and walked back to the Great Western Hotel to report to Vastra. She was half tempted to just give in, but Harriet Fields’ face kept swimming in front of her. She’d looked so desperate.

Upon hearing the update, Vastra merely grunted.

“D’you want to go back to London?” Jenny asked.

“Give up you mean?” Vastra eyed her. “My reputation forbids it. I refuse to have an unsolved case on my record. It’s bad for business.”

“What business? We ain’t even bein’ paid. An’ if you are that interested in solvin’ it, maybe you could lend a hand?” as much as Jenny felt sympathy for the stares Vastra got the minute she stepped outside, she was slightly irritated with the continued sulk.

“With what?” Vastra snorted.

“Well this Matthew. I reck’n he knows more’n he lets on. He clearly knows Joseph Fields well enough to be enquirin’ as to ‘is whereabouts, but not well enough to know ‘e’s got a wife back in London? There’s some sort of deal there I reck’n. Jim’s idea about a debt might not be too far wrong.”

Vastra stood upright slowly. “And he is being uncooperative, is he?” her eyes flashed.

“He is not bein’ the most forthcomin’ of gentlemen, no.” Jenny shook her head solemnly.

“Well then.” Vastra grinned, the prospect of terrifying an ape cheering her a little. “Perhaps I should interrogate him more strenuously.”

March 1st 1888
Jenny waited with Vastra outside the foundry, waiting for Matthew to appear. It was dark by the time Jenny nudged Vastra and pointed him out amongst the crowd of burly railway workers. They watched as he tugged a cap on, turned up his collar and looked about suspiciously as the rest rowdily made their way home, as if he was expecting trouble. He spotted them almost immediately, recognised Jenny and his shoulders sagged but he made his way over.

“Thought you’d come round again.” He muttered to Jenny, shoving his hands in his coat pocket.

“Thas cos you got somethin’ to tell us, ain’t it Matthew.” Jenny crossed her arms and looked sternly at him.

“’ow’d’yer know ‘oo I am?!” he startled.

“We have our sources of information.” Vastra interjected smoothly.

“That boy Jim told yer din’t he.” Matthew called Jim a rude name. “So you must be this big London detective then.” He peered at Vastra, as if trying to see through the veil.

“My name is Madame Vastra.”

“Sounds foreign.” Matthew grunted.

Vastra paused. “You could say that. Be that as it may, we would like to ask you some questions. If you would come with us?” she turned in a swirl of cloak and started towards the hotel, not bothering to check if Matthew was following. He stared at Vastra in disbelief until Jenny hooked her arm through his and tugged him after her, not releasing him until after they had returned to Jenny and Vastra’s room.

“Shouldn’t be lettin’ me in ‘ere. See a navvy comin’ into yer room, be all sorts of rumours.” Matthew twitched nervously as Jenny let him go to lock the door behind them.

“I believe that to be the least of my worries.” Vastra said grandly. “And yours.” She flipped her veil up to Jenny’s horror and gave Matthew a toothy grin.

He stared at her transfixed for a full three minutes in silence until Jenny tutted loudly. He turned to gape at her but her unimpressed glare at Vastra seemed to snap him back to attention.

“So.” Vastra said delicately, removing her veil completely and sitting down in the small chair in the corner of the room. “Joseph Fields. You are looking for him, so I hear.”

Matthew shifted on his feet, now completely unnerved. “Aye well…” he took his hat off and ran his fingers through his hair.

“And why might that be?”

“We know each other. Through the railway. Get to know the blokes on the trains. S’a ten minute stop at Swindon. Get to see faces.”

“And you have not seen his face for a while, I suppose. Hence looking for him.” Vastra leant back in the chair, steeping her fingers as Jenny had done back at Paternoster Row.

“Aye.” Matthew nodded. In the silence that followed he nervously began twisting his cap in his hands. Vastra waited.

“When did you last see him?” Jenny asked, coming to stand beside Vastra. She could see Matthew
was beginning to sweat and suspected it had little to do with the fire Jenny had stoked back into life as Vastra had begun the interrogation.

He gave her a pained look. “I din’t do nuffin’ to ‘im. Well…not like that I mean. He…he said he needed a place to stay fer the night. Missed gettin’ on the last train. So I said ‘e could kip at mine. S’not a big berth, navvy quarters never are but large enough someone could bunk down on the floor.”

“How charitable of you.” Vastra remarked.

“Yeah. So. We got to know each other. So when I din’t see ‘im around fer a bit, got to wonderin’ where he was.”

“Your concern is touching.”

That got Matthew’s back up. “Last time I saw ‘im was when he walked out my door near of three weeks ago now. I ain’t seen ‘im since an’ I don’t know where he is now an’ I ain’t got nuffin’ more ter say.” He tugged his hat back on, gave them both one final glower and then stormed from the room, slamming the door behind him.

Jenny waited a moment, listening to his heavy footsteps on the stairs, before turning on Vastra.

“What in the bleedin’ ‘ell were you thinkin’, takin’ yer veil off like that?!”

Vastra stood up in a fit of pique. “Do I have to hide away from every single ape I meet?!”

Jenny started at the unexpected reproof, unable to form a reply. “I…”

“Don’ be a damn fool!” she hissed. “Maybe it ain’t so bad showin’ the occasional cove, who’d believe ‘im anyway but walkin’ out into the street? You want to go back to the circus?”

“If my veil is yet another cage I might as well!” Vastra shook herself free.

“What the ‘ell’s gotten into yer?!” Jenny stared at Vastra, completely bewildered.

“Sometimes…I do not wish for the world to make sense.” Vastra gave a small keen. “It is difficult here. I…” she threw her hands in the air in a defeated gesture and turned away from Jenny.

“What’s so difficult? Bein’ cooped up in the room? You survived weeks on a boat goin’ to Japan. An’ people stared then too.” Jenny pointed out.

“I wouldn’t expect an ape to understand.” Vastra snarled over her shoulder.

“Try me!” Jenny snapped.

They scowled at each other for a few moments. Vastra shocked Jenny by relenting and walking over to where the young woman stood, taking a clenched fist in her gloved hand and resting her forehead against Jenny’s.

“The admission made Jenny’s heart sink and she stared after Vastra as the Silurian dressed in her nightgown and slid into bed, back towards Jenny.
Jenny glanced around the room, feeling guilty at her outburst. She’d spent an uncomfortable three months in prison, when she’d been arrested for thieving from the house where she worked as a skiv. The hotel room was more comfortable than her cell and slightly larger but in London they not only had a large house to move around in and train in but there were also people who knew Vastra; the Irregulars, George, even Jess, whom she could be herself around. And she knew all too well the frustrations, the longings to be openly acknowledged, to not have to hide away.

“I’ll talk to Matthew again tomorrow.” Jenny said eventually, the only answer she could come up with to the dilemma being to solve the case as swiftly as possible so that they could return to London. When Vastra didn’t answer, Jenny sat down on the bed and began to undress. “’e took it well.” She remarked, pulling her dress over her head.

Vastra snorted.

“Din’t scream or nuffin’.” Jenny shot a glance out the corner of her eyes, unclipping her corset. The Silurian seemed to have relaxed. Jenny, now dressed only in her chemise and drawers, slid under the covers. She draped an arm over Vastra’s waist, propping herself up on her elbow so she could lean over to see Vastra’s face. ““In fact, I’d say he…”

She was prevented from saying what she would have said about him by the gentleman in question bursting back through their hotel room door, which Jenny had forgotten to lock, his agitation disproving his earlier claim of having nothing more to say. Whatever it was he’d returned to tell them died on his lips as he saw them, curled up in bed together, Jenny hastily grabbing at the covers as she sat upright. Matthew’s previous astonishment at Vastra’s scales was nothing to what his face told of now.

Chapter End Notes

Jenny’s habit of forgetting to lock doors begins…

The Swindon Mechanic’s Institute was acutally the first lending library apparently. It’s completely trashed these days and there seems to be no move to restore it. As far as I can tell women were allowed into public libraries and mechanics institutes (after a while at any rate). The Mechanics Institute was also used as a place of entertainment and would put on shows and concerts and the like.

I also found this photo of the County Constabulary on Eastcott Road albeit from a decade or so later and find it hilarious that they made policemen sit like school children had to sit for their photos. https://www.flickr.com/photos/swindonlocal/3833555328/ a thing of beauty.
After a moment of frozen fear, Jenny threw back the covers and stood up, folding her arms and glowering at Matthew, who instantaneously threw his hands up in the air and backed away.

“‘You got somethin’ more to tell us then I take it?’” Jenny snapped impatiently, as Matthew continued to stand there in silence.

“Yes!” Matthew grasped at this permission to speak. “Yes. Um…I mean…it actually makes…I mean if you two…I mean blimey though, she’s a lizard and…”

“What of it?” Jenny snarled at him and he backed away even further, almost out the door.

“My dear,” Vastra serenely slid out of bed and briefly touched Jenny on the shoulder. “Don’t terrify the poor man.”

Jenny stared in disbelief at Vastra’s calmness as she moved behind Matthew to close the door once more; he scuttled into the corner as she approached him.

“Perhaps you’d like to sit down.” Vastra gestured towards the chair in the corner before tugging on a thick woollen dressing gown. Matthew seemed unnerved at the idea of coming any further into the room and stayed in his corner. Despite his broad shoulders, he tried to shrink in on himself. Vastra draped Jenny’s dressing gown over her shoulders as she went to sit down in the chair, as Matthew seemed to have no intention of using it, and with a sigh Jenny uncrossed her arms and put it on.

“Well?” Jenny asked, once she’d tied it around her waist.

“‘ere. You’re police from London right?”

“I am a private detective. I occasionally assist Scotland Yard but I am by no means employed by them.” Vastra answered him.

“So…just to say, if I said I’d done somethin’…a bit illegal, you wouldn’t just turn me in or nuffin’.” Matthew eyed Jenny warily. She frowned at him, puzzled.

“It would entirely depend upon the nature of the illegal action you’d taken.” Vastra shrugged.

“But I mean you two…I mean…” Matthew trailed off into silence.

A penny dropped in Jenny’s head, Jenny could hear it rolling around until it finally clattered onto its side. “Oh!” She exclaimed suddenly. Matthew started, staring at her in fear. Vastra merely shot her a puzzled glance. Jenny bit her lip to stop a rather inappropriate grin spreading across her face. She turned towards Vastra. “Him and Joe.” Jenny waggled her eyebrows suggestively.
They both looked at a now scarlet-faced Matthew who nonetheless looked relieved. “Oh.” Vastra’s eyes glittered and a faint smile tugged at her lips.

“So ’e stayed the night then.” Jenny prompted, putting a particular emphasis on the phrase.

“Aye.” Matthew relaxed although his cheeks still burned. “But the next morning, ‘e seemed troubled, see. An’ then ’e just took off. An’ I ain’t seen ’im since.” There was a small pause as Matthew seemed to be struggling with something. “Does ’e really ‘ave a wife in London?”

Jenny and Vastra looked at each other. “Yes.” Jenny said decisively. Lying wouldn’t make Matthew’s situation any better.

“Oh.” His shoulders sagged. “Well…anyways. That’s about all I know I’m afraid. Maybe he’s gone back to her.” He sighed dejectedly.

“Seeing as she was the lady who hired us to find him, I highly doubt that.” Vastra snorted. But Matthew brightened at the reminder.

“Oh! Yeah.”

Jenny’s mouth twitched at the hopeful expression dawning on his features but she managed to control herself. “Well, thank you fer lettin’ us know the whole of the business. It might ‘elp with our enquiries.”

“’ere!” Matthew stepped forward suddenly. “You ain’t gonna give ’im away either are ye? With yer enquiries?”

“Not in the slightest.” Vastra assured him. “The police do not need to know the reason for his visit to your abode, beyond needing lodgings for the night. And, as he could procure them adequately enough, they can hardly arrest him for that.”

“Right.” Matthew nodded. “Well I’ll leave you to…uh…it. Um! You will let me know? If you find ’im?”

“When we find him, we will.” Jenny nodded reassuringly, beginning to feel very much sorry for Matthew.

“Right.” He said again, dejection creeping back into his tone, before turning and striding out the door, closing it behind him.

“Well.” Vastra said in a slightly stunned voice.

“Well.” Jenny agreed, still staring at the shut door.

“However, I fear there is little else we can do apart from send out search parties.” Vastra sighed as she divested herself of her dressing gown and curled back up in bed once more.

“Aye the coppers said they wouldn’t do nuffin’ ‘less he committed a crime. Even more useless than Inspector Gregson.” Jenny shook her head, carefully locking the door this time before joining Vastra.

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Vastra and Jenny spent a very boring week, waiting for any news from either Jim or Matthew but nothing came to them. Nor were the police of any assistance, indeed they became impatient with Jenny over her frequent enquiries at the station and told her quite sternly that if she bothered them
again without a crime having been committed, they’d make her spend a night in the cells.

10th March 1888

Jenny had begun the habit of trawling the local paper for any hint of news. One morning, she was once more perusing it over breakfast when she saw an article that made her eyes go wide.

Inhaling deeply, she stood up, grabbed the newspaper and, abandoning her breakfast, stomped back upstairs to their room. She stormed over to the small desk where Vastra was seated and threw the paper in front of the Silurian.

“What is this?” Vastra set her book down and peered at the paper. An amused look flashed across her eyes but she kept a studiously straight face as she turned to meet Jenny’s gaze. “Yes my dear?” she asked, with an expression of innocent bewilderment.

Jenny swelled as she took a deep breath, jabbed at the paper with her finger and read aloud furiously “Mysterious monster reported to be stalking Swindon. Only seen at night. Has the attire of a lady but the face as of Satan himself. Recalls the myth of the Stratton Sea Serpent. Half the town in terror.” She paused for a breath, giving Vastra a fixed grin. “This “mysterious monster” wouldn’t ‘appen to be you, my darling, would it? Or is there more’n one prehistoric creature roamin’ about the place?”

Vastra had quailed slightly under Jenny’s highly unimpressed glare but managed to regain some degree of poise as she averted her eyes and gave a dismissive shrug, stammering “I…I was bored one night. I needed some fresh air.”

“One?” Jenny folded her arms.

“One can never get too much fresh air.” Vastra replied primly, turning back to the desk so she wouldn’t have to see Jenny’s expression and folding the paper up to tuck it away. She pulled a piece of paper towards her and made to start writing a letter.

Jenny took a very audible deep breath and Vastra half flinched, waiting for the incoming lecture. The breath merely came out as an equally deep and audible sigh and Jenny moved away to collapse heavily onto the bed.

“Fink I preferred fightin’ ‘awks.” She grumbled.

Vastra looked up, staring at the wall in front of the desk as she considered this statement. “I must admit, I do not prefer you fighting hawks.” She loaded her pen and began to write a letter, instructing Parker that they would be yet even longer than originally planned and could he please some money out for the Irregulars or generally make sure they got fed. He would, of course, be reimbursed the cost when they returned.

Jenny lifted her head off the bed, her frustration relenting at such a touching statement.

“I’m near enuff healed. Could train if we ‘ad anywhere to do so.” Jenny heaved herself back upright.

“It might break the scabs.” Vastra shook her head, signing off her letter.

“So what we gonna do about this then.” Jenny perched on the edge of the desk and picked up the paper once more. “Sez ‘ere they’re organising hunts.”

“I suppose I shall have to curtail my night time activities.” Vastra clicked in irritation as she rose and
handed the now addressed envelope to Jenny.

Jenny frowned as she took it, the paper slipping from her other hand. “Why din’t you wake me up ter go with yer?” a note of hurt crept into her voice. “You could’ve bin injured. Captured! An’ then what would I do ey?”

Somehow, Vastra mused, Jenny’s tone was worse than a lecture. “Storm the gaol to free me?” she shrugged, gesturing blasély with her hands. “Seeing as I suspect I am henceforth banned from venturing out the room, with or without my veil, would you mind sending that letter off for me? And I wouldn’t mind some lamb for lunch.” She curled up in a huff on the bed.

Jenny’s outrage at such a dismissal of her concerns moved beyond the realm of mere words and to avoid what would probably be a very noisy and attention bringing row if she ever managed to give voice to her fury, Jenny grabbed her cloak and strode from the room, muttering under her breath as she invented new insulting invectives against stupid bloody lizard detectives.

A nervous looking Matthew was waiting for her outside the hotel. “I saw the newspaper.” He said as way of a greeting, as he joined her, managing to match her pace with long strides of his own.


“Is it ‘er then? That they’re after?”

“’ow many “mysterious monsters” d’you think there are in town?”

“Well…she don’t seem like a monster to me.” Matthew earned no small amount of Jenny’s esteem for that. She decided against telling him that Vastra ate people on occasion.

“What’re you gonna do?” he asked earnestly.


“But they might come after ‘er!” Matthew earned himself more of Jenny’s esteem; really he seemed more worried than she was.

“So long as she stays in ‘er room, she’ll be fine.” Jenny tried to reassure him.

“An’ if she don’t?” Matthew asked.

Jenny stopped dead in the street as she calculated the odds of Vastra staying put. Vastra was more the sort to go out and try and lure a mob to make fools of them.

“What’m I gonna do…” she groaned, slumping suddenly against a wall.

“Go ter the police.” Matthew said suddenly.

“You what?” Jenny jerked her head up in alarm.


“An’ when they discover I bin stringin’ ‘em along? What’ll they do then? I’m ‘avin’ enough bleedin’ trouble gettin’ ‘em to help with Joe as it is. They’ve already threatened me with a night in the cells, if
I bother ‘em unnecessarily.”

“I dunno! We could set up a decoy like. We get ‘em to chase that instead of yer missus.”

“How?” Jenny ignored the “missus”.

“I…I c’ld dress up as a monster.” Matthew volunteered, with only a second’s hesitation. “Paint me face’n everythin’. Then you c’ld lead ‘em after me an’ when they catch me I just says it was all a joke. Y’know. Just a navvy larkin’ about.”

“Wot an’ get you into trouble?”

“I won’t get into no trouble. Not fer a prank. C’ld say I ‘eard about that Stratton story an’ thought to set up for an April Fool’s joke. On’y got caught a bit early see.”

April. It was nearly April. The realisation struck Jenny out of the blue but she forced herself to focus on what Matthew was saying.

“You’d risk that fer us?”

Matthew shrugged his broad shoulders. “Well…yer still lookin’ fer Joe. Most would’ve given up by now. An’ you ain’t y’know…tellin’ on us or nuffin’ either. An’…” He gave a quick grin. “s’a bit funny ain’t it. A double bluff like.”

Jenny stared at him incredulously but the idea had taken root already and at the very least it sounded like some excitement. Her eyes flickered across his broad shoulders and narrowed.

“You’ll never fit into one of Vastra’s dresses though…”

Chapter End Notes

Is there more than one prehistoric creature roaming about the place tho...

I am using this article as inspiration for the article about Vastra. Alas it’s about 30 years too early to be actually about Vastra but hey.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/swindonlocal/9964296145/in/album-72157621965075674/

The local paper back in those days was called the Swindon Advertiser and Wiltshire, Berkshire and Gloucestershire Chronicle, apparently back then they liked really long newspaper names, in case anyone is interested apart from me.
The Hunting Of The Snark

Chapter Summary

Soz for the lack of update I was ill.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jenny debated whether to tell Vastra about this grand plan of theirs, she could predict a few of the snide remarks Vastra might make about it, but as it would require one of her dresses and an amount of Jenny’s time, she and Matthew agreed it was probably best to bring her into the loop. They returned to the hotel room after lunch, having spent the morning detailing the plan a little better so as not to come over as rash.

“You sure they won’t miss you at the rail works?” Jenny asked, as they climbed the stairs.

“I’m a navvy, they c’n always find a replacement for me.” Matthew shrugged.

Jenny knocked four times on the door. “S’me. I got Matthew with me.” She called out. Since Matthew had burst in on them and particularly since Vastra had been spotted gadding about Swindon, Jenny had insisted on the door being locked at all times.

A key scraped in the lock and the door swung open. Jenny tugged Matthew, who seemed a little unwilling to enter, through and the door was pushed closed by Vastra, who had been standing, hidden, behind it.

“Bought you lunch.” Jenny waved a package at her before plonking it down on the table on the newspaper that told of Vastra’s night time escapades.

Vastra’s eyes glittered but she glanced at Matthew and did not move towards it.

“You c’n eat it later. We got things to talk about first.”

“Oh?”

“Regardin’ your wanderin’s. We got a plan as to how we c’n draw the police an’ everyone not only off the scent but to lay the thing to rest altogether.”

Vastra tilted her head to one side, flicking her attention between Jenny and Matthew as Jenny outlined their idea, accompanied by many encouraging nods from Matthew.

“Is that entirely necessary?” she sighed wearily, as soon as Jenny had finished. “As long as I keep to this room, there should be no further problems.”

“An’ do you think, Madam, that you would be entirely capable of doing that for the duration of the rest of this case however long that might be?” Jenny said, a touch acerbically, her arms folded, her eyebrows raised. Vastra stared at her loftily but made no reply. “An’ even if you could, what’s to stop someone comin’ in through the door?”
“If someone forgot to lock it again you mean.” Vastra sat upright.

Matthew, sensing that some rather loud and attention grabbing yelling was about to begin, felt he should interrupt. “But…but say Madame Vastra, I mean, it’d be foolin’ the police too wouldn’t it? I mean, thas…” he trailed off.

“That is hardly a challenge.” Vastra snorted, slumping once more into her seat.

“I mean, it’s payback ain’t it? For ‘em not helpin’ us? An’…” Matthew grasped at straws. “Maybe if they see that Jenny is useful like, able to help ’em sort out somethin’, maybe they’d be more inclined to help us back, see.”

Jenny couldn’t see precisely how their plan would affect such a change in the local constabulary but didn’t contest the point. “At least it’d be somethin’ to do.” She shrugged at Vastra.

“Something for you to do.” The Silurian muttered balefully but she eventually acceded to the plan.

11th March 1888

Matthew and Jenny spent a long day planning the entire thing in minute detail. They decided to do it at night, as that was when Vastra had been spotted. The spot was determined as near the railway station, close to where Vastra had been roaming and where Matthew worked and had quarters, and therefore knew his way around reasonably well, certainly enough to find hiding places if necessary. Jenny found a Harry Williams of Fleet Street to alter one of Vastra’s dresses but Vastra put her foot down at this, saying it made the plan too elaborate and that an ill-fitting dress would arouse less suspicion. Jenny bought a second-hand veil for Matthew to wear as well, as Vastra was not about to give up her perception filter for a prank. Matthew also drew the line at heeled boots; not only was his feet far too large but as he argued, how on earth was he meant to run in them when the police chased him?

13th of March (A Tuesday)

Finally, on the evening of the thirteenth of March, Jenny left Matthew waiting in position and duly rushed up to the police station, breathlessly proclaiming she had sighted the “monster”, down near the railway, as she’d been walking back to her hotel. With only a brief look of resignation after a rather longer glance of disbelief, Superintendent George North summoned the men on duty and followed her down to the railway station without too much muttering. Much as the police force of Swindon had grown weary of Jenny’s badgering with regards to Joe Fields, the past few days had brought what felt like half the population of Swindon to their door, anxiously enquiring as to what they were doing about the “monster” and they were happy enough to be seen in pursuit of anything.

Matthew and Jenny had agreed that when she had brought the police to near his hiding place she would give an exclamation along the lines of “well it was around here somewhere”. Jenny, as they neared the place, suddenly realised all the things that could go wrong with this plan, but it was a little late for cold feet, particularly if she wished to retain any credulity with the Swindon police force. She stopped and looking around the place, gave a rather shaky “I woulda sworn I saw somethin’ movin’ in amongst the buildings” and waited.

Matthew, who had been crouched behind a large stack of timber, was straining his ears and nearly missed the signal but upon hearing the louder and somewhat derisive replies of the police, darted out from his position, heavy boots thudding along as he lifted his skirts and ran.

“Hoi! There is something! There ’e goes!” Inspector Porter cried out.
“After him, Worthy!” Superintendent North roared, gesturing for them all to follow.

“Come on, men.” Sergeant Rebbick hollered and they took up the chase, Matthew being careful not to draw too far ahead, which in truth was easy enough for him to do as he was not accustomed to running in skirts.

Jenny followed behind a constable, whom she had overheard being called Fred at some point. Now that the scheme had proved semi-successful, the adrenalin meant she had to suppress a grin.

Matthew kept very carefully to the plan, running along the high street, to give the chance for as many spectators as possible. A small crowd was soon giving chase as well and Jenny made sure to tell anyone who could hear that they were chasing the “monster” that had been seen around Swindon recently. The word spread among the pursuing group and they shouted for more people to assist them. Although, Jenny considered when they numbered about 30 men, not including the police, it wasn’t exactly as though they would need help. Even if it had been a monster, or even Vastra, 30 men would be enough to overpower most things vaguely human. She got a bit alarmed for Matthew’s safety when she spotted a few members carrying knives and guns.

Fortunately, the “hunt” didn’t last much further than Regent’s Circus, where Matthew tripped, already exhausted from the long run, and fell. The police had to hold the crowd back to stop him being stampeded; they grabbed him and hauled him upright, dragging off his veil, to reveal the horrendous mixture of coal dust, oil and lipstick that he’d painted his face with.

There were cries of disgust from the crowd but Sergeant Thomas Rebbick who approached him frowned. “Tis a man!” he called out. “Not a monster.”

Matthew gave a sheepish grin which turned to one of mild alarm as he was cuffed and escorted back to the Eastcott Road police station.

Jenny tagged along at the back of the group, managing to edge her way into the station the crowd to watch as they doused him down and heard his story.

Superintendent North shook his head in disgust. “Bloody navvies!” he swore. “It’s always you lot, causing trouble. Right. I think a few nights in the cell will cure you of miserable attempts at April Fools jokes! Scaring the good people of Swindon. Not to mention whichever good lady you stole this fine dress from, you bleedin’ reprobate!” He blustered on for a while before sending the crowd home and handing Matthew a pair of trousers and a vaguely clean shirt.

Jenny gave him a sympathetic look but he gave a small shake of his head and she slipped off with the rest of the “good people of Swindon”, feeling more than a little guilty at her friend’s fate.

When she told Vastra what had happened, Vastra’s only remark was one of horror that one of her dresses was now locked up in a police station. Jenny gave a most unimpressed look at her lack of sympathy for Matthew and curled up resolutely on the floor.

### 14th of March 1888

She woke to find herself in bed and turned over about to give Vastra an earful but the Silurian was curled up in a rather tight ball on the floor, under a blanket and her own cloak. Jenny rolled her eyes that Vastra could so easily worm her way back into Jenny’s good graces and got up, throwing the blankets over the top of Vastra as she did so, before going to bathe and get dressed.

Jenny made sure she was cleanest and neatest she’d been in her life. Despite the mostly successful conclusion of the night’s events, she still wasn’t keen on Vastra wandering about for a while, which
meant that she would have to make her way to the police station by herself to ask, in light of her assistance in capturing the “monster”, for more support in their own case.

Superintendent North huffed a few times at her request, muttering about things not being as serious as people had made out and having had enough of hysterical over-reactions, but tasked one Constable Frederick Finley to support them in tracking down Joseph Fields as “he isn’t much use to us anyway.” She recognised him as the constable she’d followed the previous evening and gave him a brief smile.

“’e’s right y’know.” Constable Finley said miserably as they strode out the police station. “I dunno even what I c’n do to help yer.”

“You local to the area?” Jenny asked, thinking that at the very least he might know more people who might’ve seen something than she did.

“Born ‘n bred.” He told her as they walked towards the town centre. “Grew up in Stratton. Me ma was born in the workhouse there. She got out.” He added hastily. “Me grandma got married. It were me Da that got me the job as constable. Said it’d be a chance fer me to make up for everythin’ in me family’s past.” He shrugged. “But I don’t think the police really appreciate me bein’ there.”

Jenny wasn’t listening; the word ‘workhouse’ had sparked her attention.

“Fred,” she turned towards him and grabbed him by the arm to stop him. “if someone was loavin’ about the place like, homeless, nowhere to go…where’d they be taken?”

“Well…first they’d be arrested fer bein’ a vagrant, we don’t encourage such sort in Swindon see, an’ then…they’d be taken to the workhouse.” Fred shrugged.

“In Stratton?”

“S’about the only one around, aye.”

“You ‘ad any coves arrested and sent there recently?”

“One or two. Why?”

“Reckon you could take me there?” Jenny grinned at him.

“It’s over an hour walk.” Fred warned her.

“Got any horses?”

“Well, we got the ones for the hurry up wagon but I’m not sure Superintendent North would let…”

Jenny spun round on the spot and made for the police station.

“Why d’you even want to go to the workhouse anyway?” Fred called, jogging after her.

“Where else do you go when you’re down on your luck or wantin’ to disappear?” Jenny shot back.

Doubting that Superintendent North would be obliging in letting them have the wagon, Jenny didn’t ask him and merely saddled up the two horses and backed them into the shafts of the hurry up wagon. Fred looked half terrified, half admiringly as she steered the horses out the yard and off down the road, taking directions to Stratton from him, when he had found his voice again.

Even without walking the journey still took nearly an hour; the wagon and its horses were not made
for speed. When they’d arrived and questioned the man in charge of the workhouse, one Mr Houghton, he told them that there had been three men who had recently been admitted. It irked Jenny that he spoke to Constable Finley more than to her. He brought them all out when Jenny demanded it but as Jenny had no clue what Joseph Fields looked like, she had to insist on taking all three of them back to the police station in Swindon.

The workhouse master flatly refused and Finley was far too much a wet blanket to help her out. Jenny used all of the authoritative demeanour she could muster to quell their arguments, stating that she was representing an important and well known detective from London and that these men could be crucial in solving a case but Mr Houghton was firm, even when Jenny threatened him with Scotland Yard.

Feeling despondent, she let Finley take them back to the police station. Inspector Worthy Porter was not best pleased when they arrived back, the missing hurry up wagon had caused great consternation and Constable Finley was subject to a rather blistering earful.

Jenny slipped into the cell area whilst it was going on and found Matthew, looking not much the worse for wear.

“I think I’ve found out where Joe is. But I haven’t a clue what he looks like.” She hissed through the bars, cutting off his welcome.

Matthew’s description wasn’t very helpful either. “They all had brown hair!” Jenny cried in exasperation. She could hear the clatter of boots and turned to face the beetroot red face of Inspector Porter.

“I was just questionin’ him about my case. Might be as ‘e was runnin’ about at night he saw something.” Jenny got in the first word and then stalked out the police station without a backward glance.

She hurried back to the hotel and regaled Vastra of all that had happened.

“And you believe it is one of these three men?” Vastra asked at the end of it.

“Yes! But the bloody man who runs the place won’t let me take ‘em out so Matthew can point out which one’s Joe. And there’s no chance of me getting Matthew out there.” Jenny slumped onto the bed. “E’en when I threatened Scotland Yard on ‘em.”

Vastra’s eyes glittered and she grinned her teeth showing grin. “Well if Scotland Yard was threatened…”

“What?”

“I shall write to Gregson. If you’d be so good as to post the letter?”

Jenny duly posted the letter the next and then spent the day with Vastra in their hotel room.

17th of March 1888

A couple of days later, Jenny strode back down to the police station, waving the very official looking letter from Scotland Yard and George North gave in. The wagon was once again taken out to the workhouse, where the letter was waved again and, in the presence of three policemen and the Sergeant, it was successful in gaining the three men who Jenny Flint had requested. They were duly brought back to the Eastcott Hill station.
“Well?” Super Intendent North sighed at Jenny. “What now?”

“I’ll need you to bring out that bloke that got arrested a few nights back for dressing up as a monster.”

Jenny nodded towards the cells.

“What?!” Inspector Porter blustered, now completely confused as to why this case was quite so important to all these people from London when all it concerned was a navvy and a homeless person.

“We ‘ave reason to believe he has information pertaining to this case and may also be able to identify a person.” Jenny said grandly.

Inspector Porter looked to Sergeant Rebbick and then to his Super Intendent for support in this bewildering matter but the Sergeant merely shrugged and the Super Intendent waved a hand for him to carry on, whilst holding his head in the other.

Jenny noticed that Matthew still looked fairly hale and hearty, which she was glad for. She watched with an eagle eye the three men they’d brought from the workhouse and was not disappointed.

“That’s him.” She called out, before even Matthew could, pointing at a young-ish brown-haired man who had gone pale at the sight of Matthew.

“Is it?” Super Intendent North looked to Matthew, almost begging him with his eyes to agree and end this whole affair. Matthew nodded and then was dragged off back to the cells. Sergeant Rebbick gestured for Fred to take the other two men back to the workhouse with another constable who’d watched the proceedings with an air of amusement and the four men disappeared back out into the yard.


He looked very short of convinced.

“Well?” Inspector Porter asked.

“I think it best if I take ‘im back home. He’s clearly bin through a terrible ordeal.”

“Ordeal you say?” Super Intendent North said pompously, thinking to himself that whatever this man had gone through it was nothing compared to having Jenny Flint in his station.

“Well look at ‘im, ‘e’s in shock.” Jenny gestured at a wilting Mr Fields.

“But…” Inspector Porter protested but Sergeant Rebbick interrupted him with a frantic wave and gestured Jenny and Joseph out the station with visible relief.

Jenny slipped her arm through Joseph’s, not only to keep a firm grip on him but also to appear unremarkable. She needn’t have worried; Joseph merely stumbled along beside her, making no effort to get away. He hadn’t spoken a word since he’d been escorted from the workhouse and he maintained his silence all the way to the Great Western Hotel.

Jenny knocked and led him through, depositing him in the small chair as Vastra locked the door behind them.
He gazed up at Vastra, who was still wearing her veil, and seemed about to speak at last but she held up a gloved hand to forestall him.

“I am Madame Vastra. A detective from London, hired by your wife to track you down. Having succeeded… there is no need to explain what happened,” Vastra cut him off again. “I believe we have gained most of the story from your wife, Harriet Fields, and one navvy of the name of Matthew. The only thing of this case that remains a mystery, Mr Fields, is what you are planning on doing next?”

Chapter End Notes

Mr Houghton was the name of the Master of the Workhouse at Stratton back in the 1850s. Don't ask me why I know this.
Joseph Fields didn’t seem in any hurry to decide what to do and after waiting for a reply for a good five minutes, Jenny gave up in disgust and wandered out to get some dinner for them all, leaving Vastra to guard the rather stricken looking young man.

She was walking back up to the high street when she passed a small crowd congregating around a man holding a piece of paper. She slowed her pace, intrigued and started to hear what they were shouting.

“It’s struck again!”

“S’the monster that’s what it is.”

“Those damn police don’t have a damn clue.”

“Arrestin’ some navvy just to make it look like they’re doing something.”

“I reckon it is them, stealin’ away kiddies. Wouldn’ put it past ‘em.”

Jenny frowned and moved to the edge of the circle. She tapped someone on the shoulder. “Woss goin’ on?”

“Another attack. Killed a child this time.”

“What did?”

“The monster o’ course! Ain’t you bin payin’ attention?” The woman glanced at her scornfully.

Jenny stood in stunned silence as the group soon split up and went off to disseminate the news. She told herself sternly that Vastra, had she killed a child, would’ve eaten it. But she still dashed back to the hotel, food forgotten about. It didn’t matter if Vastra hadn’t, everyone would think she had.

Jim was standing outside the hotel when she arrived back. She’d forgotten about him entirely.

“Miss Jenny. Miss Jenny!” he ran up to her the moment he saw her, looking pale and panicked. “Is it
true that Matthew is the monster? Is that why he was arrested? Is that why you was huntin’ him Miss? Cos he killed children?”

Jenny’s stomach gave a sickening lurch at the thought that she might’ve gotten Matthew into more trouble than either of them had expected. “Wot? Nah, he was jus’...dressin’ up. Messin’ about. It wasn’t him.”

“Then who is it Miss? Is it that Joseph Fields?”

“I doubt it seein’ as how he’s bin in the workhouse this long while.” Jenny scoffed at the lack of logic.

“You found ‘im? How’d’yer find ‘im?” Jim gaped at her.

Jenny cursed under her breath. She hadn’t brought Jim up to speed on any of it, indeed she quite possibly couldn’t without getting lots of people into trouble. And right now she had a much bigger problem to sort out.

“Are you sure it ain’t Matthew?” Jim followed her up to the door. “Miss? On’y the kid wot got killed...that was down by the canal miss. And thas right by the railway.”

That stopped Jenny. “What do you know about it Jim?” she asked him gently.

“It were last night. The boys that go down by the canal bin sayin’ it for weeks now. ‘Bout the monster. But it were only when an adult saw it too that anyone believed ‘em. But now a boy’s bin killed, Miss Jenny!”

“What boys are these?” Jim hung his head and didn’t answer. “You reckon you could take me to ‘em?” He shook his head. “Can you take me down to the canal where it happened?”

He lifted his eyes and gazed at her shrewdly. “All right.”

“Good. Wait here.” Jenny tore up to the hotel room.

“Ah Jenny. I was wondering where you’d...”

“No time fer that!” Jenny cut Vastra off, slamming the door behind her. “Apparently there IS another monster here in Swindon. An’ it’s killed a kiddy. There’s gonna be a lot of angry people about.”

There was a taut silence filled with an unasked question that Jenny was trying very hard to not let come into her mind.

Vastra’s eyes narrowed. “It wasn’t me.”

“I know.” Jenny said a little too quickly.

“I would never...not even an ape...”

“I know!”

“I am aware that in the past I have threatened...” Vastra stared at a point just over the top of Jenny left ear.

“Vastra!” Jenny cried desperately. “I know! But they don’t. If you go out there now an’ they spot yer, they’ll kill yer! So please...”
Vastra looked her properly in the eyes for the first time since Jenny had spilled her news. She gave a slow nod. “I will remain here.”

Jenny wrung her hands. “I got to…”

“Of course.” Vastra’s voice was calm and distant and Jenny hated it. With a scowl and disregarding Joseph’s presence entirely, she stalked up to Vastra and flung her arms round the Silurian. “You were right.” Vastra said, gently disentangling Jenny from her and walking over to their cases. “This case has proved not as simple as it seemed.” She rumbled in the bottom of one. “Although in a most unexpected fashion.” She drew out Jenny’s sword and held it out to Jenny.

“I ain’t practiced…”

“Ha!” Vastra snorted, stalking over to Jenny. “Since when has that ever stopped you taking on anything?” She fastened the sword around Jenny’s waist.

Jenny flushed at the implied praise, and the feel of Vastra’s arms around her. “Well…”

Vastra cupped her cheek with one hand. “Be safe. And try not to get too injured?”

Jenny gave a wry smile, which Vastra promptly kissed, causing a soft “oh!” from Joseph, still slumped in the corner. Jenny ignored it and, throwing Vastra’s cloak around her shoulders, to disguise the sword, she clattered back down the stairs and out into the twilight to where Jim was waiting, stamping his feet.

“There’s a wobbly slat. You c’n sit right on the edge.”

Jenny looked over the fence. The canal looked swampy and dark in the half light. Looking around to make sure no-one was watching, she drew her sword carefully.

Jim gasped.

“I tol’ yer din’t I? Great Warrior.”

“You’re a Monster Hunter!” He looked even more awed than Jenny thought possible. “Is it Joseph Fields miss?”

“Nah. He was just a missin’ person.” Jenny shrugged. He looked at her disbelievingly. “Even monster hunters have slow days.” She rolled her eyes. “Now get through them slats an’ sing out if you see anything.”
Jim nodded eagerly and wriggled through. Jenny was not a tall or large person, but she suspected she’d have difficulty following. She wondered briefly what she was doing, what she was expecting. A prehistoric monster that killed children. The police wouldn’t think it was an actual monster of course. Especially after they’d captured Matthew. They’d think it was all a big hoax now; a distraction. Of course it could still be a normal awful human being. Jenny had met those too in her life. But people had seen a monster. Not Vastra. But something else. And it had killed a child. She was hoping Jim would count as a child enough to lure it but not enough as one that he couldn’t escape. The sight of him squatting by the water’s edge brought to her mind memories of scavenging with the mudlarks.

“Sing out if you see anythin’ Jim.” She whispered.

He nodded, crouching at the water’s edge, watching it swirl but never flow. It was a canal, the waters were always still compared to a river or a stream.

Jenny strained her eyes, wishing she’d thought to bring matches or a light of some kind. There was a gas lamp nearby and the light from the houses, but all that seemed to do was make the darkness murkier. She spotted Jim nudging a clump of reeds with a stick in the beginnings to boredom.

“Jim!” she hissed. “Stop it.” Was that a small arrow of a ripple on the water, reflecting the faint light?

“Sorry miss.” He jerked round, dropping his stick in the canal, where it made a faint glooping noise.

There was another noise from the canal, on the edge of hearing, a soft, quick hiss, as if someone had just sucked in a quick breath.

“Jim!” Jenny reacted before she’d really even seen the figure rising out of the water, struggling to get over the fence and keep her sword in her hand, tearing her skirts in her haste. She saw it now, as she stood upright; long fingered hands ending in sharp claws, no face just long dripping strands of something through which eyes gleamed and teeth glittered and a body that didn’t seem to end... Jenny grabbed Jim by the back of his shirt and threw him behind her. She heard him scrabbling over the fence to safety as she swung her sword blindly in front of her. A raucous howl of fury and disappointment and the dark shape twisted and writhed back into the water with a far too real sploosh, drenching Jenny. She waited as the waters settled and silence descended except for Jenny’s ragged breathing. Stillness except for Jenny’s eyes, frantic and wide and darting all over the surface of the canal for any sign of a return.

Minutes passed. Jenny lowered her sword at the sound of boots on stone, rushing this way and distant calls. She hastily sheathed her sword and clambered back over the fence, not particularly wanting to be found armed with a sword and in torn and bloody clothing. She watched from the shadows as the crowd reached the spot where she’d seen the monster. Belatedly she realised Jim was not there. But he’d escaped, he hadn’t been taken, she’d thrown him clear. He had to have done.

Pulling Vastra’s cloak tightly about her, she sidled through the busy crowd and back to the Great Western hotel, reasoning that if Jim were to find her anywhere, it would be there.

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“It’s not mine.” Jenny reassured Vastra as the Silurian exclaimed at the sight of blood. Her desperate swing had connected.

Joseph was still sat in the corner, looking absolutely terrified now.

“Have you decided what to do yet?” Jenny asked him, walking over to stand in front of him and folding her arms.
The sight of the blood still on her arms seemed to focus him. “Um.”

“Looks to me like you got three choices.” Jenny shucked off Vastra’s cloak and handed it to her.

“Four.” Vastra interjected, hanging it up and sighing at the rips in the bottom of it.

Jenny scowled her. “Four then. One, you c’n go back to London, go back to Harriet, all fine an’ dandy. Two, stay here, with Matthew. Three, stay here but not with Mathew. Four…” she turned to Vastra.

“Find somewhere completely new.” Vastra filled in. “Fresh starts are perfectly possible. If you wish for it.”

“It’s a little bit more complicated than that…” Joseph tried, having found his voice. “I mean I don’t… but how can I go back to Harriet now?”

“She misses yer.” Jenny shrugged. “Enough to come hirin’ us.”

Joseph looked at her and then at Vastra. It was possible that he thought that a wife who was prepared to hire them to track him down, was a wife who might be prepared to take him back.

“But you’d have to think of the consequences.” Vastra came to stand by Jenny.

Then again, a wife who was prepared to hire them to track him down, might have done so for reasons other than reuniting with him. Joseph’s eyes dragged themselves back to the blood staining Jenny’s arms.

“C…consequences?” he stuttered.

“Living a lie. All day. Every day.” Vastra’s tone seemed almost idle.

“It would keep you safe.” Jenny cut her eyes at Vastra. “But it might not keep you happy.”

Joseph sat there for a long while. “Can you write letters?” he gestured to Vastra’s sprawling mess of paper on the table.

“I can.” Vastra sat and picked up her pen in a business-like fashion. “What would you like me to say?”

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He walked out a short while later, a small amount of money in a bag in his hand and leaving behind two letters on the table.

Jenny left to have a bath; by the time she returned Vastra was already curled up in their bed, facing the wall.

“Are you happy?” the question came suddenly from the blankets as Jenny changed into her nightgown.

“’course. Mostly. I mean, terrifyin’ monsters leapin’ out a canal at me aside.” Jenny tucked herself in alongside Vastra.

“I think that contributes to your happiness, my dear.” Vastra said drily, earning herself an elbow in the back. She rolled over and raised her eyes ridges.
Jenny grinned guiltily. She’d cleaned her sword whilst Vastra had been writing Joseph’s letters and had wondered briefly whether she’d have to read them to Matthew and Harriet.

“Are you happy with me?” Vastra wasn’t giving up.

Jenny rolled onto her back with a sigh. “Look, we don’ live a lie.”

“No?”

“We…live a disguise. But at the centre of it there’s truth.” Jenny turned her head to find a very focussed gaze directed at her. “I told you before. “Honestly”, remember?”

Vastra grinned slowly but broadly, showing all her teeth. “Tell me again.”

Chapter End Notes

Monsters in the canal. Happy thought. Ten points if you can name it. Hint: Shares half its name with this fic.

Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten means a fairy tale from olden times and is a line from Die Lorelei by Heinrich Heine. Which is an epic poem.
Jenny Greenteeth

Chapter Summary

May or may not be considering dropping a crossover with the Discworld in (Y)

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the long wait for the update. I was a wee bit distracted what with holidays and other exciting happenings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

15th of March 1888

The next morning, Jenny filled Vastra in, in detail, on the misadventure down at the canal edge. She listened in studious silence, eyes narrowed.

“And Jim had disappeared afterwards, you say?” she asked when Jenny had finished describing her escape, being sure to explain, in detail, that these heroic ventures were the reason why Vastra’s second best cloak was now a wee bit tattered along the edge.

“Yes. But I don’t think he was eaten. I mean it’d already turned and run really. Don’t think it fancied its chances against an adult.”

“Still. It might be an idea to find him again. Amongst other things, it could be said that he knows a little too much about us.”

“An’ not enough. He’s ‘alf convinced it really is Matthew I reck’n.”

“All the more reason then.” Vastra shrugged.

“I’ll ask around. What’re we gonna do about Matthew?”

“Take him his letter. There’s nothing else we can do really.” If Jenny hadn’t known better, she’d have thought Vastra had just let out a sigh. But Vastra wouldn’t be feeling sorry for an ape.

Jenny was not best pleased at leaving Matthew in a cell when he was innocent, but if the monster did attack more people while he was incarcerated, that would prove his innocence well enough. For now, he was probably safest in the police station and she set off there to deliver his letter.

She did have to read it to him as she’d suspected, in a muttered whisper through the bars of the cell so that the police guard at the end of the hall couldn’t hear.

“Oh.” Matthew said, when she’d finished. He’d hunched his shoulders over leaning down to listen but now they sagged as he leaned against the bars.
“It’s prob’ly for the best.” Jenny tried. “I mean how would it have even worked…”

“You and your missus make it work.” Matthew said sullenly, moving away to sit on the board that was his bed.

Jenny ignored the “missus” once again. “Well no-one questions a maid livin’ with her mistress.” She tucked the letter back inside her dress to destroy later. Being found with such a letter on his person wouldn’t help Matthew’s situation one bit.

“Must be nice. Havin’ tin like that.” Matthew scuffed a boot on the floor. “No-one’d question me with a butler or a gardener if I ‘ad tin.” He stared intensely at his clenched fists as they rested on his knees.

“They lettin’ you out any time soon Matthew?”

“Not with all this murdered child business.” He snorted, looking in her general direction but not meeting her eye. “They reckon it was me what done it. Dressin’ meself up as a monster to fool people. I’m amazed they let you see me.” His angry gaze returned to his hands.

“I told ’em I had pers’nal news to tell yer.”

“Thanks.” The bitter tone of his voice caught at Jenny’s conscience. But there was nothing she or Vastra could do to change Joseph’s mind nor Matthew’s situation.

“We’re workin’ on it. To prove it weren’t you. To catch the monster.” She tried to reassure him.

“Wouldn’ make much difference anyhow.” Matthew shrugged. He shifted in one smooth motion fully onto the bed, stretching himself out, making himself comfortable in his resignation and misery.

“We’ll get you out.” Jenny promised but he didn’t respond and it sounded more like a hope even to her own ears. Her own shoulders sagged and she left to track down Jim.

He was working at the station again, under the watchful wrathful eye of the station porter and Jenny let him be until the last train left.

He stared at her suspiciously as he walked out but crossed the road anyway to join her.

“They’re all saying it was Matthew.” He started as soon as she was within hearing distance. “It ain’t Matthew, he were in prison. It couldn’t’ve been. But they won’t hear anything else.”

“Look, we’re workin’ on proving it weren’t Matthew an’ gettin’ him out.” Jenny sighed, knowing that although Matthew had volunteered, quite a lot of the blame could still be laid squarely at her and Vastra’s feet for his current circumstances. Which had not been helped by Joseph’s letter. “All we gotta do is catch whatever that thing was…”

“I know what it was. Is.” Jim corrected himself. “I went and tol’ me nan what happened and she tol’ me what it was. She’s sensible is me Nan.”

“You told yer Nan?” A spike of fear shot down Jenny’s spine.

“On’y that I’d been messin’ by the river last night and near got attacked by something.” He waved off her concern.

“What something did she reckon it was then?” Jenny folded her arms.
“Jenny.”

Jenny froze in horror. He couldn’t possibly be accusing her. Could he? But it would be very difficult to explain if he was.

A small, crafty but also slightly guilty grin grinned up at her.

“A Jenny Greenteeth, miss.”

The horror faded into blankness. “A who?”

“More of a what. Jenny Greenteeth. S’like…a story. Well I thought it was a story. She’s an ol’ hag who lives in stagnant water thas all o’er with weeds and pulls children in if they get too close.”

Jenny continued to stare at him blankly.

“Din’t your mother ever tell you stories like that?” Jim asked, puzzled.

“My mother’s dead.” Jenny answered shortly.

The colour drained from his face. “I din’t mean nuffin’ by it miss.” He whispered.

“So what does your ma say about Jenny Greenteeth then?” On the rather murky and stagnant waters just touched on, there was a small ripple of amusement at the fact that she shared her name with a monster.

“Well, more me nan. Me ma had to work. But me nan brought us up with all sorts of stories like that. Mostly to warn us against wanderin’ off I s’pose. So I always thought at any rate.”

“Hmm.” Jenny stared into the distance, thinking. Children’s stories couldn’t possibly start coming to life. Aliens could visit earth, could be an alien. There was a Below to everything, was this a creature from a Swindon Below?

“Anyways, what’re we gonna do to kill her an’ prove it was her that killed that boy and not Matthew?”

Jenny shrugged. It was unlikely the police, having used her assistance to capture Matthew, would be willing to follow her again to prove it wasn’t him after all. And certainly not, if she told them it was a monster from folk lore.

They set off in silence to the place where “Jenny Greenteeth” had attacked Jim but there was nothing more remarkable than tufts of grass and weeds floating in the water now. The evening light fading fast and with no sign of the monster or even a hint that she might be around, Jenny sent Jim off home and returned to Vastra and the hotel room, frustrated once again about the lack of leads in this case.

“I think, in this case my dear, the police would not be able to convince the people it was a monster unless they’d seen it themselves as well.” Vastra mused, once she’d finished laughing at “Jenny Greenteeth”. Jenny was still scowling at her. “But the nice thing about a mob is that they’re so much more amenable to chasing after something than the police.”

“What’d’yer mean?”

“I mean that if you cannot convince the police to help you in your investigations, you should call for other means of assistance.”
“What, just yell “Help there’s a monster attackin’ me!” and hope enough people turn up?”

“What, just yell “Help there’s a monster attackin’ me!” and hope enough people turn up?”

“Something along those lines?”

“What if it don’t attack me? I scored it once, it might not fancy another round. ‘Sides, if it really is Greenteeth, she only attacks children. An’ I like to think I’m a ways past that.”

“Use Jim again?” Vastra looked quizzically at Jenny, as if she’d missed something obvious.

“An’ what if this time it catches ‘im ey? What if ‘e gets locked up in jail like Matthew? I ain’t usin’ him again!” Jenny had been thinking about the ethics of this.

“Is it ‘usin’ him if he volunteers?”

“Yes.” Jenny frowned.

“Then how else do you suggest capturing the monster?”

Jenny took a deep breath.

But she hadn’t been able to come up with anything better.

Jim had stood quite quietly while she asked in stops and starts for his assistance.

“So I’m to be the bait again.”

“I din’t intend to…”

“If it gets Matthew out of prison.” He folded his arms determinedly, sticking his chin up in the air.

Jenny sighed. “‘Sides…” he gave another sly grin. “How much danger can I be in with the Isle Dog Slayer ready an’ waiting. Bet Jenny Greenteeth ain’t nuffin’ to an Isle Dog.”

