Found & Forgotten

by WhoInWhoville

Summary

Human Nature meets London, 1963. John is a writer, and has just made it big. Jane is a timid typist in the typing pool of his publishing house. He's a swinging bachelor with a roving eye. She is a quiet girl who has never sought attention. Retelling of Human Nature with both Rose and Ten both in hiding, and Jack Harkness as their protector.

Notes

This story is complete! I originally wrote this in 2012. I took it down in September of 2015, but I've decided to put it back up. I had lots of help with this story, but have made many changes, so all mistakes are mine. Thanks to kelkat9, timelord1, onabearskinrug/auntafraidanoghosts, and kilodalton for all of their help back in 2012.

Please see end notes for spoilers regarding threatened non-con. This is a major element of the story and can't realistically be skipped.

This story immediately follows "Found & Lost". In case you are wondering, this occurs before the 456 arrived on Earth (Torchwood), and before Ten and Rose visited the Torchwood Estate. For Jack, it also occurred before he found Rose Tyler in London as detailed in The Lost Day. Lots of time-travel elements. The setting and characters are inspired by the romantic comedies of the early 1960's starring Doris Day, Cary Grant, Rock
Hudson, etc.

This fic is set in 1963. Some of the attitudes and social standards were completely different than they are now. I have tried to keep this fic very realistic to the times. Feminism hadn't yet become a mainstream idea. Remaining a virgin until marriage wasn't unusual. Sexual harassment in the workplace was not taken seriously, and the term, "sexual harassment" didn't even exist.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Meet John & Jane

Chapter One: Meet John & Jane

Jane Smith was a mouse of a girl: shy, tidy, habitual to a fault. Her favorite color was brown, and she usually wore a suit of a conservative cut. Her hair was brownish, her eyes were brown, but outstanding, everyone said so.

"Why don't you wear some makeup, for heaven's sake?" her work acquaintances would say. "Would do you a world of good. Men like that sort of thing these days. A bit of color, a bit of flash. Maybe try out a different color of suit? I know, pink! And you could bleach your hair blonde and cut it like Doris Day! You would be a doll, Jane! You'd be fightin’ off the blokes."

She would smile and quietly say, "Thank you. Maybe next payday."

John Smith, on the other hand was a lion in every way. (No relation to the aforementioned Jane by the way.) Tall, lanky, confident, and proud. A man's man, a lady's man, the toast of London. His suits were Saville Row, perfectly tailored. His sleek blue roadster was sexy. His Chelsea flat was sexy. Even his job was sexy.

John Smith was the genius author behind a wildly successful, fantastical and often blush-inducing series of science fiction books about a mad professor and his lovely assistant. Everyone loved the books, though few would admit to reading them. He didn't care. The money was coming in hand over fist. He had a brand new publisher, and he was about to become a worldwide phenomenon.

John Smith was King of the Jungle.

Jane was tea and toast.

John was toast of the town.

Jane was in the typing pool.

John penned the words that she typed.

Jane hid her feminine charms.

John flaunted his masculine appeal.

Jane's head was in the clouds. But so was John's.

But that was about the only thing they had in common. Except for the fact that John Smith and Jane Smith -- no relation, remember -- were soul mates, meant for each other, separated by necessity, a plan of their own design. They just didn't know it. Yet.

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John Smith woke up to hollering and pounding on his bedroom door.

"John! Get up! Yer gonna be late!"

"Whatty a makin’ that racket for?" John yelled as he turned over and pulled his pillow over his head.

"It's your first day of work, John," Jack Harkness bellowed his reply through the door. "You made
me promise I would wake you up on time. I've been ringing you on the phone for an hour! What's the problem?"

Jack's American accent grated on John's nerves, and he pulled the pillow tighter around his head. But then reality set in. Today was the first day of the rest of his life. The day that he had been waiting for. His fame was about to explode. While he was already popular in some circles -- college students, specifically those in the hard sciences, loved his books -- The men in the marketing department of his new publisher had also discovered something surprising. His books were very popular in a very unusual segment for his genre: women, both married and single, were buying his books in spades. With this new opportunity, he was assured that his novels would soon be displayed in the front windows of every major bookstore in the English-speaking world. Foreign language deals were promised to be in the works, too.

"I'll be ready in ten minutes, Jack-o!" His voice trilled with excitement as his Scottish brogue broke through.

Jack rolled his eyes at the nickname d'jour. "When does Mrs. Huckleberry come to make breakfast? I'm starving!" he yelled through the door.

John jumped out of bed, and stretched his lanky frame. "It's her day off. Make some coffee would ya? And make it strong! Was up half the night dancing with the Nightingale sisters down at the Tiki Tiki Club. Guess who was headlining Jack old boy?"