Jenny was beginning to sincerely regret ever telling him her list of titles. She was also beginning to suspect Jim was sharper than she’d first realised. He’d make a first rate Irregular, she thought idly.

“What would you be anyways? If you killed her? Jenny Flint, the Greenteeth Destroyer. Jenny Flint, Water Witch Killer. Jenny the Jenny…” he caught a glimpse of her expression and fell silent, listening attentively as she outlined her plan. He was more aware than she’d been in planning with Matthew of all the things that could go wrong, that more was at stake than Vastra’s freedom.

Thus it was that on the night of Friday the 16th of March, she was crouched in the shadows of the trees by the canal, her sword concealed beneath what was now her cloak. Vastra had declared she would get a new one, what with this one having become quite so ragged, muttering something about style and reputations.

Jim had told the boys that he intended to go hunting for the monster down by the canal. Apparently they’d laughed at him but were idly watching him from the bridge. Hopefully between them and Jenny, enough noise would be caused to bring people running.

Her legs were beginning to cramp and she was severely doubting that this plan would be in any way successful when she saw Jim move, raising his arm in warning. She scanned the canal and found the small tell-tale V shape disturbing the water. There was slightly more light this time, from nearby
houses where help would hopefully come running from, and it danced on the ripples. She’d drawn her sword half an hour ago and she stood up, swiftly shaking the stiffness from her legs.

Jim yelled and the boys on the bridge, who were by now rather bored, stood upright and peered at the water. Even in the small amount of light, they could see the shadow of the dark shape rising out of the water. Jenny saw Jim scrabble on the bank, heard the boys shouting in alarm, calling for help.

Not yet, not yet. She told herself even as the clawed hands stretched out. People had to see it. The shape had stopped, what assumedly was its head, was wriggling it about in the air, as if it had sensed something. Sensed her?

“Jenny!” Jim screamed. There was a crowd now, drawn there by the boy’s noise, shouting exclamations as in the light of lanterns they saw the dripping green fleshed head of Jenny Greenteeth. It turned away from the light, away from Jim. Jenny heard it hiss as it recoiled away from the Jim. **Now!**

She tugged her cloak off and ran down the short bank to the canal. They’d seen it but she still had to kill it. It was already almost under water. Nothing else for it then. She leapt into the canal.

The water was freezing and thick with slime and it occurred to Jenny that she’d never really learnt to swim properly. She felt something brush against her and grabbed at it with both arms. It felt scaly and slippery but she managed to hang on as it pulled her under. She struggled with her sword, trying to pull it against the weight of the water, to stab, to cut at the creature. There were splashes in the water next to her, other people were leaping in, kicking out and grabbing around them. One of them accidentally thumped her on the back and she let out a stream of bubbles. She kicked with her legs, trying to fight back to the surface, her lungs protesting vehemently as the monster tried to swim deeper. She didn’t dare try to use her sword now with so many other people in the water around her. She felt sharp teeth bite at her, tearing through the sleeve of her dress. She saw bubbles as the head snapped again, felt a tug on her sword. It’d tried to bite her blade. The body she was still grasping went taut in pain, spewing more bubbles as hands grabbed at Jenny’s dress, pulling her upwards. Her chest was tight and she concentrated solely on holding on to the monster for dear life.

Shouts and cries filled her ears as air filled her lungs when she was dragged to the surface and then to the edge of canal. The creature wriggled and snapped furiously as it was hauled onto the bank with Jenny, who wriggled almost as much, as she tried to cough up water and whatever else was in the canal that she didn’t like to think about. Someone standing beside Jenny dealt a swift cudgel blow to the monster’s head and Jenny felt it flop once more and go still.

She swiftly released it and struggled away, trying to hide her sword, but the crowd was far more interested in the stretched-out body than herself and she able to stand and merge with the front row of the crowd. In the lantern light, she saw tangles of long dark hair, green tinged skin that stretched over elongated webbed hands that ended in inch long claws and an open snarl of vicious pointed teeth.

Jim found her and pulled her further away from the scene, as the police arrived and were greeted with derogatory shouts.

“**You alright miss?”** He’d found her cloak and wrapped it round her tightly.

“**Bit disappointed.”** She shivered, moving swiftly away but not so swiftly as to draw unwanted attention.

“**Disappointed?!”** Jim sounded appalled.

“**Weelllll…carn’t add ‘Jenny Greenteeth Destroyer’ to me list now.”** She grinned at him.
He blinked.

“Wonder what it really was.” She pondered aloud, turning back to watch the crowd as it moved away from the canal, the vague suggestion of a limp figure being carried in the middle of it.

“You don’t think it was a Jenny Greenteeth then miss?” Jim asked.

“S’pose it don’t really matter now.” She shrugged.

“You ain’t feelin’ sorry for it miss? It killed a child.” Jim stared at her.

“Thas true.” But still, she felt strangely uneasy. Vastra’s words came back to her. “Console yourself. There are people alive today because you killed them.” She looked at Jim. “You alive then?”

“Just about, Miss.”

“Fancy followin’ them lot then and findin’ out what happens next?”

He gave the best imitation of a salute he could and ran off. The crowd wasn’t moving that fast, although as far as Jenny could tell, they were moving towards the police station.

For herself, what happened next definitely included another bath.

Chapter End Notes

By the by, if you happen to write fanfic, you might just happen to meet a wonderful intelligent awesome (and attractive) person along the way and get to know them and it might just happen that they think you’re awesome enough back that they come stay with you for a while.

As dating advice goes, disclaimer, might not work for everyone. But you never know!
Time Travel Has Always Been Possible In Dreams

Chapter Summary

Also entitled "wtf is happening now..."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

16th March 1888

Jenny was returned abruptly to consciousness from her sleep by a niggling feeling that something wasn’t right. She rolled over in bed to find it empty of Vastra. Ignoring the sudden chill of panic that bolted down her spine at the thought Vastra had gone out without her, she got up hurriedly, her alarm increasing as she felt soil against her feet instead of wooden boards.

The room seemed to shimmer before her gaze but it was without a doubt not the hotel room at the Great Western Hotel. Jenny wasn’t even sure it was a room so much as a cupboard or an alcove. As she spun gently to look at the rest of the room, she noticed her sword and grabbed at it desperately. Being lost in a strange place would probably be infinitely more survivable with that. Her belt was still attached and she buckled it round her waist over her nightgown.

It was the heat she noticed as she peered out the space where a door should’ve been. Stifling heat. Outside was a vast jungle and a city of walkways and tunnels interspersed with grand halls and glowing panels. Scattered at intervals were small pod structures with dark moving shadows visible through their translucent walls.

She set off down a tunnel which seemed to lead into the nearest hall, all the while trying to determine what had happened to her. The two easiest explanations were time travel or aliens. With the appearance of Jenny Greenteeth, Jenny Flint was more willing to bet on alien presence, with some considerable amount of power too.

The tunnel eventually led out into a large cavern, decorated with a large long table, clearly some kind of meeting place. A familiar figure was sat at the head of it, head resting on green scaled hands, looking pensive.

"Vastra!" Jenny cried, hastening across to the table from the tunnel entrance.

Eyes were turned on her and shock stopped in her tracks. This was not Vastra. Although it looked enough like her to be identifiable as a Silurian.

It rose with a jerk out of its seat and hissed at her. Jenny realised belatedly that it was speaking but she couldn’t understand a word of the sibilant syllables being spat at her. She considered this a decided disadvantage as more Silurians poured in from other entrances, brought there by the yells. Jenny drew her sword but it was an action of futility. There were far too many of them.

The Silurian who had been so contemplatively seated, rattled off a phrase and the crowd fell silent. A name was called with a beckoning gesture. In the midst of such an unfamiliar language, it was a name that was comforting to recognise.
A Silurian stepped forwards and there was no mistaking her this time.

“Vastra!!” Jenny called in relief.

Vastra turned to her but there was no hint of recognition in the affronted blue eyes that glowered at her. A reply was barked out, a shake of the head, a dismissive wave of the hand.

Jenny’s heart sank and crawled to the bottom of her chest. Even without knowing Silurese, that gesture was unmistakeable. Two Silurians stepped forward at another beckon, relieving her of her sword as they took her by the arms. She felt taut with fear but allowed herself to be dragged off to what she could only assume was a cell. It was walled on three sides and the fourth was a glass panel which slid out to allow entrance and slide back behind her, locking her in.

She sat, her back against the wall, staring at the wall opposite. Her circumstances lent to the other theory that she’d travelled back in time, clearly to a Silurian city, full of Silurians. Vastra’s past. And without a present Vastra. Try as Jenny might, she couldn’t think of way that this ended well. Present Vastra had a clear disdain for humans, with perhaps good reason. Past Vastra probably didn’t even think them worthy of that. They were food. Prey. Present Vastra had told Jenny as much herself.

Jenny laughed as she wondered what present Vastra would think, if Jenny was devoured by Vastra’s past self. The scant humour of the thought was doused by the knowledge that Vastra probably wouldn’t even know.

Her one hope was that Vastra had, in actual fact, time travelled as well. But surely, if that had been her Vastra, she would’ve spoken up, spoken English. Even if it had been an act in front of the other Silurians, her Vastra would’ve come to see her, to reassure her of that, until they could both find a way to leave.

A shadow fell across her and the cell door opened without warning. Clearly they hadn’t bothered posting any guards on her. She looked up to find Vastra staring at her. Jenny’s heart gave a painful twist at the way Vastra’s head was tilted to one side in curiosity; it was such a familiar expression to her. It renewed her hope that maybe this was her Vastra.

“Vastra?” she asked cautiously, rising to her feet.

There was a curious click and a stream of words she couldn’t understand. Despite her waning hope, Jenny grinned. This was not her Vastra. And yet it was still Vastra. The Silurian had come to see her after all. She laughed again, although it ended in a sound like a sob. The Silurian stood up with a hiss and Jenny knew precisely what that jerk backwards of the head meant.

“Sorry.” Jenny apologised, her grin now fixed as it was wide.

Blue eyes narrowed. An uncertain stare. Jenny could almost predict…and there it was. The contemptuous posturing huff and flick of the head before she walked out. And left Jenny alone.

Hope was snuffed out, leaving only the small consolation that Jenny knew Vastra that much at least. A wry fondness caused Jenny to sigh. She was probably going to be eaten. Once they had scanned her and decided what she was, what she was so distantly related to, well they weren’t about to keep her around. She slid down the wall and the small laugh that escaped was almost hysterical. Disbelief that such a thing could occur swamped her and she led on the warm earth, feeling exhausted. She was trapped as surely as she had been in the cellar, in the choke hole, in prison. Panic threatened to overwhelm her. Without Vastra, without the Doctor…although there was always hope surely, that there would be an escape eventually. There was a faint humming coming from the earth itself, right next to her ear and she let the sound soothe her back to sleep.
Vastra grumbled against the approach of consciousness, delving down deeper into the covers, in search of Jenny, of her lulling warmth and security. Still so bizarre that a Silurian would find safety with an ape. Particularly after her experiences with them in general. But there it was.

Or rather wasn’t. She frowned as she pulled the covers around her without any of the usual resistance. Jenny was not in their bed. Not that this was entirely unusual; Jenny woke early to light the fires and make breakfast for the Paternoster Irregulars. But it was unwelcome.

With a small spit of annoyance, Vastra curled back up in the bed. The covers were abruptly thrown away from her as she realised this was their bed. In Paternoster Row. Not the small uncomfortable one of the hotel but their grand double bed with the decidedly thicker covers.

When had they arrived home? The case had barely been finished. There was still the matter of Jenny Greenteeth to clear up, Matthew to be freed, Jim to be repaid for his assistance.

Vastra moved to the window and looked outside at a snow ridden garden. And that was odd too. It was March. Nearly April, the traitorous thought came and was pushed away.

She smiled as she saw Jenny engaged in a violent snowball fight with two children, both well wrapped up against the cold. Some Irregular or other she supposed, moving her hand to support her on the windowsill as she leaned to look out more.

There was a clack, a cold hard pressure and she stood up straight, gazing at her hand. Around the fourth finger on it was a plain gold band. It wasn’t very shiny, almost dull in fact. Her scales were far more iridescent. Curious then that she would choose to wear such a thing.

Still in a gentle daze from sleep and the chill, she got dressed in her warmest clothes and went to find Jenny.

The young woman was laughing as she came traipsing into the warmth of the kitchen, knocking snow off her boots as she shooed the two children indoors. They sat by the range as Jenny started to take plates out of the cupboard.

Vastra looked about her. “When did we get back?” she asked, still confused at the lack of memory of travelling home.

“Hm?” Jenny paused in bringing out a loaf from the larder.

“Swindon?”

“Swindon? We ain’t been to Swindon. Not for over two decades.” Jenny looked at her puzzled.

“Two decades?” the words pierced Vastra’s brain. But she was a friend of the Doctor after all, and as such the answer offered itself readily. She had time travelled.

“Thereabouts.” Jenny laughed at her. “You dreamed of it or somethin’?”

“Possibly.” Vastra said cautiously. She sat down, resting her hands on the table, noticing once again the ring. “Why do I wear this ring?”

Jenny paused from cutting slices of bread and stared at her, bemused. “Cos you said the posh ones we’ve got might get damaged if we was on a case, remember? So we got these as our everyday ones. We only wear the posh ones on special occasions now.”
“But what does it mean?” Vastra held it up to examine it, still mystified

“It means,” Jenny’s voice was slow and amused. “that we’re married, you stupid lizard.”

Vastra froze. Jenny laid down her knife and moved over to her. “You feelin’ all right?” Amusement had turned to concern and Jenny leant against the table, placing a hand under Vastra’s chin to lift it, gazing into her eyes.

“I…” Vastra was distracted by Jenny’s face. There were a few more lines on it than she remembered. A faded scar above her right temple. And that was surely not the beginnings of grey in the fine strands of hair near her ears. Two decades...

“Musta bin some dream to fuddle you up this bad.”

“Married?” it came out as a whisper.

“For twenty years now.” Jenny laughed, reaching out to stroke Vastra’s headcrests fondly. “An’ you joke my memory’s goin’ with age.”

“You said yes?” Vastra was not sure which emotion was most dominant but surprise that Jenny would’ve agreed was greater than that Vastra had asked. After all, technically she already had.

Jenny nodded slowly. “Don’t you remember?”

“I…don’t know…” she certainly would not have forgotten such an occasion.

She was being subjected to a calculating glare which widened into amazement.

“You…carn’t ‘ear me.”

“I most certainly can.”

“No I mean…I’m…and…but you said…” Jenny trailed off and a look of understanding spread across her face. “You’re from the past!” her mouth hung open.

Vastra smiled inwardly. Her Jenny was as smart as ever. Of course, Jenny too had travelled with the Doctor, probably even more so by this point. She might even have been inside the TARDIS…

“Right then.” Jenny sat down opposite her in a business-like fashion.

“I have no idea what is going on.” Vastra admitted immediately. “Nor where my future self currently is.”

There was a silence as Jenny’s face went through an interesting combination of contortions.

“What is it?” Vastra asked, mildly alarmed at her expressions.

“Weelllll…two Vastras…” There was a faint flush on Jenny’s cheeks that amazed Vastra and the not quite so young as she had been woman gave what could only be described as a snigger. “An’ it’s not even me birthday.” Vastra felt her scales darken at Jenny’s grin and she coughed. Clearly in the future, some of Jenny’s inhibitions disappeared. She wasn’t sure whether she was pleased or shocked. “The mind boggles…”

“I would rather not think of it.” Vastra said hastily. Was it possible to be jealous of one’s future self?

Jenny didn’t even attempt to hide her grin. “Why? You jealous?”
Vastra stood up suddenly, shocked at such openness. She was about to make some stiff reply when there was a knock at the door.

Jenny shrugged and went to answer it, pausing in the door way to half turn back towards Vastra. “I won’t tell if you don’t.” she winked, completely flustering Vastra.

Damn time travel…still, if this was the future…Vastra let one of her smug satisfied grins appear. She could well look forward to this future.

Her grin disappeared swiftly at Jenny’s yell of surprise, mixed as it was with a tone of terror and abruptly cut off.

Vastra followed her with alacrity into the hallway to find Jenny held in a chokehold by none other than Mr Vandemar.

“Well, well Mr Vandemar.” The oily tones of Mr Croup rang out from behind him. “We meet these two intrepid warriors again.”

Chapter End Notes

Vworp Vworp! The Return of Croup and Vandemar.
The sound of hurried footsteps woke Jenny this time. Two Silurians ran past, clutching thin shiny objects that glowed, their white coats flapping. She pressed her nose up against the glass, trying to see where they went. More footsteps sounded, heavier and business-like this time and they strode right up to her door and released her.

She was marched back to the large room with the long table. It was still full of Silurians but the atmosphere was different. The tension spoke to Jenny of fear. In contrast, considering she felt her death was imminent, Jenny was remarkably calm. There was a strange ear-splitting noise in the background; a barked order and it was turned off.

More sibilant babbling rose like a roar and the Silurian at the head of the table had to spread her arms wide to quieten the assembled crowd. She spoke in carefully even tones but whatever she was saying must have been bad news. Small wails started up around the crowd. Jenny recognised it as the sound Silurians made instead of crying. They were grieving something? Jenny looked up at the Silurians who’d brought her here and realised they weren’t even paying attention to her. Something more pressing to deal with than a less hairy ape had happened then.

A screen was brought up out of thin air, making Jenny gasp. It showed the earth, the orbits of other planets and streaming towards it, a vivid orange streak. Bits and pieces of what Vastra had told her over the year coalesced in Jenny’s mind. Vastra had said disaster. Life without the Doctor, without disaster. Her aunt had put her and her sisters to sleep, but the systems had been damaged in a disaster. Jenny hadn’t really inquired beyond that; some distant disaster hadn’t seemed important compared to Vastra telling Jenny about her past. Seeing the rather large fireball arcing its way towards the image of earth spinning in the air in front of her, suddenly it didn’t seem such a minor detail.

A snort of laughter escaped her. She couldn’t possibly be about to die, in Vastra’s Silurian city. Could she? She was alive in the future. But this was her future. She shook her head and stopped trying to wrangle it out. More important to focus on the present.

The Silurian at the head had finished their presentation and was shouting out commands, gesturing to different groups of Silurians who melted away down the corridors. Eventually only Jenny and her two guards remained. The head Silurian gestured them over. To Jenny’s surprise, Vastra was standing by her side. Seeing them together, the likeness in their stares struck Jenny. She had no way of knowing for certain, but at that moment she would’ve bet a significant proportion of her share of the money that this was Vastra’s aunt.

A brief discussion was held over her head and then Jenny’s guards were dismissed. The head Silurian came to stand in front of her, then held out her hand to Vastra, who placed Jenny’s sword in it. The flicker of fear that she was about to be killed by her own sword was extinguished when the
head Silurian tossed it to her. Jenny caught it cleanly and smoothly tucked it back into her belt. This seemed to gain approval from both Silurians. The head Silurian nodded and beckoned for Vastra and Jenny to follow her.

There were pods in clusters all around the room, white and shining. The head Silurian pointed to an empty one in amongst a group. Those were Vastra’s sisters then, already asleep. Tears sprang to Jenny’s eyes. She knew they would not wake again, that they would leave Vastra, now climbing into her pod, bereft and alone. She wanted to warn Vastra, or her aunt, or any of them, but she could not speak Silurese nor they English.

The reality of the situation overtook her sorrow, as Vastra’s aunt pressed buttons on the pod and Vastra’s eyes closed. As much as she didn’t want to die in the disaster, at the same time, she couldn’t be put in a pod and wake beneath the earth millions of years later at the same time as Vastra. She bolted from the chamber, running mindlessly, heedless of the puzzled shout behind her. The bizarreness of the situation was about to overwhelm her as she burst back into the main chamber.

Two figures were stood at the head of the table, admiring the image still floating in the air of the earth and the fireball, but she ignored them as she tried to catch her breath. Alas all her breath disappeared in a swift moment of terror as she recognised the voice that said, in oily cultured English, “Well, well Mr Vandemar. Now there is a familiar face. A turn up for the books hm?”

“Don’ read books Mr Croup.”

It was over in a quick twist of the neck and a sneering grin and Vastra howled, grabbing her sword from the stand. They laughed at her and she recalled her blade had been ineffective against them when they’d met before. But her heart and mind were full of the crumpled form of Jenny on the floor and she leapt anyway.

Giving up on divining what precisely was going on, Jenny drew her sword even as she remembered that Vastra’s had been useless against Mr Vandemar before. She wished her Vastra were here with her as she charged forward, determined that she would fight at least.

She seemed frozen in that moment of leaping and of seeing Vandemar’s knife curve towards her, leaving a stream of orange curving behind it like fire. It intensified, burning into Vastra’s eyes, growing into a flaming ball that engulfed her whole and then abruptly went out leaving only…

As she ran time seemed to slow and the sword in her arms felt increasingly heavy as she held it ready to strike. Mr Croup grinned and the smile became wider and wider, becoming so vast she felt herself tumble headlong into it and down, down into…

Darkness.

Darkness. Jenny couldn’t see anything. She’d heard of the pitch black of the mines when the lights
blew out and imagined that it would be something like this. Only more stifling. There was a clear current of fresh air and it occurred to her that she was breathing, which reassured her she was alive at least, wherever she was. Mentally she crossed time travel off the list of possibilities and returned to her original assumption of aliens as the cause of this current adventure.

A glow in the distance caught her attention. She saw that it emitted from a little swinging lamp held by a childlike figure of indeterminate gender who was dressed in the most bizarre collection of clothes Jenny had ever seen on someone. There was a corset and then net stockings and a tail coat and half of their head was shaved and the other half was blonde and green and blue.

“Are you an alien?” Jenny asked, on principle, when the child stopped in front of her.

“No. I didn’t like that movie. There were things coming out of chest. I don’t think aliens are really like that at all do you?”

Jenny blinked. Either the child was mad or she was. “Who are you then?”

“I am your lucky star!” The child giggled behind their hand and danced a little. “Come on. Come on. Follow me.” She didn’t wait and sprang off back the way she’d come.

Taking a deep breath, just to reaffirm to herself that she wasn’t dead, Jenny followed, as no better option presented itself to her.

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A light shone through a small miasma that was moving towards her. Vastra was still shivering with anger and went to raise her sword once more but it wasn’t there. She cursed under her breath and watched and waited.

The light was now a small ball floating in a young woman’s hand. Vastra could see she was wearing tight black trousers and a vest. Something hung around her neck glinted in the light and Vastra recognised it as a symbol she’d seen in Egypt.

“Hello!” The young woman waved with her other hand. “First things first. Would you like a hotdog?”

Vastra blinked.

“No? Oh well. I just thought you might hungry. Well we can find you something you like anyway. Sorry about this form by the way. But as you’ve been living among humans, I thought it might be more suitable than…any other.”

“Where’s Jenny?” Vastra asked, as soon as she’d found her voice again.

“Oh, she’s safe. My sister has her. Of course,” the woman trailed off. “Well she should be safe. Come along with me and you’ll see her.”

“Am I dead?”

For some reason this caused the woman to laugh heartily and for some length of time. Vastra waited until she’d recovered herself.

“No.” the woman replied eventually. “And believe me, I’d know. Sorry about the mess. You weren’t meant to get caught up in any of this.”
“What is this?”

The woman hesitated. “My brother can explain it better, okay? Now come on! Let’s get you back to Jenny.” She smiled and with such a motivation, Vastra followed.

They came out into a wide green field. Even Jenny, who had been brought up on the city streets and was distinctively uncomfortable with any countryside closer than a local park, felt a sudden sense of peace. There was a portly man, well dressed in tweed and a pair of spectacles on a chain. He waved a slim cane at her. The child had disappeared so she made her way over to him.

“Rest here a while.” The man told her heartily, his moustache ruffling as he spoke. “My master will be along in a while.”

She sat down among the waving grass, arranging her sword beside her. She couldn’t really see a sun, despite the fact it was bright and warm in this place. The only source of light she could see was a small glowing ball. It seemed out of place and she rose again to make her way towards it. Was this the “master” the large man had spoken of?

Two figures seemed to shimmer into existence behind it and she cursed her stupidity for leaving her sword on the ground. But the forms were not Croup and Vandemar, she could tell that much now. A burst of light dazzled her and she raised a hand to shield her eyes.

“There you are see? Safe and sound.” An unknown woman’s voice declared and then a rather more recognisable voice called out…

“JENNY!!”

She lowered her hand. Relief swelled up in her, making her feel light as air.

“You’re alive!” Vastra was hurrying towards her.

“You recognise me! Wait I…” Jenny was distracted momentarily by the doubt in Vastra’s voice.

“Of course I do. Why…” Vastra halted in front of her, equally bemused.

“Of course I am. Why…”

Their simultaneous questions died away in silent agreement that their respective stories sounded equally long and could wait until they were both safe home.

“I must apologise for the inconvenience that has been caused to you both.”

Jenny and Vastra turned to look at a pale man stood next to them. He wore dark flowing robes with what looked like fire dancing on the hem of his cloak but it was his eyes that made Vastra shiver, black but with a small silver speck within each of them, like a star.

“My sisters brought you both safely here without too much trouble?” He asked. “It was the closest and safest dream I could think of.”

“Dream…?” Jenny repeated, scowling at him incredulously.

“Yes. A most unfortunate turn of events. You fell into a soft space. They occur sometimes, in the eddies of Dreaming.”
“A soft space?” Vastra laid a hand on Jenny’s arm.

“A dream?!” Jenny brushed her off, incensed.

“This is a dream, yes. What you fell into was a soft space between the Dreaming and your version of reality.”

“Version?!”

The man stared at her, as if puzzled by her reaction. “Yes.” He replied simply. “And within that soft space, a monster was conjured up, called upon…”

“Jenny Greenteeth?” Vastra asked, cutting off Jenny’s remark.

“A myth created by humans.” He nodded. “Inspired by the Dreaming of course. It is part of my realm. And so, into the space so kindly provided by humans and their imagination, she slithered through the walls. Of course, inevitably when one creates a hole in such a wall…”

“The fabric of reality breaks down.” Vastra nodded. Jenny forget her anger momentarily to stare up at Vastra in surprise that the Silurian was following this.

“So…was any of that real?” Jenny asked eventually, when it seemed that the explanation was over. The man turned to her. “Croup. And Vandemar. The…other places.”

“We build our nightmares from our own horrors and people them with our own monsters.” He said simply. “You will of course be returned to your world.”

“Oi!” Jenny called out as he made to leave. He stared at her, his eyebrows raised, as if no-one had ever dared say anything so uncouth as “oi” to him before. The small lights in his eyes seemed to burn and Jenny decided to hold her tongue if it meant they were sent home. He turned on his heel then and his cloak billowed and the flames that had been burning at its hem sprang up and coiled around them.

It didn’t burn them and when the flames died down, they were standing in the street outside the Great Western.

A soft curse from Jenny broke the silence. “I on’y left me bleedin’ sword there. Don’t s’pose there’s any chance of getting it back now.” She grumbled, stepped forwards. She sprang back rather hastily as with a flash of light that made her hair stand on end, her sword appeared, quivering, point down in the stone of the doorstep.

Vastra tugged it out with a small grunt and handed it to a stunned Jenny.

“Do you think the landlord will charge us for the damage?” she asked, stepping delicately over the two halves of the formerly whole doorstep and into the hotel.

“How would ’e know it was us?” Jenny shrugged, inspecting her sword for any damage. The noise of a train whistle made her start and, suddenly remembering that she was standing in the street in her nightgown wielding a sword in the wee hours of the morning, she hurried inside after Vastra.

Chapter End Notes
Croup and Vandemar, the old firm, obstacles obliterated, nuisances eradicated, bothersome limbs removed, tutelary dentistry, Troys sacked, Black Plagues brought to Flanders, Kings, popes, heroes and accredited gods assassinated, entire monasteries tortured to death, entire species wiped out of existence with asteroids. To give their full resume. (I may have added that last one on for them).

Adding in some more Gaiman characters, Delirium (formerly Delight), Death and of course, Dream.

The "I am your lucky star" is a misquote of Alien.
What Dreams May Come

Chapter Notes

Who's seen that movie with Robin Williams and Cuba Gooding Jr? That was an epic movie. I cried so much. It's also a Shakespeare quote I think from Hamlet.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

17th March 1888

Jenny had no desire to go to sleep and promptly dressed with vague plans to break Matthew out of the police cell. It kept her mind off what had happened. She didn’t want to know what Vastra had seen to make her say “You’re alive!” in such a way nor did she wish to tell Vastra what she had seen, not so close to April.

“What on earth are you doing?” Vastra asked, as Jenny buckled on her sword once more, having watched bemusedly as she got dressed.

Jenny didn’t reply, merely ran her finger along the blade to check for any damage from it having split stone.

“Jenny.”

“Just goin’ to break Matthew out. Then we can pay Jim somethin’ an’ go home.”

“I’ll pack, shall I?” Vastra raised her eye ridges.

The gently mocking tone made Jenny stop. She stared at her hand on the door handle and realised it was trembling. But she didn’t want to face it, the conversation that waited, the questions that lurked and the images that threatened to return. She opened the door.

“Jenny!”

The sudden distress in Vastra’s voice made her pause once more, now frozen in a moment of indecision.

Vastra decided for her by closing the door. Jenny didn’t resist, letting her hand fall from the handle as it swung away from her. Her shoulders sagged as the door clicked shut.

Vastra was looking at her with a detached calculating expression. Jenny took a long slow breath and let the same detachment calm her.

“When you said “you’re alive” what did you say that for?” She asked in a flat voice as Vastra made to move past her.

Vastra turned to face the door, as if now contemplating her escape. They stood side by side, both staring at it for a few moments.

“It was a nightmare. As he said. Merely a nightmare.”
“What did you see?”

“Us. In the future. And then Croup and Vandemar came…”

“An’ they killed me.” Jenny finished matter-of-factly. She glanced sideways at Vastra and saw her pale and shaking. A nightmare. She frowned. But if it was just a nightmare…the man had said they created their own nightmares. But how could she have created an entire Silurian city, the language, the disaster that had befallen them? She had no knowledge of it. “Sounds like you ended up in my nightmare.”

“It is mine too!” Vastra snapped, whirling round and walking over to the bed.

Despite the awfulness, Jenny felt strangely touched by the declaration. “Nah, musta bin mine. Cos I think I ended up in yours.”

“Mine?” Vastra looked puzzled.

“I saw…your city.” There was no reply. “The fireball.” A soft gasp. “An’ yer sisters.” Jenny closed her eyes and waited, dreading Vastra’s response. When she eventually plucked up the courage to turn around after what seemed an eternity of silence, she saw Vastra staring at her, a strange hungry expression in her eyes. ‘Really them too. I mean they were speakin’ Silurian an’ I don’t even know what that sounds like. Or I didn’t. So, it musta bin your nightmare.”

“What else did you see?” Vastra asked in a light voice, as if asking Jenny what she had seen in the market that day.

Jenny took off her sword and strode over to the bed, plopping down on it.

“I saw all these pods and alcoves. I woke up in one. I found this big room with a long table and I think I saw yer aunt but then I got captured.” She glanced at Vastra. “I saw you and I said yer name but you just hissed at me so they put me in this cell. I guess cos they thought I was some kind of weird bald ape.”

Vastra snorted but when Jenny looked up again, Vastra’s mouth was quirked up at one corner in a wry smile.

“I was still in me nightgown an’ everythin’. After a while they came and got me out and took me back to the hall only now it was filled with Silurians. An’ they brought up a picture out of thin air. I dunno how they did that. But it showed the Earth an’ planets an’ this great fireball…”

“An asteroid.” Vastra corrected her absentmindedly.

“This great big asteroid comin’ towards the Earth. An’ so your aunt started directin’ everyone off. She came up to me an’ took me to where all yer sisters were already in pods. She put you in one an’ then was about to put me in one but I thought I couldn’t be put in a pod to wake up at the same time as you. I thought I’d time travelled y’see. So I ran back to the hall but Croup an’ Vandemar were there too.”

“Croup and Vandemar were there?!”

“Yeah and then it got all weird cos I went at ’em with me sword which yer aunt had given back to me on’y Vandemar’s mouth got too big an’ I fell in it. An’ then there was just darkness before this odd… I think it were a girl at least, came an’ took me to that country place. So it musta bin a nightmare after all. Cos that wouldn’t have happened if I’d time travelled.”
She looked up at Vastra once more to find the Silurian looking relieved.

“Just a nightmare.” Vastra repeated, with a small huff of air.

“What did you see anyways? In this future? Wot were we like?” Jenny tried an offhand grin and was amazed to see Vastra’s skin darken, a sign she was blushing. “What? Carn’t be nuffin’ that bad surely. Apart from Croup and Vandemar.” Vastra remained staring steadfastly at the ceiling. “What did you do, walk in on us in bed or somethin’? She gave a small snigger.

Vastra looked askance at Jenny.

“Wot? Really?” Jenny’s eyes widened.

“No! Nothing like that. It’s just…” That snigger…*it sounded so like the snigger Jenny in the future had given.* “I was in Paternoster Row. You were playing in the snow with some children, urchins I assume.”

“And?” Jenny waited impatiently for the cause of the blush.

“And we…Well…we were just talking. You realised quite quickly I wasn’t…the right Vastra.”

“Me from the future y’mean. And?”

“And then Croup and Vandemar showed up.” The scales went pale. It was Vastra’s turn to shake uncontrollably. “And you…they…”

Jenny did not need Vastra to finish that sentence. Gingerly she reached out but Vastra merely stood there, her hands grasping at her head crests.

“‘ey!” Jenny sprang up alarmed as Vastra folded over, sagging at the knees. “S’just a nightmare!” She caught Vastra as the Silurian collapsed. “That bloke, ‘e said…we build our own nightmares. It was a nightmare thus all.” Jenny was sat on the floor now, holding her. “Musta got it mixed up. All this walls of reality collapsing.”

It was a string of hope and Vastra clung to it. Just a nightmare. Just reality collapsing. Not the future, just a vision, or a memory.

“So your nightmare was being married to me?” she asked, attempting to make light of it, to make a joke, still lying in Jenny’s lap.

“Wot??” Jenny’s voice rose to a strange pitch. Vastra silently cursed her errant tongue. “We was married?”

“Yes.” Vastra disentangled herself and got up, brushing off her skirts.

Jenny stared at the floor for a few moments. “Were we ‘appy?”

“Well it all seemed quite idyllic I suppose.” Vastra raised her eye ridges at the question, her voice dismissive “That is until Croup and Vandemar showed up.” She shrugged. “It was a nightmare.”

“Well, yeah. Just a nightmare.” Jenny idly traced the grain in a floorboard.

“Perhaps we should get some proper rest. If we’re planning on breaking Matthew out of prison.”

“Yeah.” Jenny agreed distractedly, getting up in a daze. Something for the future, that’s what she’d told Vastra, when the Silurian had asked her about marriage. As much as it had just been a
nightmare, obviously, had to have been, not the future at all, not if it included her death by Croup and Vandemar’s hands…but still it left Jenny a little envious that Vastra had seen it.

18th March 1888

Jenny walked out the Hotel in the morning, with thoughts of a brief reconnaissance trip and meeting up with Jim to hear all the news, only to find Jim and Matthew waiting for her.

“They let ‘im out as soon as they brought up the real Jenny Greenteeth,” Jim explained. “Right away.”

“I got a caution not to go round dressin’ up as monsters again.” Matthew admitted with a wry grin.

“But apart from that he’s free an’ clear.”

“So what happens for you now?” Jenny asked him.

“Back to work.” Matthew shrugged his broad shoulders, tugging his cap onto his head. “Just thought I’d let you know.” He stood awkwardly for a few seconds and then held his hand out. “Thanks for all yer help. An’ tell yer missus thanks as well.”

Jenny flushed a little at the “missus” this time but shook his hand all the same. She’d been contemplating asking him to come back to London with them but it wouldn’t change the law or his circumstances. She watched as he tipped his hat and sauntered off in the direction of the railway.

Jim stood next to her watching him as well. Wordlessly she handed him a guinea from her purse.

“Thanks for all your help.” She echoed Matthew.

“You goin’ back to London now?” he asked, pocketing the guinea swiftly.

“The next train that’ll take us.” Jenny replied emphatically.

Jim scuffed his boots against the still broken step. “I’d come wiv yer but I got family. Me Nan an’ the like y’see.”

Jenny nodded.

“You could come back. Or I could come visit some time.”

“We always welcome young scamps round fer breakfast at 13 Paternoster Row.” Jenny told him lightly.

He grinned up at her. “Well then! That’s a fair promise. I guess I’ll be carryin’ yer baggage in a small while then.” He winked and ran off to start work.

Jenny updated Vastra as to the latest developments and Vastra agreed that she’d had more than enough of Swindon and was perfectly willing to return home. Jenny crossed to the station to buy tickets as Vastra packed their cases, carefully placing the swords at the bottom of them.

It was mid-afternoon when Jim hauled their luggage into their compartment and stood waving on the platform as the train whistle blew and Jenny and Vastra left Swindon behind them at last.
bloody finally. Soz for the haste in the ending but I want to get back to London! And far less convoluted plot arcs.
Out Of Our Bourne Of Time And Space

Chapter Summary

It is with sadness that I dedicate this chapter to Spinning Jenny who passed away today. This fic is her namesake and is not dead yet.

Chapter Notes

Guess who's back...

Title is from Crossing the Bar by Lord Alfred Tennyson (a bourne is a stream ICONK)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first thing Jenny did upon arrival back at 13 Paternoster Row was send off the letter to Harriet Fields, whom she realised they had not corresponded with once and would undoubtedly be anxious. She felt relieved to be back in London, particularly as April was a mere two weeks away.

19th March 1888

The Irregulars were over-joyed at her return and had much to tell her of the local intrigues and gossip that made up their world when they were not engaged to investigate a case. There was little of any note or cause for alarm and she let the chatter wash over her, increasing the sense of ease and relief she felt as sat in her own kitchen once more.

Vastra had gone to Scotland Yard, presumably to fulfil the same task, only with policemen instead of urchins. Jenny did not envy her for it and her irritation at the fact she was seen only as a maid had decreased substantially, what with the increase in the amount of people knowing she wasn’t.

She was in such a state of contentment that even the belligerent knock at the back door didn’t annoy her and she went to answer it with only a mild pang of curiosity as to who would call at the back door, thinking perhaps it was her sister.

She opened it to find two people, dressed in the most outrageous costumes complete with masks, stood there, one of whom promptly shoved a pistol into her face.

Jenny glanced at it then looked back to the bearer, raising an eyebrow. “Can I ‘elp you?"

The two masked figures glanced at each other in consternation that their threat was being treated so dismissively.

“You can’t hide it you know.” One of them said petulantly.

The Irregulars crowded round her, intrigued as to who was at the door themselves.

“Hide what?”
“Is it a case?”

“Should we go get Madame Vastra?”

“What are they wearin’…” (this was from Jack).

The chatter was silenced when another pistol was produced and waved about threateningly.

“We’ve come for what is ours.” said the second figure.

Jenny rolled her eyes. “P’raps you might get a bit further in gettin’ it if you explained yerselves.” She turned to go indoors, herding the Irregulars before her. “Cris, nip down to Scotland Yard and tell Madame we got a case.”

Cris threw a mock salute and dashed off.

“You’d best come in an’ all.” Jenny beckoned for them to follow her indoors. For one thing, the clothes the two of them were wearing would cause comment if left out in the open too long.

Keeping their pistols high and aimed at her, the pair walked through the doorway. Jenny directed them to the Plant Room and Boggin brought in a second chair from the kitchen. The pair sat down warily, as if suspecting the chairs would collapse. Jenny sent Soljer and Ada to make some tea and then sat down in Vastra’s chair, slumping and crossing her arms and legs as she observed them.

She couldn’t see much beneath their masks and strange dark goggles obscured their eyes. The hats they wore were identical tricorns, right down to the jagged cut in the front most side. The one seated nearest her had long dark hair, secured in a ponytail at the base of her neck. The other had roughly cut dirty blonde straggles peeking out from around the brim of their hat. She frowned as she noticed that beneath their long leather coats, the dark haired one wore two straps bristling with an array of knives and the other a ridiculously patterned knitted woollen pullover vest. It needed darning, Jenny noticed. There was a hole two thirds of the way down. They had mirrored her and folded their legs, which were encased in hardy looking cloth trousers with pockets everywhere. One of them was nervously twitching a boot, making the leather creak.

Jack came through carrying the tea tray and Jenny stood, busying herself pouring it out. She tried not to let the beginnings of nervousness make her hand shake as she set the cups down. The pair might’ve looked ridiculous but pistols were still something to take into consideration. She noted, with wry amusement, that they were flintlock pistols.

After an awkward quarter of an hour, in which neither of the two visitors touched their tea, Jenny finally heard the rumble of their cab and the sound of Vastra coming in through the kitchen.

The pair got up hurriedly, standing back to back, keeping one pistol on Jenny and the other at the entrance.

Of course, Jenny realised belatedly, she’d sent Cris to fetch Vastra from Scotland Yard. And of course, Cris would have reliably and accurately informed the Silurian that a couple of pistol bearing clients were busy threatening Jenny. So of course, Vastra was going to come storming through the door, both swords drawn, ready for battle. The accompanying cohort of armed policemen with their own pistols loaded and ready, which included, she noticed, Inspector Gregson, were a surprise however.

“Madame.” She bowed her head briefly, conscious that she should show the correct deference but waggled her eyebrows and stared with widened eyes to question the presence of the police.
“They wished to accompany me.” Vastra shrugged, sheathing her swords. “Are you harmed?”

“No ma’am. We was all pleasantly not drinking tea together when you came in.” She smiled at the pair, who had paled at the entrance of quite so much weaponry. “Might I suggest, Madame, good sirs,” she turned her sardonic smile on the policemen and continued curtly, “that we put the guns away? Lest anyone gets hurt unnecessarily.” She finished, her tone suggesting that people could still get hurt necessarily if they insisted on being foolish.

The policemen shuffled but didn’t lower their guns.

“And you two!” Jenny snapped.

The pair had staunchly kept their weapons up at the entrance of Vastra and the police, but the order of unilateral disarmament seemed the course of action with the lowest mortality rate and they obediently if slowly returned their guns to their holsters. There was a brief flurry among the policemen to also stow their weapons and then they milled around, somewhat aimlessly, like additional chickens.

“Thank you, gentleman. It appears we won’t be needing you after all.” Vastra dismissed them smoothly with a wave of her hand.

Gregson looked embarrassed. “If you’re sure, Madame Vastra.”

“Perfectly, I assure you.”

He harrumphed to regain dignity, having just seen all his men take orders from a maid, and in a gruff commanding voice to indicate he was still in charge, told his officers to return to the station.

When it seemed as if he was about to linger, Vastra paused in the action of taking off her cloak and looked over her shoulder at him. “No doubt you have more pressing crimes to be investigating? Hm?”

“Oh! Yes. Yes! All sorts of…well…I’ll be going then. If these two cause any more problems…”

“Oh, I doubt they will.” Vastra turned to the pair and, making sure Gregson couldn’t see, lifted her veil to grin at them.

“Right! Right. I’ll uh…be off then.” Gregson awkwardly started walking backwards.

Vastra waited patiently for him to leave and close the door behind him, then removed her veil fully, flinging it over the back of the chair.

Jenny had been surprised at her lifting the veil and threw a questioning glance at Vastra.

“First things first. More tea, I think. Jenny?” Vastra settled herself in the old wicker chair and serenely gazed at the pair.

“Yes ma’am.” Jenny rolled her eyes. It didn’t take her long to get the kettle boiled and set the tray again. Despite being as quiet as it is possible to be whilst handling china, she didn’t hear a word spoken and when she returned to the Plant Room with four steaming cups, Vastra was still gazing. Their two clients were beginning to shift slightly under the force of it.

“Now then. Shall we start again? It’s been rather a long time now. Pearce. Darrow.” Vastra nodded to them both.
Jenny nearly dropped the tray.

“We’ve no time for pleasantries, Vastra. We know you’ve got it!” the dark haired one spoke up.

“We traced the energy signature here.” The other nodded emphatically, folding their arms.

“An’ might I enquire as to who “we” is?” Jenny put the tray down with a little more force than necessary and glowered first at them and then at Vastra.

“Ah. This is Pearce and Darrow. They were performers in the circus. Darrow was a knife thrower,” Vastra gestured towards the dark haired one. “renowned for being able to chop an onion in mid-air. Pearce was a sharp shooter. Could shoot someone in the liver from across the ring. “Liver and Onions” their act was called.”

“They shot people??” Jenny regarded their pistols with more respect.

“Only with paint pellets.” Pearce sounded mildly disgusted at their ammunition. Darrow elbowed them.

“That was in the circus.” Darrow stood up, removing her mask to reveal piercing blue eyes in a round face that was crosshatched with scars. “Beforehand, we were the infamous space pirates. All Dread Her and…”

“Silly Vest Wearer.” Pearce cut in curtly.

“It’s a literal translation.” All Dread Her said, sounding mildly apologetic. She elbowed her companion again and Silly Vest Wearer also removed their mask. Her face was more angular than her lover’s and she glowered with grey eyes, as if daring either of them to comment on her name.

Jenny saw that Vastra was equally stunned at this revelation.

“I s’pose it’s your lockets you’ve come for then.” Jenny found that she was glad they were still alive after all, although confused as to how aliens looked so human.

“That is correct.” Silly Vest Wearer’s hand strayed towards her gun again.

“Unfortunately, we are no longer in possession of them. We returned both lockets to Torchwood, where they no doubt are locked securely in a vault.” Vastra steepled her fingers and rested her finger tips against her chin.

All Dread Her delved into a pocket and brought out a compact device that was glowing orange.

“This vault must be shielded against our technology.”

“Another dead end.” Silly Vest Wearer sighed.

Or else your technology is a bit useless, Jenny thought privately to herself. The vault hadn’t seemed very shielded to her.

“If you don’t mind me enquiring, how did you come to lose them in the first place?” Vastra asked. “I don’t recall you having any such lockets at the circus.”

“Hm?” All Dread Her looked up distractedly from her device. “Oh.” She flushed. “Ha. That would’ve been interesting wouldn’t it. Imagine the tricks we could’ve done.” She snapped the device shut and stowed it in her jacket.

“Well?”


All Dread Her shuffled her feet. “Well, they were stolen by accident.”

“How c’n yer steal somethin’ by accident?” Jenny, who had never in her life stolen anything by accident, snorted.

Silly Vest Wearer’s hand twitched towards her gun again.

“Interesting story.” All Dread Her laughed. “But as you don’t have our lockets, we’ll just be on our way. If you could point us in the direction of this Torchwood Vault?”

“I don’t think Torchwood would be best pleased with us if we did that.” Vastra smiled.

“An’ they investigate alien technology an’ the like. Fink they might be a bit interested in you. As in they might try an’ add you to their collection.” Jenny added.

“Oh but we’re not aliens!” All Dread Her protested. “We’re human. From Earth!”

“But you said you were space pirates!” Jenny pointed out, her ire rising.

“Infamous ones.” All Dread Her nodded.

“Time travelling ones too I take it.” Vastra raised her eye ridges.

“Not by choice.” Silly Vest Wearer muttered darkly.

“How c’n you time travel without choice?” Jenny was now completely exasperated at what was looking to be another ridiculous case.

All Dread Her smiled at her sympathetically. “I take it you’ve never heard of the beings known as the Weeping Angels.”

Chapter End Notes

In the Brilliant Book 2012 from which much inspiration comes, on the poster from Vastra’s circus there is Pearce and Darrow "Liver and onions", which duly became an in disguise All Dread Her and Silly Vest Wearer because it seemed fun that Vastra would know them.
Chapter Summary

In Which Characters Tell Their Back Stories For No Other Reason Than To Let The Readers Know How The Hell They Ended Up There

Chapter Notes

They will be henceforth known as Pearce (Silly Vest Wearer) and Darrow (All Dread Her) I cannot write those other names without cracking up and it is detrimental to my writing.

The title should be instantly recognisable to any Tru 90s Kid

The blank look on Jenny’s face as well as Vastra’s made Pearce and Darrow smile grimly at each other.

“They call them the Lonely Assassins. But they don’t actually kill you.” Darrow explained.

“They drop you in the past with no means of returning…”

“…and you live out a life, eventually dying of old age.”

“Or boredom.” Pearce spat.

“They were hired to deal with us after we…”

“…became slightly too infamous.” Pearce’s voice was tinged with pride.

“Impenetrable bank, you know how it is. Far too tempting.”

“We weren’t to know…”

“…that they needed to keep up the reputation of being impenetrable.”

“Can’t spill the beans if you’re back in the damn Victorian Era.” Pearce sighed, leaning back in her chair.

“So, you joined the circus to fit in. Like Vastra.” Jenny was getting impatient.

Darrow nodded approvingly. “Picked up a smart one did you Vastra?”

Vastra smiled coldly. “But the Weeping Angels didn’t take your lockets I’m assuming.”

“No. That was…”

“Torchwood.” Pearce interrupted.” We underestimated the Victorian Era. We were…”
“…engaged in criminal activities, using our lockets as…”

“…a perfect get away route.”

“One always stays on board, or outside…”

“…the moment something is acquired or trouble is gotten into…”

“…flash!” Darrow finished.

“I thought it was so you could always return to each other’s sides.” Jenny frowned and folded her arms.

“It can’t be both?” Darrow smiled disarmingly.

Jenny flushed.

“Unfortunately,” Pearce continued, “we didn’t realise that such magic tricks were not dismissed so easily now.”

“It being the age of reason. Science and deduction.”

“We can only assume stories about us made their way from police and guards to Torchwood.”

“At any rate, they were waiting for us…”

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Pearce had scoped the place for weeks and had seen nothing more intimidating than a sleepy looking guard and the occasional strolling policeman. She was confident. Darrow would remain at their hideout, waiting and she, Pearce, would put the old man to sleep, nip in, nip out along with a nice bit of shine. It was an operation they had carried out innumerable times.

She toyed with the knife Darrow had lent her, waiting for the policeman to pass into the distance, confident he wouldn’t return this way again for at least an hour. By which time she would be long gone, back to the safety of Darrow. These silly little people wouldn’t ever catch her, the infamous Space Pirate. They didn’t have the brains to do anything but stand amazed as she disappeared in front of their eyes.

She easily hauled herself up over the wall, dropping down with barely a sound. With confident ease, she sauntered across the courtyard to the door. Flicking the knife into the air and catching it again, she placed the point in the lock, slid a wire in beside it and gave a twisting jerk. The door swung open to reveal the petrified stare of the elderly guard. It gave her satisfaction to see it and she stepped forward, drawing her pistol.

Her arm was halted in its action by a steely grip. She tried to jerk away but she was held fast. Another arm reached out and forced her own into an X across her chest. She heard the guard give a terrified squeal and flee.

“Now then, Ms Vest Wearer, you have been the source of considerable inconvenience and upset for us.” A voice sneered from behind her.

She ignored it and fumbled for her locket.

“She’s going to use the locket Mr C…”
She cursed as she felt another hand on her shoulder as she flicked the catch but it was lost along with the name of her attacker as she was transported away.

“Only it took all of us, of course.” Pearce began pacing in frustration.

“They were prepared for that too.” Darrow sighed. “There was I, resting and cleaning one of my knives when they all appeared in the room. They broke Pearce’s from around her neck. Grabbed at mine. I tried to stab them…”

“…but they didn’t bleed.”

For the first time, Jenny heard a hint of uncertainty and disbelief in Pearce’s voice. “Yeah, we know the sort.” She nodded sympathetically.

“Really?” Darrow smiled at Jenny again, making Vastra’s eyes narrow. “At any rate, they seemed more interested in the lockets, so I broke my chain too and we both scarpered. It was easy enough to hide after all.”

“We look human.”

“That’s because we are.” Darrow reminded her companion sardonically.

“I mean we look like them.” Pearce waved a hand at Jenny. “The dumb ones from this era. Those types of humans.”

Vastra laid a restraining hand gently on Jenny’s arm. She wasn’t sure on the young woman’s capacity to deflect so many knives and the two pirates still had their pistols as well.

“Fortunately, we had other skills we could use other than just our lockets.” Darrow seemed blissfully unaware as she demonstratively flipped a knife into the air. “And the circus gave us an opportunity to use them.”

Pearce eyed Jenny, mentally assessing her capabilities. “And an opportunity for excitement, with our lockets gone.”

“But I assume you had some way to trace the lockets. Why didn’t you try to retrieve them before now?” Vastra prompted.

“We didn’t know where they were for ages.” Darrow admitted, sheathing her knife. “We had a crude device which we managed to build but nothing showed up on it. We thought we’d made it wrong.”

“But then we suddenly saw all these little blips.” Pearce’s eyes glittered.

“At a whorehouse. Here. Well the whorehouse was deserted when we checked it out but we turn up to find you here Vastra!”

Jenny rolled her eyes at the fact that her presence was once again forgotten.

“Working with the police no less.” The suddenly threatening tone of Pearce’s voice brought Jenny onto her guard.

“Living in such a nice house too. You never bought this with your wages from the circus.” Darrow gestured to the Plant Room.
Jenny’s fingers itched for her sword.

“Particularly as you left in such a hurry. Such a shame.” Pearce toyed with her gun and grinned malevolently. “I always wanted to know. Whether you could’ve caught bullets with your tongue.” She aimed her gun at Vastra and mimicked the sound of a gun firing.

“And I wonder, if I could, would you be able to reload before I killed you?” Vastra’s tongue flicked out.

Jenny glanced between Vastra to Pearce before locking gazes with Darrow. Their eyes had a brief but illuminating conversation and they came to a silent agreement.

“Um…darling.” Darrow laid a hand on Pearce’s arm, smoothly lowering it and plucking the gun from her hand. “I think they’d struggle to help us with retrieving our lockets if we shoot them.”

Jenny darted forward and grabbed the gun from Darrow’s hand, pointing it firmly at Pearce.

Darrow’s jaw dropped in shocked approval at Jenny’s betrayal of their agreement. Pearce responded by standing and reaching over, drawing Darrow’s gun from its holster and aiming at Jenny.

“We could still shoot this one.”

Vastra darted upright, hissing. Darrow, disconcerted at being the only one left seated and unarmed to boot, scrambled up, knocking her chair over. She looked helplessly at Vastra this time, whose eyes only spoke of painful and extended murder if Pearce fired.

Even the sound of knocking at the back door didn’t break the frozen tableau.

“I don’t know how you two ever get a single case when you never answer the door. Oh! I see you’ve already got one. With guns too. Look at that Donna, did you ever see a picture more perfectly portraying human stupidity!”

Vastra struggled to contain the feeling of relief that flooded through her at the sound of the Doctor’s voice. If anyone could talk their way out of a situation, it was him. Pearce spinning round to point the gun at the Doctor only added to the sensation of relief.

“Ooh.” The Doctor exclaimed as she did. “Come on now. I know you wear a ridiculous vest but you’re meant to be the sensible one. Aren’t you…Pearce.” The Doctor grinned irrepressibly as Pearce moved towards him, sauntering up to her and placing a finger against the barrel of Pearce’s gun. “How about I just take that then ey?” he whipped it out her hand. “Ooh. Flintlock pistol. Like you ey Jenny Flint?”

Rolling her eyes, Jenny threw the gun into Pearce’s vacated chair.

“That’s more like it. See Donna? That’s humans being clever.” He threw the gun he’d taken from Pearce into a convenient plant pot.

“Who are you?” Pearce was dumbfounded that she’d been disarmed so easily.


“What…” Pearce and Darrow spoke simultaneously.

“Was there anyone normal in that circus?” Jenny asked Vastra as she watched the Doctor explain to
Darrow and Pearce.

“Well there was George.” Vastra pointed out.

“He needs a step ladder just to reach a table top.” Jenny stared at her.

“So? Compared to a time traveller, space pirates and a lizard woman from the dawn of time, I’d say that’s a minor matter. And it certainly doesn’t stop him being normal.” Vastra told her contemptuously.

Jenny opened her mouth but couldn’t think of a reply so wisely closed it again.

“Absolutely right Vastra.” The Doctor interrupted. “Met a bloke, Bannakaffalatta. Barely came up to my waist. Perfectly normal. Half cyborg Zocci he was. Absolutely brilliant. Saved my life.” He flopped down into Pearce’s vacated chair, jerking back up as he sat on the gun. He hooked it up on one finger and glared at it before placing it delicately on the floor beside him.

“I don’t remember him.” Donna interrupted, righting Darrow’s chair and sitting by the Doctor.

“Well you weren’t there. Anyway!” he clapped his hands together and swiftly changed the subject. “Now we’re all getting along so splendid…” he trailed off as he felt the muzzle of a pistol pressed against the back of his head. “Oh come onnnnn Pearce. Really?” he raised his hands in the air.

“Time traveller hm Doctor?” Darrow was smiling cockily once more. She moved round and retrieved her own gun from the plant pot.

“You will help us infiltrate Torchwood…”

“…and retrieve what is ours.”

“And then you will return us to our own time.” Pearce hissed triumphantly.

“Ah. Well. That might be a little complicated. You see, Torchwood was set up to stop me. Specifically me too, not a past me, might’ve swung it with that. Um…” the Doctor absentmindedly scratched the back of his head, his hand brushing against the barrel of the gun. “They might not be best pleased to see me.” He finished weakly.
Donna sat, staring at the Doctor and Pearce. Vastra was still stood in front of them. Darrow nervously toyed with her gun. Jenny quickly debated whether there was any move she could make that wouldn’t cause the Doctor to get shot. She’d heard about his regenerating abilities but wasn’t about to risk putting them to the test.

It’s just another case. Jenny thought to herself. We’ve handled all sorts before.

“Oh, but this is amazing!” The Doctor exclaimed. “I didn’t realise you two were time travellers too!”

“We’re not.” Pearce replied through gritted teeth.

“Weepin’ Angels.” Jenny cut in to explain.

The Doctor’s face became a rictus.

“Look. You remember those lockets that Torchwood had?” Jenny prompted.

He nodded, his jaw dropping open slightly.

“An’ you told me they belonged to the infamous Space Pirates.”

The Doctor nodded again. Jenny waited. His eyes widened. “OH! Of course!” The Doctor hit himself on the forehead with the heel of his hand. “Stupid! Ohhh. The silly vest should’ve been a dead giveaway. I am so stupid.” He grinned and turned around to look up at Pearce, sobering slightly at the sight of the gun. “Blimey it really was a circus wasn’t it. So, when you say you want returning to your own time...”

“You can’t just take them home!” Jenny protested.

“Why not? S’where they belong.” The Doctor swivelled back round.

“They’ll just get arrested again by Weeping Angels or somethin’.” Jenny pointed out.
“Well I can’t sort out everyone’s problems. Even with a TARDIS, I wouldn’t have the time. ‘Sides, it’s what you get for being pirates.”

“I personally fail to see how these two criminals being arrested would be a problem.” Vastra scowled.

“Oh well, now this is a turn up for the books!” Darrow feigned shock. “Vastra being on the side of the law!”

“Why not bring those police men back and have them try to arrest us?” Pearce challenged.

“Yes, I’m sure they could shoot us just fine. Through numbers alone, if not by actual marksmanship.”

Jenny glanced at Donna who’d been silent during this exchange. She was watching them bicker with an expression of amusement on her face.

“An’ I thought I had a gob.” Donna said when she noticed Jenny looking at her.

Pearce, Darrow, the Doctor and Vastra all turned to glower at her.

Jenny gave an exasperated sigh. “How about me and Vastra handle Torchwood and the Doctor handles the time travel and no-one gets shot or captured.”

“Apart from us!” Vastra protested. “Our…agreement with Torchwood doesn’t exactly cover theft.”

“Why not? They stole the lockets from Pearce and Darrow in the first place. S’more like recoverin’ stolen property.”

The Doctor laughed. “You’d shut down every Museum ever, Jenny Flint.”

“I don’t believe Torchwood will exactly take the same view.” Vastra spoke over him.

“Well s’not like Croup and Vandemar are in charge anymore.” Jenny turned to the Doctor for support.

“We don’t even know where the lockets are kept! And their method of detecting them is useless.” Vastra waved at the still glowing orange detector.

“I do. S’where the locket took me that time was into their vaults.” Jenny realised the second after the words left her mouth that this possibly wasn’t the wisest thing she’d ever said. She closed her eyes as Pearce pointed the gun at her again.

“Jenny!” The Silurian’s cry tugged at Jenny’s heart.

“Oh, I think we just found a new method for detecting them that will be quite…efficient.” Darrow grinned delightedly.

“Unless you want to try that bullet catching act after all, I’d suggest you sit down Vastra.” Pearce cocked her gun as the Silurian made as if to move. Vastra complied.

“Hey now, Pearce, Darrow. We’re all mates here. All old circus buddies, ey?” The Doctor looked nervous as Pearce moved forward and grabbed Jenny’s arm, hauling her towards the door.

“Indeed! And what are friends for but for helping each other? We’ll be back Doctor. And just to make sure you don’t run off, I think we’ll take your beautiful lady here with us too.” Darrow
motioned for Donna to walk in front of her.

“His what??” Donna folded her arms

“Donna.” The Doctor warned. She looked at him and he shook his head.

Heaving a sigh and muttering under her breath Donna accompanied Jenny, Pearce and Darrow out the door.

Parker was chatting with his son in the stable doorway as they brushed down Alice and put the carriage away, speculating on what had happened at 13 Paternoster Row now that required an entire cohort of police. He looked up as he heard the door slam to see Jenny being dragged across the courtyard towards them with Pearce pointing a gun at her head.

“Parker. Could you get the carriage ready again?” Jenny asked apologetically, forestalling any questions.

“At once, Miss Jenny.” Parker nodded warily and went to collect the reins and harness. Alice whickered at Jenny in oblivious greeting. Parker’s son squared his shoulders as Donna and Darrow approached them all but a look from Jenny stopped him from anything more than glowering.

When the carriage was ready, Jenny nodded up to Parker who was sat next to his son. “You remember where Torchwood was when Vastra took you that time?”

“Aye Miss Jenny.”

“Well, we’re payin’ em another visit.” She said wearily, as she followed Darrow and Donna into the back of the carriage, Pearce and her gun bringing up the rear.

Pearce sat in silence, pointing her gun vaguely in Jenny’s direction but staring out the window in boredom. Donna kept throwing glances at Jenny to see if she had a plan but Jenny was distracted by Darrow who sat diagonally across from her, smirking.

“Vastra seems to be quite fond of you.” Darrow probed, twiddling a blade handle.

“So, you two are lovers?” Jenny retorted.

“I think that’s a rather loose term.”

“We’re married.” Pearce cut in, turning from the window.

“In your own time? In the future?” Donna asked.

Darrow turned to Donna with a mildly affronted expression. “No, no. We got married here. Decided it would help us fit in more.” Darrow looked back at Jenny and laughed at her shock. “Oh, you thought you couldn’t? Anything is possible, Miss Jenny.”

Even Pearce snorted in amusement at the glare Jenny shot at Darrow. “That’d be something to see. A human and a lizard getting married. She eats humans. Did you know that?”

“Yes.” Jenny snapped.

“You what??” Donna gave Jenny a very wary look.

“Well she don’t really any more. Well, only people that deserve it.”
“Oh an’ who decides that then?!” Donna asked angrily, folding her arms.

Jenny couldn’t think how to answer. Vastra seemed to restrict herself to criminals and even then it’d been a while since she’d met one reprehensible enough to ‘deserve’ it. She frowned.

“Well she ain’t really eaten anyone for a while. Since she met me. Only threatens to.”

“Oh, well, it must be love then.” Pearce tutted, flashing a wry grin at Darrow.

Jenny was vibrating with barely contained rage and Pearce had foolishly stopped pointing a gun at her. The carriage was jolting slightly but Jenny pulled off a feat of balance that would’ve impressed the most sea-hardened pirate. She half rose and, using the swaying of the carriage to give her added impetus, reached across, and punched Pearce squarely on the nose.

The infamous Space Pirate didn’t bother crying out in pain. She ignored the sudden gush of blood and shoved Jenny back down onto her seat, her arm against Jenny’s throat and her pistol at Jenny’s temple.

“Sil!” Darrow barked and Pearce froze.

“Only because we need you to know where our lockets are.” Pearce hissed, slowly holstering her gun.

“You think if you kill me, the Doctor would ever take you back? He beat Croup and Vandemar.” Jenny struggled against Pearce’s grip. She managed to bend a leg up and kicked out with a grunt, sending Pearce reeling. “He wouldn’t have any problems dealin’ with you.”

Darrow immediately threw an arm across Pearce’s chest. “Enough.” She pulled a burgundy hankie from her pocket and held it to Pearce’s nose. “It seems like you’re not having too much of a problem either, Miss Jenny.”

Jenny sat in amazement, both at the compliment and the fact she was watching the woman who had been about to kill her surrender to such a gentle gesture.

“You think you’re the only one to tame a killer?” Darrow appeared amused by her shock.

“You didn’t tame me.” Pearce said thickly, her voice half muffled by the hankie.

“Ah no, I suppose you came willingly enough didn’t you.” There was a genuine smile on Darrow’s lips now.

Jenny sat back in her seat, staunchly refusing to be jealous and instead concentrating on how she was going to get Torchwood to give her back the lockets, ignoring the gob-smacked Donna.

Jenny wasn’t too surprised when it turned out that Commander Wilton remembered her. Her name was enough to bring him striding very quickly towards the gate, waving to the several guards who’d stopped the carriage to let it enter. Apparently, he remembered the two infamous space pirates as well, Jenny surmised when she watched him visibly deflate as they all stepped down from the carriage.

“Technically,” Jenny pointed out after Pearce and Darrow had pointed their guns and stated their demands. “It’s not alien technology. So, technically, Torchwood shouldn’t really have an interest in keeping it.”
“What is it this time? Lizard people from the future?” Wilton asked sarcastically.

“Just humans.” Darrow smiled her unsettling smile. It was the last straw for Wilton, who summoned Frank and Nigel to him and sent them off to fetch the lockets. He caught Jenny looking at him questioningly and gave a wry smile.

“I doubt the Queen would be very pleased if I reported to her that I’d let you be killed. Seems to have taken a shine to you. These two will have to be put on the enemies of the empire list, of course.”

“They’re due to be returned to their own time.” Jenny reassured him. “I doubt they’ll bother Torchwood again.”

Wilton snorted derisively.

“Torchwood?! This is Torchwood?” Donna tugged Jenny’s sleeve.

“You know it?”

“It’s only the thing in the future that tried to kill me! You know I told you about being engaged to the bloke who threw me over for a spider woman?”

Jenny nodded.

“Well we both worked for a company that was secretly Torchwood!” Donna looked around wonderingly. “So, this is where it all began…”

“You work for Torchwood?” Wilton gaped.


“Cybermen?” Jenny suppressed a shiver.

“From a parallel universe. They…all those people…” Donna’s voice shook. “An’ Rose…”

Jenny went cold. “I thought Rose was just…lost.”

“Yeah. In the parallel universe.”

“With a bunch of Cybermen??”

“Oh! No.” Donna snapped out of her reverie to find everyone, even Darrow and Pearce, staring at her. “They all got sucked into the Void. She was beamed back to it just before the rift closed.”

Jenny glanced at Wilton and noticed he was looking pale and perturbed. Thankfully they were saved from any further questions by Nigel scurrying back up from the vaults holding a parcel of black velvet. Pearce blinked, stepped forward, held out her hand and he tentatively gave it to her. She passed it to Darrow, who ripped it open with a knife, eyeing the lockets lovingly.

“Well, even if we can’t persuade the Doctor to take us back, this should allow us to have some more fun.” She said as she stepped behind Pearce and fastened one locket around her neck.

“The Doctor?!” Wilton suddenly brought himself to attention. “The Doctor is here?”

“Only temporarily!” Jenny put out a hand. “How else did you think they’d get back?”
“This will have to be reported to the Queen!” Wilton went to leave only to walk straight into Pearce’s gun.

“Not until he’s taken us back.” She waved him away.

“Really! You would make a complete mockery of Torchwood?!” He gestured angrily at the courtyard.

“Well surely you don’t want to report to the Queen that you got killed, do you? Or is she not so attached to you?”

Jenny glared meaningfully at Darrow, who nodded. She grabbed Pearce by the collar and tugged her away towards the gate.

“Parker will take you back to Paternoster Row.” Jenny followed them at a safe distance.

“And what will you do, Miss Jenny?” Darrow asked.

“Stall Torchwood?” Jenny shrugged.

“You are curious. We’re not waving any guns at you currently, you know.”

“I hadn’t noticed.” Jenny bit back sarcastically.

Darrow gave her a long searching look. “Well, good luck.”

Jenny was piqued as she watched Darrow climb into the carriage.

“Well I’d best be gettin’ back with them then. If Torchwood are after the Doctor he’ll be wanting to make a quick getaway.” Donna smiled, giving Jenny a quick squeeze of a hug. “Take care of yourself! An’ make sure your lizard doesn’t eat any more people.” She shouted over her shoulder as she climbed into the carriage.

Jenny waved a worried looking Parker to take them home. She looked up at Wilton as he came to stand beside her, watching the carriage turn around and rattle away.

“I’ve already sent Frank over to the palace. We’re not completely useless you know. Nor that easily stalled. So why remain here?” he asked curiously.

“Cos if I’d gone back with them I might’ve punched them again. An’ they might really shoot me now they’ve got their lockets.”

Wilton raised an eyebrow. “I did notice a slight bloodied nose. Your handiwork I presume?”

“Yes.” Jenny confessed.

“You know, the Queen is right. It really is a shame you won’t work for Torchwood.” He tutted. “I’d make you a Lieutenant?”

“I don’t think the Doctor would like that. Nor my employer. But you c’n give me a lift. Before she… comes looking for me.” Jenny hinted.

Wilton laughed nervously. “I think we could arrange that, Miss Flint.”
Thus it was that a carriage marked with the Queen’s coat of arms turned up once more outside 13 Paternoster Row. Jenny skirted hastily round to the back yard to find Parker and his son leaning out of the stables, looking for her. She waved to show she was all right and ran up to the back door. It was opened, just as she got to it, by the Doctor.

“Ey! And here’s Jenny Flint. Don’t worry, I’ve already sent them back. Darrow left you this by the way, to remember her by.” He handed her the gleaming flintlock pistol that had been used to threaten her. Jenny took it gingerly.

“Fink I prefer swords.” She muttered as she examined it. “Where’s Vastra?”

The Doctor looked shifty. “Well, when Parker and Son came back here without you…she...”

“She saddled up Alice and rode out like an avenging widow to go find you.” Donna appeared by his side, sipping a cup of tea.

“Oh, I thought she looked more like the Last Samurai, what with the swords.” The Doctor argued, gesticulating to indicate a pair of swords strapped to his back.

Jenny covered her eyes with her hand.

Commander Wilton had just received word back from Frank at the Palace that the Queen was not amused at the fact that the Doctor was back in her Empire once more, despite the strictest of banishments, when he heard another horse ride up, hooves clattering on the cobbles.

He froze in terror as the horse, looking very excited at having been galloping and without a carriage attached behind it, stopped in front of him, hooves kicking up sparks against the cobbles.

“We sent her back! We sent her back!!” he shouted, waving his hands frantically. “It wasn’t a serious offer, merely a compliment of her skills! We really will make her Lieutenant!”

“What on earth are you on about?”

“We sent her back! You must’ve crossed paths. She’s on her way back to 13 Paternoster Row as we speak.”

Vastra tugged on Alice’s reins, making her rear up and wheel around. Without a backward glance at Wilton she rode off.

She’d barely disappeared back down the street when Wilton heard more clattering and turned to see the Queen’s personal carriage arrive at Torchwood’s gate. He smothered a groan, offering a substantially sized prayer to his God to not to make his day any worse and then walked over to greet her Majesty.

By the time Vastra and Alice had cantered back to 13 Paternoster Row, Jenny was leaning against the back-door frame, sipping tea. Donna and the Doctor had sloped off after Jenny’s warning that Queen Victoria was on her way. Parker had gone home for a lie down and his son was attempting to clean Pearce’s blood off the upholstery of the carriage.

Vastra slid off Alice, leaving Parker’s son to grab her and lead her into the stables. She walked straight up to Jenny who put her cup down, stepping back to let her inside. Jenny was glad she’d
already finished her tea as Vastra pulled Jenny towards her and kissed her soundly. Jenny wondered briefly as she simultaneously tugged Vastra further into the kitchen and pushed the door to, whether Vastra had “come willingly” or whether it had been Jenny herself who’d been tamed. But when Vastra was kissing her like that it didn’t really seem to matter…

What did matter, Jenny belatedly realised, was that she had once again failed to lock the door, leaving it very easily opened by a very unamused British monarch.

The look on Queen Victoria’s face was somehow more terrifying than any space pirate’s gun.

“Ah! Your majesty. I’m afraid he’s already gone.” Vastra blurted out.

“Yes.” The Queen said tonelessly. “I rather suspected as much from your…activities.”

Jenny felt all of her blood that had gone cold at the Queen’s entrance, suddenly heat up and flood to her cheeks.

“You know, Madame Vastra, if you intend to be a detective, you might wish to consider better security habits.”

“I s’pose thas the offer of Lieutenant gone then.” The derisive ‘Madame’ riled Jenny beyond her fear. But she still swallowed as the Queen turned her gaze on Jenny.

“Yes. I think it best that you are not seen to be working for me. Between this, and your continued association with the Doctor.” The Queen replied coldly.

“What…” Vastra began but the Queen swept out, slamming the door behind her. “Well…” the Silurian huffed in relief.

Jenny strode over and turned the key in the lock, sliding the bolts across with unnecessary force.

Vastra raised an eye ridge, smiling. “Is that an indication you wish to pick up from where we were so rudely interrupted?”

Jenny replied only by tugging Vastra down for another kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Donna! Spoilers!!

Tune in again when I return from LA for a Chapter 69 XXXtended version (because one does not simply write a 69th chapter and not have smut attached somewhere...)

As always, the author retains the right to seriously abuse the Being Walked In On Trope. I think I may have to retire it after this because really who can beat Queen Victoria?
Yet With These April Sunsets

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had been two weeks since Queen Victoria had walked in on them, and consequently stormed back out again. She had not reappeared on the scene nor had there been any indication that she intended to do so, to Jenny’s private relief. There had been no further visits from the Space Pirates, the Doctor was keeping out of Queen Victoria’s way and overall it had been a quiet two weeks. The only thing vaguely concerned with a case was a return letter from Harriet Fields. In it, she thanked them shortly for their assistance and asked if it was possible they could assist her in finding accommodation. Jenny had made a quick visit to Mrs Blackett asking if she could give cheap rent to someone struggling and Mrs Blackett had taken Harriet under her wing. Jenny wondered briefly if Harriet would end up being a Blackett much like her sister had but shrugged the thought off. Her sister’s battles had not resulted in any cases for them nor could she see much disruption around London, so whatever it was she was up to, Jenny figured it didn’t concern her.

The 1st of April came but Jenny was too nervous about it being April to participate much in the pranks of the Paternoster Irregulars. Mrs Parker laughed until she cried at their antics and then told them she’d hidden eggs all over London for them and they darted out at once to hunt them all down.

They returned just before midday looking weary and without a single egg, giving Mrs Parker her dues for a prank well played. Jenny made it up to them with several Cadbury eggs she’d bought and gave Parker and his wife a lovely Easter present of a small china hare.

They had a large Easter dinner cooked by Mrs Parker and Jenny took a plate full of some lamb for Vastra who had retired early in the day to the Plant room and hadn’t left it since. Jenny found her sleeping in the wicker chair and put the plate on the small tea table before returning to the party.

5th April 1888

Jenny had taken to buying The Times newspaper, not only because it was the newspaper that Vastra advertised her services as an Adventurer in but also trying to see if there were any weird and wonderful things happening in London that might require their attention. The police were in a tizzy over a murder that they couldn’t solve but Jenny could guess as to who had done it in five seconds. She had worked for the Tong gang after all. It brought her mind to Lettie and she wondered whether Lettie had escaped again from the troubles Jenny had brought to her door and where she was. It was something to investigate at least and she felt guilty for not having thought to find out sooner.

6th April 1888

The next morning, Jenny sent off the Irregulars to look for any hint of her before going to find Vastra. She found the Silurian sleeping in the Plant room again, as she had been doing every day since April began. Jenny stood watching her for a long time. She’d tried not to be worried, but Vastra had barely said a word to her in a week. There was an unnerving stillness, and Vastra’s scales were tinged with yellow. Not for the first time, Jenny thought that she should learn more about Silurian physiology, what sickness looked like, what illnesses they caught. She placed a hand gently against Vastra’s triangular forehead crest. It felt cold, despite the fire they’d paid to be put in to thoroughly warm through the Plant room.

She jumped at the sound of distant thunder and a moment later the skies opened and rain pelted...
down on the glass ceiling in a sudden April shower. Vastra jerked awake, knocking Jenny’s hand aside. Her eyes scowled. Jenny remembered that look. It was the blank look of hatred reserved for apes that Vastra only got after a dream about her past. Particularly in April.

“Bad dreams?” Jenny ventured when Vastra didn’t move or utter a word. “April right?”

Vastra blinked. And then blinked a few more times before her eyes cleared. Her jaw tensed but she nodded.

“You hungry? Should I get you somethin’?” Jenny made to move away but Vastra grabbed her hand, tugging her down. “I’ll squash the chair, you stupid lizard! S’only wicker.” Jenny braced herself before she was pulled into Vastra’s lap. She remembered Vastra sitting in the wicker chair all day during their first April together. Only a year ago Jenny thought. Vastra had been so angry, getting drunk and then falling apart.

Vastra went to get up but Jenny still stood over her, hands on the arm rests, staring at nothing with a distant look in her eyes.

“What are you thinking?” the Silurian asked curiously.

“A year ago, I was still workin’ in the factory. Knowin’ nuffin of anythin’ much. Now I snub me nose at the Queen an’ fight pirates and goodness knows what else.”

“You’ve come up in the world.” Vastra remarked with amusement.

“What about you?” Jenny tilted her head and looked Vastra in the eyes.

Jenny was clearly in one of those kinds of moods, Vastra noted. She’d felt in a similar mood herself the past few days, thinking about her sisters. In a small attic flat above a gin shop it had felt easy to feel sorry for herself, particularly after quitting the circus and having no idea of the future. It had been easy to wallow, for what had there been that was good in her life to feel as if she were moving forward, living a life? But now, there was Jenny...

“I am wondering what my sisters would have thought of all this.” Vastra gestured to the room about her.

“Maybe they’d just be glad you was happy.” Jenny shrugged. Her face fell at Vastra’s silence and she stood up again. “What?”

There was no denying she was happy. Happier. The cases gave her a purpose and Jenny...Jenny gave her laughter. Warmth. Affection. Companionship. She’d mourned for years over her sister’s death, every April without fail. But now there was a future, a life to be lived. Jenny had given her that too.

“It is entirely possible. I was on far better terms with them then you are with your family.” She replied eventually.

Jenny sighed. She remembered asking Vastra about the Silurian’s sisters. She remembered Vastra’s curiosity about her own. She smiled; neither of them had reacted to well to such inquiries. But she did wonder sometimes, what she had done to deserve the life she had now. What it was that had gifted it to her.

“Do you ever feel guilty, bein’ happy?”

Her ape did so love to ask the pointed questions at difficult times, Vastra mused. Not that she had
been much better herself at times.

“More regretful, that they cannot share in it. That I have grown beyond them and they cannot ever grow to catch up. Ironic, considering I was the youngest.” She sighed. “The Doctor once told me I had changed. Such a cruel word that is.”

Jenny’s face twisted into a frown of concentration as she struggled to process what Vastra meant. “Why? Surely s’a good thing to change.”

“Is it?” Vastra glowered at her, surging up out the chair. “Do you not ever feel it? That sense of leaving something behind? With your family? At least you can have a hope they will change. My family are dead. I have no hope of them accepting me for what I am. The further I change, the less I am like them.” Vastra scoffed. “Perhaps I should change some more? Change completely! Become even more human.”

Jenny blinked. A shimmer appeared around Vastra’s head, a shadow of something, blurring Vastra’s face. “Oi!” she didn’t know why she’d called out like that. She blinked again and felt tears on her cheeks. A sense of loneliness overwhelmed her and she could do nothing, she felt, but stand there, gazing helplessly at Vastra.

“Isn’t that why you went to them? Your aunt and uncle? A foolish hope they would accept you? How did it feel when your entire family rejected you?” the Silurian hissed.

Jenny took a shaky breath and realised she was trembling all over. She had always wanted to tell Vastra and it spilled out of her now. “You’re my family now. You an’ the urchins.”

“You cannot replace them!” Vastra snapped.

Something ticked, like a clock, clicked, like a stone sliding into place. It felt as if time had slowed, just enough to give her time. Jenny shook her head to dispel it but her anger at Vastra had already subsided into a strange, still calm. “You stupid, bloody lizard.” Vastra blinked. “Silurian.” Jenny amended. The stunned expression on Vastra’s face was almost worth letting go of her anger for. “Is that really what you think I’m tryin’ to do? Is that really what you think I want? Ha! I hope you don’t become human. Humans discriminate just as much.” Vastra’s speechlessness dissipated any anger remaining. “I miss ‘em too y’know. I miss what I had, what coulda been. But I got you now. It don’t mean you’ve replaced ‘em or anythin’. S’just…like you got me new clothes cos me old ones were scruffy. Or moving to here. Don’t mean I never wore me old clothes or that we never had good times at the gin flat. It was just time to change, thas all. An’ yeah, that’s scary an’ lonely but it’s also better. And happier. I mean, you seem happier at any rate.” Jenny twisted her skirt in hands, nervous that she’d gone too far.

Vastra sank slowly back into her wicker chair, recalling the times she’d questioned Jenny on her happiness. The urge to reassure Jenny struggled to overcome her shock at Jenny’s reaction.

“I’ve changed too.” Jenny continued. “I don’t run off no more whenever you have a conniption.”

“Ha!” Vastra felt a pang of bittersweet amusement at the statement, remembering their first April together. She smiled apologetically at Jenny. “You are right, my dear.” She pulled Jenny towards her, the ape curling up onto her lap, tucking her head against Vastra’s shoulder as Vastra buried her fingers into Jenny’s hair. “You are right.” She whispered into Jenny’s ear. “I am happier.”

Jenny’s prediction alas proved true. She had been curled in Vastra’s lap but for a moment when the wicker chair gave way entirely and deposited them both on the stone slab floor.
Vastra looked up at her, stunned and winded.

“Did tell yer.” Was all Jenny felt she could manage.

7th April 1888

The Irregulars reported no trace of Lettie yet but that they would keep searching. The lack of news Jenny took as good news. If the Irregulars couldn’t track her down, neither could Torchwood. Although, under the new management of Lieutenant Wilton, it was entirely possible they wouldn’t be that bothered about her.

After ensuring Vastra had eaten something, the two of them set out to procure a replacement wicker chair for the Plant room. Vastra had been distraught at the destruction and no amount of reassurances on Jenny’s part that no doubt it had been old, that Mrs Blackett wouldn’t mind, that she’d been passing off old furniture as much as anything, could console Vastra. It was her favourite lounging chair.

Jenny had no idea where they’d even find a wicker chair maker and the only suggestion Vastra could come up with was to visit George or Mrs Blackett. Jenny agreed with George, suspecting the exceedingly short man of having contacts across London and in many different lines of businesses.

George was over-joyed to see them, welcoming them with literal open arms.

“Ey! And tis grand to see you back in my shop. Come, come. My apologies for not coming to visit at Christmas, but I have been busy hey? I have new customers and the circus wanting all their outfits ready for the Spring season. I have been thinking of taking on an assistant. Don’t want all my skills to go to waste ey? A successor as it were. Of course, my son…” George almost spat the word. “He is useless huh? Goes off who knows where. Does he come back to help his papa? No.” George locked the door behind them and put up the closed sign, continuing to ramble on as he bustled about making tea and Jenny and Vastra settled themselves down for the visit. “And how are my two favourite people ey? It’s been so long. Anything interesting happen? Tell me all.”

Jenny glanced at Vastra who declared loftily. “It would take too long to tell George.”

“I see your advertisement yes? Adventuress. It suits you. Lots of adventures?”

“Lots of adventures.” Vastra smiled.

“No cages?”

“No cages.” Jenny butted in. George gave her a look and a knowing smile.

“Well it seems you are looking after each other and that really is all I need to know.” He leant back in his chair and sipped his tea. “Now! How can I help you? For you still look very fine, so no new clothes huh?”

“A wicker chair manufacturer.” Vastra told him. “My old one has…disintegrated. I wish to have a new one made, in the same fashion.”

“We was wonderin’ if p’raps you knew anyone.”
“I know a man.” George nodded. Jenny waited for the ensuing story, probably with some sort of gruesome detail involving a willow branch but George said no more. “His name is Frederick. James Frederick. You will find him on Wigmore Street. His company makes bamboo and wicker furniture. Very good quality, I’m assured. Doesn’t upholster them, but if you want I could do it. My father, George Maddox, had a shop up on Baker Street and he taught me enough that with some good time?”

“He passed away a few years ago, if I recall.” Vastra said.

“Yes.” George heaved a sigh. “I was already here, my brother did not wish to run the business, so he sold it.”

“A shame your father never got a chance to enjoy his retirement.”

“Eh, he would have hated it. For some people? Death is the only retirement they’ll take.”

Vastra nodded, finished her tea, and rose. Jenny hastily copied her. As always with George, he somehow managed to make it very clear the conversation was now over, without actually saying any of the many phrases that usually indicated as such. Vastra thanked George for the advice, took him up on the offer of upholstering the chair when it was done and bade him farewell before sweeping at the door. Jenny gave a wave as she followed but George was already clearing away the tea things.

“I din’t know he had a brother.” Jenny commented as they walked towards Wigmore street. Then again, she did not know much about George at all.

“They’re not on good terms.” Vastra replied shortly. Jenny didn’t inquire further. Vastra’s tone spoke of the similar sort of “not on good terms” that Jenny was with most her family.

On the way, back from Wigmore street, they were caught in another sudden downpour. Since they were too far away from Paternoster Row for running to be worthwhile, they trudged back through the emptying streets in silence.

Jenny insisted Vastra take a bath to warm up again the moment they got home. She bundled all their wet clothes together and dumped them in the laundry, before starting a fresh fire in the bedroom and kitchen. She warmed up some left-over beef stew for her dinner, hastily gulping it down. She wanted to get warm again, the chill of the rain had gotten into her bones.

Vastra was already curled up under several blankets in bed when Jenny went upstairs. She ran herself a fresh bath and let the heat soak through her, the sudden warmth giving her a slight headache. She felt better once she was wrapped up in several towels next to the fire in their bedroom, drying her hair. Vastra woke up and shuffled over to sit behind her and comb it.

“Can Silurians get sick?” Jenny had been running through the past few days in her mind and had recalled her thought of yesterday morning.

Vastra stared blankly at Jenny, as if struggling to comprehend her meaning. “Of course.”

“Like humans?”

“There are specific Silurian diseases and a range of viruses. But that was back then. I doubt they survived the millennia.”

“What about like…I dunno. A cold. Could you catch cold? Say if you got too wet?”

“You cannot get a cold from getting drenched in rain. It’s a myth.” Vastra rolled her eyes. “But when
I first emerged, there were a few times I caught human illnesses. I thought I would surely die, my immune system was not at all adapted. And of course, the circus did nothing to help. But I recovered. Now I very rarely get sick.”

Jenny had to admit the truth of that, she’d never once seen Vastra ill in the year they’d been together. Then again, neither had she. Better diet and better shelter had done wonders for her health.

“What do you need if you get ill?” They were now curled up together in bed, Jenny, for a change, curled up against Vastra’s chest under the covers. “I mean what does it look like? How would I know? How would I treat it even?”

*Vastra was touched at the little ape’s concern. “My physiology is not so different. But I can teach you if you like. Tomorrow.” She added on, to stop any further questions. The cold and the rain had made her sleepy. Jenny yawned in agreement and relaxed against her.*

Suddenly, out of nowhere, there happened an almighty sneeze.

Chapter End Notes

Is Vastra sick? Is Jenny sick? Is there a mysterious sneeze monster which has invaded their bedroom and now they must fight it? Find out in the next chapter!

There did indeed exist a James Frederick who made wicker furniture and yes, at 21 Baker Street, there was a George Maddox who did upholstery, from 1860 to 1885.

*Title is from Portrait Of A Lady from Prufrock by T.S Eliot.*

"Now that the lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
'Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands';
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
'You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no more remorse
And smiles at situations which it cannot see.'
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.

'Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."
He's Banish'd, And It Shall Be So

Chapter Summary

I'm not entirely with this chapter but onwards!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Who sez you don’t catch a cold getting wet.” Jenny tutted, sitting upright in the bed. “You need a hankie?”

“I wasn’t the one who sneezed.” Vastra sounded mildly put out.

There was an awkward moment of silence. “Well I din’t sneeze neither.” Jenny said, reaching for her bedside matches.

There was an even longer silence as they both mulled over the implications of these facts. Jenny took a deep breath and hastily struck a match. The sudden flare ruined her night vision but the meagre light of the candle as she held it in the air showed nothing untoward in their bedroom.

Frowning, Jenny threw her legs over the side of the bed, ready to get up and explore the room. She let out a shriek as something cold and clammy grabbed at her ankle. She kicked it away, scrambling back into the centre of the bed, swearing non-stop.

Vastra raised an eye ridge at such profanity. “What was it, my dear?”

“How the bleedin’ hell should I know! Somethin’ grabbed my ankle, I din’t bother to look.”

“How rude of it.” Vastra’s eyes narrowed. “Come out!” she commanded. “Whatever you are.”

Something shuffled out from under the bed. Jenny and Vastra peered into the gloom at a dirty grey figure dressed in rags that was standing up slowly. It was rather short, Jenny noticed. It snuffled and shook whilst rubbing at its eyes. Another sneeze rang out. Vastra shot Jenny a bemused look which Jenny returned in kind.

“’m sorry.” Came a hoarse whisper. “’m sorry I left you. I din’t mean to.”

Jenny blinked. “What was you doin’ under our bed?” she asked tentatively.

“I din’t mean to. They was just so big. I got scared. I’m sorry I bit you too.” The figure’s voice trembled violently.

Jenny’s mind struggled, tired as it was by the walk and the rain, to comprehend what the figure was on about, but it didn’t seem to be very threatening. She wriggled over to the side of the bed to take a closer look.

“YOU!” her hand shot out and grabbed at the figure’s clothes, hauling it close. “You left me you little…!”
“’m sorry!! ’m sorry!” the voice became shrill.

“Jenny?” Vastra laid a restraining hand on Jenny’s arm.

“It’s Peggy.” Jenny told her through gritted teeth.

“The Ratspeaker?? What on earth were you doing under our bed??” Vastra turned to Peggy as well.

“S’just where I came out. He punished me see. He punished me fer leavin’ you.”

Jenny felt a chill that was nothing to do with her walk in the rain. She let Peggy go. “Albie?”

“He said I shoulda died rather than leave you.” Peggy’s teeth were chattering, she was shaking so hard. Her voice shrunk to a whisper. “He punished me.”

Jenny made a note to have some very strong words with her brother next time she saw him. Peggy sneezed for a third time and wiped her nose on her sleeve.

“C’mon.” Jenny stood up and grabbed Peggy’s arm, pulling her gently along to the bathroom. The urchin was covered in unidentifiable dirt and dust. She looked like a pathetic ghost. Jenny drew a bath and gestured for Peggy to get in. Peggy glanced at Vastra, who’d followed them and was now standing in the doorway.

“I din’t mean to leave her.” She repeated.

Jenny shot a stern look at the Silurian, warning her against further remonstrations.

“I understand.” Vastra inclined her head before walking back to the bedroom.

Jenny helped Peggy out of her rags and into the bath. There didn’t seem to be any marks on Peggy, making Jenny wonder afresh about what the punishment was that Peggy had endured. She seemed utterly terrified, shaking despite the heat of the bath.

Vastra came back with one of Jenny’s nightgowns. It was too long for Peggy and she looked even more like a ghost, staring pathetically up at them. Jenny decided an interrogation could wait until morning and led Peggy to one of their spare bedrooms, hastily airing the sheets by means of flapping them a few times.

“There. You can tell us what happened in the morning.” Jenny turned down the light in the wall but didn’t shut it off entirely. Peggy’s wide afraid eyes followed her out the room. The fear in them stayed with Jenny as she made her way down to the basement, long since resolved as a place of fear. She picked up her sword and strapped it around her waist before heading out into the yard. Alice whickered softly in greeting and Jenny gave her a soft stroke as she passed, moving towards the feed bins. Vandemar had said they had a rat problem. In the house they would be harder to find but there would always be some in the stables, after the food for Alice.

She lit an oil lamp as she heard scuffles and squeaks in the dark. A few of the rats fled but one was too slow, almost as if it were waiting to be caught. She grabbed it, wrinkling her nose in distaste as she brought it level with her eyes.

“Bring my brother here. Or take me to him.” She snarled. The rat’s nose quivered and it twisted out of her grasp. She drew her sword and waited, still as a statue. The air shimmered and darkened, became heavy and then suddenly Albie was there. He looked just as distant as he had before.

“Be glad you are a sister to me. I would not usually take kindly on such summons.” He glanced
around at the stable. “But as it is, I have something to tell you anyway.”

“Is it something to do with terrorising a child?” Jenny hissed.

“Hm?” Albie seemed genuinely puzzled.

“Peggy.”

“Oh! She is not a child.” He laughed. “She is a Ratspeaker. A Ratspeaker who disobeyed me. Failed me on two occasions.”

“What did you do to her?”

“What concern is it of yours?” Albie found himself with a sword pressed to his throat. He sighed through his nose. “Really.”

“How did she fail yer?”

“I allowed her to watch you for me, but she merely got you lost. She was meant to guide you to the Hawks, protect and defend you, but fled at the first opportunity.”

Jenny was dumbfounded. “I can fight me own battles Albie. I been fightin’ ‘em that long without your help.”

“Have you now.” Albie said disinterestedly. “At any rate, it does no good if it is seen that my orders are disobeyed without repercussion. I am the Lord Ratspeaker.”

“You’re the Lord Ratbag is what you are.”

“Do not speak about things you do not understand. This is Below. I am the Lord Ratspeaker. She disobeyed my orders.” Albie leant against Jenny’s blade. “And all this is irrelevant. I have something to tell you.”

“I don’t give a damn about anything you have to say.”

“You will. There is something coming. There is a whisper in the darkness. It is stirring. Not yet. But it will come soon.

“Something from Below?” Jenny’s curiosity got the better of her.

Albie laughed humourlessly. “Below has its own monsters I’ll grant you, but this is from your world. This is human.” He stepped backwards. “Well I’ve warned you. That’s all I can do. And after all, you can fight your own battles.” He smirked.

Jenny lowered her sword and grabbed his arm. “I’ve got a warning for you an’ all.”

“Yes?” he seemed amused.

“Touch her again and the rats will need a new Lord Speaker.”

Albie sneered. “You think I care about her now? How she escaped I know not, but she came out in the Upworld and it is there she’ll stay. You cannot belong to both worlds.”

“You’d throw her out? Just for runnin’ away?”

Albie’s face closed, became blank. He stared at her in silence for a moment. When he spoke, it was
devoid of any of his previous aloofness. “When you first came to the Rat Halls, you asked me why I did not return. And I told you that I could not return, that I owed a debt to the rats. Peggy also has a debt. She owes her life, and should have given it, if they needed her to. She is expendable.”

“Not to me she ain’t.”

Albie rolled his eyes. “I wouldn’t expect an Upworlder to understand.”

“You was an Upworlder!”

“Not any more. She was sent with you as…”

“Bait? A sacrifice?”

“Insurance. We could not be seen to interfere, she was too small to be of note, but it was vital the situation was resolved. She was to keep you safe.”

“When she got me lost…”

“She failed then too.” Albie smiled coldly. “I was very displeased. I could not afford a feud with the Isle Dogs but to lose my sister because an uppity Rat Speaker took it in their head to talk to her? And then to have that Rat Speaker indebted to that ridiculous Marquis.” He shook his head in disgust.

“What you’d sooner lose me on purpose by having me get eaten by massive hawks?”

“You were already about to get involved in the case. I merely offered a more direct route to the solution, which resulted in a woman’s life being saved and political tumult being calmed. You would have arrived far too late, if at all, if I had not sent you.”

Jenny tried to find an argument back but failed.

“Where did you send her? Where did she escape from?”

“Between.” Albie’s face shut down again.

“Would you have been sent there? If you’d left? If you didn’t do what they told you? If you failed…”

“They chose me well. I was particularly suited to be Lord Rat speaker.” For the first time, Jenny saw a shadow flit across Albie’s face. It disappeared as swiftly. He wrenched his arm free from her grip. “Do not summon me again. Take heed of my warning. It is all I can give you. Claim the rat girl’s life if you wish. Along with her punishment she was banished from the Rat halls and Below, and therefore no longer my concern.”

Jenny got the feeling Albie almost wanted her to. “I claim it as my own.” She stated, just in case it hadn’t been clear.

He gave a curt nod. “You are fortunate. For the part you played at Goldhawk Road, her banishment will not be extended to you. In future, be more careful about your preference in company.” He turned thrice widdershins and disappeared.

Jenny threw down her sword in a fit of pique. “What makes you think I care??” she shouted to the empty air. A rat squeaked near her foot. “Get out!” she kicked at it. It looked at her reproachfully and scampered out the door. Jenny clenched her jaw, screwing up her face against tears. She took a few deep breaths to try and calm herself. “You bastard…”
Try as she might, she could not understand what Albie had told her. She stood watching the small swirls of hay that had been spun into the air by Albie’s disappearance. The dust motes gleamed gold in the lamplight. Alice whickered nervously and Jenny went to soothe her.

“Well?” Vastra asked, edging into the stables.

“Albie.” Jenny said simply, giving Alice one final rub on the nose. She knelt and picked up her sword, checked it for damage then sheathed it, once she was satisfied.

“Did he come to collect Peggy?” Vastra tensed.

“Nah. She’s banished. An’ apparently so will I be if I’m not careful. Not that I care. Peggy’s worth ten of him.”

“Is she?” Vastra neither looked nor sounded convinced.

“Well, she’s here now,” Jenny sighed, feeling completely exhausted. “And stuck here. Can’t go back to Below. Not to Lord Rat-droppings anyway.” She picked up the lamp and stalked back inside. Vastra followed her, mouth twitching in amusement at Jenny’s new name for her brother.

Jenny peered round the basement as she returned her sword to its stand, as if half expecting a spectral hound to appear. Below was a separate world, with separate rules. Her brother had been taken Below, and the person who had survived it did not feel like her brother. She struggled to process all that he’d told her. But that could wait until her brain felt less like a peasouper.

She looked in on Peggy. The newly ex-rat speaker was still awake, staring fixedly at the ceiling. Jenny moved into the room and sat on the edge of the bed.

“I talked to Albie. He tol’ me you’re banished from Below but that he won’t be comin’ after you. So, you’re safe. It’s up to you what you do. Not sure Vastra would be entirely welcomin’ of a live-in Irregular but I can pay for a place for you. Make sure the Irregulars look after you.” To Jenny’s surprise she saw Peggy’s face fall.

“He…let me go?”

“Yes.”

“I’m stuck here?”

“Yes.”

“I fell through when I was five. I…”

“It’ll be fine.” Jenny cut her off, unsure she could take any more stories of Below tonight. “Go to sleep.”

“I can’t. What if he changes his mind? What if he comes back?” The odd note of hope unsettled Jenny.

Something shot out and snapped at the air. Jenny looked at Vastra, who was stood in the doorway, in surprise. “If he does, I shall eat him.” Vastra grinned, showing all her teeth.

Jenny wasn’t sure that was the best way to reassure Peggy. “He won’t. I claimed yer life as mine and I give it to you.”

“I won’t ever see the rats again?”
Jenny looked helplessly at Vastra. The Silurian shook her head. She walked to the side of the bed, shooing Jenny away and smoothed out the sheets. “Freedom is terrifying, isn’t it?” She stared down at Peggy. “And lonely. How will you ever survive, unable to return to all you have ever known. You are not alone in preferring the cage. But you are fortunate, as was I.”

“How?” Peggy asked.

“You have Jenny watching out for you. So sleep.”

Jenny nodded encouragingly, to disguise any uncertainty she felt at being able to live up to those words. It got a slow nod in return and Peggy burrowed deeper under the covers.

As they made their way back to their own bedroom, Vastra glanced at Jenny. “Of course, I would only eat him if you said I could.” She said offhandedly.

“If he turns up for her you can do what you like to him.” Jenny’s face was resolute and stony.

“He is your brother.”

“Not any more. He’s Lord Ratspeaker, whatever that means.” Jenny blew out the candle. “S’not like with you an’ your sisters. You miss ‘em cos you remember what it was like to be a family. Mine all left me to the wind in the end. I had to find a new family. Gribble and Jacob were me brothers on the street. Now I got you and the urchins…”

“And Peggy is the latest addition to our family I take it.” Vastra interrupted.

“Looks like.” Jenny sniffed. It struck her only after they’d settled back down to sleep that Vastra had said ‘our family’. A warmth spread out from her chest and filled her body. She smiled then sniffed again.

“Achoo!”

Chapter End Notes

title is from Coriolanus by Shakespeare
"That was you." Vastra stated, half accusingly, gazing down at Jenny.

"'m fine." Jenny burrowed further under the covers. "Go to sleep."

Vastra delicately lifted the blankets and laid her hand against Jenny’s forehead, gaining her an unimpressed glare.

"You was the one who said I couldn’t catch a cold from gettin’ wet.” Jenny pointed out, wriggling away from the touch.

"You can’t. But it could still cause a lowering of defences enough that you could catch one more easily.”

“I wonder if they have colds in Below.” Jenny mused, resignedly sitting up to blow her nose. “Even if they do, I can’t have caught one that quickly. Prob’ly just the dust from the stables got up me nose.”

She snuggled back up to Vastra and went to sleep.

8th April

Vastra was surprised at Jenny still being in bed when she woke up and shook her gently. Jenny groaned and rolled over, tugging the blankets around her. Vastra, piqued at the sudden lack of warmth pulled them back and Jenny rolled back again, her arms flopping weakly onto the bed.

"Think my defences musta got lowered.” Jenny murmured, staring at Vastra blearily.

Vastra sighed and rolled her eyes. "Stay in bed.” She ordered, getting up and setting the fire. Jenny was more than happy to comply, piling all the blankets on top of and around her until only a mess of hair was visible on the pillow.

Vastra dressed and descended the stairs with alacrity. She remembered being ill herself at the circus and George giving her what he called a ‘hot toddy’. The taste had been quite frankly disgusting and she doubted its effectiveness but beyond that, she knew there was no real cure, certainly not in this era. She made Jenny porridge and tea, the sight of the urchins reminding her that they had a guest in the house. After reassuring the urchins that Jenny was in no danger and that no, they did not need to ascend en masse to see her, after all what would they do if they all caught cold as well, she informed them of Peggy’s new position and instructed them to take care of her when she was ready to begin her new life Above.

Jenny was grateful for the porridge and the hot sugary tea so thick the spoon almost stood up in it. It revived some colour in her face, Vastra was glad to see. She instructed the little ape to sleep further and that she would return shortly with the recipe for something to further alleviate her symptoms.

She arrived at George’s shop to find him peculiarly absent. But then, she reasoned, it was the beginning of April. No doubt he was visiting the circus, returning mended costumes, or handing out
new ones. Foiled in her plan, she thought to visit Mrs Blackett, who would surely know some remedy or other.

It felt strange, returning to the gin shop, as an acquaintance, a customer almost, rather than as someone who lived there. Jenny had said Harriet Fields was living there now, in their old flat. She gazed up at the small window. Her little ape was right, she thought. Them living at 13 Paternoster Row did not change the fact they had lived here, and all the memories. Vastra grinned under the cover of her veil at some of them and went in through the door of the shop.

It was empty. Feeling a little like an intruder, Vastra ventured up the stairs, calling out Mrs Blackett’s name but there was no reply. She returned to the ground floor, annoyed that her quest had been thwarted twice, when she heard voices coming from the kitchen. She called out again and they stopped abruptly.

The kitchen door was cracked open to reveal Mrs Blackett. “Oh! And tis yourself.” she held a hand to her heart. “Well and here’s an occurrence.” She looked over her shoulder at whoever was in the kitchen with her. “Tis just Madame Vastra, dears, come to visit.”

Several chairs scraped backwards. Feet clattered and a door slammed. Vastra raised an unseen eye ridge. Mrs Blackett laughed nervously. “I was just havin’ some tea with a few friends. They don’t like to impose. Won’t you come in?” she opened the kitchen door fully and Vastra walked cautiously in. She noticed Jess was still sat at the table, nonchalantly leaning back on her chair, a guarded expression on her face. Jess gave a brief nod to Mrs Blackett who relaxed and started bustling about making tea.

“Is there a cause for such a grand visit then?” Jess was still eyeing her warily.

“Jenny is ill. I was wondering if you had the recipe for a ‘hot toddy’.”

Jess’s chair legs slammed back down on the floor. “She’s ill?”

“A mere cold.” Vastra reassured her.