"Who, Doc?" Jack snickered, guessing his reaction to the use of the name.

"Why do you insist on calling me that ridiculous nickname? If you won't call me John, which you seem loathe to do, why not call me Prof or Professor? Doc, as far as nicknames go, is highly illogical," he whined some more about the moniker as Jack silently laughed outside of his door, and then switched gears back to the previous night's events. "Dean Martin! Deano Martini himself was at the Tiki Tiki! Music! Dancing! We did the Watusi!" He did a few steps of the ridiculous dance as he recalled the evening. "And the girls. Twins. Gingers! Jack, you should see the melons on them! I'm tellin' you, Marilyn Monroe has nothing on these two! Phwoar," he growled as he recalled their dimensions. "But," he sighed, "I sent them home in a cab, came back to the flat and stayed up writing until four am. Got a bug in my ear at the club when I saw this blonde bird being hit on something fierce by a clueless old coot. I came to her rescue of course, stepped in right at the last minute, but then her big lump of a boyfriend came back from the loo and almost decked me. She assured Buzz -- that was his name. Buzz. -- that I was only trying to help, but then--"

"John, you're rambling," Jack interrupted. "You said you had a plot idea?"

"Oh right! Picture this: Iris held hostage in this underground bunker by Metaltron. Like that? Metaltron. Sort has a ring to it. It's this really scary looking robot, but it isn't a robot, see. It is a creature inside of a metal casing, but she doesn't know that, of course, and the Professor is stuck in another room, but he can see everything that is goin' on in the room that Iris is stuck in. And," John yelled as he moved into the bathroom and started stripping for the shower. "And just as Metaltron is about to shoot her with his ray gun, fry her to bits, he makes this grand declaration."

"The Professor is finally gonna tell Ro--", Jack winced at his near slip. "He's gonna tell Iris he loves her?"

"Metaltron you ninny, not the Professor. Metaltron! Metaltron confronts the Professor and."

"Doc, are you going to tell me the entire plot or are you going to take a shower?" Jack said. He sauntered into the kitchen and then his spirits fell. "Coffee not tea, Jack-o instead of Jack. Suits
instead of leather. Dancing the damn Watusi, one of the dumbest dances ever in the history of the universe. And going nightclubbing with twins! Who does he think he is? Trying to be the bachelor of the year?” Jack sighed. “And Rose, it's like she's afraid of her own shadow. She dresses like a damn schoolmarm. At least they work at the same place. How in the hell am I going to keep him from cheating on her for another three months?” Jack muttered to himself as he watched the coffee in the space-age designed silver percolator begin to sputter into the little glass dome on the lid.

He put a hand into his pocket and felt the weight of the two fob watches as he rubbed his eyes wearily.

"You look like an angel, walk like an angel, talk like an angel, but I got wise, you're the devil in disguise."

Jack shook his head and chuckled. The Doctor -- no, John -- was singing in the shower.

"What I wouldn't do for digital recorder right now," he laughed himself out of his misery as he listened to the Not-Time Lord singing Elvis with a Scottish twist. He poured himself a cup of hot, black coffee, and shoved a stale pastry into his mouth. He sat on a stool and contemplated how he ended up in this predicament.

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April 3, 1963

Jack was in Cardiff when it happened. It was during one of those times when he needed a place to lay low for a while, so he had retreated to the Hub to ride out the most recent Let's Experiment on Jack campaign. Things would settle down, they always did. Torchwood would proverbially come knocking (meaning he got the word by messages transmitted from agent to agent to agent to trusted agent), begging forgiveness for ever thinking about vivisection or dismemberment or some other ghastly experiment. The pleas to return usually coincided with some nasty alien threat that needed Jack's special expertise.

He was feeling bold and safe that day. It had been three months or so since he'd hightailed it out of London over to Cardiff, so he decided to see what things were like topside. He needed fresh air, a pint and companionship.

He emerged from his underground hideaway through an abandoned old warehouse near the docks. It was a very different neighborhood in 1963 than it would be in the 21st century when the Doctor, Rose, and he visited, and Roald Dahl Plass wouldn't be as they had seen it until 2000.

He rounded a corner and then he saw the TARDIS. She was parked in the spot that he knew to be right over the Rift and the Hub.

He hadn't seen the Doctor since That Day: the day he lost his mortality; the day that Rose died; the day the Doctor had abandoned him to the future. He had scraped his way back to Earth, finally ending up in the late 1800's, and had been stuck ever since, working for Torchwood the entire time.