“Hah.” Jess scoffed. “Ain’t no such thing.” She stood up. “Mrs Blackett!” she called out, for the woman had gone out into the yard to fill up the kettle from the stopcock. “Jenny’s ill. Madame ‘ere wants a cure for a cold.”

“Whisky and ginger wine, s’what my dearly departed used to swear by when he came back from India.” Mrs Blackett shuffled back in. “Mixed with a little hot water to make a toddy if you want to.”

“You got any whisky about the place Mrs B?” Jess asked, stalking out to the bar.

“Try in the cupboard under the bar, there’ll be some Stone’s in there too.” Mrs Blackett called after her, looking a little worried. “Miss Jenny laid up with the influenza is she?”

“A cold.”

Mrs Blackett looked thoughtful. “I’ll make up some chicken soup and send it over with Jess. No doubt she’ll want to see her sister anyway.”

“Thank you.” Vastra was unsure as to the efficacy of chicken soup and alcohol but had little else to offer. And a doctor would probably only proscribe a tincture of laudanum and that was even worse.

She set off home, carrying a bottle of Bells whisky and Stone’s ginger wine, with instructions on how
to mix it. Her concern for Jenny overrode the curiosity as to what Jess and Mrs Blackett had been doing in the kitchen with whomever else it was that had been “visiting” but she made a note to inform Jenny when she was well again. She had read Jess’s wariness as a belief she had come to investigate them, Jenny had no doubt informed them of Vastra’s new occupation. It aroused Vastra’s suspicion at any rate.

Jenny was asleep when she returned, so she merely mixed the whisky and ginger wine and left it by the bedside. Vastra checked on Peggy, who was looking morosely out the window at another April downpour.

“Are you hungry?” Vastra asked her, standing by the doorway. Experience had taught her that urchins were always hungry. But Peggy shook her head. Vastra came to stand by the windowsill, remembering when she had stood by Jenny at the flat window.

“It is lonely, isn’t it.” She remarked, not looking at Peggy. “Not being able to return to your world.”

Peggy sniffled. “S’not like they were friends exactly or anything. But they were all I had since I was five. And it was more than I’d had beforehand. Bein’ a Ratspeaker…it’s what I was. Who I was. What am I meant to do now?”

“The urchins will look after you. Find you places to stay, if you wish. And there is always a meal to be had here.”

Peggy was silent, remembering the offer Jenny had made her that fateful day at the docks.

“Workin’ for a slightly more scrupulous gang, Jenny said.”

Vastra considered the ragtag band of urchins that made up the Irregulars. Despite their worldly wise and cunning approach to life, they did have some scruples she supposed. “Yes.”

“But I won’t see me liddle rat mates no more.” Peggy burst into tears, inconsolable. Feeling that she lacked the ability to calm Peggy down, Vastra retreated back to Jenny in their bedroom.

“You bin out I take it?” Jenny asked, gesturing part of a blanket at the now empty tumbler.

“Mrs Blackett suggested it.”

“S’nice.”

“She said she’d get your sister to call later with some chicken soup.”

“Jess? She was there?”

“Yes. There seemed to be quite a meeting going on when I arrived. They all made a swift get away out the back door.”

“Prob’ly Jess’s ‘cause’ or whatever it is she fights for. Socialism.” Jenny muttered. Vastra poured her another tot and placed it on the bedside cabinet. “How’s Peggy?”

“Distraught, to say the least.” Vastra shrugged.

“Mmph.”

“How are you feeling?”

“Hnghhh.” Jenny groaned.
“I’ll leave you to sleep.” Vastra got up and wandered back downstairs, a little at a loss as to what to do now. She tried to read in the living room but was swiftly interrupted by a knock at the back door. Parker was there with Boggin.

“I heard Miss Jenny was ill.” He said immediately she opened the door. “So I bought some cough mixture for ‘er. The ‘fluenza can bring on a terrible cough in the after.” He gestured a brown bottle of liquid at her.

“Thank you Parker.” She took the bottle and nodded her head to him and he put his cap back on and went about his work in the stables. Boggin lingered.

“She alright Madame?”

“She’s sleeping. It’s just a cold.”

“S’never just a cold Madame. Kills you on the street one of them can.” Boggin shook his head seriously, alarming Vastra. Jess too had laughed at the idea of it being just a cold.

“I’m sure she will recover in good time.” Vastra ushered him out the door. She looked at the label on the bottle as she carried it upstairs, read the listed ingredients and immediately returned downstairs and poured it down the sink in horror, quite confident that whatever it might do, it wouldn’t cure a cold. She’d felt the whisky was dubious enough.

Restless, she returned upstairs to Jenny’s bedside to find Peggy sat there, dolefully sat at the side of the bed watching her.

In answer to the raised eye ridge, Peggy answered, “You said she was gonna watch over me. So seein’ as how she’s ill, thought I’d watch over her.”

“And how is she?” Vastra asked, sitting down on the bed beside the pile of blankets that she assumed Jenny was within.

“Sleepin’.”

There was another knock at the door and Vastra left Peggy to her task to answer it.

The Irregulars were back in force. “We got her some lozenges. To help with the cough when it comes.” Thrupp thrust them at Vastra, who didn’t enquire as to how the urchins might have “got” them but merely thanked them a little wearily. She wondered what the lozenges contained as she eyed them dubiously.

Half an hour of distracted reading of a book later, the door knocked again.

“Some chicken soup as promised.” Jess barged in, holding a towel wrapped around something. She deposited the contents of the dish in a saucepan on the stove and started heating it up. “You c’n take yer veil off if you want, s’not like I ain’t seen your scaly face before.”

Irritation at the constant stream of interruptions gave way to appreciation for all the people who clearly cared a great deal for Jenny. Her chosen family. It made Vastra feel a little lonely. She removed her veil and waited silently for the chicken soup to heat back up.

When she and Jess went up to visit Jenny, the young woman was awake and grateful for the food. Jess eyed Peggy as she stood away from the bed.

“Latest addition?” she asked Vastra, tilting her head at the ex-Ratspeaker.
VAstra nodded.

Chapter End Notes

An: Whisky is not alas a cold medicine, but ginger is pretty good in all forms and I do swear by Whisky Mac and bed rest for a cold. Chicken soup apparently also has some decongestive abilities.

A Flint In Flint

Chapter Summary

Another case

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Peggy watched over Jenny faithfully whilst the young woman recovered from her cold, keeping her well supplied with whisky mac, hot sugary tea, and cough sweets. She took on Jenny’s chores, keeping the house warm in the dampness of April. Jenny, grateful for the luxury of being able to fully rest whilst being ill, slept a great deal. Vastra hovered distractedly all the while, concerned that the cold would worsen into something more serious. When Jenny was awake, Vastra would read to her from the newspapers or from a book to stop Jenny being too bored.

Jess visited now and then, always with a serious expression on her face, studying her sister intently. Jenny was puzzled by the sudden attention but didn’t comment on it. Perhaps Jess was just worried about the cold worsening too.

For her own part, Jenny was reminded of the first time she and Vastra and the Doctor had all met. How he had saved her life. As she snuggled under the blankets in the warmth, she remembered the cold and the snow. How scornful Vastra had been. She laughed softly, setting off a bout of coughing.

13th April 1888 (A Friday)

Jenny was dozing in bed, propped up against multiple cushions to help ease her coughing, Vastra was reading silently and Peggy was crouched on her small stool, still and alert. There was a knock at the door and her head jerked up from watching Jenny. Vastra gave a small sigh, marked her place, and then threw her veil on to go and see who it was. She hoped it wasn’t Inspector Gregson; she felt Jenny was not well enough to deal with a case and dealing with one without Jenny might prove difficult.

It was not Inspector Gregson, but judging by the look on the man’s face, he had come to them with a case. She beckoned him through to the plant room, realised their wicker chairs had not yet come through and ushered him instead into the dining room. He sat down gingerly at the large octagonal table, taking off his hat and spinning it in his hands.

Vastra waited patiently for him to start.

“I hear you are a person who deals with all sorts of…strange things.”

“I investigate that which might puzzle the more practical of men, yes.” Vastra remained standing.

“My name is Jenkins. Hywel…well…Howell Jenkins.” He stood up, awkwardly dipped his head in her direction and sat back down again. Vastra slid into a seat opposite him, feeling awkward herself. The chairs in the dining room were not meant for lounging and she missed Jenny’s presence. “I come from a small town in Wales. Well, it’s not so small I suppose now with a railway station. I work on
the farm and happen to London now and again, my brother came here, after he got work on the 
railway. And I saw your advert in the newspaper. And well, there’s a bit of queer business goin’ on. 
And I thought to come see you.”

“And what is this queer business?” Vastra asked patiently.

He looked about him nervously. “I’m afraid you won’t believe me.”

“I have seen many strange and wonderful things in my life.” Vastra told him entirely truthfully.

“Well it’s my daughter see. She won’t wake up.” He looked miserably at her, as if expecting a snort 
of derision and to be thrown from the house. When this failed to happen, he went on. “I’ve had all 
sorts of doctors out to see her. But none of them have got a bloody clue. Pardon my language. They 
say she’s just sleepin’. Apart from that perfectly healthy. I thought maybe it was some kind of 
supernatural dealing then. But the priests have helped no more’n the doctors. I’m at my wits end.”

Vastra was silent. It sounded highly intriguing. But Jenny wasn’t well…

“I can pay you too. And for all the travel. It won’t put you out none. But please help me.” The 
desperation she had seen on his face when she’d first opened the door reappeared. She nodded.

“I will take on the case. If you could make the necessary travel arrangements and inform me of 
them?” She stood up and he followed suit, relief spreading a smile across his face.

“Of course. And thank you. I’ll be back tomorrow then to let you know. It won’t take long.” He 
tugged his hat on and hurried out the door with a brief farewell.

Vastra closed her eyes for a moment, smothering a small groan. But it was a case. And she knew if 
Jenny found out about it, she would wish to go in an instance. The past few days of bedrest had 
irked her, particularly now she had mostly gotten over the cold itself and was just coughing. She 
returned upstairs to inform Jenny of their new case and to pack.

16th April 1888

They stood on the chilly platform in Crewe, having travelled up there from London, waiting for the 
train that would take them to the small town of Flint, where Howell Jenkins lived. Vastra had been 
amused no end at the name and earnt herself more than a few unimpressed glares. Jenny was 
bundled up under several coats and a warm hat and one of Vastra’s cloaks, looking several inches 
larger than she usually did. She coughed in the smoky air and Peggy looked up at her. Jenny had 
beenadamant about taking an Irregular with her this time, remembering how difficult it had been in 
Swindon and Peggy had refused to leave Jenny’s side. Vastra merely shrugged and bought an extra 
ticket, calling in at George’s shop to get her some clothes that weren’t rags. Jenny asked her what the 
story was behind them but Vastra hadn’t said, not wishing to alarm Peggy. Jenny privately thought 
Peggy wouldn’t care but didn’t press the matter.

“I’m fine.” Jenny reassured Peggy. She was grateful to be up and about again, but also grateful for 
the layers of warm clothing. “You ever heard of someone not wakin’ up down in Below?” she 
asked. Peggy shook her head. “Guess it’ll be a new experience for all of us then.”

“I suspect some form of illness or coma. Possibly induced by ingestion of plant life.” Vastra was 
wearring as many layers as Jenny but had still turned a pale yellow. “It is entirely possible there is 
nothing supernatural at all.”
“With our luck in cases?” Jenny pointed out as the train finally pulled in to the station and they climbed into their compartment.

Peggy immediately glued her face to the window, as she had all the way on the trip up from London. She couldn’t remember any of her time before she’d fallen Below and had only really ventured into the Upworld to follow Jenny. Jenny was equally fascinated by the world outside the window and Vastra sat in quiet amusement at the two of them, identical expressions of wonder on their faces. She’d seen quite a lot of Britain touring with the circuses and the large swathes of countryside and hills and mountains were not new to her. Instead she speculated to herself what could cause the lack of waking, and what, if anything, could be done to revive Howell Jenkin’s daughter. If the cause were an entirely rational one, it might be impossible. If there was indeed some supernatural agent in involved…

*Vastra grinned to herself determinedly. She had told Jenny she was happier, and she was, but sitting by a bed watching a sleeping Jenny, had left her plentiful time for brooding and her thoughts had turned again to her sisters. She thought back to what Jenny had told her, in the dream, and remembered it herself, watching her sisters climb into their pods with her aunt (although Jenny had not been there). She’d felt matter of fact at the time. Although there was a sense of urgency, there had been little panic. They would sleep and then revive once the disaster was over and rebuild. It had felt simple. But they had slept on beneath the surface, never again to waken. A burst of anger at the fact filled Vastra with a resolve to wake Howell Jenkin’s daughter, whatever the cause might be.*

By the time they arrived in Flint, it was well into the evening and they were all tired and hungry. Mr Jenkins met them at the train station and took them back to Coleshill farm, where he lived, their luggage loaded onto the back of a flat cart, where they were greeted by a small harried woman whom he introduced as his wife Seren. They were shown to a small guest room.

“Your maids can sleep with ours in the attic.” Seren told them, looking dubiously at Peggy. “Though she only has a single bed.”

Vastra glanced at Jenny and Peggy who both wore wooden expressions. “They are accustomed to sleeping on the floor, it will be of little matter. Show me your daughter please.”

Seren nodded and took them through a twisting house with small steps and narrow corridors everywhere to a rather quaintly decorated room. The bed was by the window and by the light of a candle Vastra could see the girl, no more than six or seven.

“Mari. Her name’s Mari.” Seren told them. Mr Jenkins nodded.

Vastra, with her back to them, held her veil up to look down with unimpeded vision. The girl appeared in perfect health. There was colour in her cheeks, she was breathing evenly but her eyes were closed, and according to her parents, she hadn’t opened them since the beginning of March. She let her veil fall back.

“Tell me everything that occurred before she fell into this state.” Vastra commanded, turning back round. The Jenkins’ opened their mouths but Vastra held up her hand. “Tomorrow. I will be able to work better with rest and if this state has not harmed her before now, it is doubtful it will over the course of one night.”

“Of course.” Mr Jenkins shoulders sagged but he led them all back downstairs and offered them a very late meal of soup and bread.
The bed in Vastra’s room was thankfully a double and Vastra made sure Jenny was well tucked up. Peggy eyed them both and then retreated outside, Jenny assumed to go sleep in the stable. The past few days when she had not been watching over Jenny, she had slept in the stable. She was uncomfortable in houses and Jenny knew that she was hoping the rats in the stable would speak to her.

“Are you warm enough?” Vastra asked, wrapping herself up against the night and curling up beside Jenny.

“Mm.” Jenny was already half asleep.

“Well at least this bed is more comfortable than the one in Swindon.” Vastra mused.

“The case is stranger though. What could make a person fall asleep and not get up?”

“There are plants, cases of poisonings, head injuries.” Vastra shrugged. “The doctors here may be incompetent and have merely missed the obvious. We’ll find out more tomorrow. Sleep, my dear.”

“I’m well enough.” Jenny coughed, settling herself more comfortably on the pillows Vastra had stacked up.

The Silurian curled up at her side, resting her head practically in Jenny’s lap. The young woman stroked Vastra’s head crests unconsciously, her hand remained resting against them after she fell asleep.

17th April 1888

The Jenkins’ got up early and Jenny woke to the sound of bustle around the house. Mr Jenkins had already gone to work by the time they got up but, as Seren said, she knew more about her daughter’s comings and goings than he did anyway.

She set down breakfast for them and told them all she knew as they ate.

“She’s a quiet girl. Goes to the school regular but not much in the way of friends. She likes stories, off with the faeries she is, in her head. But she’s steady. I can trust her with the chores and she does her work fair enough.”

“What happened on the day she first fell into the sleep?” Vastra had already finished eating.

“She did her work, same as usual in the mornings. Went to the school down the road. I let her off to play for the afternoon as it was a nice day for a change, one of the first of the year. She usually goes up by the river or the castle. I couldn’t tell you where she went on that particular day though. Came home, had her food, said goodnight and the next day, I found it strange she didn’t stir, went up to find her and there she was. Led there peaceful as anything, but nothin’ I could do to wake her. Nor Howell. We’ve had doctors check her, the local vicar, everything.”

“Did anybody see her that day? Where she would’ve gone?”

“The local children might, but they haven’t said a word about it. Everyone’s very worried. Not lettin’ their children out far. You’d’ve thought they would’ve said if they had. Most all the adults are busy in the day see, working an’ the like. Wouldn’t really notice a kid wandering off.” Seren suddenly looked a little guilty. “Well we’re busy a lot.” She repeated apologetically.
“I quite understand.” Vastra nodded. “We will begin our investigations immediately. Could you give us directions to the river and the castle?”

“Sure. Sure. Can’t promise you a cart to get there but it’s not a long walk anyway, only about 5 minutes from the train station where you came in. Half an hour from here.”

Once Jenny had finished her breakfast, they walked out and collected Peggy. Jenny updated her on all they’d been told and then sent her off to investigate by asking the local children if they’d seen or heard anything.

Most of the adults Jenny and Vastra spoke with, as Seren had predicted, had not seen Mari. The ones that had reported only that they saw her frequently head up to the castle ruins, but not that particular day.

“Some of the children like to play around it, make up stories, pretend.” One woman shrugged at them before walking quickly away from them.

Vastra was getting stares again but Jenny was also an object of curiosity and suspicion. People looked at the both of them and then bent towards each other, muttering in Welsh. Jenny had travelled abroad, it was not her first experience at not being able to understand the people around her, but she found the experience of being stared at unsettling, when so much of her life had been lived, had depended even on her ability to fade into the background. Even in Swindon, she had been able to blend in fairly easily.

They hastened along the main road in Flint and made their way to the castle, Vastra being unable to resist one more quip about Jenny having a castle.

Chapter End Notes

There is a town in Wales called Flint (Y Fflint). It’s in the county of Flintshire (Sir y Fflint). I stayed there when I went to see Catrin Stewart in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof.

Flint Castle is one of the settings in Richard II “Go to Flint Castle: There I’ll pine away” and etc due to him being imprisoned there by Bolingbroke during the Civil War (the British one).


The railway line between Chester and Holyhead was built back in the 1840’s and Flint was one of the stations originally built on that line. So Jenny and Vastra would’ve taken a train on the London and North Western Railway, changed at Crewe and then taken a train from there on the Chester to Holyhead route (taken over by the LNWR and now part of the West Coast Main Line) and stopped off at Flint.
The castle ruins were impressive. Four large circular towers, two of which were mostly still standing. The path towards it was clear cut through grass and Jenny and Vastra passed through a gap in the walls to enter the main courtyard. They looked out across a marshy area, where children were fishing and playing.

“They look like mudlarks.” Jenny commented, smiling nostalgically as she remembered her own days messing about on the edge of the Thames.

“The river must come right up to the edge of the castle at high tide, or during a flood.” Vastra observed. They stood, leaning against the wall, watching the boats sailing on the river further out. “But there does not seem to be anything fantastical or otherworldly here. If there was, it would’ve affected the other children too.” She pointed to where the children were stood, now looking up at them suspiciously.

“Wonder if there’s any places around here that are.” Jenny mused.

“What are you thinking?”

“Of Jenny Greenteeth. Stories. All the ones with enchanted sleeping people.”

“I doubt Mr Jenkins would be very happy if his daughter stayed asleep for a hundred years.”

“Time to get back to investigatin’ then?” Jenny stood away from the wall.

On their way back to the farm they were waylaid by a middle-aged woman who darted out of her cottage when she saw them walking past.

“Hear you’re lookin’ into what happened. To Mari.” She said in hushed tones, grabbing at Jenny’s cloak. “I must tell you. Someone died before. You might too if you’re not careful. They’re dangerous.”

“What are?” Jenny stepped closer to her.
“The Ellyllon. The Ellyllon got her. Put a spell on her. Made her go to sleep.”

“What’s the Ellyllon?”

“They’re the fairies that live up on Flint Mountain. The Pwll y Wrach. They killed someone some years back. Put a curse on him for seeing them and he died a year to the day later. Not a mark on him mind. And a cuckoo hopped from tree to tree as they buried him. The Ellyllon did it.”

“Did he fall asleep too?” Vastra asked.

“No, he walked about merry the whole year.”

“Don’t seem like a repeat episode. Surely she should still be up and about, not snoring.” Jenny said sceptically.

“It was them! I saw her. She goes up there, sneaks off. Up Flint Mountain.” Jenny elbowed Vastra before she could comment on Jenny having a mountain now too. “Likes the fairies she does. Thinks it’s all wonderful and enchanting. Well they got her now.” The woman shook her head. “They curse people with all sorts, the Ellyllon. You should know.” She pointed at Vastra. “Almost thought you was one, when I first saw you.” She spat and turned round widdershins. “Don’t know what you are though. But I don’t reckon you’d be investigating their work if you was one. Or is it a case of to catch a thief?” she grinned at them suddenly, then as abruptly the grin fell away. “Go up Flint Mountain if you wants to get ‘em. They’re up there.”

“Would you show us the way?” Vastra asked.

The woman shook her head vigorously. “I see what they did to John Roberts. I don’t bother them none, and they don’t hassle me. Stupid girl, goin’ up there.” She turned and practically fled back into her house.

“Well…” Vastra said after a while, stunned.

“You’re a hallion sometimes, dunno about an Ellyllon.” Jenny smirked.

“They’re on your mountain.” Vastra bit back.

“Oh thanks! Don’t make me responsible does it. More likely, they put a curse on me. That would explain my life somewhat.” Jenny grumbled, coughing as they continued walking back to the Jenkins’ house.

“We should go up there tonight.” Vastra eyed the coughing Jenny. “If you’re feeling well enough.”

Jenny shot her an angry glare. “Course. Why tonight?”

“Is that not the traditional fairy time? Stealth might be necessary.” Vastra observed over another fine fit of coughing.

“S’not the cough that carries you off it’s the coffin they carry you off in.” Jenny shrugged.

“Jenny.” The concern in Vastra’s voice stopped Jenny.

“I’m fine ma’am.”

“Hmm. Well, rest up for the evening. We’ll set off around eleven.”

“We gotta find out where it is first.” Jenny pointed out.
The Jenkins were rather horrified at the idea that Jenny and Vastra were to be going up Flint Mountain in the dark and almost refused to tell them where it was. But Vastra convinced them by telling them that engaging with the Ellyllon directly might be the only way to save their daughter. They told Jenny and Vastra the way, hesitantly offering their horse and cart, for they had seen that Jenny was unwell and it was an hour’s walk in the dark and across mountains on the Northrop road. Vastra declined, feeling a horse might spook and be lost, and without Parker she wasn’t confident on being able to handle driving one across mountains.

Jenny rested all evening and felt sufficiently recovered from the day to accompany Vastra, confident she would be able to manage the walk. As she told Vastra, it wasn’t as if they hadn’t walked long distances in London. Peggy returned just before dinner and told them that the children confirmed what the woman had said, Mari had indeed frequently gone up Flint Mountain. They had never accompanied her, being more wary of the Ellyllon and, after John Roberts’ death, forbidden to go up there by their grandparents and parents who had been children at the time.

“She reckons she can talk to them, according to the kids, and that they talk to her. In strange languages.” Peggy told them, looking fearful when Jenny told her of their quest to Flint Mountain. Jenny reassured her that she was not accompanying them and despite Peggy being reluctant to leave Jenny’s side, she was relieved and didn’t argue. On Jenny’s part, she suspected Peggy would only flee at the first sign of trouble and she didn’t fancy traipsing the Welsh countryside trying to track Peggy down if she did.

When the small mantelpiece clock chimed the eleventh hour, Jenny and Vastra set off. The road was rough at times and lit only by an oil lamp it was not an easy journey. Jenny was coughing again by the time they had reached the main town of Flint and Vastra began to regret her decision not to take a horse and cart. She suggested turning around but Jenny brushed her off.

They reached the Mountain around midnight, a traditional witching hour as Vastra had pointed out. They found the pool almost by stumbling into it, it was so overgrown and half hidden by trees.

Jenny was unnerved, the darkness and the trees brought back memories of the forest in Japan and cybermen, the pool making her think of Jenny Greenteeth. What other strange things from folklore might come to life? She could recall a few other tales that would be terrifying, if they’d been based off reality.

She walked into Vastra’s back when the Silurian stopped suddenly.

“Well that is certainly nothing to do with witches.” Vastra pointed at an object, half buried in the undergrowth on the other side of the pool. Jenny looked across, straining her eyes in the half-darkness until she could make out something that looked like an enormous almond. A small flash of light illuminated a round porthole. Metal. Glass. A ship.

“Aliens?” Jenny suppressed a cough.

“It would be the most likely explanation, combined with the tales around this place.” Vastra fought her way round the pool until she was standing beside it. It was large enough by itself but looking at it, it seemed only the tail end of a far vaster ship.

“You recognise it?” Jenny whispered, peering around Vastra.
“Beyond the basics? No. Undoubtedly the Doctor would know. It appears to have crash landed. But I can see engines for interstellar travel.” Vastra moved cautiously round, not wanting to fall in the pool, running her hand over one of the fins that jutted out from the side. “They’ve tried to repair it by the looks.”

A series of clacks and trills made Jenny whip round.

“You seem to know a lot about our ship.” The alien addressing Vastra was a small figure, shorter than Peggy, if they’d stood side by side. The limbs that were not covered by a hard, green, shell casing looked brittle, full of holes as if someone had taken several bites out of them, leaving sharp edges and points. Red horns grew from bald heads. “But then again you are not human.”

“Certainly not.” Despite her surprise at the creatures, Vastra still managed to sound affronted.

A large white owl landed on the alien’s shoulder, hooting softly. Jenny remembered the woman saying about a cuckoo and eyed it warily.

“Is that the bird you use to kill people now? Rather than a cuckoo? Or is it cos it’s night and you need a different bird for night?” Jenny asked.

The alien laughed. “You have heard the story then. It is so useful to keep people away whilst we repair our ship.”

“You killed him just for that?” Jenny was horrified.

“And the girl?” Vastra asked. “Why was she spared with sleep?”

“She thought we were fairies. Isn’t that what bad fairies do? Put little girls to sleep?”

“You seem to know a lot about earth tales.” Vastra pointed out.

“We?” Jenny asked simultaneously.

The alien grinned. Rustling noises all around them alerted Jenny and Vastra to the fact they were surrounded. Jenny silently calculated the probability of weapons. It was high.

“How did you do it? How did you get a bird to kill him?” The question burst out of her, despite their predicament.

“Well it’s not really a bird. It’s a quantum shade.” The alien sent the owl soaring around the ring of trees. “It can kill anyone, anywhere in time and space.”

Jenny ducked instinctively as it flew over her.

“And you can control it.”

“More, we have a pact with it.”

“So how is it keeping the girl asleep?”

The alien laughed. “That isn’t the Shade. The Shade will kill anyone who we mark with the Chronolock. The girl we keep asleep by mere herbs alone. We don’t kill children. Particularly not when they’re just so charming and interested.”

“The other children said you talked to her.”
“Yes. She heard about the man dying from her elders and she wanted to see the fairies. When she saw us, she was not afraid. She told us such stories. We liked her.”

“Then why put her to sleep?”

“She said they were taunting her for believing in fairies, even as they were too afraid to come here themselves. Fear is a form of belief, don’t you know. She wanted to bring them up here, to prove she wasn’t lying. Well, we killed the man to keep people away. Another legend, another tale. But we don’t kill children.”


“She will wake, when we leave.”

“If you leave. There is significant damage to your ship.” Vastra pointed out.

The alien scowled. “The technology of this time is not sufficient. We are having to make do.”

“So what? You just keep her asleep forever then? For a hundred years? They’ll come here eventually. When they know. Or even in a hundred years. They’ll stop believing. They’ll stop being afraid.”

“And how would they know?” the alien smirked.

“And who would dare venture up here when even the brave detectives hired to investigate… mysteriously drop dead.” Another piped up.

“The man we had to keep alive for a while, to spread the story. And killing him a year to the day was poetical, enhances the myth.”

“You, we might as well kill in seconds.”

“What if we helped you? Fix your ship like.” Jenny grasped at the idea.

“You?” The alien looked at her sceptically.

“I might be able to help.” Vastra interjected. “There are other technologies the apes have devised that could be adapted.”

“Or Torchwood might have something.” The suggestion caused Vastra to raise her eyeridges at Jenny. “Well they might.” She muttered. “Surprised they ain’t picked these lot up yet.”

“They might.” Vastra conceded. “Whether we would be able to gain their assistance would be a different matter.”

There was a brief interchange of nods and trills around them.

“Very well.” The first alien agreed. “You will help us.”

Jenny’s hope at a resolution was dashed when she saw the blade at Vastra’s throat.

“Move, please.” The alien who was holding it edged Vastra away.

Jenny took a long breath and drew her sword. “Let her go.”

“Oh, I don’t think so. If she can’t help us, we’ll kill her anyway. You, being a human, I doubt we
have any use for.” The first alien pointed at Jenny and a dark twisting shape writhed off her hand, snaking through the air. Jenny slashed at it but it dodged her blade and wrapped itself around her wrist, shooting up her arm underneath her dress. She froze but could feel nothing.

The first alien turned to Vastra. “The chronolock is counting down. A much shorter time than a year. Can you help us? Or not?” Jenny’s mouth went dry. “You might as well stop waving that thing around. Only the master of a quantum shade can lift the chronolock. If you killed me, it would not stop your fate.”

“Vastra…” Jenny looked at the Silurian who looked a little stunned.

“How much time? Your ship is heavily damaged.” She stalked over to it once more, eyeing it shrewdly. “You think pressuring me by threatening her is going to increase my efficiency?”

“It is amazing what focuses the mind.” The alien shrugged. “And we would have killed her anyway. Why not make it a meaningful death?”

“There is nothing meaningful about it!” Vastra snapped.

“If you work, and succeed, we might let you both go. There is no reason after all, if we can flee, to kill anyone more. The girl will come back round without the herb to keep her unconscious. How much more motivation do you need?”

Vastra looked at the ship. From what she could see, there was no way to repair it fully. Not to do what they would want it to do, return to space. There was no time to fetch Torchwood, no time to do anything. And whatever a quantum shade was, she doubted it could be bested in a sword fight.

The hull seemed fine, was already repaired extensively. Even the engines, the rotors had been patched. Flint made chemicals and steel, it was almost an ideal place. But she had seen nothing in the Victorian era that would replace the burnt-out computer chips. Nothing that even came close. Even to construct the components would be immensely tricky. And without the computer, the ship would be impossible to fly accurately. They’d barely lift off the ground. Even if they got into space, they would be blind and probably without enough fuel.

She wondered how long they’d been here. Well over thirty years. What was their plan? Wait long enough for humanity to evolve? Keep everyone away through fear of the fairies? That wouldn’t work forever. As the apes evolved scientifically, so surely their irrational fears would overcome. Fairy tales would not be enough.

But Jenny’s life was at stake, as was her own, if she failed to come up with something. Anything. She wracked her brains, becoming desperate.

Suddenly a voice rang out around the clearing. “Oh, come on. Everyone here knows that ship will never fly.”

Chapter End Notes

ten quid to anyone who can guess who (it's not the Doctor)

http://www.dudleymall.co.uk/loclhist/rayner/flint%20castle%201882_720.jpg Here's a cool pic of Flint Castle 1889
**A Name I Call Myself**

Chapter Summary

Another talky chapter...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*Vastra whirled round, half thinking it would be the Doctor. But she had always recognised him, whatever his regeneration and this small cloaked figure, leaning nonchalantly against a tree, was not him, even if he had regenerated into a woman.*

“Well. It’s obvious, isn’t it?” The woman continued in a clear voice as she stepped down towards them. “I don’t have a vast amount of knowledge. But I’ve met enough aliens over time to pick up the basics. And that ship is not leaving here any time soon. Certainly not in your lifetimes. Possibly in mine. But then again, I have slightly longer than… Jenny was it? Jenny here.” She clapped a hand on Jenny’s shoulder, peering at the back of her neck. “Yes.” She gave Jenny a commiserating look, but her eyes were cold and unfeeling. Jenny shrugged her off, clasping a hand to the back of her neck, but she couldn’t feel anything there.

“And I should probably point out, if your intention is to keep people away to continue attempting to repair it, your best bet would be to let these two go.” The young woman walked towards the aliens, nonchalantly gesturing towards Jenny and Vastra. “They know people at Scotland Yard, Torchwood. The Prime Minister owes them a really big favour and they’re…very well acquainted with the Queen.” She smiled knowingly. “If they go missing up here, there’ll be quite a lot of people coming to find them. People who aren’t your average human and therefore won’t be fobbed off with a fairy story.” The aliens were looking very unnerved at this point. “And if you’re really unlucky, a very dangerous man might show up looking for them. And if they were harmed in any way, he wouldn’t be very happy. And you can’t repair a ship if you’re dead, now can you.” She finished condescendingly.

“Are you from Torchwood?” Jenny asked her, the shock of a complete stranger knowing so much about them over-riding the shock of having a death sentence apparently displayed on her neck. A stern silence was the only reply, as if the woman wished to indicate that such a stupid question was beneath denial.

“So. What are we to do.” The figure advanced into the centre of the ring of trees, standing at the edge of the pool by Vastra. “A stranded alien ship. Death dealing aliens, determined to escape. A chronolock. And two detectives out of their depth. Any ideas how to resolve this?” She was given a stern silence of her own. “No? Oh dear. Really, I would’ve expected better. An entire group of conniving murderous aliens and the Queen’s own investigators and you can’t come up with something?” She strode up and down at a leisurely pace at the water’s edge.

“What’s yer point.” Jenny snapped, resisting a childish urge to push the woman in.

“Sorry. Yes. On a clock here.” The figure went up to the first alien. “Join me. I have a place. A place where you can hide away. We might even have some technology lying around, that could even repair your ship. It’s a little bit more… up your alley you might say.” The figure laughed. “At least
more so than a stagnant pool in the middle of nowhere.” She gestured to the aforementioned pool.

The aliens gathered in a small huddle, arguing in whispers. The woman tapped her feet impatiently. Jenny felt a small trickle of sweat run down her neck, despite the cold night.

“We accept.” One of the aliens declared, standing away from the group. There were some mutterings, particularly from the first alien but no objections.

“Excellent. One of the first rules of the Street however, is no violence, no killings. So, part of the agreement will have to be taking the Chronolock off my friend here.”

Grumbling, the first alien lifted a hand. Jenny felt as if a small weight had been lifted from her spine and the same black smokey substance flew towards the first alien and dissipated.

“Thank you. A Quantum shade, hm? I could do with one of those. It would act as a nice deterrent.” The woman shook her cloak away from her arm and held out a hand. The owl stared at her. The first alien stared at her. “Would you like to make an alliance with me?” she asked the owl. “They will die in the end.” She pointed at the first alien. “They will all die. And there will be no-one to hand you onto. And we can’t have something as beautiful and deadly as you running around free now, can we.” The owl turned its head to the first alien who cried out as it swooped down and landed on the woman’s hand.

Jenny and Vastra watched in fascination as something detached itself from the first alien, formed the shape of a bird and then flew directly at the figure’s chest. The force knocked the figure back several steps but when she regained her balance the owl had disappeared. In its place, on her outstretched fist, was a raven. It clacked its beak.

“The rules of the Street are numerous. And any breaking of those rules is punishable by death. We have a lot of violent species living there. So you’ll fit right in, don’t worry. But no death, no violence, no thievery. Not even an attempted murder is allowed I’m afraid.” The woman grinned at the Raven. “A Quantum Shade will be the perfect method of execution. We can leave now, if you like. A recovery team can be sent for your ship later. Given that these two probably won’t be too happy, I’d suggest a swift departure.”

“What about Mari?!” Jenny found her voice again, as the aliens began to shuffle into a group.

“No doubt she will recover, given sufficient time.” The figure lowered her hood. Jenny was startled. The woman was younger than she was. Barely more than a child. “I know you two like to pry into mysterious happenings. But I’d just take the credit for saving the girl’s life and go home. This one is on me. And I saved your life too. I think you owe me a non-interference pact at the very least. I don’t go around committing crimes or trying to take over the earth so really there’s nothing for you to investigate is there?”

“Who are you?” Vastra asked, striding over to join Jenny.

“I’m like you. I want to keep people safe. The only difference being, in this instance, the people I keep safe are aliens.”

“From Torchwood.” Vastra’s eyes narrowed. She knew what they had been like under Croup and Vandemar.

“Among other things.” The young woman’s eyes darkened for a moment. “Don’t worry. These lot won’t be troubling you again.” She gestured to the huddled aliens. “I guarantee it.” She smiled, but her eyes were as cold as when she’d comforted Jenny.
“But who are you?” Vastra asked, still piqued at the young woman coming out of nowhere and not only saving Jenny but taking charge of the situation and anonymously at that.

The woman smiled all the more broadly but it still didn’t reach her eyes. “I’m Me.”

Jenny laid a hand on Vastra’s elbow. The Silurian looked at her and she shook her head. The woman was now in charge of whatever that bird was that could kill people. Having been newly released from it, Jenny wasn’t in the mood to argue.

“Thanks.” The woman smiled charmingly at Jenny, winking at her. “Well hopefully I won’t see you any time soon. Good luck.” She marched the downcast aliens down the mountain, disappearing swiftly in the gloom.

“Where on Earth could you hide that many aliens?” Vastra mused, attempting to distract herself from being excessively annoyed by checking Jenny over thoroughly. There was no sign of anything on Jenny’s neck any more.

“Below?” Jenny suggested, sheathing her sword that had been dangling limply in her grasp.

Vastra leaned back to look at her. “Below??”

“Something Albie said.” Jenny frowned. “When Peggy took me to see him about the Marchioness. He didn’t want any investigations from Torchwood because of an alley that he didn’t want coming to their attention.”

“Right up their alley hm?” Vastra repeated “Me”’s words. “You think it isn’t a co-incidence.”

“She seems to know a lot about us.” Jenny began coughing again as they started down the mountain on the long walk home. “And Torchwood.”

“I think we will have to give her that one.” Vastra took one last look at the ship in the ring of trees. “I doubt anyone will come up here before she has a chance to retrieve it.”

“An’ I do owe her my life. We’ll have to be careful though. She was following us.” Jenny frowned again. “She couldn’t have known to come here any other way.”

“Who investigates the investigators…” Vastra mused. “I wonder why she didn’t intervene in the case of the Space Pirates.”

“She only does aliens by the sounds of it. They were both humans, even if they were from the future. And we had them under control. ‘Specially once the Doctor turned up.” Jenny tripped over a loose stone, cursing. Vastra looped Jenny’s arm in hers to guide her, holding the lamp up to illuminate the path more.

“It sounds as if she knows the Doctor too.”

“S’not like he needs keeping safe. Not like anyone could even if he did.” Jenny snorted.

Wearied, it took them well over an hour to return to the house and they joined Peggy in the stable to avoid waking anyone up and slept until dawn.

They were woken by the sounds of a farm in the morning, which involved a lot of clanking and animals. Vastra shivered and huddled closer to Jenny. The young woman tried to go back to sleep,
feeling exhausted after the adventures of that night. But there was a cock crowing somewhere, and a herd of cattle mooing and someone flung open the door, letting in bright sunshine.

“Oh! I’m sorry!”

“Good morning Mr Jenkins.” Vastra greeted him wearily, from underneath the blanket.

“You got back alright then. From the mountain.”

“Yes.”

“There was nuffin’ out of the ordinary up there.” Jenny yawned. “Just a pool of water and trees.”

Mr Jenkins looked at them very disbelievingly. Vastra pulled on her veil and then emerged, wrapping the blanket around her as she got up.

“We have come to believe your daughter’s sleeping state may have been induced by something she ingested.” Vastra said, not untruthfully. “I believe I can concoct a remedy.”

Jenny tried to look as if this wasn’t news to her.

“Oh. Well.” Mr Jenkins still didn’t look convinced but stood back to let them out the stable and went to get his horse.

“He’s not gonna believe us is he.” Jenny shook her head as they walked towards the farmhouse, hoping for some breakfast. “You can make up whatever you like, they’re still going to think it’s fairies.”

“Well, someone did die in rather dramatic circumstances involving a cuckoo. Can you blame them?” Vastra pointed out.

“Can you really cure her?”

“If we can remove whatever they were using to keep her in sleep, she should wake on her own. The trick will be in finding it.”

They walked together in Mari’s room, where she was still sleeping peacefully. “She walked all the way home before falling into a sleep. That suggests that whatever put her to sleep is in this house, possibly in this room.”

“What would it look like?”

“A piece of machinery, possibly quite small. Even a plant. To keep her so continuously asleep, something like that would have had to have been administered consistently.”

“Surely they would’ve noticed machinery though.” Jenny checked under the bed. She coughed at the dust, thinking she wouldn’t mind being asleep for a few weeks herself.

“Never underestimate an ape’s ability to miss the obvious.”

“Oh thank you.” Jenny muttered. “I was the one who spotted the cyber mat in Japan you know.” She grumbled to herself, wriggling back out and looking by the window. She noticed a few petals on the windowsill and swept them into her hand, holding it out for Vastra to see.

“Hm.” Vastra hummed thoughtfully to herself.
“Do you know what they are?” Jenny asked.

“No.” Vastra grinned. “But I’m sure we can find someone who might.”

“Eggs and bacon.” Seren told them when they showed her the petals.

“I’d love some.” Jenny shot back.

“Daftie. It’s the name of the flower. Their proper name is trefoil. Birds foot trefoil. They’re common enough. Grow all over the meadows.” She shrugged. “Probably Mari picked them on her wanderings. They’re not poisonous.”

Their search of Mari’s bedroom exhausted, the trefoil found to be impossible as a cause of the coma, Jenny and Vastra were back to square one. “We could just wait. If you reckon she might wake up again anyway. Might be long gone, whatever caused it, gone with the aliens.” Jenny was led in their bed, resting. She’d sent Peggy to watch over Mari just in case of any changes. Seren had taken her at her word and had made them both eggs and bacon for breakfast which Jenny had gratefully wolfed down before retiring upstairs again.

There was a knock on the door and Vastra threw her veil on.

“Mrs Rowlands come to see you.” Seren told them and ushered in the woman who had first told them of the Ellyllon.

“It’s all around Flint, how you went up the mountain to Pwll y Wrach and came down unharmed.”

“It is an unremarkable place.” Vastra told her, completely truthfully. The place itself had been nothing out of the ordinary.

“But Mari still sleeps.”

“Yes. We could find nothing in her room either, save some trefoil petals.”

“What were you expecting to find ever?” Mrs Rowlands asked.

“Some sort of apparatus or drug that was keeping her sedated.” Vastra sighed.

Mrs Rowlands laughed sarcastically. “The on’y thing that will take the curse off her is if the Ellyllon themselves remove it. I was thinking since you went up there unharmed you might have been able to deal with them. Obviously not.” She snorted and walked back out the door.

Vastra glared after her for a few seconds before returning to the task at hand. “The only other conclusion to come to then, is that a device remains active on their ship.”

Jenny slumped further down on the bed. “You mean we gotta walk all the way back up the mountain again?”

Chapter End Notes
Wrong immortal. Soz guys. ^^;; (not sorry ten quid is a lot of money to me)

Who's excited for the new Doctor announcement tomorrow??
Journey to the Centre of the Space Ship

Chapter Notes

Heading off alone to investigate an alien space ship. What could possibly go wrong?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

18th April 1888

Vastra had insisted on Jenny resting for the remainder of the day, curling up beside her most of the time, attempting to sleep. The image of the countdown imprinted on Jenny’s neck kept returning to the front of her mind. Eventually, so as not to disturb Jenny, who was snoring lightly, Vastra got up and asked Mrs Jenkins for a horse. She received a few stares when, instead of hitching a cart to the cob she was given, she mounted and rode away down the street.

By horse it was only half an hour or so and navigating the uneven path on horseback required her attention. Enough to distract her from distressing visions and thoughts. She looped the reins over a low hanging tree branch and left the horse sedately cropping as she once again approached the pool. It seemed just as gloomy during the day as it had at night. But no foliage rustled to indicate any presence other than her own. The only sign of unnaturalness was the spaceship, still half sunk into the ground. She examined the trees around and found only faint traces of damage. The aliens must’ve been here for a while. She hadn’t recognised them and they hadn’t introduced themselves. The Doctor no doubt would’ve known them. She wished her old friend were here. It was still April and Jenny had nearly died, right in front of her and she’d been powerless to stop it.

She circled the protruding stern and found a small circular door still open. She ducked in and found cramped quarters, pull down bare beds. The rough conditions indicated it was no cruise ship. Transport or cargo? She wondered. Or perhaps even exploration. Although they seemed a bit murderous for peacefully exploring the galaxy. An invasion force would hardly crash land. She moved further down, bracing herself against sliding all the way. The technology was advanced, even by Silurian standards. She ran her fingers over the patches and bodged repair jobs as she made her way down to the bridge.

She lit a lamp as she descended past the point where light found its way in but lights flickered on, shining dimly as she walked past. Most of the technology seemed to be dormant. The lights gave her hope of finding the cause of Mari’s slumber still active somewhere on the ship. Vastra assumed some sort of back-up power or generator was still operating.

The bridge door had been jimmed open, probably to escape after the initial crash. None of the consoles were usable. It was understandable why they had accepted so easily “Me”’s offer of a new home, hidden from humanity. How long had they been here, desperately attempting to get home, knowing that it would be impossible? She couldn’t forgive them for threatening to kill Jenny, but she felt no small amount of empathy at being trapped on a world with no prospect of getting home, unable to build a new one due to the violence of apes against anyone who didn’t look like them.

She cursed loudly as she tore her dress climbing back through to the main body of the ship. There were no obvious devices, flashing or generally looking ominous that she could see. The only other
option was to find the power source and turn it off. There’d been a promising looking trap door half way through the body of the ship that looked like it could lead to some engineering compartment. Vastra heartily wished she could wear her bank robbing cat suit. Or even her Silurian warrior garb. Still, she tugged the trap door open and peered down into the darkness. The first few rungs of a ladder were visible. She propped the trap door open and descended, lamp in mouth, hissing at the sensation. As she climbed down, lights came on as before to reveal a large hold. Most of the barrels and containers were empty. The ones that remained held parcels labelled in a strange language. She cautiously opened one but it seemed to be nothing but a sort of food pellet. An exploratory ship then.

Towards the back of the hold there was a door, warped in its frame, surrounded by pipes leading away from it. Vastra put her hand on it and was surprised to feel warmth beneath her hand. The rest of the ship had been cold and clammy. She tugged at the handle and managed to jerk the door open wide enough to let her see into the room beyond.

It was small and circular, filled with a complex network of pipes and the occasional bare wire. Heat leaked out through the gap in the door and a miasma floated up above, fed by small emanations from cracks in the pipes. They all led to a small cylinder set into an alcove in the wall. It didn’t glow or belch smoke. It didn’t even have a faint rainbow of an oily sheen. It was the dull grey of useful metal and that was all.

Vastra edged a shoulder into the small opening and shoved hard, bracing herself on the door frame. After a few moments of straining, the door grated open a few more inches. With her dress on, getting through was an impossibility, but there wasn’t an abundance of people round to observe her without it on. She stripped down to her shift and slid through the gap. Careful not to brush against any of the loose wires hanging down, she made her way over to the cylinder.

There wasn’t an obvious off switch, or a specific pipe that looked like a primary power supply. The pipes were welded on. Vastra gingerly brushed a fingertip against one. It was hot, as she’d expected. She was confused. This was clearly some kind of power source and it was still working, so why hadn’t they been able to fly? The aliens had wanted her to fix their ship, despite their lack of hope in it. Were they overlooking something obvious? After the length of time they’d been here, they surely must’ve explored every possibility. She didn’t want to break the system, not if there was a chance for them to take their ship and repair it elsewhere and get home.

Vastra traced some of the pipes to another trap door, circular, not unlike a manhole cover, leading further down into the depths of the ship. After considering it for a moment, Vastra tugged at its handle and nearly fell head first, it had slid to one side so easily. A second ladder descended into darkness. Biting down on the lamp’s handle once more, she climbed down. Lights failed to flicker on and she had to use her lamp to look around at…

“Stasis pods.” Vastra breathed. “Of course.” Each unit was empty but around the chamber were a few scattered boxes filled with small vials and pill bottles. Clearly, it was drugs that induced the sleep state, the pods merely providing a place of rest and monitoring. She examined the vials and bottles. “But which did they give to Mari? And how much…” The aliens had said Mari would wake when they left, that they’d been keeping her asleep through herbs alone. Vastra had thought there must be a device, something on the ship or in Mari’s room that was keeping something going, to consistently administer the drug, but they’d found nothing in either place. If the girl was asleep merely because the sheer amount she’d been given in one go, then there was no telling how much longer she’d sleep for.

“With no ability to know when they were going to leave, I must conclude the sleep state is permanent, reversed only by the administering of another drug. But is the ‘herb’ in the pill or the liquid. It would’ve been nice if they’d told us before going off with “Me”.’” Vastra sighed. There was
one way to test it, but she doubted Jenny would be very happy. Or convinced.

19th April 1888

“You are not takin’ one of them things just to see which one it is. You don’t know whether it’s either of ‘em keepin’ her asleep!” It was the following morning, Jenny was sat up in bed and not happy. “Sides, you’re a Silurian. Might not work either way. Diff’rent bodies.”

“It seems to be effective across species.” Vastra pointed out.

“No.”

“Well we can’t just inject her with both. Another dose might send her into a deeper sleep or even kill her. We can’t even accurately monitor what the “herb” has already done.”

“I doubt Mr and Mrs Jenkins would like if we kidnapped their daughter to put her in an alien stasis pod. They might get alarmed.” Jenny could see the next thought Vastra was having. “Don’t it say on the bottles? On our medicines, it has labels saying what’s in it and how to take it.”

“I’m sure it does, if I could read Alien-ese.” Vastra handed her a pill bottle, where there was indeed small neat lettering in an undecipherable language.

“Should’ve got ‘em to tell us how to lift it before they went off with Bird Girl.” Jenny sighed and handed it back. “I could…”

“Oh, if I’m not taking it, you’re certainly not.” Vastra held the pill bottle away from Jenny. “You’re ill.”

“I’m recoverin’.” Jenny snarled back.

Vastra was about to reply but the pill bottle being snatched from her outstretched hand distracted her. She turned to see Peggy, backing towards the doorway.

“No!” Jenny cried out.

“I c’n take it. I ain’t got nuffin’ to lose and nobody to lose me. ‘Sides, I owe you a debt.” Peggy muttered, before tipping one of the pills into her mouth.

“Peggy!!” Jenny leapt out of bed and rushed over to the ex-rat speaker.

“Remember, Mari was able to walk all the way back down the mountain before she sank into her sleep.” Vastra pointed out, as Peggy assured Jenny she didn’t feel any different.

“So…” Jenny was breathing heavily. “So, we monitor her.” She grabbed Peggy by the shoulder and dragged her over to the bed. “You don’t leave. You don’t touch anything. You don’t do anything.”

“You gave me my life remember.” Peggy said in a small voice.

“And I didn’t do that so as you could go throw it away at the first available opportunity!”

“Jenny…” Vastra laid a hand on her arm.

“Just…just rest.” Jenny allowed Vastra to pull her away from the bed and out the door. “What?” she asked Vastra eventually.
“I understand your protectiveness…”

“Oh, so you’re fine with her taking it, just not me,” Jenny folded her arms. “Is this that I’m an exception to the rule stuff again? Happy to risk everyone else’s life but mine? You don’t understand my protectiveness at all!”

“Peggy is trying to be useful. Trying to prove her worthiness.”

“She don’t have to do that.”

“Whether she does or not is irrelevant, that’s what she’s trying to do. And you getting angry at her devalues her attempt, whether it’s necessary or not. Whether we approve of it or not. It is, after all, her life. You gave it to her. Allow her the grace of making her own choices with it.”

“And if those choices result in her dyin’?!?” Jenny hissed angrily. “The Doctor told me if I save someone’s life I’m responsible for it.”

“Making someone feel useless and worthless is hardly being responsible.”

“I brought her up here. She’s helpin’ out. What more does she want?”

“To return the favour.” When Jenny didn’t look convinced, Vastra sighed heavily. “Do you remember when you first came to live with me?”

Jenny’s face softened. “Yeah.”

“I offered that you could stay with me, that I would not kick you out. When you enquired whether I’d gotten to like having you around, I replied that I felt responsible for you. The Doctor had told me the same thing. You…weren’t impressed.” Vastra gave a wry smile. “And you endured many hardships to return the favour, so I would not have to return to the circus. You risked many things to gain us money, including your own life.”

“Yeah well…” Jenny shifted. “Didn’t like feelin’ like I owed you something.”

“Well there you go. Being responsible for someone does not mean making every decision for them or controlling their actions and not allowing them their personal freedom.”

“So how come you didn’t allow me to take it? Ain’t that controllin’ my actions?”

“You forbade me from taking it first.” Vastra smiled at the expression on Jenny’s face. “We were not able to prevent Peggy from taking such an action. Devaluing her efforts serves no purpose and will not change what has been done.” She continued matter-of-factly. “And from what you’ve told me, it is what she was brought up to believe. She owed a debt to the rats and her life was expendable.”

Jenny snorted. “Well it’s not anymore.”

“Indeed.” Vastra paused. “You’re right of course. I am far happier allowing her to take the risk than you. I would sacrifice a great deal to keep you from harm, to keep you safe.”

Jenny stared at Vastra thoughtfully. She didn’t know what she was willing to sacrifice. Would she sooner let someone else die than Vastra? Vastra had told her that she was responsible for many ape deaths, if she wished to save humans, she should end Vastra’s life. Her mind swirled and she could reach no conclusion. In the end, she supposed, at least Vastra was honest about it. “C’mon. We’d best keep an eye on her.”
They returned to the room to make Peggy as comfortable as possible, bringing up food from Mrs Jenkins. When asked what progress they were making, Vastra informed her they were conducting a test which they had high hopes would bring about a result which would enable them to cure her daughter in a day or two. She seemed slightly baffled by the roundabout language but optimistic that they were working on it. Mr Jenkins was less impressed by the bluster but didn’t argue the point, merely making a mental note that if there wasn’t a significant improvement in two days to start having words about payment, mostly regarding whether or not it happened.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing. Nothing goes wrong because the author having been laid up in bed for a good while with a dire illness could not in good conscience make anything happen that would require Jenny to leave her sick bed, particularly not for something so common as dramatic effect. Also Vastra is way too savvy.
Peggy had fallen asleep sometime in the wee hours of the night, although whether through the pill or sheer tiredness, Jenny couldn’t tell. She’d stayed up all night watching her closely, monitoring her breathing. She’d rowed with Vastra again, Vastra worried Jenny would have a relapse of her cold if she didn’t sleep. Jenny didn’t care. She was troubled by the fact that Peggy would risk her life to help Jenny. But, as Vastra pointed out, Jenny had done much the same for Vastra, risking incarceration to rob a bank and facing abusive factory managers. Jenny struggled with where the difference lay, between her helping Vastra and Peggy helping her.

Vastra was curled up next to Peggy, under many blankets and her cloak. Jenny shifted her gaze to Vastra. The difference was Vastra was irreplaceable in Jenny’s life. Peggy was her responsibility, much as all the urchins were in one way or another. But Vastra was unique, not just in her green skin, but in the way Jenny felt about her. She got up and bent over Vastra’s form, drawing back the veil that was necessary whilst they slept in a stranger’s house, and pressed her lips gently against a crest. She stood up and saw an eye open slowly to gaze at her in annoyance and then firmly close. Jenny grinned and tossed the veil back over Vastra’s head. With a soft hiss, Vastra drew her head into the pile of blankets, disappearing completely.

Jenny leant against the windowsill to look out at the farm coming to life once more. She’d observed such a staid routine to it over the few days they’d been there. In their life at Paternoster Row, the only routine was the hungry urchins in the morning and her own ablutions. No two days were ever the same, in terms of the work they did. Although a lot of the cases had involved travelling recently. She wouldn’t mind a case in London, on her own turf. Waiting around in strange places made for a strange tension. Vastra being unable to remove her veil, the extra precautions, not knowing the lay of the land. There was something comfortable about London for Jenny. She knew how to survive there. Although, she conceded, the air was certainly cleaner in the country, even with the smell of animal dung that lingered.

She washed her face in the bowl to completely wake herself up and then moved to Peggy’s side and shook her gently. The young woman didn’t stir. Jenny stared and then went to find Mrs Jenkins.

“Is this how Mari was? When you first tried to wake her?” Jenny asked, pointing at the sleeping form of Peggy.

After a brief confused glance at the mound that was Vastra, Mrs Jenkins came around the bed to look at Peggy.

“She won’t wake either? She’s been the stricken the same?” Mrs Jenkins gazed at Jenny in horror.

“She took a pill. We suspect it to be the one that induced the sleep in Mari.” Jenny explained, a little uncertain as to how to explain where the pills came from. “Fortunately, we believe we have something that may be the cure.” Jenny turned her attention back to Peggy, shaking her once more and calling her name.

There was no response. Jenny picked up the small vial of liquid from the bedside table. She took a deep breath. Mrs Jenkins backed away nervously. Jenny closed her eyes and offered a small prayer to whatever gods might be listening. It had to work. If not, both Peggy and Mari were now lost. Her hands surprised her by being steady as she worked the lid off, opening Peggy’s mouth and poured a few drops into her mouth. She had no idea what dose to even give her, she realised, shaking a few
more drops in. She dared give no more.

“It may take a while to work, as the pill originally did. I will administer more this evening, if she hasn’t woken by then.” Jenny put the bottle back down, her heart sinking even as she attempted to remain professional and optimistic in front of Mrs Jenkins.

“I’ll make breakfast.” Mrs Jenkins wasn’t fooled. Her shoulders sagged and she left.

Jenny threw herself back into the chair, frustrated anger rising in her.

“Perhaps she needs more.” Vastra’s head emerged from the pile.

“An’ perhaps I’ll bleedin’ give her too much! And then what!” Jenny tried not to shout.

“You should sleep, my dear.” Vastra got up and draped a blanket over Jenny.

Jenny balled it up and threw it across the room. Vastra moved away to check Peggy over, opening her eyes and listening to her breathing, checking her pulse. With a glance at Jenny, she took the bottle and poured a good half of it into Peggy’s mouth. Peggy swallowed and stirred but did not wake.

“Now we shall wait. Rest. I’ll watch over her.” Vastra offered.

Jenny didn’t reply, stood up and stomped downstairs. She ignored Mrs Jenkins’ call to breakfast and walked straight out the house. The horses were all busy so she walked, walked, and walked. Without any purpose or intention, she ended up walking up Flint Mountain once more, as the steepest hardest walk she knew in the area.

She couldn’t stand another minute of sitting there waiting. She climbed up onto a protruding nacelle of the spaceship, not yet sunk into the mud, and sat there, staring morosely into the pool. She wondered about the Ellylon and Mrs Rowlands. Mrs Rowlands who could see through Vastra’s veil. What else could the woman see? But it had been the aliens, and not some mystical fae creature that had caused Mari’s sleep. She hoped that Mrs Rowlands’ prediction that only the creatures themselves could remove the curse was not true. It might be, she supposed, if they were dealing with fairies. At any rate, the aliens themselves were gone to who knew where.

Hunger got to her eventually and she was about to hop down from her perch when a small voice came from the bushes behind her. Cursing that she hadn’t brought her sword, Jenny leapt down, hiding behind the nacelle.

“I said! She hasn’t woken up yet has she.”

It sounded like a small child. Jenny peered hesitantly round to see one of the aliens emerge from the bushes. It looked smaller than the ones she’d seen last night.

“No. She hasn’t. No thanks to you.” Jenny took a leap of faith and walked round to stare down at the child. It looked slightly crestfallen.

“She was my friend. I didn’t want them to. But I couldn’t stop them either.” It wriggled its shoulders, causing a small rattling sound.

“She used to come up here to play with you.” Jenny calmed herself down. Getting mad a child, even if it was an alien, wasn’t going to help matters. It nodded in reply to her statement. Jenny stared at it, trying to size it up. Explorers wouldn’t have taken children along with them, would they? Not from the harsh conditions Vastra had described to her of the spaceship. “You…were born ’ere weren’t
you. On Earth.”

It nodded again, a little more warily.

“Is that why they left you behind?”

“They didn’t leave me behind!” It scowled. “I chose to stay behind.”

“To help Mari?”

“I don’t know how to. They gave her something. I don’t know what it is. They wouldn’t let me see.” The child shrugged. “They wouldn’t let me help her. They said it was the only way to keep people away. They said I was stupid for playing with her and bringing her up here. After they killed the man too.”

“What’s yer name?” Jenny’s heart sank slightly at the news but she couldn’t in good conscience leave a child up here on its own. Perhaps the Doctor could fashion another device like Vastra’s veil.

It rattled off an incomprehensible sound.

“What did Mari call you?” Jenny wasn’t even going to attempt to reproduce it and doubted Mari had either.

“She called me Bach Wrach.”

“Well…you’d better come with me anyways. If we can get Mari to wake up, I’m sure she’ll be glad to see you.” Jenny contemplated the struggles of smuggling an alien into the farmhouse. But anything was better than leaving someone up on a lonely mountain by themselves for another night. It followed her cautiously at a distant, moving in small hops and scurries.

Jenny skirted the major roads, wishing she’d brought her cloak to hide the young alien under and they managed to sneak round to the back of the farmhouse without anyone seeing them.

“Wait here.” Jenny gestured for Bach Wrach to hide in the bushes and went to fetch a blanket from the stables. She threw it round the young alien but all it really achieved was covering it up. With a sign, Jenny decided to take her chances. It was now after lunch and the downstairs was deserted, apart from a brief lingering smell of food which made Jenny’s stomach growl. Promising herself food the moment she deposited Bach Wrach with Vastra, Jenny made her way upstairs.

Vastra glared at her for a moment. “I was wor…” The Silurian stopped as she saw the mobile blanket following Jenny.

“They left something behind.” Jenny shrugged.

“They didn’t leave me behind. I stayed behind.” Bach Wrach corrected her, throwing off the blanket. Jenny rolled her eyes.

“It’s Mari’s friend.”

“I’m not an it either.”

“They’re Mari’s friend.” Jenny sighed.

Vastra stood up and stalked over to the young alien, towering above her. Jenny raised her eyebrows, impressed at the way Bach Wrach didn’t back down but stared back at her. She frowned, a thought suddenly occurring to her.
“Bach Wrach…”

“Bach what?” Vastra interrupted.

“Sh.” Jenny knelt in front of the young alien. “I know you said they wouldn’t let you help Mari, an’ that you were born ’ere. But…your language. The written language. Can you read it?”

“Of course I can read. I’m not stupid.”

Vastra hastily retrieved the bottle from the bedside table. “This. Can you read this?” Bach Wrach read it in their own language. “And in English?”

Bach Wrach frowned. “Well…it’s a name. And then lots of things. There aren’t words for them.” Jenny slumped a little. “And then it says, “To revive from…I don’t know those words in English… two drops in each eye and swallow the rest of vial.”

Jenny looked up at Vastra. “How many of the boxes did you bring back?”

“Enough.” Vastra smiled and went to retrieve them.

“Peggy first.” Jenny said when she returned, taking a vial. “Should we only pour half?”

Vastra shrugged. “For now. We can always pour the rest later.”

Jenny took a new vial from the box Vastra offered her. She frowned in concentration as she carefully let two drops fall on each of Peggy’s eyes, holding the lids open as she did. Then, carefully measuring, she poured half the vial into her mouth.

“Does it say how long it takes to work?”

Bach Wrach shook their head.

“Assumedly, the stasis pods would monitor the condition, under normal circumstances.” Vastra peered over Jenny’s shoulder at Peggy.

“Shall we try it on Mari?”

“Well, it says it’s the revival liquid, so better sooner than later.” Vastra retrieved another vial.

Jenny, Vastra and Bach Wrach walked out onto the landing, just as Mr Jenkins was coming up the stairs. They froze as he looked up at the sound of their feet and saw them. Jenny closed her eyes, realising that Vastra hadn’t put her veil down. The silence continued so she opened them. Mr Jenkins eyes were flicking from Vastra to Bach Wrach to Jenny.

“We captured one of the Ellyllon on Flint Mountain.” Jenny blurted out. “To see if they could reverse the curse they put on Mari. They cursed Madame Vastra too though, to look…like a lizard. But I’ve got them under control now. And they say they’re gonna undo everything. We’re just going up there now to give Mari the fairy potion that will undo her sleep.”

Understanding and relief flooded Mr Jenkins’ face and he nodded. “I’ll come up with you then.” He made his way up to where they were standing on the landing. “Well?” he asked, as they continued to stand there.

“Right. Come on you.” She grabbed Bach Wrach by the arm, making a show of being forceful. “Time to undo your mischief.”
Bach Wrach opened their mouth to protest it wasn’t *their* mischief but closed it after Jenny glowered at them warningly. Meekly, they allowed themself to be dragged along.

Jenny passed the vial to Bach Wrach, who nervously went up to Mari and copied Jenny’s actions.

“It…it’ll take some time. To undo. It took some time to cast it.” Bach Wrach trembled as they turned back round with the empty vial.

“You’ll stay here until we’re sure it works.” Mr Jenkins scowled at them. “And I don’t know what we shall do with you after.”

“There is a place we know of, that...takes care of things like this fairy creature.” Vastra assured him. “We will take them there.”

He nodded before turning back to Bach Wrach. “And now take the curse off Madame Vastra too.”

Bach Wrach glanced pleadingly at Jenny.

“They’ve used up all their power. All this cursing people and reviving them. We’ll make sure they do it later.” Jenny told him. “Now, all we can do is wait. May as well go back about your business.” She smiled at him and nodded. He instinctively nodded back and she guided him to the door. After watching him tramp back downstairs, she turned back into the room and closed the door, leaning against it with a heavy sigh.

“Well done Jenny.” Vastra clapped slowly. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you lie so convincingly.” She wasn’t looking the best pleased Silurian in the room and Bach Wrach was scowling. Jenny didn’t care.

“It worked.” She stuck out her tongue at them and walked back to their room to watch over Peggy.
21st April 1888

Jenny sat observing Peggy; the breaths she took, any twitches she made, any small movement of eyes under their lids. Mari had woken at dawn, apparently suffering no ill effects apart from being very, very confused. She’d been hugged, shouted at, sobbed over and, after the emotional displays had fizzled out, had been told matter-of-factly to go and feed the chickens and collect the eggs. Jenny had seen her out the window, cheerfully tripping along with a basket towards the hen coops. Normality had restored itself for the Jenkins family. They’d thanked Vastra profusely (Jenny had been ignored for the most part) and promised that a tidy sum would be winging its way to Vastra’s bank account very soon.

Which left Peggy, still asleep. Jenny, watching over her. And Bach Wrach, crouched on the floor, their chin resting in a scoop in their arm, the red horns that usually stood proud from their head, led down and flat against their shoulders. With every breath, the horns moved and clicked. Jenny had decided against letting Mari know Bach Wrach was in the house. She wasn’t sure how the Jenkins would react to their daughter joyfully embracing the creature blamed for her malaise. Besides, the Jenkins appeared to have forgotten about the alien child, and Jenny thought that was probably for the best.

“Do you really know a place for me?” Bach Wrach piped up after another hour of small clicks and almost silence.

“We’re not gonna leave you here, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“Oh.”

Jenny frowned. “I don’t think it’s best you stay here either. You got no family here now. Mari and ‘er family ain’t exactly going to welcome yer. An’ prob’ly half the place wants to kill you.” The ‘oh’ had sounded very morose.

“I should’ve gone with them.”

“Maybe. But where’d we be without yer?”

The red horns rose a little. “So…where are you going to take me?”

“Home with us, as soon as Peggy wakes up.”

“I’ve been thinking about that.”

“Hm?”

Bach Wrach got up and padded over to the bed. “How many of the pills did she take?”

“Just the one. She ain’t stupid.”

“Hm.”
“Look, if it worked on Mari, it should’ve worked on Peggy. They’re both humans, both children.”

“But you administered it incorrectly at first.”

“Well we hadn’t found the usefulness that is yourself at that point.” Jenny was irked. “An’ we weren’t about to risk givin’ her too much.”

Bach Wrach edged away again. “Maybe she doesn’t want to wake up.”

“What do you mean?”

“Sometimes dreams are nicer. I once had a really nice dream. And I told my parent about it. And they looked really sad, instead of grumpy like they usually did, and they said sometimes dreams are nicer. And then they told me, they once knew someone who liked their dream so much, they went to sleep and never woke up again. I thought they were talking about dead people. But maybe they really did just sleep. Maybe they took the pill and then just didn’t wake up after.”

Jenny sat in silence, staring at Peggy. The ex-Rat Speaker hadn’t told her anything about her life before the Rats. For the first time, Jenny considered what kind of life you had to live, that being a Rat Speaker was an improvement, was something to cling to so desperately. Peggy had told her that being a Rat Speaker was “more than what she’d had before”. It led to Albie and she found herself lost, wondering what his life had been like, what he’d endured. The debt they owed to the Rats. The loyalty that they had. Jenny’s own life hadn’t been a bed of roses, but she could think of no situation in it, even when she’d been close to death, where she would’ve chosen to be taken Below, would’ve chosen to live in under that debt, rather than continue on in her circumstances.

But in her mind, as she sat there, darkness rose and swallowed her, and the sound of a storm echoed in her mind, mixing with panicked, rapid breathing and, she remembered now, the occasional squeaking of rats. She jerked herself back to reality, her heart jumping, tears pricking her eyes. Struggling to control her breathing, filled with the rush of adrenalin, Jenny stood and walked towards the door.

“Watch over her.” She turned and pointed at Peggy. Bach Wrach nodded, obviously confused.

Jenny searched the farmhouse desperately for Vastra, wondering where the Silurian would’ve gone. She found a farmhand, grabbed him, and gasped out an inquiry.

“Not seen her.” He replied bluntly.

Jenny stood still, struggling to control the panic. Vastra... Maybe the Silurian was hungry, she’d been eating bacon and sausages but perhaps that wasn’t enough. Or she’d gone back to the spaceship, to investigate something else, bring back more information. Eager to expend the excess energy the flashback had given her, she ran towards Flint Mountain.

She had to walk the rest of the way, having winded herself by running so fast, but she felt calmer now. Her breathing had returned to normal, and out under the watery Spring sun, it was harder to be drawn back to the poke hole. It’d only been a few days. That’d been bad enough. And once she’d gotten out, she was careful to never do anything that would result in her returning there. But if she had, if that had been her life, there in the darkness, starving and with only rats for company, Jenny thought, maybe she would’ve begged to anyone, would’ve paid any price, if it meant getting out of there. And if it had been the Rats who had answered the desperate prayers for escape? “Sometimes dreams are nicer.” There had been only nightmares in the pokehole.

She stopped and looked around, nearly at Pwll-y-Wrach. Countryside was pleasant, she’d give it
that. Trees and greenery, all in a tangle, or so it looked like to her. And it was light, and smog-free, if alarming in its emptiness at times. Or its lack of emptiness, with animals rustling and calling constantly, pigeons clattering through branches. And yet, still there had been monsters. Jenny sighed and sat down on the grass, feeling tired now. If Vastra was down at the farm, she’d be worried. Jenny led back, a strange stupor coming over her, her eyes closing. She needed to rest for a few minutes. Vastra…

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It was a dream. She knew that even before she opened her eyes. One of those rare intense, real dreams that were terrifying in that, she was never sure sometimes, whether she’d really woken up. The kind where she’d woken up and yet was still in the dream and had to wake up again, sweating and nervous, in case she still wasn’t really back.

There was laughter. It didn’t sound carefree, but it sounded experienced. As if it had been laughed a lot. She didn’t recognise where she was. An attic room somewhere. The laughter was coming from below. She opened the trapdoor without even trying. Dreams get details like that wrong sometimes. The ladder was sturdy enough beneath and she moved easily down and onto the landing, drifting downwards towards the voices. They were talking animatedly and easily, laughter still bubbling up on occasion.

When she opened the door, all the women in the room looked at her. A few were older, looked similar, stood around a table. Sisters, perhaps. The rest bore no resemblance to each other, except they were all younger, in their early twenties or late teens. They’d been playing a game of cards, gambling by the looks of the small pile of brass and bronze coins in the centre. Tea cups littered the room. One of the older women beckoned her in, staring curiously at her, expecting her to speak. When she did not, a shrug and a smile were the only response. Another gestured towards the table, inviting her to play.

She didn’t feel nervous, sliding into an empty chair. They dealt her in and she picked up the cards, knowing how to play. She glanced up at the older women watching them. One of them was stood, arms folded, a serious expression on her face as she watched the game attentively. The other was lounging, taking copious swigs from a bottle. A third was leaning against the wall, smiling as she took the entire scene in. Their eyes locked. The woman nodded.

A shout made her turn her attention back to the game. It was her go. She went through the motions, passing and picking up cards, not really caring. A few more turns. The woman was leaning against the wall laughed, shaking her head. Some mistake had been made, some misfortune or bad luck.

“*Is this how you dream it?*” A soft voice came from behind her. None of the others seemed to hear it. “*Family? A future?*” The woman was staring at her again. Or beyond her. “*It is a nice dream.*” The voice conceded. “*But it is only a dream. Better to wake, and wait, and make it a reality. Believe me. It is far more satisfying.*”

She sat, staring at her cards. It was her turn again. She looked round at all the expectant faces which she knew and yet, did not know. If she left them now, she might not ever find them again. They might never exist. This might never happen. This warm, happy place of laughter and good-natured jibing, of comfort and presence. It felt real. Really real.

She put the cards down on the table. “I fold.”

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“Jenny! Jenny!!”
Her name being called so desperately broke her out of her daze. “Hnn?” She sat up, her clothes damp from the grass.

“Jenny!” Vastra was riding towards her, jumping down before the horse had even stopped pulling her upright.

“What is it?”

“Peggy’s awake! What were you doing lying in the grass?”

“Jus’ resting. I felt tired after runnin’ up here.”

Vastra tutted, and pulled her cloak about Jenny’s shoulders. “Are you feeling unwell?”

“I’m fine ma’am.” Jenny brushed Vastra’s hand away from her forehead.

“Well…” Vastra huffed. “Come on then.” Vastra leapt back up onto her horse, hauling Jenny up behind her and set off at a steadier pace back towards the farm.

The heavy, languid feeling had been dispelled by Vastra’s arrival and the panic that had consumed her disappeared completely as she clung on to Vastra, the Silurian a solid reassuring presence.

“How did you get her to wake up anyway?” Jenny asked wonderingly, as they neared the house. Vastra didn’t reply immediately. “Vastra?”

“The little wretch told me their theory, that she was trapped in a dream. I…spoke to her, in the dream. Advised her to wake up. It seemed to do the trick.”

“You just told her to wake up. And she magically did.” Jenny said disbelievingly.

“Or perhaps the potion worked in the end and it was co-incidence.” Vastra shrugged. Jenny could feel her smug smirk, even without seeing her face. Vastra clearly didn’t think that was the case.

“Tell me later.” Jenny slid backward off the horse and dropped to the ground. With barely a backward glance she ran indoors to see for herself that Peggy was fully recovered.

She burst into their room to find Peggy sat on the bed, chatting nervously with Bach Wrach.

“Jenny!” Peggy turned at her abrupt entrance.

“How you feelin’?”

“I’m fine. I don’t feel bad or anything.”

“Good.” Jenny nodded, satisfied. “Next time you do anythin’ so stupid, I will not be very ‘appy. Clear?”

Peggy winced. “Clear.”

Jenny whirled back out to go find Vastra, determined to find out what precisely Vastra had done. She paused as she was about to close the door, turning to watch Bach Wrach and Peggy as they resumed their conversation. With a resigned sigh, she pulled the door to gently behind her. Clearly Peggy had passed on her mantle of “the latest addition”.

Chapter End Notes
Whose Dream Is It Anyway
Two Without The House

Chapter Summary

In the old sense, meaning outside

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

22nd April 1888

It was with a sigh of relief that Jenny opened the back door of 13 Paternoster Row and let Peggy, Bach Wrach and Vastra through before her. They’d spent their final night in Flint discussing what should be done with Bach Wrach, and for that matter, Peggy. Whereas the ex-Ratspeaker could very well run with the Irregulars, Bach Wrach posed a bit of a problem. It’d been difficult enough getting them on the train, smuggled in a spare suitcase loaned by a puzzled Mr Jenkins.

Still, as she ordered Peggy to bed in the spare room and set about airing the servant’s quarters for Bach Wrach, Jenny knew without a doubt it was a case they would have to solve. Jenny found herself almost wishing the Doctor would turn up on one of his visits, maybe he could take Bach Wrach home, or find somewhere a little more suitable than 19th Century London for them. But then, technically this was Bach Wrach’s home. That’s what Vastra had argued last night. The child had been born on earth, had known nothing else. Then again, they hadn’t known that much of earth either. In the compartment, when they were assured no-one would come in, they had let Bach Wrach out. They’d viewed the scenery with awe and astonishment, and almost complete incomprehension. But what would the child do anyway? Jenny looked up to find Bach Wrach staring at her. She tried to smile reassuringly.

“Well, you c’n sleep ‘ere for now right? Til we find you somewhere more suitable.” She patted the bed she’d just finished making up. Bach Wrach nodded, resignedly.

23rd April 1888

“What are we gonna do with ‘em both?” Jenny asked Vastra as she sat morosely on the toilet bowl the next morning, watching Vastra soaking in warm water.

“Start an orphanage? For little lost aliens?” Vastra sighed, scratching at her scales.

“Peggy’s not an alien.” Jenny pointed out.

Vastra glowered at her. “You bring home the strays, they’re your responsibility.”

“I didn’t bring them home! I could hardly ‘ave left ‘em there.”

“Couldn’t you…” The Silurian muttered.
“No. And neither could you in a better mood.” Vastra had told Jenny her scales were beginning to shed, hence the soaking. Jenny had been alarmed to receive news that she too, even as a human, shed her skin on a regular basis. Far more regular in fact than Vastra, a fully-grown Silurian, did.

“‘ow long did you say this shed goes on for?”

“A few days, a few weeks. It happens very infrequently these days. I’m not exactly a growing hatchling anymore.”

“You never did say whether you were really two hundred years old.”

“And I have no intention of telling you now!” Vastra snapped.

Jenny gave her up for a lost cause and went downstairs to make herself lunch. Bach Wrach and Peggy were both sat at the kitchen table in silence, looking awkward.

“Food?” Jenny asked simply. They both nodded and she plonked some bread rolls down on the table along with some fruit. She wondered briefly what Bach Wrach ate but the alien seemed happy enough with an apple so Jenny left her to it. She was interrupted from debating her own lunch by a knock at the back door. The Doctor? She opened to find a hooded figure standing there that strode past her into the kitchen and revealed itself to be Me.

She smiled winningly at Jenny who merely raised her eyebrows. “I believe I may have…left something behind.” She looked over at Bach Wrach.

“Not a thing.” Jenny scowled.

“Well, either way, I have a vaguely worried parent looking for them.”

“‘ow did you find us?”

“I have my sources.” The smile became smug. “Come along…” Me somehow managed to pronounce the incomprehensible syllables. “After all, they’ll be much better off among their own people than on the streets of London.” Me pointed out as Jenny moved in front of Bach Wrach. “And you needn’t worry. I’ve rescued all sorts of strays in my time. They’ll be well cared for.”

“D’you want to go?” Jenny turned and asked them.

Bach Wrach stared at the kitchen table. Jenny’s heart went out to them.

“Can I come too?” Jenny stared at Peggy, gobsmacked.

Me raised her eyebrows, taken aback. “Why would you want to? You’re human.”

“So’re you.”

Me inclined her head, grinning wryly. “I’m a little more than that. But in any case, the Street is intended as a shelter, for alien refugees, if you like. Surely you’d sooner stay with Jenny? Join her little band?”

“I’ve paid my debt to her.” Peggy stared blankly at the opposite wall. “I want to go home. Seein’ as ‘ow I can’t, I’d sooner move on.”

“As well you might, alas I cannot allow you to move onto the Street.” Me told her, a hint of sadness in her tone. She called Bach Wrach’s name again. “Come.”
The alien child got up and went to follow Me out the door.

“Bach Wrach!” Jenny called. “If it don’t work out, on the Street, you c’n always come back ‘ere.”

Bach Wrach smiled. “You said yourself Jenny, until I found somewhere more suitable. With my kind is as suitable as I’ll get.”

The door shut behind them, leaving Jenny unable to argue with the logic.

“So you want to leave too?” Jenny didn’t turn around to look at Peggy.

“You’ve bin very kind. But it just…”

“We could set you up with lodgings…”

“I’ll be fine.” Peggy cut her off and stood up. She saw Jenny’s hurt and baffled face as she went to leave and stopped. “Madame said, that being outside the cage was scary. An’ that I was lucky, to have you watchin’ out for me. An’ I was. But if I stay ‘ere, s’just gonna turn into another sort of cage ain’t it. Even now, you don’t want me to go. Though I dunno why. You’re happy enough to let your urchins run around. I mean, I was a Ratspeaker.” Peggy’s head dropped. “I can get by fine enough on my own.”

*I lived on the streets long enough, I can get by well enough without you!* Jenny shook away the echo. Wordlessly she went to the back door and opened it again.

Peggy stepped warily towards it and then ran. She turned at the back gate, glanced back for a moment and then her coat tails vanished behind the wall.

Jenny closed the door.

Vastra was silent when Jenny related the two incidents to her later, sat on the edge of the bed.

“Bet you’re happy though. No more strays underfoot at least.”

“Hmm. You seem strangely depressed about this.” Vastra uncurled from underneath the sheets and sat up. “I think it’s the best possible outcome. Bach Wrach should be with their kind, and this “Street” whatever and wherever it is, is the best they’re going to get. And Peggy? She has not shown the best…aptitude for being an Irregular. Leaving you to fight the hawks, swallowing unknown alien pills. If she wants to find her own way, let her.” Vastra narrowed her eyes, staring at the figure curled up at the foot of the bed. “What makes her so special anyway? From all the other urchins? Did her pathos get to you? Or is it the link with your brother? You feel a kindred spirit with her? Both of you, young urchins, abandoned by him to the fates. You feel a sense of responsibility? Atone for his sins? Prove yourself the better sibling?”

“She said livin’ here would become another cage.” Jenny ignored the barbs.

Vastra sighed and crawled across the bed. “Jenny…Peggy’s dream was of a warm place, people having fun, comfort and laughter. It was a very…safe dream.”

“An’ our life ain’t very safe.” Jenny conceded.

“Indeed. If she stays here, what are her choices? Become an Irregular? Against her natural instincts and abilities? Stay inside all the time? Not exactly useful or fulfilling, although safe. She dreams of a
Jenny scowled at the lump, got up, walked round to her side of the bed, picked up one of her pillows and thumped it down on top of Vastra. There was a moment of perfect stillness. Then, in a lightning fast movement, Vastra whipped out from under the covers, grabbed the pillow and threw it at Jenny, almost knocking her off her feet. Vastra’s eyes were blazing, with something half way between fun and fury.

“And what, might I ask, was that for?” she asked icily, one hand reaching for her own pillow.

“Bein’ stupid!” Jenny gripped her own pillow, knelt on the bed, and went to thwack it across Vastra’s head but Vastra parried. There was a hard thwap as the two pillows collided.

“Well, what would you like me to say? Something trite?” Vastra swung her pillow and Jenny dodged it.

“Somethin’ serious would do me.” Jenny raised her pillow over her head and brought it down. Vastra grabbed it and tried to tug it out of Jenny’s grasp. Jenny pulled hard and then let go, causing Vastra to topple forward across the bed. Jenny snatched up her second pillow and thumped Vastra across the back of the head. There was a ripping sound and an explosion of feathers. The pillow had caught on Vastra’s head crest. Jenny froze. Then, biting her lip, she gently tugged the pillow off, causing a cascade of more feathers all over Vastra.

The Silurian pushed herself upright, rocking back to kneel on the bed, a curiously blank expression on her face. Jenny looked at her warily, aware that Vastra still had a pillow in each hand. Vastra didn’t even spare her a glance as she placed the two pillows on top of her own undisturbed one and then led back down, pulling the covers over her.

Jenny sighed, whether through sadness or relief, she couldn’t tell, and went to lie down herself, only then realising she was completely without any pillows.

“Oi!”

“No.” Vastra refused to budge. When Jenny went to tug her pillow back, Vastra merely pressed down even harder.

Jenny sat on the bed for a while, staring at the prone Silurian.

“D’you know what I dream?” she asked softly.

“Yes.”

“What?” Jenny was startled.

“In Swindon, when we were caught up in those dreams. Nightmares. You ended up in mine and I in yours, remember?”

Jenny flushed slightly at the recollection but sadness overtook embarrassment. “So you still dream of ‘em?” Vastra didn’t reply. The realisation that it was April crept in and Jenny winced at her own insensitivity. “Sorry.” She moved off the bed, thinking she should get something to gather up the
feathers. She was nearly at the door when a pillow hit her square in the back. She spun round but it was as if the Silurian hadn’t even moved. She stared, confused, at the pillow, then rolled her eyes at her stupidity. Gathering up the pillow, she moved back towards the bed, swept the worst of the feathers onto the floor and then clambered into bed, fluffing up her one sole pillow as much as possible. She’d just got settled when another pillow came down on her face.

“Oi!” She tore it off with a huff. “Fine then.” She shoved it under her head and flopped backwards with a sigh.

She was about to drop off, led on her back, her head curled into the crook of her arm, flung up on the pillow, when there was a rustle of sheets from beside her. An arm slithered across her stomach, tickling her but she didn’t move. A leg bumped against her own and a head nudged her in the side before resting on her breast.

Dreaming of her coming to bed indeed… she thought wryly before she fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

I’m not the happiest with this chapter but I have an exciting idea for the next arc.
May 1st 1888

They spent the last week of April in almost quiet solitude at home, enjoying the chance to train, waiting for the new chairs from George and his friend and generally idling. A knock on the door did not surprise them, a case was long overdue arrival. The person who was at the door however…

“Captain Jack?!” Jenny stared. Rose had said he was rebuilding an empire or something. What on earth was he doing here.

“Captain!” Vastra seemed less surprised and beckoned him in. “To what do we owe the pleasure?”

He moved into the kitchen. “I have a case for you two lovely ladies. I was rather hoping you could help us out.”

“Us?” The plural did not escape Vastra.

“Torchwood.” Jack grinned. Jenny and Vastra froze. “Uh. Perhaps, I’d better explain.” He laughed awkwardly at their expressions. “Not the Torchwood from your era. Or even Rose’s era. This is… my Torchwood. Sort of. I’m more a freelance agent. I should be around here somewhere. I won’t have joined up with them yet though.”

“How d’you mean?”

“Well I was trying to get back to the Doctor and ended up in 1869.”

“That was the year I was born.” Jenny mused.

“Ahh, if I’d’ve known I’d’ve come to wish you happy birthday! Alas, this was a long time ago now. For me anyway.”

“So, you’re visiting us from the future.” Vastra surmised, spotting the small device on his wrist that he’d used to get them home from Japan as she ushered them all into the living room.

“Precisely.” He gave her a dazzlingly toothy grin as he sat down in an arm chair. “Strange thing. A case came up and a name was mentioned, and one thing led to another and I found this small note tucked away in this absolutely ancient archive folder, that I should contact a certain Miss Jenny Flint,” he nodded towards Jenny, “about it. Well, I couldn’t resist! Perfect excuse to come see you again after all. So here I am.” He leaned back with a creak of leather, sprawling slightly.

“Here you are.” Vastra looked at Jenny, whose face was wooden. They both remembered what the Prime Minister had said. They had not thought it would return quite so soon to haunt them.
“Yes.” Jack became serious for a moment. “Chap calling himself the Marquis de Carabas. Oh you know him!” he spotted Jenny’s eyes going wide. “Very dapper, I must say. That coat! He went on about time differentiations in Below, meaning he could skip through time or something. Not much different from what my device used to be able to do. Anyway. How does a little trip to Cardiff sound?”

“Cardiff?”

“In Wales?” Jack grinned.

“Wales.” Jenny repeatedly hollowly.

“In 1998.”

“What?!”

“Hey look, you’re both in unison.” Jack laughed. “The Doctor was right. Well you’ve travelled with my little device before. It’s not like you’re new to time travel. Shouldn’t be any worries. I can fix you up with appropriate costume once we’re there.”

“Appropriate costume?” Jenny glanced at Vastra.

“Oh, don’t worry. Torchwood know you well after all.” Captain Jack realised Jenny’s concern. “So…” he stood up and clapped his hands together. “Will you come? Like I said, no need to worry about clothes.” He winked and gave a laugh. “Oh! But you might want to bring those beautiful swords I got for you both.”

Vastra nodded, seemingly perfectly content to travel a hundred years and more into the future.

“Well then. I’ll go get the cases.” Jenny sped down to the basement where they were kept. Her heart was thumping, not so much at the thought of another case, that was par for the course but…1998? More than a hundred years in the future. This wasn’t just nipping backwards a couple of months. Her hands shook slightly as she placed the swords in their cases with reverent care. The haphazard training she’d received meant she still wasn’t really trained enough to use them. But she’d been lucky and, as Vastra had pointed out, it had never stopped her before. Grabbing both cases by the handle, she took a deep steadying breath and then walked back up the cellar steps.

“Excellent!” Jack exclaimed when he saw them. “Have you been practicing hard? A pro already?”

“When I can.” Jenny shrugged.

“I’m sure you’ll be fine.” He held out his arm to Vastra, who carefully put on her veil before taking it. He offered his other arm to Jenny but she was fully occupied carrying the swords. “Well, shall we?” He stepped towards the door.

“Wait, we’re not using your wrist thing?” Jenny asked, confused.

“It shorted out. No, the fine gentleman is going to guide us.” Jack’s grin became a little fixed as he opened the door to reveal the Marquis de Carabas.

The Marquis made an ostentatious bow. “If you’d like to follow me?”

They followed him silently through the streets. There was an eerie quality with travelling with the Marquis. Jenny felt as if some invisible barrier had come up and now sound was muffled and people didn’t notice them. They ducked down an alley and through a small wooden door, descending down
steps into a basement. Dim light that didn’t seem to come from anywhere in particular illuminated their path through a patch of darkness where a wall should’ve been. Jenny wished her sword was strapped to her hip rather than in a case. Vastra was still arm in arm with Captain Jack, the Marquis striding ahead. Jenny wanted to close her eyes but they were squelching through mud now, along a dried river bed. She saw strange spears and guns and a large threatening cylinder which Captain Jack warned her to stay away from.

“It’s an unexploded bomb. From the Second World War.”

Jenny stared at it. The fact that there had been a second world war scared her. She wondered what had happened with the first one, and how far in the future it was. Would she live to see it?

Time became impossible to measure, as it had when she’d walked the One Path. Odd cries and strange voices echoed occasionally.

“It’s rare I travel so far outside London. Cardiff Below is very different to London.” The Marquis mused, after a while. “Of course, I had to pull in a few favours to gain us safe passage. But I always make sure to keep a few spare.” He gave a humourless laugh.

The mention of favours jolted Jenny’s memory. “Do you know Albie?” She jogged forward, slipping in the mud. He steadied her, took one of the sword cases and gave her a very odd look. Was he…afraid? After a moment, he regained his composure and they continued. “Yes. I know the Lord Rat Speaker.”

“Does he owe you a favour?”

“Quite a few of the rat speakers do.” The Marquis’s mouth curled into a smile. “But no. Not his Lordship directly.”

“Do you know when he came to Below?”

The Marquis smiled. “What will you give me for such information?”

“I wouldn’t give him anything. He tried to trick me the same way.” Captain Jack called out, causing the Marquis to scowl at him. “Luckily I know a few tricks of my own.”

The Marquis hmphed. “We’re nearly there. Then you’re on your own.”

“Hey, I negotiated for safe passage to AND from Cardiff Below.”

“Indeed. And once your business is finished, I will be there to escort whatever pieces are left of you back home to your appropriate times.”

Jenny wondered, watching this exchange, what Captain Jack had on the Marquis that he’d been able to negotiate this. She didn’t have time to ponder long. A heavy looking steel door appeared in front of them.

With a flourish and a whirl of his coat, the Marquis disappeared.

“What did you give him?” Jenny asked, looking blankly at the door.

Jack coughed. “I promised him my coat, when I died.” He laughed flatly. “Looks like this is our stop.” He wrenched the wheel on the door round and it swung open to reveal what looked strangely reminiscent of the Torchwood vault Jenny had seen. Only, a lot brighter.
She winced at the buzzing overhead lights, the humming box in the corner, clicking and whirring to itself.

“Right then. First things first. Correct attire for 1998.” Jack stepped through aisles of steel shelves to a small suitcase. Jenny looked scandalised at the blue trousers and gaudy jacket that Jack held up for her. “I think these should be your size.” He took out a pair of bulky white shoes. “Trainers.” He explained at Jenny’s fixed expression.

“I coulda just brought my trousers.” She said weakly.

“Yes. Not quite the style to fit in, alas.” He turned to Vastra and handed her a pair of trousers and a long-sleeved roll neck jumper.

“At least it’s purple.” Vastra mused, holding up the long jacket that seemed part of the ensemble.

“C’mon. What’s the point of time travel if you can’t have a little fun with the clothing? Don’t be like the Doctor where the man considers a change of colour of shirt a revolution in fashion.”

The trousers seemed tough at least. Jenny ran her fingers over the strange material.

“Denim. You have to love it. They’re from GAP.” Jack laughed at her reaction. “I’ll leave you two to get changed.”

“And then you can tell us why we’re here.” Vastra said, a little sharply.

He smiled mysteriously. “Have you ever heard the phrase “Y ddraig goch ddyry cychwyn”? They shook their heads. “It’s the new motto. It pertains to the Red Dragon, which is the emblem of Wales.”

Jenny felt dread spread through her.

“I take it,” Vastra said, cottoning on as well, “this is a real dragon.”

“You want us to kill a dragon?” Jenny whispered.

“Oh no. Nothing like that.” Jack waved his hand. “It’s gone missing from Below. We’d like you to help us find it.”

He left and Jenny and Vastra looked at each other.

“Somehow.” Jenny grumbled, “I don’t think findin’ a great big flyin’ lizard is goin’ to be the problem.”

Vastra snorted, reluctantly beginning to remove her dress. “No.”

“Catchin’ it, without us gettin’ eaten or burnt to death…”

“Remind me, if we get home in one piece, to pay the Prime Minister a visit.” Vastra smiled, showing all her teeth.

“No eatin’ the Prime Minister!” Jenny struggled to get the denim trousers over her drawers and gave up. “Do they not wear underwear in the future?” she snapped.

Vastra held up a small pair of unembellished very short and very tight drawers for Jenny’s inspection. “Try these.”
Silently, Jenny took them. They fitted remarkably well, and she wondered how Jack had known what size of clothing to provide. Then again, she wasn’t sure she absolutely wanted to know. Half her top seemed to be missing and she swiftly buttoned up the soft checked shirt to cover her stomach. She felt very exposed and awkward, tugging on the trainers. She looked at Vastra to see how the Silurian was getting on and flushed. Vastra always looked poised, no matter her clothing but she looked…sleek in the long high waisted trousers and roll neck. Vastra shrugged into the long jacket and raised her eye ridges at Jenny’s attention.

Jenny hastily looked down under the guise of checking out her own gear. It didn’t seem to be half so stylish as Vastra’s clothing. She pulled on the denim jacket anyway, her hands disappearing inside the sleeves.

“We don’t exactly look like dragon slayers.” Jenny pointed out, looking back at Vastra.

“Just as well, as we’re not here to slay it.” Vastra shrugged, taking her broad leather strap from out the case, removing her jacket and buckling it round her, making sure she could still easily move and draw her swords in the strange outfit.

Jenny sighed and retrieved her own sword. It still rested easily at her hip. She felt it like an anchor, a piece of real and rightness and it settled her.

Jack knocked and Vastra called for him to come in.

“Perfect!” he declared upon seeing them. “You could be natives to the ‘90s. Well, apart from the swords. Bit of a give away.”

“And the scales.” Jenny was still confused how they could just walk around without Vastra’s veil.

“No worries. I’ve got you covered.” Jack removed the device from around his wrist. “May I?” he gestured to Vastra’s arm. “It has a built-in cloaking device. If I press here…” he fiddled with a button. “Et voila. It’s a little bit stronger than the perception filter. What do you think Jenny?”

Jenny just stared in mute shock. The eyes were the same, the same colour blue but it was now a human woman that stood in front of her. Short black hair framed a human face. The nose was the same she noticed. It was…Vastra. But it wasn’t Vastra.

“Jenny?”

It was Vastra’s voice. But it was a human hand that reached out towards her. It was still Vastra, Jenny told herself. She tensed but the hand that gently rested against her cheek was still cool and scaly and she relaxed.

“Think she prefers you looking like a Silurian.” Jack winked at Vastra. “Shall we?” He added hastily, after receiving matching scowls.

Chapter End Notes

Heh
With Haggard Eyes The Poet Stood

Chapter Summary

Robed in the sable garb of woe, with haggard eyes the poet stood - The Bard A Pindaric Ode by Thomas Gray.

Chapter Notes

I am ill (again) so if there's any mistakes or anything doesn't make sense I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry.

“I should take you out on the town! While you’re here. There’s a nice little pub I’ve found, King’s Cross where we will be quite welcome.” Jack winked at them.

Jenny refrained from asking why three people who, despite their best efforts, didn’t quite fit in to the locale, would be welcome.

“Of course,” he went on, “lots has changed since your day. Not quite enough but…better.” He shrugged. “I’ve lived through it all. Campaigned. Useful of course, not being able to die.”

“What has?” Vastra took the dive.

“Gay rights! The current campaign is to get equal age of consent. I’ve been arrested a few times now.” Jack opened the door onto the street and they stepped out onto the pavement. “Right then. Welcome to Cardiff. These are the docks.” He gestured round at the mass of grey water and boats. “We’re based just under the Rift. They’re regenerating the whole area, lots of plans from what I hear. It’s not too bad now though. We get pizza from the Atlantic Wharf Leisure Centre. Terrible name. But good pizza. I’ll take you there. We can go bowling.”

“We?” Jenny asked, looking around her distractedly as she followed Jack. Not only was he talking about things she didn’t understand but there was a whole new world to take in. Grey flat roads and white paint. Signs and poles. She nearly walked into one until Vastra pulled her aside at the last moment. Even the boats looked strange. She’d seen many barges and ships on the Thames, when visiting Albie, but none that were white and sleek like these. Strange smells assaulted her nose. Still, the smell wasn’t quite as bad as London.

“Well, not really a “we”’. Torchwood Three! And that’s about as many people as it has working for it. I’ve been working sort of freelance for them since the 1880’s. And of course, the Doctor visits here in the future. To visit the Rift, just along from here actually. There’ll be a great centre built there. And the Senedd. But that’s all…” he waved a hand.

“So…we have to find a dragon?” Vastra interjected. She was twitchy and stiff. Jenny wondered what it was like for her, walking along in daylight with seeing the world through a black haze. A sudden urge gripped her, to grasp Vastra’s hand and hold it tight.
“And capture it. Or lure it back. I’ve read the files.” He nodded backwards at Jenny. “Quite the
adventurer. The Doctor will be recruiting you if you don’t watch out.”

“I see plenty of action in my own line of work, thank you.”

“I’m sure you do. The rift is what we’re worried about.” By now they’d reached a red brick building
overlooking the bay and Jack turned right just beyond it.

“Rift?”

“There’s a great rift that runs just under this area here. In the future it’ll be called Roald Dahl Plass.
After the author.” At Jenny and Vastra’s blank stares, Jack waved his hand again. “All after your
time. Sorry. Anyway. Temporal rift. It sometimes sucks things into it. And they’re gone. But we
would’ve registered a negative rift spike if it did. But we have to catch it before it flies through. I
don’t want to know what happens to the rift, or to the Dragon…”

“Or to Cardiff Below…” Jenny thought that the loss of their Dragon might not go down well there.

“Or Cardiff Below,” Jack nodded at her. “if it goes through.”

“So, no pressure then.” Jenny bit, as he lifted up what looked like an ordinary piece of stone to reveal
a long ladder, disappearing downwards into darkness.

“None at all.” He smiled, guided her forward to the edge. “Time to meet the team. Such as it is. Get
you kitted up and then we’ll be off.”

Jenny was becoming increasingly dubious about this case, particularly as she suspected that once
again they wouldn’t be getting paid, but descended the ladder first. When they were all squashed
together at the bottom of the ladder, Jack reached over and entered a code in a square box with lights
and beeping and a door slid open with a hiss to reveal a cramped and haphazard office.

“Looks like everyone’s out. Working overtime on this Dragon. Welcome to Torchwood Three,
Jenny, Vastra. We’ll need some scanners for you, amped up with alien tech, top of the range.” He
disappeared under a desk and rooted round in some cardboard boxes. Eventually he came back up
with three identical black square boxes, with a small screen on them. “Like something out of Star
Trek.” He laughed at their blank stares. Jenny took hers with trepidation but Vastra seemed at home
with it, approving of the technological advancements apes had made.

“Press that button there to switch it on.” Jack instructed her. “And then if you want to switch
scanning modes…” he launched into a small lecture on its use. Jenny was convinced it would be
easier if she just used her eyes. Vastra, of course, was picking up all of Jack’s instructions with ease.

“We’ve got a large area to cover. I mean it’s a dragon. It can fly. All I could get out the Marquis is
that it probably hasn’t strayed beyond Cardiff. But that’s still a lot of city to cover ladies. We’re out
hunting most days. Of course, occasionally we get reports from people who look up once in a while
and have binoculars.”

“Is there anyway to capture it? Or to even lure it down?”

Jack hesitated. “We have sonic lanterns to put a boundary round it, and a sonic net. We could use
meat or some sort of prey but it’s already…eaten, so we’re not sure how effective that would be.”

“Eaten…” Jenny repeated tonelessly.

Jack gave a nervous laugh. “We were kind of hoping as the experts in Below, you’d have more of an
idea than us.”

Jenny shook her head slowly.

“Right.” Jack’s voice went up a pitch. “Keep your swords handy then.” He brought himself together. “As it’s your first time out in the city, maybe don’t split up. Other than that? Enjoy the sights of Cardiff.”

They climbed back up the ladder in silence and set off along a road. Cars, as Jack Harkness informed them, were something else they needed to watch out for. “Like carriages without horses.”

Jenny thought he was beginning to regret calling them in, if they didn’t have the specialist knowledge the Prime Minister seemed to think they had. Peggy had insinuated that getting indebted to the Marquis was not something you’d want.

Lacking any better idea, she wandered down towards the docks, thinking of Albie and the rats. Of course, he would be dead by now. Over a hundred years in the future. Everyone would be. Her sister. Missus Blackett. The thought stunned her and she stood still at the railing. Vastra was fiddling with her scanning device and not really paying attention to her.

“What did it disappear from?” Jenny asked after a while. “It must have a home. What did it want to leave for?”

Vastra looked up but took them to be rhetoric questions and didn’t bother to assure Jenny of her complete ignorance in these matters.

“Are we really going to try and capture a Dragon without any idea of what it wants or where it’s from?” Jenny snapped.

“It does seem unwise.” Vastra conceded, finally lowering her device. “What would you propose?”

“Proper research!” Jenny threw her hands in the air. “Those Ravens and Eagles weren’t dumb animals, why would this Dragon be any different? We need to find out where it came from, what it wants and if it even wants to go back, before we go around tryin’ to capture it! You didn’t like it much when apes did that to you.”

Vastra blinked at Jenny’s ferocity. “Where would you propose we start?”

“I dunno.” Jenny frowned, trying to focus her thoughts. “Jack said it was the emblem of Wales. There’s gotta be stories about that. Myths. And the last time we was ‘ere, myths led us straight to the aliens.”

“Apes seem to have progressed since we were last in Wales. They might not believe in such tales anymore.” Vastra warned her.

“Bet they would if the dragon flew up an’ threatened to eat ‘em.” Jenny muttered, folding her arms. Vastra considered this in silent amusement. “And where would we find such tales?”

“Books. Maybe there’s something in the Torchwood files. Or we could just ask someone?” Jenny suggested.

After more than a few strange stares and people walking off muttering about weird people from
London, a middle-aged woman draped in a long scarf and a cardigan and carrying a pile of books finally responded.

“You mean the tale of the red dragon and the white dragon?”

“Possibly.” Vastra hedged.

She stared at them oddly. “Some kind of research project, is it?”

“Yes. On Welsh mythology.” Vastra grasped at the excuse.

“Yeah. Like the Pwll-y-wrach.” Jenny added.

The woman’s eyes flicked between the two of them.

“Well you’ll be wanting the Mabinogion then.” She gave them a short nod and hurried off.

“Mabi-what?”

Vastra shrugged. “Shall we try the Torchwood files?”

“Do you remember which stone it was to lift?”

Regret at ever agreeing to help filled Vastra’s eyes.

Collecting a few more stares along the way, they tried several stones in the area before they found the one that lifted to reveal the ladder.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Vastra was brought up short by the keypad.

“Can you pick the lock?” she asked Jenny without much hope

“Don’t need to.” Jenny leaned round her and carefully pressed the same sequence she’d seen Jack put in. The door whooshed open. Jenny smirked at Vastra’s expression and walked through. The smirk faltered as she was reminded of the minor chaos that was the Torchwood office.

“Don’t they have any kind of library or…or system?” Jenny said in despair, rifling through various loose pages scattered on a desk. Vastra was investigated a clunky white box with a screen that was sat in the corner, pushing buttons at random. It lit up and a very blocky image appeared along with the words Windows ’95. Jenny came over and they stared in fascination as it eventually loaded to a blank green screen, covered with yellow squares.

“Alien invasions, alien kidnappings, lost aliens, hostile aliens, aliens living in Wales, alien dignitaries, rift occurrences…” Jenny peered at the screen, reading the names. “The Doctor gets a whole file to himself look…”

“We had something similar. But of course, ours were far more technically advanced. We had clear images for one thing…” Vastra continued muttering under her breath as she found the small white object that moved the pointer and pressed a button on it whilst hovering the pointer over a yellow square with the title “Aliens linked to myths”.

The glare off the screen was beginning to hurt Jenny’s eyes and she left Vastra browsing and cursing under her breath and went to examine a set of shelves, filled with loose papers, box files and battered books. Given the lack of organisation she wasn’t expecting to find anything but there it was, third
“Vastra!” Jenny called, pulling it out. “Mabinogion. That’s what that lady said.” She showed it to the Silurian when she came over. Vastra opened it.

“It’s not in English.”

“What?” Jenny grabbed it back, riffling through the pages in dismay. “Ah! At the back. It’s in English at the back.”

“So is there a story about the illustrious red dragon?” Vastra hovered impatiently as Jenny flipped through the book.

“Here’s one! Lludd and L…l…Llefelys? There’s a red dragon which fights a white dragon…”

“There’s two dragons?!” Vastra read over her shoulder. One dragon was bad enough… “Is that it? They’re just imprisoned in a hill?”

“But that’s at this place called Dinas Emrys. This is Cardiff, right? Cardiff Below.”

“Maybe it fled here underground? This is mythology, after all. The rules of reality need not apply.” Jenny sighed. “Any luck with you?”

“Several interesting tales. More reports than anything. Alas, no dragons.”

Jenny placed the book on a nearby desk and went back, pulling books off at random. Vastra stayed to help her.

“D’you reckon Jack knows about any of this?”

“I believe he is just trying to capture it. To stop it eating people by the sounds of it. Ah! Here’s some more…” Vastra read silently. “They…fight? The red dragon wins…”

“Is that it?” Vastra handed the book to Jenny who placed it with the other one. “These don’t tell us anything.”

“What we need is a link to Below. Which is presumably what we were meant to be.”

“Well if you see any rats, sing out.” Jenny grumbled. “I’m hungry.”

Vastra smiled. “Shall we see what Cardiff has to offer?”

“We ain’t got any money.” Jenny pointed out. “An’ I’d rather not get caught thievin’ in a different century.” When Vastra raised an eye ridge, Jenny merely replied, “Turned honest when I started livin’ with you.” Which merely caused the second eye ridge to raise.

“It could lead to some questions.” Vastra admitted after a return glower.

“I’m goin’ back out to the docks!” Jenny slammed the book she was perusing back onto the shelf. “I c’n understand why that dragon would escape. Bein’ trapped underground is maddening!”

Vastra followed silently as Jenny stomped her way back up the ladder, Jack had warned them against splitting up after all. And some fresh air would be nice.

Jenny leaned against a railing, scowling off into the distance. Vastra strolled up and down,
wandering around small piles of construction equipment, enjoying the sun that had come out and wisely leaving Jenny be. But she stopped when she noticed Jenny stand upright suddenly. She watched curiously as Jenny decisively stood away from the railing and then turned round three times, anti-clockwise.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m goin’ to offer him a favour.”

“Who?”

“Me, Madame Vastra.” The Marquis startled her by swirling out of some rags that had been abandoned by a stack of bricks covered in tarpaulin. “Did mine ears deceive me? Or did I hear mention of someone owing me a favour?” he clasped a hand to where his heart should’ve been in mock shock.

Well at least it worked, Jenny thought. “Depends if you can tell us what we need to know.”

“Couldn’t help you, if it’s about the Dragon. I’m from London Below? This is rather out in the sticks for me.” He gestured round at the undeveloped docks.

“Could you put us in contact with someone from this Below then?”

The Marquis made a show of stroking his chin and looking pensively at the sky. “I suppose I could put you in touch with The Bard. A favour you say?”

“No.” Vastra spoke up. “Jenny will not owe you anything.”

“But a favour is such a good payment.” The Marquis pouted. “And she is the sister of a Ratspeaker.”

Vastra drew her sword. “Consider the cost of not helping us.”

The Marquis held up his hands slowly, unconcerned. “There’s no need to be rude. But I cannot go around helping people without some payment. It’s bad for business. You understand.”

“I will owe you a favour then.” Vastra replied. “A very, very small one.”

The Marquis side stepped her sword and bowed. “It is agreed. If you would follow me?”

He led them past the roads, on which rode the carriages without horses, through streets and shops to a dingy alley. A tramp was slumped at one end. “Of course, he doesn’t belong in Cardiff Below either. But alas, so many of the legends were abandoned here. Belief runs out.” The Marquis shook his head sadly. “My Lord Taliesin. There are people to see you. They wish to enquire about the Ddraig Goch.”

The tramp mumbled in Welsh. The Marquis turned, shrugged and walked off. “It’ll cost you more, for more than that.” With a contemptuous smile, he disappeared.

The heap of rags stumbled towards them. Jenny snorted against the smell of stale alcohol.

“Anglisc?” it asked.

“English?” Jenny said doubtfully.

It snorted in disgust. “English. Anglisc.”
“Are you Taliesin?” Vastra tried. “We were told you could help us. We are looking for the red dragon.”

“I’m Taliesin. What do you want with the red dragon?”

“We just want to find it!” Jenny reassured him. “It belongs in Below.”

“It did not!” Taliesin shouted at her. “It did not belong here. No-one belongs here. But all the myths were buried, in the end. Killed. Or Below.” He slumped heavily against the wall.

“Do you know how it escaped?” Vastra tried a different tack.

“It flew. Came up through the ground. Maybe it heard the white dragon was coming again.” Taliesin laughed bitterly. Jenny and Vastra exchanged looks. “It must go back below?” the question had a pleading tone.

“It’s a dragon. It…won’t survive.”

“You kill it? Sword and spear. You would kill it?!”

“No! Just…”

“You want to find dragons? Just find dragons?” Taliesin mocked her. “Go along the main road, away from the mountains. Find a hovel. Walk straight up to it. Knock three times.” Taliesin knocked on the wall three times. “And click your fingers. Poof!” he clicked his fingers and disappeared, without even a puff of smoke for good effect.

“Wonderful.” Vastra tutted.

“Three. Why is it always three?” Jenny sighed, defeated.

Chapter End Notes

Atlantic Wharf Leisure Village was renamed in 2000 to be the Red Dragon Centre. The cinema isn’t bad. I recommend the hotdogs. R.I.P The Doctor Who Experience, who was most fun. Hopefully they leave the TARDIS there. There’s a very nice café (The Lookout) which I hope is still open too. Try the faggots. (it's a type of meatball)

I’m totally ripping off Patricia C Wrede with the whole follow the main road and knocking on hovels. Dragonsbane is an awesome book, as is the entire series tbf. Cimorene is a kick-ass magic wielding Dragon's Princess who deals with her own knights and takes it to evil wizards by dunking them in soapy water (with a dash of lemon juice). I fully recommend reading.
“Any luck ladies?” Jack asked as he walked through the door, accompanied by an unknown woman. For wont of money and ideas, they’d returned to Torchwood Three, where at least it was warm.

“Oh yes. Absolutely. We’ve got the dragon tied up in the cellar.” Jenny bit at him.

He tried to raise his hands placatingly but they were full of thin brown boxes. “I bring food? We haven’t had any luck either.” He nodded towards his companion. “This is Karen by the way,” he placed the boxes down on the desk and opened the top one. Jenny’s nose twitched. It smelt strange but delicious. “I say we give in for the night. Try again tomorrow.” He took something out the box and bit into it. “I think that Marquis fellow must’ve been having us on about it not going beyond Cardiff.” He gestured for Jenny to help herself as she edged over. Whatever it was, was round and steaming slightly. It seemed to shimmer with a thin veneer of grease. The colours were bright, almost artificial. It was hot in her fingers and it tasted gorgeous and she wolfed down three triangles as Vastra explained their research and inevitable return.

“Yes. I did wonder how you got back in. Should’ve known better. Eagle-eyed Jenny.” He grinned at her and gave her a thumbs-up.

“Don’t s’pose you know of any hovels around here?” Jenny asked despondently through a mouthful.

“Not recent like.” Karen answered her. “There’d be maybe back a hundred more years ago. What does he mean, the main road? Away from the mountains? We’re already away from the mountains. Much further away will see us in the water.”

“We were in Cardiff centre at the time, maybe that’s what he meant.”

“The Marquis said it couldn’t go outside of Cardiff. Probably.”

“That’s still a big area, Jack.” Karen waved a crust at him.

“Well it doesn’t have to be a specific hovel. Just a hovel. On the main road. Away from the mountains. So, if we go say a little up…what is it?”

“North Road?”

“Right! North Road. Then start walking back towards here. Then find a hovel.”

“In the middle of Cardiff…” Karen sounded doubtful. “Besides is the North Road main enough? What about the A48?”

“That’s more across than…”
Vastra decided to leave them bickering and join Jenny in her silent and dedicated attack on the boxes. There wasn’t much she could find to like, but Jenny waved a slice covered in what she took to be meat at her and she delicately snicked it off with her tongue, leaving the base, sauce and cheese for Jenny to polish off. Which she did. With alacrity.

“Look!” Jack’s raised voice brought them back to the argument at hand. “It’s been a long day. Why don’t we all go out somewhere?”

“Oh if we’re clockin’ out then I’m off home. To have a proper dinner. But have fun Jack.”

“I always do!” he blew an air kiss at Karen’s departing back. “We’ll sort out this riddle tomorrow. I…” he looked down. “…see you’ve finished the pizza. Fancy a night out to that place I told you about?” he clapped his hands together.

Jenny’s temper having been abated by food, she was now a little more curious about the waning years of the 20th century, having not yet officially arrived in it yet herself. She shrugged at Vastra’s expression. “S’not like we can really do anything more tonight.”

“Besides, the King’s Cross is technically immediately down and away and directly south of the mountains. Sort of. Maybe we’ll strike lucky and find a hovel there!” Jack grinned at Vastra who shrugged.

“Lead on then.”

It was a small comfort to Jenny that pubs had not changed that much in the intervening century. It was smoky and not well lit, with a low-slung ceiling. People sat around wobbly looking tables on spindly chairs and bench seating along the walls. Pints seemed to be the order of the day. Jack waltzed his way to the bar, winked and ordered three. Jenny stared at the gilt lettering, inscribing the names of drinks above the bar. Her sister would like this place. Vastra and Jack moved away to find a table but Jenny lingered by the bar, happy to just find a little spot of familiarity.

Someone was playing what she assumed counted as music. She must’ve looked a little lost for a young woman came over to ask if she was all right.

“First time out ey?” The woman blew a cloud of smoke out the corner of her mouth.

“Somethin’ like that.”

“You’re not from around here. Not with that accent.”

“I’m from London.” Jenny told her, entirely accurately.

“Surprise you come to Cardiff. Surely there’s a much bigger scene there.”

“I’m visiting a friend.”

“A friend, is it?”

“Yeah.” Jenny pointed over at the table where Vastra and Jack were sitting.

“Bit old for you isn’t she?” Jenny gave a fixed polite smile, trying not to laugh. They had no idea.

“Is that what the fashion is then in London?” the lady pointed at her trousers. Jack had insisted they
all change into something “slightly less country” for the night and had given her a pair of baggy cargo trousers and another tight stomach revealing top. She’d insisted on retaining her flannel shirt and denim jacket. “I’m Lowri by the way.” The lady held out her hand.

“Jenny.” She shook it.

“Well, Jenny, I see you’ve finished your pint already. Another?”

Jenny glanced over to where Jack and Vastra were sat. Jack looked highly amused. Vastra was staring intently at them but looked away when she caught Jenny’s eye.

“C’mon.” Lowri dragged her over to a table. “This is Caitrin and Luned. Meet Jenny.”

They welcomed her and Lowri disappeared back to the bar for another pint.

“First time out?”

Jenny felt suspicious as to why she was continually being asked that but settled for nodding again, grateful for when her pint arrived and she could busy herself drinking it.

“Jenny’s from London.” Lowri informed them, plopping down on the bench seat next to Jenny. “Come here to visit a friend.”

“Oh London! The scene is a lot bigger there ey?”

“Couldn’t really say.” Jenny shrugged. She amused herself answering their questions as truthfully as possible but without giving away the truth. When they asked her what her and her friend were doing, she replied they were here for a job, involving research into mythological creatures and the legends of Wales. When they asked her what she thought of Cardiff, she told them she hadn’t seen much of it yet. When they asked her things like favourite movies and tv shows, she had to shrug. “I prefer books.” To which they nodded wisely.

“Literary types.” Luned shook her head.

“How’d you meet your “friend” then?”

“I was bein’ attacked by a gang and she rescued me. I was homeless at the time and she took me in.”

“Very Tippin’ The Velvet.” Lowri snorted.

“What?” even Luned and Caitrin didn’t seem to understand that reference.

“S’a new book out.” Lowri waved them away. “You read it Jenny?”

“No.” Jenny was getting annoyed at Lowri’s attitude.

“Thought you preferred books! You can borrow it if you like.” Lowri suggested hopefully.

“Hopefully I won’t be around long enough to read it.” Jenny got up, rescued her pint, and made her way back over to Jack and Vastra.

“Hey! Don’t be like that.” Lowri followed her, tugging her back round.

Jenny hadn’t noticed Vastra get up but the Silurian was suddenly stood beside her. “Vastra…” Jenny warned but she wasn’t paying attention, staring very pointedly at Lowri’s hand.
“I’d watch out for her if I was you.” Lowri nodded towards Vastra, releasing Jenny and making a show of raising her hands in the air. “The older ones can be like hawks. Offer you a place to stay and then take advantage of you. Make you do all sorts.”

Vastra stepped forward but was stopped by Jenny’s arm. Lowri smirked. So Jenny moved her arm, swinging it up, balling her hand into a fist. Her knuckles cracked against Lowri’s jaw and Jenny hissed, grasping her hand. Vastra didn’t wait for Lowri to recover but hastily dragged Jenny out the bar door and into the street, not stopping until they’d found a suitable alley.

“Really!”

“Like you was about to do anythin’ different!” Jenny snapped, shaking her hand.

“I was about to ask her to remove her hand from you.” Vastra said loftily, amused at how irate Jenny got when anyone accused Vastra of taking advantage of her. Jenny swore in pain and disbelief. Vastra snorted softly and took Jenny’s hand in her own, deftly checking for damage. Jenny still wasn’t used to seeing a human face when she looked at Vastra but the expression was one she recognised, a touching mix of concentration and concern. She pulled Vastra close with her bad hand, reaching up with the other to cup Vastra’s cheek. There was a small dissonance, seeing skin but feeling scales. She kissed Vastra. No amount of cloaking device could change the way that felt.


Vastra smiled and reached out to embrace Jenny.

“Didn’t you say…” Jenny murmured, after a few more kisses. “That you’d seen apes do all sorts down alleys?”

Vastra’s eyes glittered and her tongue flickered out, her hand moving to the waist of Jenny’s cargo trousers.

“Ahem! Much as I hate to interrupt…”

“Jeezus!” Jenny swore again.

“Might I suggest we move away from the general vicinity? Torchwood isn’t that big that I can pull rank with the local police. And I suspect they might be arriving shortly, judging by the sirens.” Jack gestured to the alley’s entrance. There was a strange wailing sound in the distance.

“What?” Jenny folded her arms.

“Can’t take you anywhere, Jenny Flint.” Jack shook his head with a grin. “Come on.”

“Where are we stayin’ anyway?” Jenny’s mind being on bed related activities, the thought of where they were going to sleep tonight occurred to her.

“Well, I have a very nice spare bedroom, or I believe there’s a fold down bed in the Torchwood bunker.” Jenny and Vastra looked at each other. “I can take the fold down bed if you two want some privacy?” Jack winked at them.

They set off for Jack’s, Jenny still debating internally whether to take him up on the offer. The orange glow of street lamps reminded her of gas lamps, the roar of the occasional car recalling the clatter of a late-night cab driving home. The world hadn’t changed that much. There were still drunk people, shouting. A hundred years, she contemplated, wasn’t that long a time at all. Not compared to
the millions Vastra had spent sleeping. The urge to take Vastra’s hand came upon her again. And as it was night, and no-one seemed to be paying attention, Jenny obeyed it. She received a grateful squeeze. Bravado aside, Jenny’s heart still beat a little faster at how brazen they were being. Was the world changed that much after all? The freedom made her giddy and she glanced up at Vastra. The sight of a human face brought her back down. It would probably take another hundred years in the future before Vastra could enjoy the same sensation of freedom. Vastra squeezed her hand again, as if guessing her thoughts. For now, the pleasure of walking hand in hand with Vastra, underneath stars dimmed by orange lamps, was enough.

Jack’s apartment when they arrived ten minutes later was bare, bright and modern. It looked unlived in, apart from the kitchen. Looking around, Jenny missed the warmth of 13 Paternoster Row, where there were books and wood panelling and cosy fireplaces. There were strange appliances everywhere in Jack’s place. Jenny didn’t bother to enquire what they were all for.

On the brief tour of the place, Jenny noted, toilets hadn’t changed much. Nor had baths. She took one, Jack saying he preferred showers in the morning, before he left them to go to bed. Vastra sat below something mounted on the wall that was blowing out hot air, watching Jenny as she took Jack’s advice and used the bubble bath, delighting in the fragrant smelling foam. There were a lot of things she would miss about the future and she’d only been there a day. She briefly daydreamed about staying but found herself missing home more. The urchins and Parker, her sister. Thinking about them, they would all be dead by now. She stood up suddenly, water and bubbles cascading off her, reaching for the towels that sat folded on the toilet seat. Vastra jerked her head in surprise.

“Are you all right?”

“Oh. Just…strange bein’ in a different time, thas all.”

Vastra stared at her, amused. “Yes. Yes, it is.” She got up off the floor, grinning wryly as Jenny realised what she’d just said, to Vastra of all people, her face screwing up in embarrassment.

“Yes well. It’s a first for me.” Jenny mumbled, walking through to the spare bedroom, sitting on the bed to dry her hair. Vastra curled up around her, enjoying the residual warmth.

“The question is, which do you prefer? You can stay here, or return to your own time. That is a choice available to you.” She stated solemnly.

“You din’t have a choice.”

“The Doctor offered me a different time. I could have gone forward. The world was already strange, what would have been the harm in making it stranger? But it was the still time I had surfaced in. The time my sisters had died in. I had a connection to it. I felt a sense of being where I belonged, in time. We are all but transient guests, but we are still tied, by the times and the places we are meant to be. Even the Doctor, who falls through and across and up and down time, is guided by where he is meant to be. And we…are meant to be asleep.” Vastra nudge Jenny gently.

Jenny quickly finished drying herself, dressing in the pyjamas Jack had given them and curling up beside Vastra. She felt reassured, with the comforting weight of Vastra’s arm flung over her, that this was where she belonged, here and now.

Chapter End Notes
No alley sex just yet I'm afraid.

(it's only been a decade since they raised the smoking age to 18 and banned it in pubs. *remembers the days of being able to buy a pack of 20 cigs for like three quid, from a vending machine, no ID...insanity...*)

EDIT: because it's come to my attention I totally forgot to credit it. My apologies. The line Vastra says "We are all but transient guests" is a paraphrase of "transient guests are we" from the Vampire Hunter D novels. Eesh books but good quote.
Karen drove them all out towards the mountain range, away from Cardiff but they passed nothing that could be reasonably be called a hovel, even on the way back towards the town centre. Jenny sat in the front seat of the car, enjoying the sensation of effortless speed, as they made their way along what was apparently the A470 back towards Cardiff. Vastra and Jack were discussing the intricacies of his broken vortex manipulator and whether it would be repairable. It was Karen who jerked their journey to an abrupt halt as they passed through a village.

“Taff’s Well.” Karen shifted around in her seat to talk to Jack after she’d pulled up at the side of the road. “D’you think that would count as a hovel? The building itself isn’t all that after all. And under Cardiff there’s a cave system. Perfect place to hide a dragon.”

Jenny was impressed not only at Karen’s casual acceptance of the existence of dragons, but also her logical thinking when it came to where to find them.

“Worth a try.” Jack shrugged.

“Used to try and go down those caves as a dare.” Karen shook her head as she parked the car.

When Jenny saw the building she well agreed it could be called a hovel, if a slightly done up one. Having walked straight up to it, they stood outside the door silently.

“Should we try the door?” Karen whispered.

Jenny shook her head, took a breath, and stepped up. She knocked three times and clicked her fingers. Nothing happened and she let go her breath. Vastra opened the door and they squeezed inside. It was darker than Jenny had expected. And cooler.

“Um…” Karen said, unnerved. “I don’t think…” There was a large splash. The sound echoed. Jack fumbled with something and a beam of light shone round an enormous cavern, dominated by a hot spring the size of a small lake. Jenny noted that it would have to be that big, because bathing in it were half a dozen dragons. Their slit pupils narrowed when the torch beam hit them.

“Um…” One heaved itself out of the pool, water cascading off its purple scales and started clumsily towards them, its talons leaving deep imprints in the earth.

“Um!” Karen glanced at the other three, saw they weren’t moving and ran anyway.

“Karen!” Jack shouted, following her. But all they came up against was a very solid cave wall. “Oh no.”

Jenny was still trying to unfreeze her mind. Giant hawks had been bad enough. Why did everything in Below have to be so big and terrifying? How did anyone survive down here?
“You.” The dragon pointed a scaly claw at her.

“Yes?” she answered, proud that her voice was only slightly higher than it would be normally.

“Are you a knight?” it’s claw moved to point at her sword.

“No! No. Definitely not.” She unbuckled it and stepped away from it. It was hardly going to be much use against a dragon anyway. Vastra followed suit, a little more slowly.

“Then, are you a princess?”

“She’s not dressed like a princess.” Another dragon, deep gold in colour, had swum over to the edge of the pool. “She’s dressed like a knight. I say eat her.”

“No, she’s not. Knights wear armour. And you know knights give you indigestion.” The first dragon snapped. It turned back to Jenny, breathing hot smoky air over her. “You have sought out dragons. Why?”

“We only wanted to find one particular dragon.” Vastra corrected them.

A susurration travelled around the cave.

“Which one?” the first dragon hissed.

“The red, specifically.” This increased the level of background hissing.

“And what do you wish with the red dragon…specifically?”

Jenny shrugged helplessly. “It’s gone missing. We want to find it. To take it back.”

“Little human.” The purple dragon shook its mighty head. “Arrogant little human. As if you could. There is a battle brewing. And the Red Dragon must be free.”

Jack stepped forward. “But if it flies about the place fighting, it’s going to get killed.”

“There’s bigger things than lances these days.” Karen had crept back up. “And even bigger things than that. At Torchwood. We’ll have to report it. It’s a matter of security.”

“Big enough to kill a dragon?”

Karen and Jack exchanged glances. “I would be willing to bet it could make a dent.” Jack said eventually.

This gave the dragons pause. “Well, we don’t know where it is, any more than you do.” The purple dragon shrugged.

“Hang on. I thought it was tied to Cardiff Below? That it couldn’t leave the city?” Jack’s face fell.

“Normally it couldn’t leave Cardiff Below. As it already has, don’t you think assuming it couldn’t leave Cardiff is a little…naïve?” a dragon’s laughter resulted in small jets of fire coming from its nostrils, Jenny observed, focussing on them intently.

“Do you know why it left? Taliesin mentioned…the white dragon.” Jenny was now the object of intent focus, from twelve slit pupils.

“The white dragon is a traitor.”
"Usurper!"

"Murderer."

"Invader."

"So why don’t you all go fight it, if it’s that bad?” Jenny folded her arms.

An older dragon, its scales turning dull grey, swam forward until it was in front of her. It opened its mouth and flames ran along its tongue. Jenny could feel the heat of them scorching her face. She tried not to flinch. “Dragons have honour. An unequal battle brings no pride.”

“Besides,” the purple dragon chimed in. “We have little power in the Upworld. We have no image there anymore. If we went above, we would be little more than ghosts. The red dragon remains as the symbol of an entire country. It still has power.”

“The red dragon must win this time.” the purple dragon hit the pool with a clenched claw, spraying everyone with water. “Half the battle is already won after all.”

“And it alone remains, out of all of us who once had power…”

Jack, Jenny and Vastra stood in complete bafflement. But Karen crept forward from where she had glued herself to the cave wall.

“Is this to do with the referendum?” she whispered. The attention of the six great dragons turned to her and she darted behind Jenny, who seemed the least afraid. A look of comprehension spread across Jack’s face.

“Gwytha!” the dull grey dragon called out, a calculating expression in his eyes. The purple dragon turned to look at him. “We may not know where it is now, but we know its destination. You must take them to the original battleground.”

“Why?” Gwytha’s head reeled back.

“They wish to return the red dragon to Cardiff Below. Whether it wins or loses, they are right. It must return.”

“Why would it need them to do that?”

“They can protect it.”

“From what?” Gwytha snorted derisively, looking over the four bipeds in front of it.

“From themselves. They threaten worse than lances, ways to ‘dent’ a dragon. If they are there to ensure its return, it will not be killed by whatever forces they have dreamed up.”

Jack and Karen looked mildly insulted.

“We entrust the safety of the red dragon to you.” The silver dragon brought itself upright. “Gwytha and Macsen will take you.”

Gwytha looked resigned. Another dragon, a deep dark green, clearly Macsen, looked affronted. But they were both silent.

“Um. Can’t we just drive there? Please?” Karen looked very unnerved and had started backing away. “I mean, in the legend…I mean I know where it is. We can look it up.”
"We can’t get there by driving. Can we." Jenny interrupted her. It wasn’t a question. Gwytha grinned unpleasantly in confirmation. Jenny stared at the cave ceiling, wondering why their cases always ended up like this. This wasn’t detecting, solving crimes, and helping people. This was getting involved in mythological warfare. What she wouldn’t give for some simple human based crimes…

The gold dragon sniggered. “Smart little human. Who are you, smart little human?”

“Jenny. Jenny Flint.”

All the dragons made sounds of approval at her name. “Tell me, Jenny Flint, how would you like to serve a dragon? I would take you on, as an apprentice rider.” The smile of the gold dragon didn’t inspire confidence. ‘We would be little more than ghosts’ they’d said. She would be bound to this beneath world, as her brother was. Was this what her brother had done? Made a pact, for the excitement, for the thrill? The temptation of adventure? But Jenny already had adventure in her life. She glanced at the main source of it. “I already got a dragon thanks.”

“What?” Vastra looked most affronted.

“What? You’re a lizard ain’t you? It’s basically the same.” Jenny hissed.

“Oh, thank you!”

The dragons all stared pointedly at Vastra. All they could see was another human. With a huff, she removed Jack’s device. Six necks all reeled backwards.

“A Silurian!”

“Awake!”

The necks convened for a muttered discussion. Vastra’s irritation at Jenny was overtaken by shock that they recognised her species.

Gwytha approached her. “We will take you to Dynas Emrys. Once the battle is done, it is within our power, small as it is, to return you to the place where your kind sleep beneath the earth, where you could join them once more.”

Jenny felt as if her heart had dropped through the floor. She didn’t move in the silence that followed the dragon’s statement.

“Thank you for the offer.” Vastra replied eventually, bowing her head.

“Well then. Let us be off. You two, ride with Macsen. I will take the Silurian and Jenny Flint.”

“Vastra.” Jenny blurted out. “Her name’s Vastra. And that’s Jack. And that’s Karen.”

“Climb aboard then, Jenny Flint and Vastra.” Gwytha crouched down. Vastra retrieved her sword and quickly scaled its leg, hauling herself up to sit between two ridge spikes on its back. Jenny took her time buckling on her sword, climbing slowly up after her, still feeling the shock of Gwytha’s offer. But it was selfish to ask Vastra to stay, when she could be with her own kind. Not her sisters, Jenny knew, but at least other Silurians. Where she would not have to wear a mask. Where she would not have to be alone among apes. She tried to shake it from her mind, to concentrate on what they had to do. What was about to happen.

Jenny saw out the corner of her eye that Jack and Karen had climbed up Macsen, looking very
nervous. Gwytha confirmed Macsen’s readiness with a brief look and then bounded up a tunnel into another far vaster cavern, launching herself into the air when she reached the tunnel’s lip. The wind whistled past, eye-stinging speed having been attained from a few wing flaps. If Jenny thought the car had provided effortless speed, it was nothing compared to a dragon. She hung onto the spike in front of her, squinting at the back of Vastra’s bowed head, so lost in her own thoughts that it took her a while to realise they couldn’t possibly be flying through a cave system. She looked down and saw small wavy lines of light in constant motion. She looked left and right to find small glows glimmering in the distance, causing the reflections on the water. The cold was getting to her and she wondered how Vastra was surviving, when Gwytha’s chest expanded and glorious heat spread through its scales and into her legs, easily rising through her body. The tiny glows were getting larger and turning into streaks as their speed increased. But the warmth remained.

Jenny felt the same sense of timelessness she’d experienced walking the One path, and therefore could not have said how long it was before the glows suddenly surrounded them, encasing them in a soft white light. In one heart stopping moment, they burst through the opaque wall it had created and into icy clouds that instantly drenched Jenny and Vastra to the bone. Gwytha slowed and glided to a halt, tumbling them onto the rocky ground. As they led there, recovering, Gwytha breathed a long continuous stream of hot air, warming them once more and causing their clothes to steam and dry.

“Protect the red dragon.” It said, stopping after their clothes began to crisp. “It is the last among us. Keep it safe, from whatever you would do to it.” The dragon seemed to fade, even as they stared at it. It took one last deep breath. “It has been good to fly above again.” It smiled wistfully as it disappeared completely.

Vastra was the first on her feet. She turned and tugged Jenny upright, her eyes glittering in raw and unadulterated joy. Jenny had never seen such an expression on her face before. It was mildly terrifying and yet infectious. She gave an attempt at a smile in return.

“That was fun.” Vastra grinned, showing all her teeth.

Jenny nodded and looked around, finding Jack and Karen sat a little way from them. “So, we just wait here for the Red Dragon then do we?”

Chapter End Notes

In 1979 proposals for a Welsh Assembly were turned down in a referendum. In September of 1997 another referendum was held and a slim majority voted for a Welsh Assembly. The Government of Wales Bill passed and in July 1998, royal assent was given to the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the Welsh Assembly was formed. (There have been further acts involving further devolvement of powers and organisation of how it works.)

Also, careful what you wish for Jenny Flint…
When it strode out of the mist, the first thing that surprised Jenny was the size. Far smaller than the frankly majestic dragons in the cave beneath Taff’s Well. It certainly couldn’t have carried more than one of them, it was barely bigger than a horse. Its scales shone like pearl, even against the white fog. It ignored them, stalking past to crouch on its hind legs at the edge of basin dip in the ground. Its tail whisking back and forth reminded Jenny of a cat. This was clearly the white dragon of legend. She glanced sideways at Vastra.

“D’you think the red dragon is gonna kill it?” she whispered, shivering slightly from cold and anticipation.

“I doubt it. It doesn’t seem to have succeeded any other time. Nor vice versa. I think it is defeat more than death.”

Jenny was about to reply when a ruffle of air swam through the fog. She grabbed Vastra and pulled her out of the way as a long plume of smoky orange flame burnt towards them. Vastra ran, keeping Jenny’s hand firmly in her own, choking on the hot air.

“I hope we’re the only ones here!” Jack and Karen were running towards them, eyes streaming from the smoke.

“I suggest finding a rock and hiding under it.” Karen gasped. “I thought I was going to be fighting aliens not…not that!” She gestured behind her at the two dragons.

“Trust me, some aliens are worse. And at least you’re not fighting either of them.” Jack slapped her on the back reassuringly as, unable to find a suitably large rock, they lay flat on the ground.

An ear-splitting roar made everyone cover their ears. Jenny screwed up her eyes, it was so loud it was painful. Her ears felt like they were vibrating.

“Is this actually happening?” Karen cried. “I mean can other people hear this and see this?”

Jack shrugged helplessly. “While fantastical and amazing, and rather attractive,” he winked “most of what I’ve dealt with falls in the range of sci-fi more than fantasy.” he grinned. “Well…depending on…” Karen elbowed him before he could finish the sentence.

Jenny, with her hands clapped over her ears, ignored them, watching the dragons, half mesmerised by the way such large beasts could move so daintily in the air, dodging slashing talons and whips of tails. Occasionally another plume of fire would scorch through the fog. Whenever the dragons landed for a moment, their talons scored the earth.

“I think this is definitely a real place and that these dragons are real.”

“But the dragons said you were right, that we couldn’t just drive here. If this is the real Dynas Emrys why not?” Karen asked.

“I think the term you’re looking for is ‘out of phase’. ” Jack interrupted, wincing as one of the red dragon’s talons tore through the wing skein of the white dragon and it let out an agonised shriek.

“This is a real place and the dragons are real. But both they and probably us as well, aren’t quite in
the same reality.”

“But it ate nine sheep!” Karen said indignantly. “People saw it! We got phonecalls!”

“This is definitely the Upworld.” Jenny agreed. “The dragons said it was the Upworld.” She was getting confused herself.

A bang nearby and a sudden burst of flame caused all four to scramble up, looking frantically around them.

“You are indeed all correct.” A voice said.

Vastra drew her sword. A hand reached out of the smoke and gently pushed it aside, the figure of a man materialising in front of her.

“Who are you?” Vastra asked roughly.

“My name is Myrddin Emrys. But there are some who call me…Tim?”

“Merlin??” Karen looked at him, wide eyed.

He bowed. “As I was saying, you are all correct. This is the Upworld. However, around this place, I found it pertinent to cast an enchantment. The shrieks of battling dragons can have unfortunate consequences on those mortals who hear them.”

“Oh great.” Jenny snorted.

“I take it one of the Elder Six, those who represented lands now fallen, would have brought you here?” he asked.

“Yes. Gwytha. And Macsen. But how come the Red Dragon could get here through the Upworld and we had to fly on dragons?” Karen sounded very put out about this. Jenny couldn’t understand. The ride had been intense, but a magical experience.

“I am a great enchanter, a noble magician, but even a fallen dragon has more power than me. With ease they can break through the barrier placed around here. It is, after all, merely to protect humans.” Tim/Merlin looked at them, raising an eyebrow.

“It ate nine sheep!”

“It was about to have a fight.” Tim pointed at the two dragons, now fighting tooth and claw as they rolled down the side of the dip. “It looks like its winning too.” The Enchanter smiled in grim satisfaction.

“How do we get it home?” Jenny asked. “The other dragons, they asked us to protect it.”

“It will return on its own, once the battle is over.” Tim shrugged. “But it will be visible.”

“What happens to the white dragon?” Vastra looked down at the miserable looking creature, blood staining its opalescent scales. It had fallen and now lay still at the bottom of the pit.

“It will stay here. This place has become its home after so many long years. It will return to the pit below, as will I.” Tim made his way to the edge of the pit and started to climb down.

“So that’s it?” Jenny snapped, as she stood at the edge. The red dragon was growling to itself as it climbed up, growling at Tim as he went by. It had grown larger. Even larger than Gwytha and
Macsen. Whether it was bleeding or not, Jenny couldn’t tell.

“Hey wait.” Karen suddenly looked horrified as the dragon passed them. “Only dragons can get in or out of Tim’s enchantment, right?”

“I hope you have those sonic lanterns!” the colour drained from Jack’s face.

“They’re in the car…” Karen whispered.

Jenny and Vastra didn’t wait for any further ideas but pelted after the red dragon.

“What are you going to do?” Jack yelled after them.

“You wanted us to capture the dragon! So that’s what we’re going to do!” Jenny shouted back over her shoulder, drawing her sword ready. Vastra nodded at her briefly and broke away in a diagonal line.

“How?? We don’t have any equipment!” Karen called after her.

The dragon was striding but at a leisurely enough pace that Jenny could run in front of it. At what she calculated to be an appropriate distance she skidded to a halt and turned.

“STOP!!” Jenny bellowed, brandishing her sword in front of her.

“Yelling at it?? That’s your plan??” Karen looked on in horror as the red dragon stopped mid-stride, snaking its head downwards towards her.

“Oh god.” Jack held Karen back. The red dragon’s jaws were opening, revealing very big pointy teeth.

Vastra came charging from the left, launching herself at the dragon’s head, narrowly missing impaling herself on a neck spike and grabbed it around the throat. It reared up, distracted, trying to shake Vastra off.

“COME ON!!” Jenny beckoned the other two as she circled round the dragon, sheathed her sword, and started climbing up its tail, using spikes and scales as hand holds.

“Oh well. At least I’m immortal.” Jack swallowed hard and started climbing,

“That’s a great comfort to me I’m sure!” Karen followed him.

The dragon felt the irritation on its tail and lashed around, landing back on four legs.

Karen clung on by wrapping her arms and legs fully around it. Jack almost fell, Jenny grabbed him by the jacket, allowing him enough of a reprieve to regain a hold.

“Make for the neck!” He gestured forward. “I’ll help Karen.”

The dragon was striding forward again, breaking into an ungainly run.

“Just hold on!” Jack yelled at Karen. “As soon as we’re free of the enchantment we should be fine.”

“What and then walk all the way back to bloody Cardiff??”

“Good point.” Jack conceded.
Jenny got half way towards the neck when, in an attempt to shake loose its unwelcome passengers, the red dragon took flight.

Multiple profanities rang out. Jenny even heard some hissed Silurian curses that made her raise her eyebrows. She clung to the spike in front of her, alternating her swearing with prayers.

Riding Gwytha had been thrilling, smooth and warm, a wonder of flight. Jenny tried hard not to throw up as the red dragon rolled over in mid-air, digging the toes of her boots underneath the lip of scales.

“I QUIT. I HAND IN MY RESIGNATION.” Jenny heard Karen scream from the tail as the dragon mercifully righted itself. “OH GOD!”

“Hey! I think I can see my house from up here!” Jack laughed manically.

“I TAKE IT BACK. I AM QUITE HAPPY TO WALK ALL THE WAY TO CARDIFF.”

Jenny looked down, letting the hysterical shouts and laughter wash over her. They were quite high up. She could feel the coolness of the air begin to bite at her hands and froze. “Vastra! We need to get it to land!” She had no idea how long it would take to travel back to Cardiff, particularly by dragon, but the cold would make it impossible for more than a few minutes. Particularly for the Silurian.

“That’s a good idea Jenny but how?” Jack asked.

“I don’t know.” Jenny whispered. There was no way they could hope to control the dragon. All they had were swords, and killing it would merely result in a plummet to their deaths. And they’d probably get in trouble if they even so much as injured it. She closed her eyes, trying to focus on holding on, imagining what else the dragon would try to get them off its back. After all, it wanted them gone as much as they wanted to be.

A swift almost vertical dive turned out to be its next move, levelling off just before they ploughed into the ground.

“Oh, we are going to have so much explaining to do.” Jack shook his head as they narrowly missed knocking a chimney off a house. The dragon swiftly gained height once more.

It was slightly warmer at least, at this height, Jenny mused, trying to ignore the fact that when she looked down she could see net curtains in windows. Jack was right. They were going to be seen by somebody. But that too was preferable to freezing to death. Having to cover up a gigantic red dragon flying around was acceptable if it meant that you were alive to do the covering up. And the dragon, Jenny noticed, as did Jack and Karen, was flying remarkably calmly now, low and level.

“What did you do?” Jenny shouted, asking anyone in her immediate vicinity.

“Used a Silurian method of communication to persuade it to comply.” Vastra replied simply, sounding a little weak and distant.

Jenny didn’t ask.

The flight to Cardiff was a great deal shorter than Jenny expected. Which meant less time for them to come up with a strategy on where precisely to land a ruddy great dragon. They had no idea where the red dragon even needed to land, in order to return to Cardiff Below. However, the red dragon
solved this problem for them by flying straight towards Cardiff Bay.

“Oh no.” Jack groaned as wings were folded in along the dragon’s back. “I suggest we jump for it!”
The dragon was speeding like an arrow in a shallow dive towards the water. “I hope everyone can swim!”

They jumped when Vastra jumped, diving or, alternately, falling in an undignified manner into the water. It hurt, Jenny thought, as she hung in the water, half stunned, her skin stinging, the waves caused by the dragon entering the water knocking against her. She tried to peer round in the murky water, but it hurt her eyes and she closed them, kicking towards the surface.

“Well! At least we’re fairly close to home.” Jack held her, floating on his back as she coughed and spat out water. He pointed over towards the bay’s edge where Jenny spotted a familiar red brick building. Karen was already swimming for it. Jenny could hear her cursing about the cold.

“Where’s Vastra?” Jenny turned around, struggling to keep afloat with her clothes. The Silurian was swimming towards her, to Jenny’s relief. Her relief was short lived when she saw how yellow Vastra’s scales were. And then she realised she could see Vastra’s scales. “Jack!”

“I got it.” Jack grabbed Vastra by the hand, re-activating the device.

“Jack. She’s too cold. We’ve gotta get her out of the water.” Jenny was staring at Vastra’s dull eyes as the Silurian held her hand.

Jack looked around the bay, searching for a boat or anything that could save them.

Jenny tugged the Silurian to her, hugging her, desperately treading water. “Please…”

Chapter End Notes

Various Dilemmas

Chapter Summary

A hospital is a good place to set various dilemmas. - Aminatta Forna

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The roar of an outboard motor was a foreign sound to Jenny but the sight of a small boat racing towards them was a welcome one. She had never before appreciated quite how heavy clothes could be, particularly combined with her sword and her Silurian. There were four people on board, peculiar puffed up waistcoats on over their clothes. One was steering, another was bent over, barely visible and two were sitting, one each side. One of them waved in reply to Jack’s desperate shout.

The one steering killed the engine and the boat drifted alongside them. One of them threw a round orange ring at Jenny. It floated, and she grabbed hold.

“Her first!” Jack pointed at Vastra and two people reached over and grabbed a hold, hauling her swiftly into the boat. Jenny clung with both hands to the ring which was hauled aboard with her along with it. Water streamed off her into the bottom of the boat where Vastra lay, unmoving, her human façade white, lips blue. The person who’d been bent over in the boat was attending to her, trying to feel for a pulse. Jack joined them with a grunt, flopping against the side of the boat.

“Radio in and get them to call for an ambulance.” he said, after looking at Vastra’s face. The man held up a large black rectangle to his face and barked an order.

“An ambulance?” Jenny grabbed Jack’s arm, nearly toppling him into the bottom of the boat as the person steering started the engine once more and sped towards the shore.

“It’ll take us to the hospital.” He reassured her.

“Are you mad??” Jenny hissed.

“She’s hypothermic. She needs hospital treatment.” Jack replied firmly. The boat slowed to pick up Karen, still swimming balefully.

“And when they find out?” Jenny raised her eyebrows meaningfully under the distraction of Karen’s arrival into the boat.

“Is it better that she dies? I don’t have a first clue about…how she works. But this is not good.” Jack gestured at the still Silurian.

“Can’t you get Torchwood? Doesn’t that have doctors?” Jenny asked desperately.

“And what do you think they’ll do to her?! This isn’t the Torchwood from here, a small unit, mainly forgotten about. And it isn’t the Torchwood from your time either, still setting up, able to reason with.” Jack argued back quietly, glancing at the other four people in the boat. And Karen who was frowning. Jenny didn’t think that kidnapping their agents and riding into their base and waving swords particularly counted as reasoning with them, but she was silent. This was a Torchwood after
a hundred years, with the support of the Queen. She could imagine why Jack was concerned.

“Your time?” Karen whispered at Jenny, breaking her from her brief reverie.

“Shh! My point being we don’t really have a choice. And you all need to go to hospital too.” Jack pointed between Jenny and Karen.

“What about you?” Jenny, more on autopilot than anything. Fear was gripping her more than the cold was.

“Strong constitution.” Jack fobbed her off.

Jenny slumped in the bottom of the boat, miserable in her sopping clothes, trying to think of any way out that didn’t involve hospitals and coming up with nothing. She’d never seen Vastra in such a bad state before. She leant over the prone Silurian and whispered “I won’t let them take you. I promise.”

The sound of the siren made her wince as the ambulance approached where they were waiting on the docks. Vastra was loaded onto a trolley and Jenny followed it, hauling herself into the back after the paramedics. They gave her one glance and told her to sit on the seat and strap herself in.

“Jenny…” Jack called as the doors slammed behind her and the ambulance set off.

It was fast, much faster than the car had been, and the sirens rarely cut out their wailing. Jenny watched in silence as the paramedic checked Vastra over, attaching clips and wires, reading monitors that pinged and dinged, a look of fierce concentration on her face.

“We need to get her out of these clothes.” The paramedic muttered to herself, cutting them away and covering Vastra with a blanket. Jenny collected Vastra’s sword as it was unceremoniously dumped on the floor. She’d been in many strange situations before but this one was beating spectral hounds in the basement.

It seemed no time at all that they pulled up outside a large building and Vastra was being unloaded, pushed along on a trolley through wide white corridors. Jenny followed, still dripping water everywhere. A nurse grabbed at her and was shoved heedlessly to one side.

“You can’t go in there. They’ll do the best they can for her. Come on.” Another nurse appeared to help her colleague.

Jenny didn’t bother replying, merely drew her sword. They backed away hastily and let her pass, calling out for security. She followed Vastra’s trolley into a room with small bays, separated by curtains. The paramedic was reeling off information to a group of people who were gathered around Vastra. None of it sounded good. The paramedic turned to leave and noticed Jenny stood there, sword drawn.

“You can’t take the device on her wrist off.” Jenny managed to say. Her mind was beginning to fog from the cold. The sword in her hands was wavering in front of her eyes as she felt herself shivering uncontrollably.

“We’re going to do the best we can for her, but you need to leave now. You need treatment yourself.” Two nurses came up to her from behind, followed by a tall man in black clothes.

“You can’t take it off.” Jenny fought the dizziness, her sword dropping. There were tears on her face, she could feel them, startling and warm. Someone grabbed the sword from her hands, she felt
people grab her by the arms as she sagged forward, and she thought she heard a cry of surprise but there was nothing she could do now. Her final thought before unconsciousness claimed her was that she had failed Vastra.

It was dark. She’d opened her eyes and there was only a little light, from glowing machines and through a window in the door. She wasn’t wearing her clothes but an uncomfortable gown. Silvery sheets covered her. She struggled upright, feeling nauseous. There was someone sat in the chair beside her bed, asleep and snoring gently. It was Jack and a pang of relief at familiarity shot through her.

“Jack.” she swung herself out of bed and shook him awake. “Jack!”

“Jenny!” He swept her up in a huge bear hug.

“Where…”

“Vastra’s fine. She…they um…realised. Obviously. But it’s fine. She’s fine.” Jack laughed a little nervously.

“What happened?!”

“Well obviously you caused quite a stir with the swords.” Jack tutted. “Don’t worry, I’ve got them both safe.”

“Jack!” Jenny snapped at him.

“I brought you some clothes.” He reached down to a bag by the side of his chair. “I hate hospital gowns. Figured you would as well.”

She glowered at him but snatched them gratefully.

“As I was saying, Vastra is safe. I uh…there was a bit of a shock. But she’s safe.”

“They’re not gonna lock her up?” Jenny frowned as she tugged on a pair of jeans.

“No but they are…very interested.”

“Who’s they??”

“Well the nurses obviously. They wanted to ring people. I dissuaded them. Well Torchwood did. It’s all under wraps.” Jack shrugged with a smile.

“Torchwood.” Jenny froze in unfolding a jumper.

“I rang them, they got in touch with sleeper agents within certain industries. The hospital is on a lock down. Contagious skin disease is the official story.”

“It’s not a disease, it’s just her skin!”

“I know! I know.” Jack held up his hands in surrender. “The uh…the Queen got involved.”

“Queen Victoria??”
“No, no. Elizabeth in this era. Apparently certain stories got handed down through the generations.” Jack grinned. “And it’s amazing what a phone call from the Queen can achieve, even in this day and age.”

Jenny stood silently for a moment. “I want to see her.”

“They’ll want to do tests on you too, to make sure you’re all right…” Jack watched Jenny march towards the door. “…but that can wait.” He jogged after her.

Jenny didn’t need Jack to point out the door that led to Vastra. Two burly men, dressed in grey, brown and green uniforms stood either side, holding guns with practised ease. They spotted Jack and saluted. One of them held the door open for Jenny, staring at her blankly. It was as if they’d been expecting her. Part of Jenny’s mind wondered precisely what those handed down stories had contained. For the moment, she ignored him and orders he might have been given and walked through. The room was hot, almost muggy with heat that emanated from glowing orange tubes in metal boxes. She picked her way through to the bed. Light shone off the Silurian’s scales, which were now a healthier pale green. She was covered in blankets and silver sheets, still attached to the steadily bipping monitors by means of wires that ran down under the blankets.

Jenny reached out a hand and was shocked to find it trembling, as badly as it had done from cold. Her whole body was. Her clenched teeth were chattering.

“Jenny!” Jack was suddenly beside her, turning her round and holding her up by the arms. “It’s okay. She’s okay. It’s all just medical equipment, it’s just to monitor her. They…we…we don’t know anything about Silurians. What the normal pulse rate is or normal temperature.”

“She didn’t tell you?”

“Do you know?”

“She hasn’t woken up yet?” Jenny knocked Jack’s hands away and turned back to Vastra. It wasn’t really a question. “Where’s her clothes? She won’t…she won’t like being in a gown. Not like that.” Jenny spun back round. “Get her some clothes!”

Jack took a step back, recovered, nodded and left in silence, the look in Jenny’s eyes forbidding any argument or comment.

Jenny carefully climbed into the bed with Vastra, curling up at her side underneath the blankets. “This is like our first April. When you got all cold. Remember?” Jenny whispered to her. “You got drunk and then I came home from work to find you on the floor. And we curled up together like cats in front of the fire. Near lost me job for stayin’ home to nurse you. Got such a wallop. You ain’t gonna take three days to get better, now are you? I don’t care what Jack sez. We gotta go home. Somehow. Gotta find the Marquis and go home. Where we’re safe. Sort of. Safer than ‘ere.” Jenny thought about their life in Victorian London. “Sort of.” She sighed.

By the time Jack had returned with clothes for Vastra, Jenny was already asleep. He placed them on a chair by the bed and left them, guarded by the two men, still staring stoically at anyone who came near them.

Jenny woke up hot and sweating under the blankets. Someone had come in and turned down the heaters, but it was still baking. She felt Vastra wriggle next to her as she sat up, being careful not to let the cocoon of blankets fall open too far. She placed a hand on the Silurian’s head crest scales and
was relieved to find them warm.

“Water…” Vastra croaked softly.

Jenny looked about her and found someone had already placed a jug and glasses on the bed side cabinet. It was tepid, just as well, Jenny thought, cold water would have chilled Vastra’s stomach. Jenny reached over and poured a glass before urging Vastra to sit up a little, keeping the blankets tucked around her neck.

“I’m not a youngling to need such care.” Vastra looked at Jenny out the corner of her eye as the young woman held the glass to Vastra’s lips.

“Small sips.” Jenny ignored her, trickling water into Vastra’s mouth.

“Well, what are we to do?” Vastra asked, once she’d drank the entire glass. “I notice that I am no longer wearing that reprehensible device and that there are two men standing guard at the door. Have we been captured?”

“They’re just there to keep people away.” Jenny shrugged. “I think. Jack should be coming back later. He brought you clothes. Thought you wouldn’t like wearing the gown once you came to.”

“Mm.” Vastra hummed and snuggled back up against Jenny. Getting dressed would involve getting out of the bed. Out of the warmth.

“We can’t escape with you wearing it at any rate. And you’ll probably be warmer in clothes.” Jenny shifted away, sliding off the bed. She was glad to see her hands no longer shook. She felt calm. She was hungry though. She drank a glass of water herself, but it did little to fill her stomach up. She held out a pair of trousers to a baleful Silurian who was glaring at her from half-lidded eyes. “I want to go home.” Jenny said simply.

With a soft sigh, Vastra got up and dressed.

“Jack’s got our swords. We’ll have to find him first.” Jenny informed her when she was done, wrapped in a high collared woollen jumper, jogging bottoms and trainers, a garishly coloured jacket clashing with Vastra’s scales. Jenny studied the ensemble critically. Without Jack’s device Vastra still stood out. Even more so with that jacket.

“First we have to get past the guards.” Vastra reminded her. “But that shouldn’t be a worry.”

“No eating them.” Jenny told her sternly as they walked over to the doors.

“Of course not.” Vastra replied, in a tone most unreassuring.

Jenny flung the doors open at Vastra’s gesture and the Silurian smiled as the two men turned around in surprise. Her tongue snapped out at first one, then the other and they dropped to the floor.

Jenny stared, first at them and then at Vastra.

“A Silurian’s tongue can be coated in a mild poison intended to stun its victims, so it can kill and eat them at leisure.” Vastra grinned arrogantly.

“An’ you din’t think to tell me before you…” Jenny stopped abruptly, flushing bright red. She scowled at Vastra who dropped her smile and looked suitably apologetic.

“I have full control over it.” She protested. “And I would never use it on you.”
“That’s very comforting to know.” Jenny said acidly, stepping over the fallen men and glancing up and down the corridor.

“Jenny!” Vastra grabbed her arm and she looked at her. “Never. It never even occurred to me to tell you before now.”

“Well from now on you’re gonna tell me everything. Everything about Silurians. Starting with average heartbeat and body temperature. And what happens when you get sick.” Jenny took her hand and pulled her out into the corridor.

Vastra remembered she’d promised Jenny that she’d teach Jenny about Silurian physiology, what seemed an age ago now.

“A normal heart rate would be about 40 beats per minutes. Resting, I suppose it could drop to as low as 30. My body temperature would be about the same as yours, internally. 35 to 37 degrees, optimally.”

Jenny pulled her flat against the wall behind a door as two nurses strode down the corridor they were about to emerge onto. “That’s all bloody wonderful. Mind writing it down for me after we get out of here?” she whispered.

“I don’t see why we don’t just wait here for Jack.”

“You weren’t saying that when you was knocking them guards out!”

“That was before I realised how cold it was out here.” Vastra sniffed, huddling closer to Jenny.

With a long-suffering sigh, Jenny checked the coast was clear and tugged Vastra along again. She found a door that said stairs and pushed it open, furtively scouting ahead and then beckoning for Vastra to follow her. They made their way down past large signs with numbers on them all the way to the ground floor without incident. The reception area not crowded but was still full of people. Jenny bit her lip, watching through a small pane of glass.

She turned to Vastra. “Pull the neck up.” She tugged the long stretchy neck of the jumper Vastra was wearing up and over the Silurian’s nose.

“Won’t this make me even more conspicuous?” Vastra asked, voice muffled by the material, as Jenny found a hood in the collar of the jacket and pulled it up and over Vastra’s head.

“Just keep yer head down.” Jenny ordered her. Taking a deep breath she pushed the door open. She was about to hold Vastra’s hand and then remembered herself, shoving her own in her pockets and casually striding across the floor. Vastra followed, gaining more than a few odd looks for her deeply suspicious outfit. However, she was staring intently at Jenny’s feet and didn’t see them.

Jenny heaved a sigh of relief as they passed through the main door and out onto the pavement. It was cut off by the sight of a long black car sitting ominously at the kerb in the drop off area. An upright person in a suit who had been stood by the side of it strode over to meet them.

“Come with me if you want to live.”

“I told you we should’ve just waited for Jack.” Vastra looked pointedly at Jenny.

Chapter End Notes
It was in 1887 that St John’s Ambulance (as in the sticker on the front of the TARDIS) Brigade was created in London. Before then it was private ambulances if you had the money to pay. Three cheers for the NHS.
Moving On Through Time

Chapter Summary

I wanted a quick ending. Deus ex TARDISa

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the long gap. S’bin one helluva year.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They stared in horror at the man, who coughed. “Sorry. Always wanted to say that. What I mean is, I’m here to drive you back to the Torchwood base. Jack said you probably wouldn’t stick around in the hospital.” He sighed. “That’s another fiver I owe him. Well anyway. Shall we?” He opened the back door of the car.

“How d’we know we can trust you? Might be kidnappin’ us to take us back to some secret base?” Jenny didn’t move an inch closer to the car.

The man looked stumped. “Well, technically we are going to a secret base. Well, back to Torchwood Three. It’s not really that secret if you’ve been there before. Um, but we’d better move quickly. I mean…” he gestured at Vastra.

The jacket really did stand out. “Fine.” Jenny saw Vastra shiver and followed the Silurian into the back seat of the car.

She wasn’t overly comfortable with it, but it did get them out of the hospital. And he was only one man. She glanced at Vastra, who had been strangely silent. The car was heated, and the Silurian had hunched in on herself in the back seat. She hadn’t tugged down the jumper, her head shrouded. Such actions did little to quell Jenny’s sense of unease.

When they pulled up and walked towards the stone, they saw even more guards standing around the small stone. They looked a little more intimidating than the man who had picked them up, despite wearing the same style of suit. One of them thumbed a button on a small black box and uttered something. The hatch was thrown open. Jenny and Vastra were guided by ungentle hands towards it. The fact that Vastra didn’t comment on this ungraceful behaviour by apes scared Jenny. She wondered if the Silurian was not sufficiently recovered enough and cursed her own haste at wanting to get out. The driver, now seeming a friendly and helpful being, had been left behind. She swallowed as she climbed down towards the door, not saying anything either. Hopefully, Jack would be there and would explain.

There were two more guards, in armour and carrying guns of a very modern variety, either side of the door. One of them turned around and keyed the entry code and the door opened. Jack was indeed there, standing very upright and still, eyeing the overly armed people that filled his small office.

Jenny glanced around them all and then her eyes caught the small old lady in a pastel yellow skirt
suit who was sat in a chair not too far away. There was a matching hat and a small handbag. She seemed very out of place in amongst the clutter and the bristling weaponry. Another alien? Jenny wondered to herself.

She looked up. “Ah. You have arrived at last. Good. You may sit down.” Her voice was reedy but firm.

Vastra sagged into a chair but Jenny remained standing up, mimicking the posture of the guards, to make it clear what her role was.

“One knows what you are.” The lady ignored Jenny. “You do not need to remain disguised.”

Vastra silently pulled down the jumper. The chair creaked and rocked a little as she slumped a little further down, lounging as if she were back in the plant room at Paternoster Row. The old lady’s eyes raked over the scales.

“Exactly as described. Of course, you are not one’s first encounter with the strange and unknown. But it is still a marvel to see. I only wish the Doctor were here with you. I have never met the man, only heard from afar the chaos which usually attends his visits to this planet. Of course, he is officially banished, but I should like to meet him one day. He got on very well with the first Elizabeth. Enough that she married him. Although she ended up banishing him as well. And yet he flouts both.”

“The Doctor got married?” Jenny raised her eyebrows in surprise. The old lady ignored her but wheels were slowly turning in Jenny’s mind. “Wait. When you say the first Elizabeth, you mean like…Queen Elizabeth?” Vastra’s head raised slightly. Jack desperately tried to catch Jenny’s eye but she ignored him. “Are you the Queen?”

The Queen finally looked at her and gave a small smile. “Your lack of reverence for the monarchy is also recorded in the archives.” Jenny flushed but the Queen was already looking at Vastra again. “When one heard reports that you’d turned up in Cardiff, one decided to meet with you, having read so much of your exploits from the archives. Not just of Torchwood, but UNIT and Scotland Yard.”

Jenny opened her mouth, but the Queen held up a small gloved hand and she remained silent.

“I believe the phrase one uses is Spoilers.” The Queen got up, a little stiffly and walked over to stand in front of Jenny. She was the same height. Some fleeting thought on curtseying flashed through Jenny’s mind but the Queen had moved over to Vastra before Jenny could move.

“One is told you are a great detective.”

Vastra gazed dully up at the Queen.

“Indeed, that your investigations have saved the Earth from alien incursion and supernatural phenomena many a time. One is told that once again you have been instrumental just such an adventure here.”

Vastra’s continued silence puzzled and worried Jenny. “Ma’am?” Jenny broke her stance and crouched down beside the chair.

“Is she quite well?” The Queen enquired.

“I dunno. She never tells me about her physiology. Not enough to know. Vastra!”

The Silurian turned her head and looked at Jenny with plaintive eyes. “I’m hungry.”
Jenny snorted, remembering how many occasions she’d told Vastra that. But Vastra was in earnest, just as much as she’d been.

“She needs food.” Jenny stood up and turned to the Queen. “After bein’ so cold. And she ain’t eaten well since we got ‘ere.”

“What does she require?” The Queen asked, beckoning a guard to her.

“Meat. Any kind. Lamb she likes. Raw meat I mean. She…”

“Lamb, then.” The Queen nodded towards a random guard and he left. “So. You are Jenny Flint, yes?”

Jenny nodded, trying a hasty curtsey, before remembering she was wearing jeans. She caught Jack’s eye after she’d regained her balance and he looked away hastily, trying not to laugh.

“One’s great, great grandmother commented on your lack of grace. Indeed, she seemed quite taken by you.”

Jenny recalled her last meeting with Queen Victoria. “Can’t imagine why. Ma’am.” She tacked on hastily. Perhaps she should get into the habit of being slightly more cordial towards monarchs.

The Queen merely raised her eyebrows.

“One does wonder, if the Doctor is not with you, how you will be returning to your own time?”

“We have an arrangement with…someone.” Jenny cut herself off. London Below would not welcome official interest.

“Someone?” The Queen stared at her. Jenny ignored her, more concerned with Vastra, who had slipped further down in the chair.

“I should never’ve taken you out the hospital.” Jenny sighed, crouching down beside her once more. “Not that they’d exactly know what to do with you either.”

“Here.” Jack walked over, shrugging off his jacket and spreading it over Vastra.

“Do you know anything about Silurians?” Jenny asked him.

He shook his head. “I’ve only ever met Vastra. So far. There’s a long life waiting for me yet.”

“She is a Silurian?” They both turned to look at the Queen. “She doesn’t look anything like the Silurians I’ve read about in the UNIT files.”

Jenny had no idea what to say. Fortunately, the guard arrived back with some lamb.

“I asked them to cut it into strips.” He said as he shoved the waxed paper parcel towards Jenny.

She stared some more at this unexpected thoughtfulness. “Er…thanks. Ma’am?”

There was a susurration as the guards minutely adjusted their postures and stared fixedly at points in thin air or on the wall or indeed anywhere that was not at a ravenous Silurian gulping down strips of raw meat, fed to her by Jenny. The Queen covered the moment by striking up a conversation with Captain Jack, asking about the case. He enthusiastically launched into an explanation about dragons and flying and generally how everyone had saved the day. Jenny couldn’t see quite what they’d done apart from investigate and find things out. They hadn’t been able to stop anything, nor had they
been particularly useful. Indeed, the only thing she could see that they’d done on this adventure was get into trouble. And she bet they wouldn’t even get paid for it either. Below didn’t work in currency and the money in 1998 was not going to pass muster in 1888. Not to mention the small matter of getting them home, to the right time frame, without getting further indebted to the Marquis. But that would require Vastra to be at full fitness and for the Queen and her score of body guards to let them go. There was also the small issue of sleep and food for Jenny, which her body was reminding her about quite firmly.

She slumped to the floor, with the Doctor’s voice echoing in her head. “Going for two days without food or drink is all very well in an Underworld…”

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There was a hiss of rain on glass. She was warm and comfortable but ravenous and the plaintive gurgling of her stomach roused her. Grumbling, she swung her legs out of bed, feeling lightheaded. She staggered out the bedroom door and all the way down to the kitchen on autopilot before her brain managed to catch up with her.

She paused only for a second before deciding that that information could be processed later, and promptly raided the larder.

“Hello!”

She turned and threw an onion at him. He ducked. “Oi! What was that for?”

“Surprisin’ me.” Jenny shrugged, taking down the frying pan and starting on breakfast.

“Thought it’d be a nice one. Home again.” The Doctor gestured round the kitchen. “I checked Vastra over by the way. She’s fine.”

“How did you get us back?”

“Well, Vastra must’ve mentioned I travel in time.”

“The…time and dimension ship?”

“Time And Relative Dimension In Space. TARDIS. Yes.”

“She said she’d only go in it to save your life.”

“Step inside it was her exact words. Not stepping if you’re being carried. I…you need to be here. Couldn’t rely on this Marquis bloke, might get you stuck wandering below for eternity and you’re needed here. Soon. Quite soon. There’s something you’ve got to do. Something important. Big and important.”

Jenny stared at him. Then looked around. “Where’s Donna?” she looked at him. His face was crumpled in pain but there was something else. He looked…thin. And old.

“She uh…she’s safe. She’s fine. She uh…went back home. She’s married now.”

“Doctor…”

“Ahh.” He slumped. Teeth gritted in pain. She watched in silence. “Stuff happens doesn’t it. Hah. I kept telling Vastra to be careful.” He trailed off again.

“I’ll go get ‘er.” Jenny stood to leave.
“No! I’ll…you have breakfast. You haven’t eaten. I can find her.” He staggered out the door.

The Doctor had staggered. Jenny turned over sausages, cracked open an egg and plopped a slice of bread in the pan. But he regenerated. Rose had explained it. Whatever had happened. “He’ll be fine. He won’t die.” She whispered to herself. “He’ll just…change. Again.” She didn’t want him to. She’d grown to like this Doctor as well. And he’d looked so sad.

Vastra would tell her later, perhaps. The Doctor never seemed to really trust her with the full story. Or maybe he just didn’t want to scare her. Maybe she reminded him too much of his companions. Maybe when he looked at her, he saw her being lost too. All the things his companions went through. Vastra had asked “Is it worth it?” He’d said “Always.”

Wonder whether they’d answer the same, the people he travels with. She thought, chewing reflectively on a piece of bacon. Would she? The Doctor had said his answer couldn’t be Vastra’s. Couldn’t be anyone else’s. She had seen fantastical things, ridden on dragons and hawks. No doubt his companions had also seen amazing things. You just couldn’t compare that to the life without, you wouldn’t know. But she preferred this life, the excitement. Jess had been right about her in that respect. Even if she had of come from a normal home, she would never have been able to settle for it. Still, there was a small pang. A little bit of normal never hurt anyone. She wondered whether the Doctor ever yearned for it. The future where her and Vastra had been married sprang to mind.

She washed up and made tea and hung about the kitchen waiting. Vastra came in, silently and Jenny shoved a plate of cold meat and a cup of tea across the table towards her.

“Has he gone?”

“Yes.”

“I wanted to say goodbye.”

“He does not like goodbyes.” Vastra looked weary. “Besides, we will see him again, no doubt.”

“But not…him, right?”

“Who knows.”

The sadness of the Doctor was clearly catching.

“Did he tell you how we got home?”

“Yes.” Vastra said with a hint of asperity. “But I forgive him for that. And I am glad I got to see him. Getting forewarning of an upcoming regeneration is always nice.”

“I didn’t think I’d miss him. When I first met ‘im, I din’t like him all that much. Preferred the old Doctor. But now he’s goin’, I think I’ll miss him too.”

Vastra smiled wryly. “Such is the way of being friends with the Doctor. No doubt when we next meet him, it will follow the same pattern.”

Jenny sighed. “S’a shame he brought us back tho. I’d’ve liked to see the dragons again.”

“Should I be jealous?”

“Ha! You’re the only lizard fer me.”
No but seriously Catrin Stewart and the Queen are the same height.

Trivia! Queen Elizabeth II wakes up to bagpipes every day. Apparently this was a tradition started by Queen Victoria. Hella way to wake up. I'mma set my alarm ring tone to Piper's Spirit from here on in.
It occurred to Jenny, as she was washing up the breakfast things, that the Irregulars hadn’t been round yet. Nor had Parker come to say hello. They’d been in Cardiff for a while, but with time travel surely that didn’t matter.

“P’raps they think we’re still away.” She mused out loud to herself, drying her hands on a towel. Vastra had disappeared to her study, just off the Plant Room and, without an ongoing case, Jenny felt a little at a loss. She wandered distractedly into the yard, thinking to see Alice, perhaps go for a ride. There was no-one about in the yard either.

“Did we come back on a Sunday?” Jenny muttered, opening the stable. Alice snorted and whinnied at her. Jenny smiled. “Miss me that much old girl?” she whispered, stroking a hand down the horse’s neck.

From outside came the sound of tuneless whistling that she recognised as Parker’s son. She turned to greet him as he opened the door but his look of terror stalled her words. He stood frozen for a moment before dashing back out again. Jenny checked herself. No, she was wearing proper Victorian clothes again, not “jeans”.

“Did I ‘ave somethin’ on me face?” she asked Alice before following him. The gate swung shut with a bang behind him. Feeling distinctly unnerved, Jenny went back into the house, swiftly checking her face in the bathroom mirror before going to find Vastra.

“Ma’am. This time travel stuff. It don’t…make you scary does it? Like…someone would just drop everything and flee at the sight of yer?”

“It depends. Most apes find me terrifying.”

“Yeah but that’s just…” Jenny cut herself off. Well, it got Vastra back for “apes”, she supposed.

“Quite.” Vastra said dryly. “But no. If you’re concerned that it would suddenly turn you into a gorgon…well not the type of time travelling we’ve done at any rate. Why are you even asking?”

“Parker. Junior. ‘e came into the stables, saw me and bolted. As if I was a ghost… I din’t die or nuffin’ in the future? and now I’m a ghost in the past?”

“Well if you are, you are a very visible ghost.” Vastra smiled, pressing a finger very gently against Jenny’s nose.

“I ain’t bein’ funny!” Jenny knocked her hand away. “This is serious.”

“Perhaps he had been drinking and was scared you’d caught him? Parker did mention his son had a weakness for it.” Vastra shrugged. It wasn’t enough of a mystery to interest the Silurian but Jenny was still unsettled. She wanted to see the Paternoster Irregulars.

“Well, anyway. The Irregulars ain’t come round so I’m goin’ out to see if I can catch up on anythin’ we missed.”

“Your little band of informants missed breakfast? Now that is unusual.”
Jenny stuck her tongue out but Vastra always had her beat in that competition. The Silurian turned back to her book and missed Jenny’s eyeroll.

“See you later then ma’am.”

She’d barely flung her cloak round her shoulders and reached the front door when there was a loud banging and clattering at the back one. Darting into the kitchen, she was suddenly accosted from all sides.

“Miss Jenny!”

“Jenny!!”

“Miss! You’re back!”

“Miss Jenny!!”

Even Parker was there, wide eyes staring at her.

Jenny held herself calm and still in amongst the clamouring throng. The most important thing right now, she told herself, is not to give anything away until you know what’s going on.

She let out the breath she’d been holding. “Yes! Yes.” she held up her hands placatingly. “I’m back. Arrived back last night with Madam.”

“Where on Earth did you go?” Parker asked, his usual deferential manner dropped momentarily.

“Where was you?” Ada tugged at her sleeve.

“Was it NOT on Earth?” Jack asked, wide-eyed.

“Was it Below?” Cris shuddered.

“We couldn’t find you!” Dotty tugged at her other sleeve.

“Not in all o’ London!” Thrupp added.

“Well that would be because I was in Cardiff.” Jenny spoke over the noise. Well it’s not a lie, she thought.

“Cardiff?” Dotty frowned.

“Where’s that?” Soljer asked.

“In WALES?!”

“In Wales again?” Parker raised his eyebrows.

“What was there in Wales to keep you away so long?” Thrupp looked dolefully up at her.

Now a distinct feeling of dread was beginning to fall on Jenny. “Was I away that long? It didn’t feel like it.” She said, once again speaking the absolute truth.

“Months and MONTHS Miss Jenny.” Thrupp answered.
“Aye! You left in Spring and now it’s SUMMER.” Boggin told her.

“S’almost AUTUMN.” Jack folded his arms, shaking his head.

“It IS Autumn really.” Cris shrugged.

Months and months? Jenny felt a surge of irritation. Oh, but the Doctor had to get them back himself because he didn’t want to risk de Carabas getting them lost in London Below, did he? They had to be back in this specific time because they had things to do, he said. Maybe nearly regenerating made him lose track. Maybe his TARDIS whatever that was couldn’t tell the damn time properly. Whatever it was, when she next saw him, she was going to give HIM months and months.

“Miss Jenny?” Parker asked tentatively after a moment’s silence.

“You alright miss?” Jack looked at her strangely.

She took a deep breath. “Yes. Well. We’re back now, so business as usual. Sorry to be away so long, we didn’t really intend to. Did you take the money out the pot like I told you to if I wasn’t here? Did your wages get paid Parker?” Jenny tried to change the subject, in case the next question was what she’d been up to.

“Yes we did.” Boggin rolled his eyes, as if they’d forget.

“It’s nearly ALL gone though!” Thrupp said pitifully.

“Aye they did that. Nothing amiss on that front. Just concerned about where you and Madam was.” Parker interjected.

“We ALL were.” Ada said resentfully.

“Well then. Months and months. You must have a lot to tell me about what’s been going on, ey?” Jenny tried to distract them again from her disappearance.

“Oh yes!” Dotty nodded.

“There’s bin a murder.” Boggin said spookily.

“TWO murders.” Thrupp corrected him.

“These two women got killed.” Cris told her, more helpfully.

“One got stabbed 39 times!! Imagine bein’ stabbed 39 times.” Jack’s face was a picture.

“Imagine havin’ the energy to STAB someone 39 times!” Thrupp’s face was two pictures.

“And one got slashed ALL over their body. Din’t they Parker?” Dotty said ghoulishly.

“Well don’t go an’ tell Miss Jenny about that now ey?” Parker tried to hush her.

“Yeah but we gotta! The police are real worried. Cos Madam wasn’t here. And they never caught no-one for that murder back in April neither so they reckon they got a proper killer on their hands.” Dotty shuddered.

“I don’ think they care tho cos all those women were just prostitutes. They just ain’t tryin’.” Cris shrugged.
A fresh feeling of dread swept through Jenny. “What was their names?” she asked, as casually as she could and held back a sigh of relief when none of them were Lettie. And then felt bad. Three women were dead. There was nothing to be relieved about.

“The last was the worst. They reckon whoever did was tryna get at her vitals like.” Jack spat.

“S’dark times Miss Jenny. Makes a man glad you and the Madam are back. Bet the police will be too.” Parker nodded seriously.

“Yeah we all know how much they rely on you really.” Cris nodded.

“Well, me and Madam best be off down the police station then. Find out everything.” Jenny tried to bustle her way through the crowd of irregulars. Vastra would need informing of this “months and months” situation as well as the run of murders.

“We can tell you everythin’ Miss Jenny.” Jack said reproachfully.

“Yeah the police don’t know much about it.” Cris shook his head.

“Well, they need to know we’re back at any rate. And if you want some work, try tracking down Lettie Palmer. Should’ve set up shop again by now. She might know even more about it than you.”

The Irregulars looked shocked. “Blimey.” Jack whistled. “Now thas a lady to be respectful to then.”

“Aye and make sure you are.” Jenny nodded.

Chris beckoned the urchins out, leaving Jenny and Parker alone in the kitchen.

“Much else happened then?” she asked casually, not knowing quite how to dismiss him so she could find Vastra.

“No, not much Miss. We kept Alice in good condition, my missus came and aired the house and dusted. You should find it all just so.” Parker nodded. “I don’t let her walk alone now. Nor my son with his wife.”

“What not even to the shops?” Jenny teased.

“Of course to the shops, Miss Jenny.” Parker sighed patiently. “I meant alone at night.” He tutted and went back out into the yard.

Jenny thought about Vastra, and all of her night time wanderings. Well at least I don’t have to worry about her, she thought. If Vastra met a knife wielding maniac, she’d probably eat him.

But if someone was targeting prostitutes, then Lettie was suddenly high on her concern list, even if she was a house owner more than a street walker these days. And then there was her sister, and her unknown activities. If it wasn’t safe to walk the streets at night, Jenny wanted to check in on her as well. She cursed that she’d already sent all of the Irregulars off as she went to find Vastra.

Vastra was reading a newspaper whilst lounging in one of the two new wicker chairs that now stood in the Plant Room.

“Ah Jenny. They are quite excellent are they not? They must’ve been delivered whilst we were away. Although, according to this newspaper we’ve only been gone a day.” Vastra flicked to the front to check the date and then frowned.

“Um…about that.” Jenny bit her lip. “The uh… the Irregulars…”
“Oh they came round after all then did they?”

“Yes. And Parker. Um…I think that might be an old newspaper. Parker’s wife probably stopped bringing them in after a few days.” Jenny started twisting her hands inside her cloak.

The gesture did not go unnoticed by the Silurian.

“What is it? What did they tell you?” Vastra stood up.

“I think we need to go see the Inspector. Well you do. I’ve got to go check on Jess. Um. There’s been murders you see. Three now. Two pretty bad ones. Violent like.”

Vastra tutted. “We leave for only a few days…”

“No ma’am. I mean…it ain’t been just a few days. More like…a few months.”

Vastra sighed. “This, Jenny, is why I dislike time travel.”

“Still. Makes up for the second go at Christmas.” Jenny shrugged. “Gained months then, lost months now. I feel sort of caught up on myself.” The thought cheered her.

“Hm. Well I suppose it evens out eventually.” Vastra shook her head. “And it seems once more the hunt is on.”

“I’ll tell Parker to get the carriage out.” Jenny turned to leave.

“Are you sure you won’t accompany me to Scotland Yard?” Vastra asked in an innocent tone.

“Yes ma’am.” Jenny glowered at her. “Besides, I really want to make sure Jess is alright.”

Vastra nodded. “To business then.”

Jenny felt strangely relieved as she watched the carriage rattle out the yard and set off purposefully to find her sister. They were back in London, back in 1888, there was a case to investigate. After seeing the future, riding dragons, wearing jeans and eating pizza, the normality of it was as grounding as the brutal murders were disturbing. Besides, she had every confidence Vastra would soon find the murderer and duly dispatch them, probably before the week was out. And then she and Vastra could both get on with doing this “big and important” thing the Doctor had talked about.

Chapter End Notes

apologies for any rough writing I haven't written for like a year and I am out of practice.

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Identity From Purpose

Chapter Summary

The knife is an instrument and so takes its identity from the purpose of the hand that uses it. - The Knife by Rodney Gomez

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There was no answer when Jenny knocked on the door to Jess’s rented room but, for someone fully equipped with a lock pick set, it didn’t present a problem. The fact that Jess clearly didn’t live there anymore was the more pressing issue. The room was still as spartan as ever, but there were more odds and ends, washing flung about the place and Jess’s suitcase was noticeably absent from its spot. Not wanting to appear as an intruder and risk arrest, Jenny beat a hasty retreat and re-locked the door behind her. She stood for a moment, wondering if she could ask anyone whether they’d seen Jess or knew anything. Then she came to her senses. In this kind of neighbourhood, no-one ever saw anything. At least, not unless they saw some serious incentive first. No doubt why Jess had chosen to live there.

Puzzled but not yet unduly worried, Jenny went instead to Mrs Blackett’s. Jess might’ve gone there after all, if faced with a sudden eviction. But all that met Jenny at the gin shop was boarded up windows and another locked door. Stunned, Jenny wandered around the back and into the yard, to be less visible when once again applying her talents with locks. There were no clues to be found. The place was stripped bare, not even a forgotten article of clothing or long-lost bottle of gin on some dusty shelf. Unease and melancholy at finding two important parts of her life vanished, Jenny went upstairs, to the old attic room. It was as cleaned out as the rest of the place, only a thin layer of dust to indicate that the premises had been empty for months.

Months. Months and months. That’s how long she’d been gone. Whatever trouble Jess had managed to get herself into, perhaps Mrs Blackett shared it now as well. Jenny had long suspected they had more in common than they let on. The mysterious cause of Jess’s, for one. She allowed herself a few more moments of nostalgia, looking around the attic room where she’d lived her life with Vastra before descending back down to the old almost basement kitchen.

There was a knife, stabbed into the table. It was the only thing in the room, apart from the table, and immediately commanded the attention of anyone who walked through the door. Jenny Flint was not just anyone however and moved swiftly sideways so her back was pressed against the wall, looking around at every nook and cranny of the room. Satisfied that only her and the ominous kitchen utensil occupied the room, she stepped forward to look closer.

It was a knife. Well used. The handle was worn smooth, the blade had a chip in it. It was not stabbed through some portentous folded piece of paper. It was not flecked with blood or some other sign of violence. It was just a knife. Stabbed into a table.

Jenny looked around the kitchen, opened a few of the cupboards and then stopped. Double checking the room again, she got down on her hands and knees and crawled underneath the table before flipping on her back and looking up.
“For Jenny.” Said the letters scratched into the wood. Jenny stared at them. The knife was for her? The message was for her? The table? She went to wiggle back out from underneath the table and felt something shift beneath her. Rolling over and shuffling back a bit, she felt the flagstone that she’d been led on. It moved slightly under her fingers. She scrabbled at it, struggling to get enough of a grip with the tips of her fingers to lift it.

“The knife.” Her patience was beginning to wane as she edged her way back out, tugged the knife out with one twist and set back to work. The flagstone lifted free to reveal a small hole dug out beneath it and a box. It was locked.

“Gonna need a new set of lock picks at this rate.” Jenny grumbled as she made short work of it.

There was a letter inside.

“Dear Jenny, you’ve been gone a while now. You missed a lot. The matchgirl’s strike for one. That was a to-do. Thought you would’ve been there, having been one. If you’re reading this then you’ve come back so at least you’re not gone like Albie. Me and Mrs Blackett have found need to up and leave as it might be said. She’s left you the gin bar. The deeds are at your bank. Don’t ask how we knew which one. Least said. She reckons you can put it to good use. We’re safe. I even managed to sneak back to put this here. Best if you don’t look too hard for us. What with all your palling around with the Highest Society. Don’t want to bring you into disrepute. Remember to keep it up with her indoors, if you can. If she gets too much, just give her hell from me. I’ll come back, when I can. Until then. Jess.”

Jenny felt many emotions at this letter but the one that overwhelmed her was sheer curiosity at whatever in the name of the seven hells her sister was into. She’d always assumed it was politics, but this seemed a little much. Besides, it was a ‘cause’, Jess had said.

She re-read the letter. “Highest Society.” Did Jess know about her and the Queen? The Doctor? Torchwood? Even the inspector at Scotland Yard might just about pass muster, depending on how low you were in society to begin with. The remark about Albie made her heart twinge with guilt. Months and months.

She replaced the flagstone but took the box and of course the letter with her. The knife she placed in a drawer. She’d use it again, when she’d written her own letter back.

Vastra was in a state of agitation when Jenny returned, placing the box on the dining room table.

“There have been another two murders.”

“What? I’ve only been gone an hour or so at most!”

“These two were early this morning. Two more women, brutally attacked.”

“How come the Irregulars didn’t pick up on that?” Jenny raised an eyebrow.

“They did. They came back briefly with news of one Miss Lettie Palmer...”

“Mrs.” Jenny corrected her.

“Mrs. And with news also of this fresh atrocity. It must’ve happened almost the same time as we
arrived back. The Doctor did say we had something to do soon. I didn’t realise he meant this soon.” Vastra shook her head. “They refer to the murderer as Jack the Ripper, on account of a letter that was received yesterday. I take it the reason you were enquiring after…Mrs Palmer was due to the nature of her business?”

“She’s a prostitute yes. Or was. Or still is. An’ yes, I was hoping she’d have gossip. The Irregulars said the victims were street walkers.”

“No doubt you will wish to make haste to see her.”

Jenny glared at her. “Yes. In case she has any information that can help us solve this case.”

Vastra merely nodded. “What is the box? A gift from your sister?”

“Of a sort.” Jenny sighed. She wanted to find out more, but her sister had said not to come looking.

Vastra gave her a concerned look but continued. “Jack, not Jack the Ripper, as far as I know, is in the yard, waiting to give you his information.”

“Right! I’d best be off. Oh, by the way, you remember the gin shop?”

“Yes.” Vastra’s eye ridges drew together.

“It’s ours now. I’ll swing by the bank to check out the deeds but probably best to leave them there.” Jenny walked out into the yard.

“Well.” Vastra said quietly to herself. “It has been a busy morning.” She looked at the box but kept her curiosity in check. She had an entire file from the police to trawl through and a case board to make up and, given the nature of the attacks, some training to restart. “Jenny!” she called suddenly, grabbing the short sword from the stand in the hallway as she followed her.

“Yes ma’am?” Jenny popped her head round the kitchen door.

Vastra merely held the sword out to her. “When you return, we will continue training.”

Jenny took it, concealing the sword beneath her cloak. “I won’t be long.” She promised.

The streets were buzzing, despite it being a Sunday, as she hurried along them, following Jack.

“Were you respectful?” she asked, after ten minutes of silence from the boy.


“What did she say?”

“She said we wuz too young to acquire any services from her house. We told ‘er we weren’t there for that and she asked what the hell was that meant to mean and we said as how we’d come from you and how you wuz investigating. She don’t think the police is doin’ a good job either. I think she’s glad you’re on the case miss.” Jack stole a look up at Jenny as she strode beside him.

“Enough of that now.”

“But you did used to go with ‘er, dint you miss?”
“So what?”

“So s’like… long lost romance.” Jack clasped his hands to his chest.

“You’ll be long lost if you don’t shuttit.”

“Aw c’mon Miss Jenny. Tell me you ain’t nervous about meetin’ ‘er after all these years.”

“I met her just a few months back.”

“Her husband passed on.”

“JACK!” the young urchin scampered out of reach of any appendage or implement. “Never known anyone like you for romance. Still haven’t forgotten all that bloody mistletoe…” Jenny muttered.

“It got you the girl though din’t it.” Jack grinned at her.

“Woman.” Jenny had no other come back after that and they walked on in silence, Jack skipping at having won the argument.

The series of locks on the back door of the House were even more intricate than the previous ones. Jenny mentally calculated how long it would take for her to pick them as she waited in the kitchen for the burly heavy man to find Lettie. She’d told Jack to wait outside but she doubted he would.

“Jenny Flint. Always bringing me trouble. It’s bad for business to be seen having urchins hanging about the place. Why, pray tell, have you accosted me thus? The most I could get out of them was that you wanted information. I don’t have anything more than you undoubtedly already know. None of the girls attacked were anything to do with me.” Lettie rambled on as she set about making tea. “Do you want cake? I’m doing well, I can afford a bit of posh-ness for special visitors. No? Well anyway. None of mine really do much street walking any more and if you’re looking for someone to act as bait, I won’t let you offer them whatever extortionate amount of money you’re thinking offering.

Jenny had only just sat down at the table by the time Lettie finished.

“I wasn’t…”

“You would’ve.” Lettie cut her off. “Still, you can finish your tea before you go. Got any other ideas about how to catch him?”

“We’re still at the gatherin’ information point at the moment.”

“Will your lizard lady catch him?” Lettie leaned forward towards Jenny. “Will she use you as bait when you can’t hire any?”

“I don’t need to be used. If it helps catch the bastard, I’ll do it willingly.”

“And when he tries to gut you?”

Jenny lifted her cloak aside to reveal her sword. “If I don’t gut him first.”

Lettie sat back, impressed. “I’ll leave him to your capable hands.”
“Look. I really only wanted to make sure you were safe.”

“Oo er Jenny Flint. You do know how to make a woman feel special. All it took was a mass murderer for you to come an’ find me again.”

“I thought you wouldn’t want the attention.” Jenny shrugged. “And then things happened.”

“Talking of things happening, I told myself last time we met that you owed me the story of how you ended up…working for the Lizard Woman from the circus.”

Jenny took a sip of tea to postpone organising the exact timeline of events that had led to it.

“I’d met her a few times before, walking about at night. But well…you remember the Tong Gang?”

“Vividly. Still haven’t forgiven you for that.”

“Well they’d tracked me down and…she saved me from them. Killed them all.” Jenny decided to leave out the eating part.

“So…” Lettie let out a long breath. “She’ll have no hassle with this article going about at the moment then.”

“Mostly likely not. Anyway, she took me back to her place.”

Lettie let out a loud bark of laughter. “You do have a habit of following people home don’t you Jenny Flint!”

“And.” Jenny spoke loudly over the remnants of Lettie sniggering. “she said I could stay. So I stayed. Though she made me have a bath.”

“This isn’t sounding familiar whatsoever at all.” Lettie looked at Jenny over the top of her cup, her eyebrows disappearing into her fringe.

“Yes. All right.” Jenny downed the rest of her tea and stood up to leave. “Glad yer safe.”

“I would say something similar, but you and safety have never been words to put together, have they?”

Jenny grinned ruefully. “So I’ve been told.”

“I will merely wish that you catch the bastard soon then.” Lettie raised her cup in a salute and farewell.

Jenny nodded. She was walking home when she realised that the big thing the Doctor had been talking about was this. Jack the Ripper. Possibly it wasn’t a case to be closed within a week then. She shivered in the gathering chill of an October evening, but the sword was a comforting weight at her hip and she walked without unusual fear.

Chapter End Notes

re-reading this I realise that Jess Blackett is EXTRA™, woman of mystery, stabber of
tables. I may have to write a side fic about her which would actually be less side fic and more just...original novel...
Jenny placed her sword lovingly back on its rack, hung up her cloak, put the kettle on the stove and went to find Vastra. The Silurian was slumped in her new wicker chair, idly rustling the newspaper. Jenny carefully sat down in the other chair, making sure it really would take her weight, and waited. After a while, the kettle whistle sounded, and she went to make tea. Jenny placed a cup on the small table by Vastra’s chair, but she acknowledged neither Jenny nor the drink. Jenny’s lip twitched, and she got a book from her photography room and returned to her seat opposite Vastra, occasionally sipping her tea. To anyone watching them, she thought, it would be a picture of domesticity. But Jenny was merely waiting.

There was a sniff. The ostentatious rustle of a newspaper page being turned. Out the corner of her eye, Jenny could see it was the last page. She turned a page of her own book.

Vastra crumpled the newspaper closed and tossed it onto the table, narrowly missing the cooling tea. She stared at Jenny. “Well?”

Jenny looked up from taking a sip of tea. “Well what ma’am?”

“How is Mrs Palmer?”

“Lettie? Oh, she’s fine. None of the women attacked were from her house, so she doesn’t really have much more of a clue than us about what’s going on.”

“Oh really. She has more of a clue than someone who spent the day going through the entire case file?”

“Police report helpful, was it?”

“No.” Vastra conceded. “A lot of information about times and places and circumstances but not a lot of knowledge. No-one sees the attack, no-one hears anything. Not even a worthwhile description. It’s all contradictory. There’s nothing to go on. The media aren’t helping at all, all sensationalist drivel.” She indicated the scrunched-up paper.

Jenny put her tea down. “We’ll catch ‘im ma’am. I promise.”

Vastra let out a deep sigh. “I would be grateful for any ideas.”

Bait. That’s what Lettie had said. But if Vastra was around, lying in wait, Jenny would hardly be in any danger. And it would mean Vastra had back up too.

“I mean you gotta admit, I do have experience of bein’ attacked down alleys.” Jenny finished her pitch.
“You want to walk around London. At night. Dressed as a prostitute. Whilst I follow you around with a sword and hope that we get lucky? That the one person out of all the drunken fools who would approach you will be the Ripper?”

“Oh I see. So only drunken fools are gonna find me attractive, is that it? Thank you!” Jenny snorted and folded her arms.

“Are you saying only knife wielding mass murderers with a penchant for removing organs will?” Vastra raised an eye ridge.

“Well…” Jenny looked Vastra dead in the eye.

The Silurian turned a darker green. “Is that how you see me?”

The blood drained from Jenny’s face. “What? No! I…”

“I suppose, if I were an ape, I would be considered the same, if not worse, than the Ripper.” Vastra said in a flat voice.

“But you ain’t. You ain’t! I didn’t mean it like that. You ain’t nuffin like ‘im.”

“But I was. Before I met you. Even afterwards. I killed the entirety of the Tong Gang.”

“An’ have you eaten anyone since?” Jenny stood up. “Since I started buyin’ you meat an’ pies an’ blood?”

Vastra looked up at her. “Are you trying to say you rehabilitated me?”

“I’m sayin’ you’re a Silurian. You saw humans as your enemy, as food. As animals. Thas not what he sees those women as.”

“Is it not?” Vastra sat up straight.

“What?”

Vastra stood up, brushing past Jenny. “Let us not regard him as your usual petty murderer. Let us see him instead as a hunter. A cruel and unusual beast. He sees them as prey. He will have territories perhaps, hunting grounds.” Vastra moved through the Plant Room to her office. “Rituals even. Routines.” She observed the board where she’d tacked up information from all the crimes. Jenny came to stand by her. Vastra turned and gave her a small smile. “Set a thief to catch a thief.”

When Jenny started to object, Vastra interrupted her. “Let us not disregard our pasts. As yours has been useful in helping to bring about our current state of affairs, let mine be equally useful. Tea, please, Jenny.”

Jenny didn’t move away. “I still don’t think you’re anythin’ like him.”

“So eager to redeem me. It will take a lot more than that, my dear.” Vastra waved her concerns away.

Jenny sighed. “I’ll make the tea then.”

“You didn’t rehabilitate me, you know.” Vastra called after her. “I did not stop hunting apes because of some change of heart or new learned moral.”

“No?” Jenny
“No.” Vastra said simply, drawing a finger along the board.

Puzzled, but realising she would get no more out of her Silurian than that, Jenny rolled her eyes and gathered up the tea cups.

“One day,” she muttered to herself as the kettle boiled and she laid out a fresh tray. “One day we’ll have someone to make the tea for us. And then I can stop bein’ a maid in private as well as public.”

She returned to find Vastra laying out a map, making marks where murders had been committed.

“Looks like a square. With two in the middle.” She commented.

“Those two were the first murders earlier this year. The police are not yet sure whether to attribute them to this Ripper.” Vastra pinned the map up on the board.

“So this,” Jenny gestured to the area within the square. “is his huntin’ ground? Like you said?”

“It’s a start. All the murders take place at night, unsurprisingly. For what he does to the bodies, night provides appropriate cover. We have a murder on Friday, a murder on Saturday and two on a Sunday.”

“Don’t like to kill durin’ the working week?” Jenny raised her eyebrows.

“So, a man with a job then, perhaps. Presumably one which would grant him intimacy with the whereabouts of internal organs.”

“What, like a surgeon? Because of how he knew where to get at the vitals?”

“Certainly not an amateur. And yet…he does not dispose of the bodies.”

“Theatrical then.”

“Trying to make a statement?”

“Political?”

Jenny and Vastra looked at each other. “Much as this is potentially illuminating, I feel it gets us no closer to being able to catch him.”

“But we have an area to stake out at least.”

“I am still averse to the idea of using you as bait.”

“I’ll get a dress off Lettie, she can make me up so I look the part.”

“You not being able to pull off the disguise was not the basis of my objection.” Vastra said archly.

9th October 1888

They took the night off from investigating for Jenny’s birthday. Jenny spent the day exhausted from their nightly roaming and fretful in case the Ripper chose this one night to attack. Vastra pointed out that it was a Tuesday and therefore he’d be breaking his pattern, but it did little to reassure her. The
Doctor had turned up, alone and uncommunicative, stopping off just long enough to give her a box with a large cake in it. “As promised. I won’t stay.” He waved off Vastra’s concern and Jenny’s offer of a cup of tea.

“He has been alone too long.” Vastra frowned after him.

“How can you tell?”

“I remember him from before. After the War, when he’d travelled alone. It is then that he is the most foolish. And dangerous. I believe half the reason he stayed at the circus with me so long was because he was aware of this.”

“Let’s hope he finds a companion soon then.”

“Indeed. But I think…he will have to change a great deal before that happens.”

“You mean, regenerate? Ma’am?”

“Perhaps.” Vastra shrugged, turning back to the cake, delicately scooping up some icing with her tongue and promptly spitting it out again. “Lemon.” She explained to an unimpressed Jenny.

16th October 1888

They had been roaming up and down and around the area of the murders, Jenny literally tarted up and Vastra lurking in the shadows, every night since they’d returned, except the night of Jenny’s birthday. Jenny had nearly been arrested by police for being a prostitute so often, Gregson had given her a ticket to carry with her to prevent re-occurrences. Lettie had been most put out when Jenny had told her about this and threatened to start a petition to get all prostitutes officially licenced. Vastra had lost count of the number of drunks who’d soiled themselves when she’d leapt out of the shadows wielding a sword at them, for laying a hand on Jenny. Rumours had started up that now the Ripper was attacking people who went after prostitutes, for which Jenny found herself once again facing Lettie’s ire.

“Bad enough the actual bastard is causing a fall in business, without you joining in! Mind, it does mean a lot more customers call along to the House.” She mused as she once again applied what felt like the entirety of her vanity box to Jenny’s face.

Jenny was tired from the sudden change in their sleeping habit, bored with the attire she was wearing and half frozen, with only a thin shawl draped across her shoulders. She lurked at the opening of Palmer street, trying her best sashay. Lettie had tried to give her lessons, helpfully falling about laughing at Jenny’s imitation. “I think you’re safe enough from real punters.” She’d spluttered. “But it might be enough to fool the Ripper.”

A thin drizzle started, and Jenny huddled in on herself. The street took on a greasy sheen from the water. Somewhere along the street a lamp guttered out. Jenny hoped Vastra was able to keep warm. George had made up a fleece lined cloak for her to wear in winter, to make the investigations that brought them out on such nights more comfortable.

In the distance footsteps ran, slipping on the wet cobbles. A door banged shut, setting Jenny’s nerves on edge. Her hand went instinctively to her sword. Water dripped from her fringe. She blinked it from her eyes, wiping the rat tails of her hair back from her face and side stepped neatly out of the way of the knife that came whistling down, tearing into the sleeve of her dress. Her elbow jerked
back, connecting with a dull thud with someone’s rib cage. She spun around, drawing her sword, blocking the blade as it was thrust towards her midriff. A hand grabbed at her hair, but she brought the butt of her sword handle up into the man’s throat and he let go. She swung at him, but he ducked under it, slashing at her side as he ran past her.

The clash of metal had attracted Vastra’s attention. She darted down the street, not bothering to draw her sword, charging at the man and knocking him into the street. His hat fell off as he rolled, his knife skittering away from him. Jenny locked eyes with him as he stood up. The cold bloodthirsty gaze reminded her of Vandemar and she froze, remembering Vastra’s nightmare, remembering her own. But Vastra was stood in front of her, sword raised, and the man grabbed his knife and fled, disappearing into the warren of small streets.

Vastra let out a stream of Silurian curses and sheathed her sword, not bothering to chase him. She collected the hat and looked it over. It was nondescript and mildly shabby, and she threw it back into the gutter in disgust.

“I doubt he will be back out again tonight, we may as well head home.” Vastra walked back to Jenny. “No point in chasing him in this weather, any trail will be easily lost.”

“Ma’am…”

“It was not your fault Jenny.” Vastra held up her hand to forestall any apology. “He took us both by surprise.”

“No. Ma’am!”

Vastra quirked her head, observing the shivering woman.

“He got me ma’am.”
fuck history I’m making it so Elizabeth Garrett Anderson is now the Chief Patcher-Upper for the Paternoster Gang I care not.

(interesting side note EGA was born in acutally born in Whitechapel, until they moved to Aldeburgh, Suffolk where her father founded Snape Maltings and became Mayor. EGA went back to London for education and stuff but would later also become the Mayor of Aldeburgh, the first woman Mayor elected in England.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson was not accustomed to being woken up in the wee hours of the morning by frantic hammering on her front door but nevertheless she threw on a dressing gown, grabbed a light and went to open it anyway.

There was a veiled lady, Elizabeth would’ve presumed widow but for the very large sword strapped to her back, holding up a young prostitute, whose dress was soaked in blood.

“She has been cut by the Ripper. I can only do basic first aid, she needs surgery.” The widow explained.

“The Ri…the murderer?” Elizabeth’s eyes widened but she asked no more questions, ushering them both into the house and locking the door after them. “Lay her out on the dining room table.” She pointed to the door at the far end of the hall.

They staggered into a rich but sparsely furnished room. There was a cabinet, filled with small glasses and bottles of liquor in the corner. A large rectangular table took up most of the space. Its well-polished surface gleamed in the lamplight that Elizabeth lit. She moved the chairs surrounding it out the way so Vastra could lay Jenny down, the young woman already drifting in and out of consciousness. Vastra brushed strands of hair from her pale face and glanced around the rest of the room. The only other object was an oval mirror above the fireplace, reflecting Vastra’s face back at her, visible to her through the veil. She was startled from her reverie by Elizabeth returning from setting a pan of water to boil and thrusting a bundle of old sheets into Vastra’s arms.

“Tear them into strips please. Long ones.”

Vastra was glad to have a task to do, as she watched Elizabeth cut the dress off of Jenny. A brief thought occurred that Lettie Palmer would not be best pleased at this happening. Later, this thought would be amusing. At the moment, Vastra felt like a ball of anxious electricity. Liquid was poured out, Vastra smelt iodine, and used to clean the wounds.

“The arm is fine, tis but a scratch. The side wound will indeed need stitching, but it’s not too deep and it’s clean.” Elizabeth opened up a brown leather bag. “Usually I’d do this in the hospital, but I can see you are in somewhat of a hurry.” She eyed the sword, which Vastra was using to cut the sheets into strips. “She is already unconscious at least.” She disappeared into the kitchen and came back with a needle steaming.
Vastra had never considered herself in the slightest bit squeamish but the sight of Elizabeth threading a needle made her turn away.

“I’ve met you before.” Elizabeth remarked conversationally as she went about her work. “I recognise this woman. She is your maid, is she not?”

“Yes.”

“You should give her a pay rise, then she might not need to resort to prostitution.”

Vastra was piqued by the barb in Elizabeth’s words and couldn’t help herself. “My name is Madame Vastra. I am an adventuress and occasionally undertake cases for the police. Jenny is my maid and assistant. She was merely dressing like that to draw out the Ripper.”

“Successfully, it appears. Well, I suppose that explains the sword. Are you sure you haven’t bitten off more than you can chew? Although, for my part, I would be glad to see the blaggard strung up. My hospital treats women you know. The kind of women he’s after. For their problems. A recent development of course. Before, they would go to lock hospitals, or the workhouse. It has only been two years after all, since the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act.”

“Contagious Diseases?”

Elizabeth paused in her stitching to gaze at Vastra, studying her, trying to detect sarcasm.

“Surely you must know? Or have you never undertaken that line of police work? Such cases never fallen into your remit? Hm.” She scoffed and turned back to Jenny. “Before the repeal of the CDA, police could arrest a woman, wandering about at night and force her to undergo examination, jailing her if she refused. The damage they could do, I have seen women die from it. And of course, if a woman was found to have the disease, they were locked up in asylums, or put on wards, completely isolated. Whereas the man who might have infected her, was free as a bird to go and pass it on to more, with not a word against him. My sister campaigned for years about it.”

Vastra listened in silence, remembering scenes from her walks about London in the past, of young women accosted by the police. Really, they weren’t much better than the Tong Gang. Apes were too barbaric sometimes. And yet, there were people like this woman, and her sister too apparently, still trying to help, to better the world.

“There.” Elizabeth declared, tying off the bandages. “Keep them clean, watch out for any dead tissue. She should be fine. Plenty of rest of course. You’ll have to hunt the Ripper by yourself I’m afraid.”

Vastra stood over Jenny, still sprawled unconscious on the table, gently stroking strands of hair from her face. “She will not be happy about that.” She said softly.

Elizabeth looked between her and Jenny, a small frown appearing on her face. But she said nothing and started winding up the strips Vastra had made.

“What did you need those for anyway?” Vastra asked, as Elizabeth disappeared back into the kitchen with them.

“To keep you busy with.” Elizabeth called back. “Nothing worse than having to stitch someone up with their friend or otherwise hovering about panicking and fussing. And I can use these, once their boiled and treated, to give out to poor women as bandages or some such. Nothing better than old bed linen.”
Vastra lifted her veil. She always felt that the veil somehow obscured Jenny from her, even though the young woman could see through it perfectly. Seeing Jenny’s pale face, the bloodied dress cut away, the bandages already stained, she felt Elizabeth’s words.

“I should never have agreed to use you as bait.” She whispered. “My lack of skill as an investigator should never have put you at risk. You should never have had to resort to this.”

She pondered, as she gazed at Jenny, how on earth she was going to get the young woman home. There was no carriage and she couldn’t carry Jenny all the way there without attracting attention. And if they walked? What if the Ripper came back? Thoughts swirled and distracted her, worst case scenarios.

“I’ve made up beds in the cellar for you both. No point moving her so soon and it still being night as well. You can…” Elizabeth bustled back into the room and froze. “What…is that…a skin condition? A disease?” She hastened over to look at Vastra, covering her mouth and nose to peer more closely.

Vastra had gained many reactions from her skin, but a detached professional curiosity, mixed with caution was new. “It is merely my skin. It is not contagious.”

Elizabeth let her handkerchief fall away. “Hm. It is like scales. What manner of disorder caused this?”

“Being born.” Vastra said with a touch of asperity.

Realisation caused Elizabeth to turn a more ashen colour than Jenny. Her eyes widened to the point of watering, taking in the sword once more. And yet she did not back away, whether frozen in place by fear or bravery, Vastra couldn’t tell.

“Amazing.” It was a barely audible breath. “May I…would it be impertinent…could I examine you?”

“No.”

“But you are…not human.”

“No, I am not.”

Elizabeth looked at Jenny once more. “But she…and you…” Words failed the doctor once more and she was silent for a moment. “Regardless. My patient requires rest. Help me move her.”

Vastra picked Jenny up in her arms, daring Elizabeth to comment.

“Be careful of her wound” was the only remark that was given as Elizabeth led the way down the cellar.

The beds were simple cots, not vastly different from what they’d slept in back in the attic room. Elizabeth had lit several candles about the place. There were a few rustlings and chitters from rats but Vastra had never been particularly bothered by them.

“She will probably run a fever.” Elizabeth warned. “I’ve put water there, it’ll remain cool enough down here. I’ve laudanum for when she’s in pain, when she wakes. And here’s a fresh nightgown for her. I’ll leave the rest to you. I must get back to bed myself.”

Vastra nodded, gently dressing Jenny in the nightgown, mouth twitching at the memories it brought back, of the night she’d rescued Jenny. Her care was more tender now, more concerned as she laid
the young woman on the cot and curled up next to her, cocooning them in blankets.

The next morning it was easy enough to send a messenger to Paternoster Row and soon enough the carriage was rattling outside Elizabeth’s door and the doctor bade farewell to her two strange and unexpected guests.

Jenny was stiff and in pain, despite the laudanum Elizabeth had dosed her with before Vastra could argue. The moment they were home, she went straight to bed without complaining. Vastra followed, a little worried, to find the young ape crying.

“Jenny?”

“Why couldn’t I fight ‘im? How did I get hurt like this? I won’t be any use to you now.” She sobbed.

“Nonsense.”

“I should’ve been able to fight ‘im off. To hurt him at least. What if he murders someone else, while I’m stuck here! It’s gonna be my fault.”

“Jenny!” Vastra was unnerved by the depressive train of thought. “Of course, it won’t. Any more than it’ll be the fault of Scotland Yard for not catching him. Or me? With my prized warrior abilities and instincts and still he slips past me?” she slipped underneath the covers, gathering Jenny to her. The young ape was clinging to her and such a display of vulnerability caught Vastra completely unawares. She hummed and clicked, crooning a Silurian lullaby, the only thing she could think of to try and soothe Jenny. She pressed her forehead against Jenny’s, her triangular scale glowing a dull orange. Hands gripped the front of her dress tighter, but the sobs cut off abruptly.

And suddenly Vastra was aware of pain and guilt and love swirling into her mind and she almost flung Jenny from her in panic, the emotions were so intense and overwhelming. She trembled as she stared at the ape in her arms. Jenny looked dazed, blinking slowly, half rising from the covers.

“Vastra…” she tried to focus her eyes properly, struggling for a moment to overcome the shock.

“What…”

The urge to flee fought with the desire to stay, to try it again and made Vastra’s muscles shake almost uncontrollably and she fell back. She had wondered about such a connection being possible but had dismissed it an impossible dream, that the ape mind was not capable of it. She gazed in awe as Jenny shifted to sit in her lap, straddling her. She stretched out a hand and Vastra grasped it, entwining their fingers as with her other hand she pulled Jenny’s head down, pressing their foreheads together. Jenny winced at the strength of the emotions, the wonder, the fear, the confusion and broke away, massaging her temples.

“How?” Jenny whispered, her hand clutching Vastra’s. “I could feel…”

“Laudanum.” Vastra interrupted, as she realised. “I have heard the drug used to expand the mind. Taking it might have opened up potential…” she trailed off, watching Jenny closely. Her ape was staring at her warily now. “I believed it impossible, for a Silurian to share such a connection with an…human, otherwise I would’ve warned you. Believe me.” She added, pleading, as Jenny was now frowning at her.
Jenny shifted off Vastra and led back down, the laudanum was beginning to make her sleepy now, not the best state to try and understand what had just happened. But she had to know. “What connection?”

“It is a revered form of intimacy, a connection forged between two minds, joining them, enhancing the bond between them. Allowing them to share emotions, even thoughts. It is rare, even among Silurians.”

“So we c’n read each other’s minds now?” Jenny was not entirely sure she was comfortable with the notion.

“I doubt our bond is that strong.” Vastra shook her head.

And yet, such dismissiveness from her Silurian was hurtful. They didn’t have a strong enough bond, did they? Jenny shifted down and pulled the covers up, snuggling down beneath them.

“Above and beyond that, to be able to feel anything more than vague emotions, to be able to discern and communicate fully articulated thought, without physical connection, would require intense focus, not to mention discipline and practice.” Vastra explained.

The emotions hadn’t felt very vague to Jenny. “But we could, one day. If we did that.”

Vastra recalled the Doctor asking her “Will you tell her what that means? For Silurians?” She felt shaken to her core at the fact they had shared a connection, even for that brief moment. The thought of exploring it further, and what it would mean if they were successful, filled her with a strange terror. And surely it was just the laudanum, the high emotions of the evening. It was doubtful they would be able to repeat the experience, even if Vastra wanted to. Fear turned to longing.

“Vastra?”

“Possibly.” Vastra rolled onto her side and held her arms open. She could not dismiss it out of hand, now that it was there. Jenny wriggled closer and Vastra embraced her gently.

“Any other magical Silurian abilities I should know about?” Jenny murmured. “Anythin’ else you bin dismissing as impossible with an ape?”

“No.” Vastra said shortly. Jenny prodded her. “Not magical abilities. There are…certain experiences.” She felt herself turn a darker shade of green. “But that would require you to be healed, I think, among other things.”

Jenny sighed, the laudanum was making focus difficult, to decipher Vastra’s meaning. But something struck her then, more sharply than it had ever before, that as much as she and Vastra were together, as much as they had a future, beyond all that they had promised, there was still some part of Vastra that was out of Jenny’s reach. An infuriating distance that made Jenny’s heart ache. She didn’t want to be able to read Vastra’s mind, she wanted Vastra to tell her. Not the drips and drabs of information she’d been able to pick up, about Silurians, about Vastra’s past, and not because she’d badgered the Silurian into giving it. She’d shared so much with Vastra about her life and family, she wanted Vastra to feel safe enough to do the same, to volunteer proper knowledge to give Jenny more understanding. Up to and including things like telepathic abilities. But Vastra was right, Jenny once again needed to recover before she could do anything about it.

Chapter End Notes
Millicent Garrett Fawcett was Elizabeth's sister and campaigned for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts which was achieved in 1886. (I first read about women being arrested and examined in Wanderlust by Rebecca Solnit) I doubt the repeal meant that such examinations stopped happening though.
How To Train Your Jenny

Chapter Notes

Whenever I had this scene in my head, I always imagined Vastra in a fabulous Stoick scots accent picking Jenny up by the scruff of the neck and going “What is she doin’… what are ye doin’ out? Get inside!” hence the title of this chapter.

I have bizarre notions…

9th November 1888

It was just after lunch time and Jenny was sat at a desk in her dark room, a cup of tea going cold next to her as she stared blankly at another list of reports on Ripper sightings. None of them had any viable information, most of them seemed made up rather than an actual encounter. Even the Paternoster Irregulars had little to report, beyond the fact there was a presence on the streets. Urchins walked a little more cautiously. She’d already warned all the girls to find a place before it got dark, not easy to do as the autumn waned and darkness came earlier.

Vastra went out every evening now, returning at dawn to wolf down some food before falling into bed. She returned uninjured, for which Jenny was grateful, but pale and demoralised, for there had been no further sign of the Ripper since he’d wounded Jenny. It itched, where it was healing. Dr Anderson had removed the stitches a few days ago and impressed upon her that she was to undertake no strenuous physical activity, particularly anything that might involve hunting down mass murderers. Jenny had submitted mutely to the order, as she had obeyed Vastra’s order to stay indoors. The Irregulars and Parker had gone shopping for her when she needed it.

But the obeisance had meant that she saw very little of Vastra and was bored out of her skull. She was restless, and only the weariness caused by convalescence enabled her to sleep in an empty bed at night. She watched Vastra get dressed each night before leaving and checked her over before sending her to bed in the morning and that was about all she saw of her. She understood Vastra’s determination all too well, the frustration at having let the Ripper slip through their hands, the fear that he would claim another victim before he could be caught. But it never quite allayed her own frustration and loneliness. She felt guilty about that.

Shaking her head, Jenny tried to concentrate on the report. Vastra had dumped a pile of them, given to her by Scotland Yard, before she retired for the day. Her concentration lasted all of two minutes before there was a knock at the back door. Grateful for the distraction, she hurried to open it, to find Ada and Dottie out of breath and frantic.

“There’s bin another one, miss!” Ada gasped out.

Jenny didn’t question her further, merely grabbed her cloak from the rack. “Show me.” She swirled it around her before following them out, closing the door behind her. Luckily, there was no-one else in the yard. Parker had been almost as strict as Vastra at not letting Jenny lift a finger more than necessary. They hurried through busy morning streets, already filled with the buzz of gossip about the latest murder, all the long way to Spitalfields and Dorset Street, where a large group of policemen were congregating uselessly. Ada and Dottie, having brought Jenny this far, melted away and left her to try and gain access to the place.
She lightfooted her way past the first few groups of police easily, they weren’t on guard, merely milling around and chatting. When challenged by an officer at the door, Jenny told him that she lived here and couldn’t she get home, she needed to get in to see to her infant child, would the man let a baby starve? Yes, she knew all about the Ripper but that didn’t stop babies being hungry. The man gave an exasperated sigh but let her through. She hurried up the stairs and out of his sight, hiding behind a corner as two more policemen walked downstairs. They looked pale and sweaty, as if they’d been sick. She took the stairs they’d just come down and saw a door open from the landing. Her heart beat faster as she approached it, peering round silently to look.

There was a lot of blood. That’s what her mind supplied, trying to think logically, analytically. The body looked…opened. She blinked. She’d seen dead bodies before, had seen her mother, her brother, her sister, all cold and dead and still but this was her first proper…corpse. This wasn’t death. This was murder and mutilation. Even as she fought down the urge to vomit, she stepped closer, wanting to etch the details into her mind. This is what it looks like. This is what it looks like. So this is what it looks like when the body has been opened like a sack and its contents emptied and skin flung back.

She was so caught up in her observations, she didn’t notice the thuds of footfalls on the stairs, or the faint voices getting louder.

The door was flung wide open. “It never gets any easier…” a voice was saying. It stopped. “What the…who the devil are you??”

“Jenny?!”

She was spun round by someone, noticed the veil, wondered briefly who it was and how they knew her name. “What is she…” the veiled lady turned to someone at the door then turned back to her, giving her a little shake. “What are you doing out?! Get back to the house!”

She blinked, recognising the voice at last and the veil…became see-through once more. The realisation that for a moment she hadn’t been able to see through it struck her and she sagged into Vastra’s arms.

“Jenny?” the voice became gentle.

“I think I’m gonna be sick.” She muttered, trying not to open her mouth too much as she spoke.

“Sit here.” She was guided to a chair, sat with her head in her hands as Vastra talked with an Inspector, explaining briefly who Jenny was, then discussing the case. She listened, unable to stop herself, even when the coroner went into detail. She tried not to, as she’d tried not to see the whole of what was there, only small parts, attempting to break down the awfulness into manageable chunks. Still. She was a Flint. Even if she felt sick, she wasn’t about to faint, even though, when she heard the words “as you can see, the heart has been removed”, she wanted to. Her own was beating a vivid tattoo. It was strangely reassuring, reminding her she was alive.

“He is progressing in his mutilations.” She heard Vastra murmur. She smiled to herself. Of course, a man-eating Silurian who had torn the arms off of people with their mouth would have no problems examining a scene like that.

She looked up, finally feeling clear-headed enough to do so. Vastra had been watching her out the corner of her eye, walking over when she noticed Jenny’s head come up.

“You should return home.”
“But…” Jenny gestured weakly.

“There are no clues to be found here, except that he is growing ever more confident and deranged.”

Vastra shook her head. “Gentlemen.” She gave a small bow to the Inspector and the coroner, then tugged Jenny upright and dragged her out the door.

“Who told you?” she asked, not relinquishing Jenny’s arm as they went downstairs.

“I ain’t getting anyone in trouble.” Jenny tried to tug her arm back but Vastra kept her firm grip, even when they stepped out onto the street. Parker’s son was waiting, sat on top of the cab, stolidly eating a hunk of bread and meat.

“Get in.” Vastra pushed Jenny into the cab and slammed the door shut behind her.

“I ain’t doin’ any strenuous activity.” Jenny pointed out. There was no reply. “S’daylight and everythin’.” That didn’t get a response either, except a continued glower. Annoyed at the lack of response, her mouth ran ahead of her mind, asking what was foremost in it. “Is that what it looked like when you killed people?”

A sharp intake of breath.

Jenny didn’t usually watch Vastra eating. She knew it was only animal meat, knew that the blood she filled the wine carafe with was animal blood. But the Silurian seemed self-conscious about it. As if the sight would remind Jenny that Vastra wasn’t human. Jenny hadn’t bothered telling her there was a myriad of little things that reminded Jenny of that anyway, beside the skin and the eating habits. Jenny took them all in her stride, accepting them, even if she felt frustrated sometimes. Vastra could tell her certain things before she found them out after all and didn’t. It was part of the deal and Jenny thought she’d accepted that. Accepted her flawed morality. And she had, for the most part. But some morbid part of her had to know. Is that what it looked like? Is that the reality? When you said eating people, when you said you had an arm hanging from your mouth, is that what it looked like? When people found the bodies, did it look like that? Were their hearts missing too? She struggled to close her mouth on all the questions lining up, determined to watch patiently for a reply to the first one.

Vastra made sure the curtains were closed then slowly removed her veil, holding it in her gloved hands, resting in her lap. “A little. Sometimes worse.” She gazed coldly at Jenny.

Jenny gave a small nod and lapsed into silence, staring back at Vastra, directly into her eyes. The Silurian was the first to look away.

Vastra went to bed, without eating, and without saying another word to Jenny, admonitory or otherwise. Sometimes Jenny could slap the Silurian for her silences. Other times they worried her. This was one of the rare occasions when Jenny was content to let Vastra sulk it out, without being unduly bothered by it. She got Vastra’s outfit ready, cleaned her swords, though they were unused. She went through her stances, to see how far she could stretch the wound. She had a quiet dinner with Parker, who’d heard of her escapade and now was also employing silence, in a stern capacity, to convey his disapproval.

What worried her was the thought of that happening to Vastra. The Silurian was quick, strong, guarded but Jenny had thought that about herself and had still been struck. She watched intently as Vastra got ready, buckling up sword belts and tying cloaks on, trying to fix the image in her mind, to wipe out the other ones still fresh and vivid, to make the image of Vastra whole and unhurt so intense
in her mind, no matter what happened, that would be how she always saw her. She wished she had any talent at drawing, she’d paint her, sketch her, in this moment and others. Just so she would always have that. The intensity of her gaze made Vastra raise an eye ridge at her in silent question. She shrugged, in silent answer. But her hands were tying knots in a dish rag, still in her hand from doing the washing up and Vastra crossed over and stilled them with her own.

“Jenny.”

“Be careful.” Jenny gritted her teeth to try and stop the tears welling up in her eyes. “I don’t wanna see you like that.”

Surprised warmth flooded Vastra’s eyes and she pulled Jenny into her arms. It was uncomfortable due to the mail and the armour and the belts, but Jenny clung to Vastra anyway, half crushed in the embrace.

“I will find him. I promise you that. He will not escape again. He will not kill anyone again.” Vastra hissed in her ear.

Jenny nodded, stepped back, her gaze once more resolute. “When you find ‘im…eat ‘im. For me.”

Vastra startled expression at such a sentiment soon morphed into a cold grin, her eyes glittering. “I assure you, my dear, I will.” She kissed Jenny on the lips, drew up her hood and swept out the door into the night.

A satisfied smile spread across Jenny’s lips. Her morality was flawed, but then again, so were human beings. Some, she decided, beyond redemption. And after what she had seen, perhaps an ending such as Vastra could give them was only fitting.
When Jenny Met TARDIS

Chapter Summary

3 years and 92 chapters and I've FINALLY caught up to where we first meet them phwweeeetttt...

edit: the title is a remix on When Harry Met Sally. Never watched the movie, heard mixed reviews but good title layout to cadge.

Chapter Notes

this fanfic now has a third of the amount of words War and Peace has. Leo Tolstoy, watch. your. BACK. I'm comin' for ya word count.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

9th November 1888

Usually when Vastra went out, Jenny would spend a few hours trying to distract herself and then go to bed. But after seeing one of the Ripper’s victims for herself, she couldn’t quell her dread. She wandered from room to room, did another set of exercises, allowing herself to feel some relief that she was improving. She had supper, did the washing up with far more vigour than necessary. Made herself a cup of tea. Forgot about it. Made another. Contemplated scrubbing out the stove and renewing the black lead. Finally drank her tea, washed her cup up and returned to wandering from room to room, looking out onto the street from every window that faced it. Not that it was likely either Vastra or the Ripper would be there. They were some way from his hunting ground.

Eventually she collapsed onto the sofa in the living room, picking up books and reading half a page before becoming bored and moving onto the next. She was in the middle of this process, her eyes barely taking in the words, when a strange whooshing noise echoed throughout the house. She dashed out into the corridor, grabbed her sword and then fought her way against a strong draught, all the way to the drawing room. She shouldered the door open, just as the draught died and the noise faded away. She stared, stunned at the large blue box sitting on the carpet. It had the words Police Public Call Box written all the way around the top and a large white notice on one of the doors.

She inched towards it very carefully and, throwing caution to the wind, knocked on the door. There was no reply. She pressed her ear against it and could hear nothing except a very low humming. She walked all the way around it. It sat there, being completely unobtrusive apart from the fact it was a large blue box, in the middle of their drawing room. She hoped that whatever mechanism it had used to get itself there was still working because otherwise getting it out was going to cause substantial problems.

Jenny considered that it might be an alien spaceship. But if it was an alien spaceship, why did it have things in English written on it? She didn’t know what a Call Box was but she was pretty sure police didn’t have them. She frowned. Remembered the Space Pirates. They’d been time travellers.
Perhaps, in the future, police did have Call Boxes. Perhaps, they could materialise anywhere there was a major crime happening. Like a sort of teleport. She walked all the way around it again. If they did, it would explain why it had come here, at this time. It wanted to talk to them about the Ripper.

She reached the door again. She knocked more firmly. “Hello?” She called out. Still nothing.

She went and sheathed her sword and put it back on the rack. She came back to find it still sat there. It projected an aura of innocence. Jenny scowled at it. It seemed even police from the future didn’t want to talk to the maid. She snorted and went off to scour the range to relieve her anger at mysterious blue boxes appearing that wouldn’t answer her. Although, she admitted, kneeling by the range with a tin of black lead, it did take her mind off the fact that Vastra still wasn’t back yet.

She was just wiping down the top when she heard the front door. Glanced at the kitchen clock and was surprised. As much as she desperately wanted Vastra to come home, it wasn’t yet morning. Her heart leapt. Did that mean…? Unless it wasn’t Vastra…she walked out into the hall with an air of studied calm. It was Vastra. Unless there was someone else who walked around with a large hooded cape and a large sword.

“You’re back early ma’am. Another case cracked I assume.” She asked.

The hooded figure rested their sword on the top of the rack.

“Send a telegram to Inspector Abberline of the Yard. Jack the Ripper has claimed his last victim.”

“How did you find him?” Jenny asked, amazed. It’d only been this morning that they’d found another victim and Vastra hadn’t mentioned any clues as to his whereabouts.

The figure threw its hood back to reveal the familiar scales and grin.

“Stringy. But tasty all the same. I shan’t be needing dinner.”

So she had eaten him. Jenny tried not to be amused and pleased about that.

“Congratulations ma’am.” She took a small breath, because Vastra had only just got back and catching the Ripper was certainly something to celebrate but… “However,” she debated the best way to say it. Vastra had always said that a case was a case and that as swiftly as one was solved another arose, but this was quite a big thing to spring on her. Jenny stepped forward and waved her wash cloth nervously. “A matter has arisen in the drawing room.”

Vastra stared at her blankly but followed Jenny curiously when she disappeared into the aforementioned room.

“It just appeared!” Jenny gestured at the blue box. “What does it mean?” she asked as Vastra strode towards it.

“It means,” and Jenny was surprised at the slight shake in the voice. “a very old debt to be repaid.” Vastra stared at it and Jenny got the feeling that this was something serious. Possibly even more serious than Jack the Ripper. Vastra turned to her. “Pack the cases, Jenny. We’re going to need the swords.”

Well that sounded interesting at least. And the “we’re” indicated, along with the Ripper’s demise, that she might finally be allowed out the house. And that her injury would not be an obstacle to accompanying Vastra. But what was the very old debt… something else Vastra hadn’t told her about no doubt, Jenny sighed as she headed down into the basement.
“And wear your trousers!” Vastra called after her.

It didn’t take long for Jenny to pack the two sword cases and two suitcases of clothes. She hauled on her trousers and then stood carrying everything in front of the blue box.

Vastra reached up, and with a moment of hesitation that only Jenny noticed, knocked.

The door flung open immediately, to Jenny’s disgust.

“Vastra!!” a skinny young man with floppy hair and a huge chin hugged Vastra and then beckoned her in. “And Jenny too, of course.” His grin faltered at the sight of her scowl. He pointed both his fingers at her. “Yes. Definitely need you both. And your swords! Good to see you prepared.” He pointed to the cases and then into the box.

Jenny had walked all the way around that box. It was barely big enough for two people, let alone luggage, but she lifted everything and hauled it through the doorway.

And stared.

The strange man, who’d hugged Vastra, was eyeing her in anticipation. Vastra was also watching her closely.

“Wot?” she managed.

He sighed heavily. “You didn’t say it! Everyone says it. Eventually.”

“Says what?!” Jenny stared at him, baffled.

“It’s…” he gestured for her to finish the sentence.

“Alien?” she tried.

“Yes. And?”

“A spaceship?”

“Yes. And?!”

“It can teleport.”

“Well yes. AND?!!”

“…s’got a Roman soldier in it?”

“Ugh! Useless!” the man gave up on her and turned to Vastra. Jenny made a rude gesture at his back in retaliation for the “useless”. The Roman soldier she’d noticed standing a little way back from the console shrugged at her but gave a small supportive smile.

“You’ve regenerated again I see.” Vastra said delicately. Jenny’s head jerked around to stare in amazement. The Doctor? This was the Doctor?! She liked him even less than the last one. Nothing to do with the random hugging of Vastra of course.

“Yes.” The Doctor was saying, running a hand through his long hair. “Been a while now actually. Sorry. Should’ve called earlier. But I’ve got a bit of a to-do on my hands you see.”

“I surmised as much by the presence of the TARDIS.” Vastra gestured around her. “Still bigger on
“Thank you!” The Doctor sighed with relief.

“So. You need my help to save your life?”

“Eh. Well.” He clapped his hands, rubbing them together. “It’s not exactly my life but I figure it’s a life, it’s being saved. Who cares about the details?” he grinned at them. “This is a much more important life. Well, let’s get you settled in, shall we? Got to get a few more people together I’m afraid, so this’ll be rather a trip. This is Rory by the way.” The Doctor bounded over to the Roman and clapped him around the shoulders. “It’s his wife and baby we’ll be saving.”

“Hi.” Rory the Roman Soldier waved his sword at them awkwardly.

“This way!” He leapt along a corridor as if he had frogs in his shoes and skidded to a halt outside a room. Flinging open the room, they got a glimpse of bunk beds before the Doctor looked at them both. “Ah. Yes. No. Had complaints about that.” He closed the door and then opened it again. The bunk beds had turned into a lovely double bed complete with canopy.

Jenny felt a headache coming on as she followed Vastra into the room, dumping their cases down by the door, which closed behind her. She shut her eyes to try and stop the faint spinning sensation. She hadn’t had any sleep, she realised, since last night and it’d been quite an eventful day.

“Jenny?” Vastra sounded concerned.

Jenny merely repeated her earlier question. “What?”

“This…is the TARDIS. Time and Relative Dimension in Space. A time travel machine.”

“And it can…change…” she gestured weakly at the bed.

“Ah. Yes.” Vastra grinned. “Useful hm?”

Jenny walked over to it and sat down heavily. Well at least it was solid enough.

“So what’re we doing here then?”

“Going to save a life. Or help to.” Vastra sat down on the bed beside Jenny.

“An’ thas the old debt?”

“I told you before did I not? About how I met the Doctor?”

Jenny nodded. Months of tension and evenings fraught with worry were beginning to catch up on her. She wanted nothing more than to curl up on this quite frankly luxurious bed and fall asleep. Her headache seemed to be getting worse.

Vastra frowned when she mentioned it. “The TARDIS is telepathic but it shouldn’t be causing headaches. Maybe it’s space sickness?”

“Fantastic.” Jenny muttered, remembering the trip to Japan and her seasickness and the Doctor’s comment that this would be “rather a trip”.

“Rest.” Vastra advised. “I’ll see if the Doctor can prescribe anything.” She left the room.

Jenny tugged her nightgown out of her suitcase, swiftly changed into and flopped under the covers.
She was asleep in seconds.

The next morning brought momentary confusion. Vastra wasn’t there and when she tried to find a bathroom so she could get to the loo, the doorway wasn’t where it was meant to be. She opened the only doorway there, to find herself in a strange corridor. She slammed the door shut, closed her eyes and allowed memory to bring explanation.

When she opened them again the door had changed. She cautiously opened it to find a bathroom, unlike any she had ever seen before. There wasn’t a box around the toilet and there was a strange small room with a hose…her mind somehow supplied the word “shower”.

She eyed it warily and settled for using the toilet and the bath instead.

There was still no sign of Vastra when she was dressed once again. She’d decided on trousers and a clean cotton shirt. After all, there was no knowing what would be on the TARDIS. After a moment’s thought she took her sword with her. There really was no knowing.

She wandered the corridors for a little while, trying to find the console room or preferably a kitchen when she spotted familiar green scales.

“Vastra!” she ran up and grabbed her arm. “Wh…What’re you wearin’?” She suddenly noticed the strange attire. It looked like chainmail armour.

The Silurian hissed at her, tugging her arm out of Jenny’s grasp before walking off with an affronted huff.

“Oi! Vastra!” Jenny strode after her.

“Grimaya.”

“What?”

“My name is not Vastra, ape, it is Grimaya.”

“Is this some kind of joke?” Jenny struggled to keep up with her. It…it was Vastra. She was sure of it.

The Silurian stopped and stared at her. “I do not joke with apes.”

Jenny looked up into blue eyes but they were cold and blank. This…wasn’t Vastra.

“Grimaya!” A voice called out. Jenny turned and…there was another…someone who looked like Vastra. In the same get up as the one in front of her. The second Silurian strode up to them. “What are you doing chatting to an ape?” Another set of blue eyes stared at her in mild disgust. Jenny tensed, her hand twitching towards her sword. Whoever they were, if they didn’t stop calling her ape…

“Being annoyed.” Grimaya shrugged artlessly.

“The Doctor is calling a meeting. Kyltra is waiting for us in the conference room off the console. There are a few more parts of the plan to go over.”

“Then let us go, Bol.”
“Bring the ape if you want. I could do with a snack.” ‘Bol’ flashed a nasty grin at Jenny.

It disappeared when Jenny drew her sword.

“The ape has a claw.” Bol laughed. “Can you use it?”

A sword blade appeared at her throat.

“Of course she can. I taught her how.”

Jenny turned and found a third set of blue eyes and wondered how she could’ve possibly mistaken the other Silurian for Vastra.

Grimaya stared at Vastra. “You taught an ape?” She looked back at Jenny.

“Grimaya! Bol! You’re late. And the Doctor told us about the apes. Leave it alone.” Another Silurian appeared in the corridor.

Grimaya and Bol immediately stood to attention. Without even a backward glance they strode off.

“Are you alright?” Vastra asked, sheathing her sword. “Jenny.” She gently laid a hand on Jenny’s arm.

The sword lowered, but the expression of someone who has been slapped in the face by several sharks did not leave Jenny’s face.

She wasn’t sure which emotion was foremost. Shock at seeing other Silurians, anger at being called an ape, a strange smugness at the way Vastra had protected her…against other Silurians no less! Other Silurians! And they all looked the same??

She was only vaguely aware of Vastra relieving her of her sword and guiding her along the corridor.

“I’m afraid explanations will have to wait. We have a meeting to attend.”

Chapter End Notes

if you have read this three times, congratulations you have read the equivalent of War and Peace.
At the meeting, in a large circular room with a long table in the centre, Jenny saw more strange creatures than she’d seen in her life. There were lots of Silurians, she kept a wary eye on Bol and her gang. There were what looked (and smelt) like pirates. Creatures in black leather with giant rhino heads and equally giant guns. And men in strange clothing, one of whom winked at her. As more people crowded in, she shuffled herself to the back, not entirely sure what she could bring to this meeting. She ended up leaning against a wall by a short brown, bald person in blue armour. It was muttering to itself and paid no attention to what was going on. Possibly no attention was being paid to it and it felt like returning the favour. She felt an instant camaraderie.

“What are they talkin’ about?” She whispered. She could hear lots of arguing from the people grouped closest to the table and thought she heard Vastra’s voice once in a while. Clearly neither her opinion nor that of the squashed potato next to her were particularly important.

“How should I know? All this foolish…plan making. Useless.” It gave what would’ve been a shrug if it had had any neck for its shoulders to travel up. “When in doubt? Charge. And throw a grenade for good measure. Would you like one?”

“What’s…a grenade?” Jenny took the small oval object and stared at it.

“An explosive device.” Jenny froze. “Merely remove the pin, thus and then throw. And quickly. Otherwise you’ll lose a hand.”

She swallowed. “Can you put the pin back in?”

“Hm? Oh. Yes. Probably shouldn’t interrupt their precious meeting.” The creature shook its head and shoved the pin back in, then, to Jenny’s relief, took it back off her and secreted it somewhere. The moment of terror over, Jenny found herself intrigued.

“I’m Jenny.” She held out the hand that thankfully hadn’t been lost. “Jenny Flint. Hard as ‘em.”

It looked her up and down disdainfully. “That’s a strange name for a boy.” Jenny’s expression solidified. “Strax.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“My name is Strax, putrid earthling. Pay attention.”

“I’m not a boy. Or a putrid earthling.” She folded her arms.

“Whatever you are, we shall die in battle together soon enough, for the glory of the Sontaran empire. I hope. It’s been a while now. The Doctor has me working as a nurse. The worst punishment for a
Sontaran Warrior. To *care* for people.” It sneered. The thought seemed to start off the muttering again. Jenny ignored Strax and turned her gaze back to the table. There was some kind of image hanging in the air and everyone was pointing at it. She spotted the Doctor gesticulating wildly at one part.

“Sounds like they’re gettin’ a bit into it.” No-one had fully explained to her yet what was going on and being told she’d die in battle alongside a sentient potato wasn’t reassuring.

“Don’t worry if you do die though. I’m an excellent nurse.”

“What, that excellent that you can bring someone back from the dead?” she scoffed.

“This device here.” The Sontaran whipped out some strange flat instrument. “has all manner of settings which can revive someone, even if their heart has stopped beating for up to an hour. See here!” he pushed a button and the device vibrated, seemed to shoot something out. “Magnificent. Of course, as a warrior, I should not wish to restart it. But as a nurse...” Strax trailed off with a sigh. Jenny took the device from him and examined it but could find nothing she could comprehend. He took it back off her. “This setting here,” he showed her how to adjust it. “can knit skin back together. This one’s for healing bones...”

Jenny was increasingly impressed by this device. Perhaps they could prevent future trips to Doctor Anderson if only they had one. She cast her eye other the band of creatures around her, wondered how much cause for Strax’s skill there’d be in the upcoming battle.

“I don’t see no other Sontarans.” She interrupted his lecture with her observation. That shut him up a little too quickly and she regretted it.

“I am the only one to be so degraded. No other Sontaran would face the Doctor and choose to live. I am outcast because of it.”

“My family didn’t accept me either.” Jenny empathised. “So, after all this, you’ll just go back to being a nurse? All alone?”

Strax stared at his device and said nothing more. Jenny was about to offer that he could come back with her and Vastra but the thought of a) the Sontaran wandering around London and b) what Vastra would say about yet another stray coming home with her, stopped her. She turned her attention to the meeting, but it seemed to have settled down from an argument into going over the huge floating image and pointing. Figuring that Vastra would explain everything and what Jenny’s role was far more clearly than trying to figure it out from the tumult, Jenny slipped away. She was hungry anyway, and she’d upset the one person who seemed to be interested in talking to her.

“Where the bleedin’ ‘ell is the kitchen on this thing?” she muttered, wandering down yet another corridor. She felt a strange tug at her mind. This way. Now this way. Round this corner. Down this corridor. This door. Deciding to investigate whatever was giving her psychic directions at a later time, she opened it. It was not anything like the kitchen in 13 Paternoster Row. The shiny surfaces were covered with bizarre utensils, a strange metallic box stood to one side. The word microwave floated into her mind. And food mixer. And coffee machine.

“’ow do I make tea?” she asked weakly. A kettle started boiling on her left, without any visible hob. A brief search turned up some bread and jam. There was a fruit bowl. It was full of bananas. She took one and sat down on a chair that at least looked wooden and normal, only just resisting the urge to cling to it.
The meeting was over by the time she made her way back to the room and she set off once more in search of Vastra. Once more she felt a strange tug at her mind, pushing her urgently onwards and she obeyed with only a trace of resentment and a lot more worry. Particularly as faint sounds of an argument came to her. She hurried forward until words could be distinguished.

“We help the Doctor because we owe him a debt! And we respect the apes of this planet because he seems to think them of worth. But to teach one of their cubs the ways of a Silurian Warrior!”

She peered round the corner to find Vastra standing, legs akimbo and arms folded gently over her sword. Jenny admired the very unimpressed glower she had on her face. It was one to rival her own such glares.

“It is pitiful.”

“A disgrace! As if they could ever master our arts.”

“Quite frankly, I find it unnatural.”

“Well? Have you anything to say for yourself?”

Jenny found her thumb flicking up her sword, ready to draw as one of the Silurians pushed Vastra.

“I believe her to be worthy.” Vastra replied softly, resuming her original pose. “She has proved herself more than once.”

“Proved herself!” the Silurian in front of her scoffed. “And you protect her for this?”

Vastra grinned. “She does not need my protection. Much.”

“So if say, one of our warriors were to challenge her…” Jenny recognised Bol as she stepped forward to sneer at Vastra.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” The Doctor interrupted, coming up behind Jenny and rounding the corner. His arm had flung around her shoulders and dragged her with him. “Don’t you know who this is?” he laughed at them. “This is The Great Warrior who defends Earth! This is the Isle Dog Slayer, Rider of the Golden Hawks, killer of cybermen, slayer of monsters and occasionally even thumbs her nose at the Queen herself. Several Queens in fact. This is Jenny Flint. And she is as ‘ard as ‘em.” He winked at her. Maybe this Doctor wasn’t all that bad. The list of titles had certainly made the Silurians look thoughtful.

Bol was having none of it. “Such a long list of titles for such a little ape.”

Vastra was grinning. Jenny could feel it out the corner of her eye. Scowling, she took a deep breath and drew her sword. “What did you call me?”

All the other Silurians backed away. Bol eyed the sword and made a short bow. “Ah. My mistake. I see I am facing a distinguished warrior, no weakling ape. Perhaps you would do me the honour of sparring with me?”

“Oh…” The Doctor tried to speak but Jenny brushed him off.

“Any time.”

“We do need to rescue…” he tried again.

“Now? I’m sure this TARDIS can conjure up a suitable room.”
"I mean Jenny is sort of vital to the…"

"Lead the way."

"And we have a schedule…" The Doctor gave up as Bol stalked off, Jenny in tow, past a long line of curious Silurians.

The Doctor gazed entreatingly at Vastra but she merely shook her head and followed Jenny. There was always one and it was going to happen eventually and better now than on a battlefield where it would matter.

Jenny could feel the TARDIS’s disapproval but they found a room that was large and airy. There was a rather obvious medical area in one corner. Jenny lips twitched. Maybe she should’ve stuck with Strax.

"Jenny…" Vastra caught her by the arm. Jenny looked up into the blue eyes and felt daring. She nodded, then stood on tiptoe, her free hand reaching up to gently stroke Vastra’s left head crest, her lips pressing against Vastra’s.

There was a sharp intake of breath from every Silurian in the room, followed by a buzz of conversation.

Vastra raised her eyes ridges but her blue eyes sparkled.

Jenny spun to face Bol, who’d found a sword from somewhere. It was similar but looked lighter, sharper than Jenny’s.

Their swords clanged off each other, a first test. Jenny feinted left, turned it into a roll under a swing and slashed at Bol’s legs. There was a snarl of pain, although she hadn’t cut deeply, just enough to cause a slight limp. The muttering increased. The first blood had gone to the ape, and so easily. Jenny was grateful it had worked. This would have to be quick. Bol would have greater strength and stamina, even if Jenny had been training long enough or consistently enough. But now Bol was on guard, no more showcasing. And there was murder in her eyes.

Jenny’s mind went back to one of her first fights with Vastra. The Warrior hadn’t been necessarily prepared for street tactics. Quite frankly, Bol’s death glare wasn’t half as intimidating as Vastra’s was, the first time Jenny had touched one of her crests. Bol was circling her now, in a half crouch, sword raised ready. Jenny dropped her stance, relaxed, stood still. She caught Vastra’s eye and gave a small nod. She saw the unconscious movement, the sudden fear, felt the thud of footsteps. She took a sudden step backwards, crouched and raised her elbow and Bol ran right into it. As the Silurian slumped over her shoulder, Jenny relieved her of her sword and light-footed away. Bol staggered, wheezing. Jenny brandished both swords in front of her, not trusting Bol to yield.

"You fight using dirty tricks. Give me back my sword and fight me properly." Bol hissed at Jenny, holding out her hand.

"I fight to win." Jenny retorted, not relinquishing either of the swords.

"You have not won!" Bol grabbed some kind of blunderbuss off an unwary Silurian.

Jenny was knocked to the ground in one swift breath-taking moment, the swords flying out of her hands. She was aware of a flash of light above her, passing through where she’d been standing, a sound not unlike *pyew* and the smell of something burning. She flipped herself over and stared into blue eyes as the sounds of a struggle and someone being wrestled away came to her attention.
“Are you alright?” the Silurian asked, getting up and offering her a hand. “The Doctor spoke right of you. You are a warrior. If a little…unorthodox.”

“I’m fine. It was all still showin’ off. Not proper fighting. I’d be dead if she’d fought me properly.” Jenny shrugged.

The Silurian was shoved aside by Jenny’s Silurian. “She was not fighting you properly and you would have been dead still.” Vastra pointed out, cupping Jenny’s face.

“I’m fine ma’am!” Jenny reassured Vastra, although there was a growing awareness that she’d narrowly escaped death and all the Silurians in the room were looking at her with a wary respect. Having checked Jenny over and satisfied herself that no harm had come from the fight or the rescuing take-down, Vastra glowered at the Silurians standing around the room, grabbed Jenny’s hand and tugged her out the door.

Chapter End Notes

in tones reminiscent of Bow (from She-ra) GRENADE SAFETY!!

ooff do NOT call Jenny a little ape
'scuse the rush job and the crapola granola writing but everything's right there in the ep and the follow up and I have Straxy The Sontaran's First Christmas to write so next chapter will be better I promise

They walked to their room in silence. A silence which Jenny broke first.

“Why were they giving you such hassle? I mean I know why but…”

“We have more pressing matters to attend to.” Vastra cut her off. “There are only a few more stops to make and then we will be in battle. Your first.”

“I’ve fought before.” Jenny argued.

“By yourself. This is more a team effort.”

“Bloody weird team.” Jenny muttered. Something was nagging at her mind. She sat down on the bed. “I met this…dunno if it was a bloke or a woman…anyway he thought I was a boy.”

“I wouldn’t take offence. The Doctor thought you were as well, the first few times you met him.” Vastra pointed out. “Perhaps it is the trousers.”

“I’ve got long hair!”

“It’s in a bun. Besides, so does the Doctor, in this regeneration. And I have no hair at all.”

“Yeah but…”

“You apes make far too much of appearance when attempting to discern gender. And apparently species.”

Jenny didn’t have time to bite back about the “you apes” or to enquire as to what precisely Vastra meant by that. Their door was flung open and a Silurian strode in, holding their swords out to them. “It is nearly time. We must prepare. You know what to do?” Vastra nodded, taking the swords and passing Jenny hers. “Then come with me.”

Pride kept Jenny from admitting she still didn’t know what her and Vastra were meant to do. Her reputation among the other Silurians was all too new. But there was a sense of panic too as they strode along the corridors to the console room.

“Remind me of the plan again?” She hissed to Vastra as they stood, in amongst the crowd of strange people and creatures. She couldn’t see the Doctor at all, perhaps he’d already left.

Vastra gave a brief outline of the plan, pointing out the different species and groups as they filed out the door. “Our part is relatively simple. We are to gain control of the technical room and operate the lights at intervals. Threats but no deaths. Doctor’s orders.” The Silurian sounded put out. “Were you not paying attention during the meeting?”
Jenny bit back her remark that no-one had paid her any attention during the meeting, including Vastra. She saw Strax stomp through the doorway, focussed and grinning, happy to be going into battle. She wasn’t sure whether she was happy. It was anger that was beginning to coil in her stomach, but at least it was replacing any fear. She still didn’t know whose life was being saved, who they were rescuing. She realised it didn’t matter. The Doctor was right. It was a life; it was being saved. Anything else was a minor detail. She tried to keep hold of that thought as they left the TARDIS, tried to keep her eyes from wandering around the metal corridors, filled with steam and harsh lights. Anger was now being over-ridden by a sense of wonder and excitement. She was on a spaceship. In space. Sword out and Vastra by her side. She glanced at the Silurian who was leading the way. There was no veil, no device to mask her scales. She caught herself grinning. This was how it should be. They met no resistance, by the looks of things every soldier was in the main hall. Vastra motioned towards a door. They could hear cries of outrage. “That’ll be the Doctor.” Vastra whispered with a grin and pressed the button, causing the door to slide silently open. They strode equally as silently into the room, spotting the two men in their seats.

“Go on. Resist. I am ever so hungry…”

She’d never really seen the Doctor at work before. Against the Kraal, he’d gotten them lost. Against the Cybermen, he’d disappeared off to another time and had left Jenny and Vastra behind. All the other times, had been fleeting visits. Even against Croup and Vandemar. It was an experience to watch him create mass fear and panic among armed military men with just a monk’s cowl, a brief speech and a dim of the lights.

“Clever, isn’t he?” she remarked to Vastra.

“And rather attractive.”

“You do realise he’s man, don’t you ma’am.” Jenny had an inkling Vastra was making a point over their argument.

“Mammals. They all look alike.”

“Oh thank you!” Jenny gave up and turned away. Vastra was operating the lights, it wasn’t as if she were particularly necessary at this moment in time.

“You mistook Grimaya for me!”

Jenny stared at the console in front of her in disbelief. Was that what this had been about? “Only once! After I saw you, I couldn’t believe I’d ever thought she was you.” She felt the Silurian pause, reassess things.

“Was I being insensitive again, dear? I don’t know why you put up with me.”

Jenny restrained from rolling her eyes as Vastra’s tongue flashed out to stun the guard. But she couldn’t stop the small quirk of her lips.

Something occurred to her. “How did you know I was a girl anyway? When we first met? If even the Doctor couldn’t tell.”

“I have my ways. Far more accurate than clothing and appearance.” Vastra shrugged.

Jenny decided she’d ask her again later. She leant over the console, watching the scene unfolding below.
“Colonel Manton is regaining control.”

“Where’s the Doctor gone?” Jenny assumed Colonel Manton was the man currently repeating ‘we are not fools’. Personally, she thought he was. They were now all unarmed and the hall was now full of fully armed Silurians and Judoon and there was Strax, right next to Colonel Manton. The Doctor was saying something, and she had to grab the console as explosions rocked the base.

“The spitfires taking out the communications.” Vastra reassured her.

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Once the explosions stopped, the door sprang open to reveal the Doctor and a large blue man. “Right. We’ll just wait here for Strax to bring ol’ Colonel Manton up and then we can get to business.” He plopped down in the chair, gestured for the two men to be released and switched on the lights in the same instant. Jenny hesitated to untie the men. Not that they’d been difficult to subdue but… “Don’t worry.” The Doctor said, as if reading her thoughts. “They’re going to surrender. Aren’t you boys?” he spun on the chair and grinned at them. Somehow it was more frightening than even Vastra’s grin. The two men quietly stood by the door after Jenny untied them. “Take them away after Manton gets here. They can go join their little friends down in the main hall, ready for them to all run away.” The Doctor spun back round to watch the monitors.

Jenny nodded.

She passed a terrifying looking woman on the way down, wearing some kind of silver eyepatch, guarded by two Silurians. None of the group acknowledged Jenny and her two prisoners.

“Right. Here you are then.” She felt the words lacked something, but the two men were dragged off by two Silurians. She stood watching as the Judoon and Silurians were joined by the pirates. Captain Avery. That was his name. And his son. The spitfire pilots, Danny Boy or whoever, must still be outside.

“Men.” A voice echoed through the hall. It sounded defeated but still choked on the words. “I order you…to run away.”

Well it wasn’t so much running. The Clerics were escorted onto ships quite civilly. A bit of an anti-climax for her first battle. Hadn’t even got her sword bloody. She watched as the spitfires disappeared, feeling a little jealous. She wouldn’t mind flying like that one day. It seemed a lot more comfortable than a dragon or an eagle, although less exciting.

“Ah! Boy.”

“Hello Strax.” She took a breath and turned away from the window. She should find the Doctor, or Rory or Vastra and report what was happening.

“Not much of a battle in the end, eh? Didn’t even die.” Strax spat, striding along beside her. “But you distinguished yourself well. For a human.”

“Thanks.” I think…

She was distracted from her report to Rory by the baby crying, being held by a woman who she deduced was Amelia. Were they saving Amelia or the baby, she wondered. Probably the baby. Amelia looked as if she could take care of herself. Strax set off, when the Doctor reappeared with a cot, muttering about securing the perimeter. Jenny decided that was a good idea. The conversation looked a little personal.
Apparently, they’d missed someone. She strode back to the group at the sound of Strax’s voice. The thought that he’d apprehended an innocent bystander was dispelled by the Cleric uniform. She’d come back to warn them. As the lights flickered out, Jenny thought on Strax’s words. “Not much of a battle, in the end.” She was inclined to believe this Cleric. Should’ve realised sooner, that it had been far too easy. She kept a ready hand on her sword as Strax scanned the area, although the knowledge that the Monks weren’t alive was not comforting. How did you kill something that wasn’t alive? The sight of Vastra striding towards them lifted her spirits, but when Vastra and Maldover told of their suspicions, Jenny’s apprehension only deepened. As a shield came down around the TARDIS and the doors locked, she heard on the edge of her hearing, a deep ominous chanting. She tried to see something, through the dark and the steam. The Doctor wasn’t in control now. She’d fought dogs and eagles and Torchwood, but what could you do against something that wasn’t alive? She readied herself, she wouldn’t give in to fear. She wasn’t a fool and she didn’t need a colonel to tell her that. But not giving in to fear wasn’t the same as not being afraid, when she heard the swish and thunk of Maldover dying, clutching at the plasma pistol the woman had given her, not a clue how to operate it as she saw the crackling red lightning of the monk’s swords and the headless body…

She threw it away as they attacked, unable to figure out how to reload it or recharge it. Relying on her sword and her minimal skills. This wasn’t like putting Bol down or showing off, or getting lucky against a huge dog. This was a fight for life, to the death. She saw Strax fall, the woman (who was definitely a woman, according to Vastra) fall. Rory finished off two of the last monks and another fell to Vastra’s sword. With a sick feeling in her stomach, Jenny cut down the headless Maldover, turning swiftly at the sound of Amy’s screams.

Where there had been a baby was now just…white liquid. Rory went to pull Amy into a hug but was pushed away, as Amy stumbled to a crate and sat down, quietly staring at the floor. Vastra strode back and forth between them and the TARDIS, checking for any more Monks and keeping an eye on the dying woman. Rory stood a little way away. Feeling raw and numb, Jenny crept towards Amy. She closed her eyes, remembering her mother, remembering the baby. She sat down behind Amy and put a useless hand on her shoulder in an attempt at comfort. Amy didn’t appear to notice but Jenny didn’t know what else to do.

She sat on the box, watching and listening, and still not quite understanding what was going on. Even less so when another woman turned up. She was new. Jenny had never seen her before. But it looked like the Doctor knew her. Vastra came over to her, slowly, not wanting to interrupt the scene unfolding.

“Who are you?”

Jenny very much wanted that question answered herself. She stood up as Vastra came to stand beside her. She knew far too little of the Doctor she realised. But her eyes narrowed as the woman went over to the cot.

“I am telling you.”

“Vastra,” she whispered. “you don’t think…”

“I am beginning to suspect. No wonder the Doctor gave up. If he already knew…”

“They seem a little bit…close.”

“Mm.”

“But if she’s Rory and Amy’s…”
“Yes.”

Jenny failed miserably at keeping a wide grin off her face. That was going to be one very awkward conversation.

“Jenny! Vastra! ‘Til next the next time!”

It became apparent that Rory and Amy weren’t as quick on the uptake. Jenny took a step back as Amy picked up the gun. She felt a little like an intruder and looked away as River revealed who she was.

River song took Rory and Amy back home first. Jenny pressed her forehead into Vastra’s shoulder, breathing a deep sigh of relief. “I still ain’t got the first clue what’s going on. Did we actually accomplish anything?”

“I’m not sure. At any rate we appear to have helped solve a mystery.”

“I want to go home.” Surrounded by dead monks and a dead Lorna and a dead Strax on a space station base or whatever it was. She felt like she hadn’t really slept since Vastra had come from eating the Ripper.

“And I’m here to take you there!” River smiled at them.

“A Vortex manipulator!” Jenny recognised the device on River’s arm.

“Ooh. A smart one.” River winked at her, holding out her hand to Jenny. Vastra hissed warning at River as Jenny took it. “You too.” River grasped Vastra’s gloved hand and placed it over Jenny’s. “Now. Where am I taking you?”

“13 Paternoster Row. London. 1888. Morning of the 10th of November should do it.”

“Right you are…”


“Good introduction! And your…”

“Vastra.”

River ignored the Silurian’s huffiness and activated the vortex manipulator.

And there they were. Back at 13 Paternoster Row. In their bedroom, no less. Jenny could see the urchins out in the back yard, playing some game of sorts. All her strays. She never had gotten round to making that offer to Strax. She took off her waistcoat and tie and threw them on the pile of washing. Better get back to maid’s clothes now they were home.

“Uh-oh. I know that face from the Doctor. What’s wrong?” River was staring at her.

Jenny chewed her lip, trying to think of how exactly to explain. “Strax.”

“The Sontaran?” Vastra asked, unbuckling the short katana from her back and reverently checking the blade for damage.

“It’s just…he was all alone. I was thinkin’…”

“Of offering him a home here.” Vastra finished, with a small sigh. She placed a comforting hand on
Jenny’s shoulder. “I’m sorry. But there’s nothing we could’ve done for him. He died. Nothing in the world can bring…” Jenny knocked her hand away. “Jenny?”

“His device!” Jenny quickly explained what Strax had told her.

“And you think you can operate it?” River asked, catching on to the excitement.

“But even if you could bring him back, how were you planning to convince him to come back here? He’s a Sontaran. According to the Doctor, they’re hardly amiable, particularly to other species.” Vastra snorted.

“It’s worth a try, ain’t it?” Jenny was already dressing in her second waistcoat and a black tie.

River and Vastra exchanged a look.

But River gave Jenny a slow smile. “Always worth a try.” She held out her hand once more and Jenny grasped it.

Vastra picked up Jenny’s sword. “We’ll take these with us, I think. In case there’s any monks left. Or your Sontaran is more belligerent upon being brought back to life.”

“I’ll take us back a couple of days after. Don’t want to end up with two lots of us. Or if anyone comes snooping. I’ll take us to the level below. I don’t think he saw me. Don’t want to confuse him too much. Coming back from the dead can be a bit of shock. Trust me.” River winked again as she pressed the button to take them back.

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