Slowly, he approached the TARDIS and circled around to the front. The door was wide open and the lights were even dimmer than usual. He wondered what he should do. He was still so angry at the Doctor for abandoning him and allowing Rose to die. Should he go in? Should he turn around and walk away? But maybe this was an earlier Doctor. Or maybe this was a time when Rose was still alive. He'd do anything to see her again. Boldly, he knocked on the door frame.

"Hello, anybody home?" He waited "Doc?" He paused hopefully. "Rose?" There was no reply.
Something didn't feel right. The hum of the ship was off, as if she was conserving energy. "You playing hide and seek? Ready or not, here I come!" he called in mock cheerfulness, pushing down the fear that started to push up into his chest. He entered the ship slowly, his boots clanging on the metal grating. He startled as the front door slammed with a bang behind him.

"Playing jokes on me, old girl?" He patted one of the gracefully curved coral columns fondly. "I have missed you," he said quietly, not sure if the ship understood or not.

He rounded the console to the far side and then he saw them: two figures face down on the grating. A slender woman with long, light brown hair, and a tall thin man in a pinstriped suit with wild chestnut hair. They were unconscious. Or worse. He knelt down and checked their necks for pulses. Both were alive. He rolled them over and gasped as he saw Rose's face. But who was the man? He was certainly handsome. Perhaps Rose had picked up one of those pretty boys that the Doctor hated.

A screen behind him came to life. The man in the brown suit and Rose -- blonde -- appeared.

"Hi, Jack. You may or may not believe me, and I really hope you do. I am the Doctor. I've regenerated." The man who claimed to be the Doctor was speaking a million miles a minute. "I know you know what that means, so you're just gonna have to take my word for it." He no longer spoke in that brusque, Northern burr. His voice was softer. His mannerisms more open, even though it was clear he was working against some dire deadline.

"Yeah, it's him," Rose added, and then bit her thumbnail.

Jack could see sheer terror in her eyes.

The Maybe-Doctor continued. "We don't have much time. We're being pursued by a very dangerous group of individuals called the Family of Blood. They want me and Rose for a snack, well more than a snack, they want to suck the time out of us. Literally. Long story, but Rose has changed. Can't get into it now."

Jack stared at the screen mouth wide open as this man who claimed to be the Doctor began to explain.

"Rose and I are going to have to undergo a procedure using the chameleon arch. It's gonna hurt. A lot. If the TARDIS finds you before it is complete, you cannot under any circumstances stop the process. It will kill us. We will scream and beg you to flip the off switch, but don't. No matter how much we beg, you can't." Rose looked at the man next to her. He quickly kissed the side of her head and then whispered something into her ear. She nodded and closed her eyes tightly, squeezing tears through her eyelashes.

Jack swallowed hard, starting to realize the gravity of the situation that his friends were facing.

"The TARDIS is going to create a whole history for the two of us, hopefully it's a good one, and hopefully we are together. She will arrange jobs, skills, anything we need to stay in hiding for the next three months. Our biology is going to change. My genetic material will literally be rewritten as human. One heart, boring normal lung capacity, puny human brain, the whole shebang. Shhhhebang. I rather like that word. I hope I get to use it again. Where was I? Oh, yes, biology. Rose here is still human, well, mostly human. Thing is, she has changed a bit, and because of that, she is actually even more of a target than I am. They can not get their hands on her Jack. Do you understand? She must be protected at all costs, even above me. I can't emphasize this enough. If they find her and restore her by opening this watch, she is dead. In an instant. And they will live forever. Oh, the watches. Right." He held up two fob watches. "Guard these with your life.
Understand? They're our beings. Our memories. Everything that makes me a Time Lord and everything that makes Rose absolutely unique and brilliant will be in these watches. You lose these? You lose us, and we will stay whoever the TARDIS decides for us to be, and we will remain those people until we die normal human lives.

"A few more things and then we have to go. Rose and I --" He pulled in a wavering breath and let it out. "Rose is my wife."

Jack audibly gasped. "Way to go Doctor!"

"And I don't know if we are going to be written into the same history or not. It's all untested. So if we aren't married in these constructed lives, will you make sure that neither of us strays?" Rose looked at the Maybe Doctor painfully. "If you get my meaning."

Jack grinned and saluted the screen.

"And one last thing. Never ever never let me eat a pear."

The screen went blank, but the work had just begun.

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John emerged from his room perfectly groomed. "My tie straight? Hair in place?"

"You look great John. You're gonna knock 'em dead. Just focus on work all right? This is a big chance for you. Don't mess it up to chase some skirt with a pair of great knockers."

"Jack Harkness, you are crude, and I highly resemble that remark!" He winked, gulped down a cup of coffee and shoved a Danish pastry in his mouth, left behind yesterday by Mrs. Huckleberry, his cook and housekeeper.

"Blech. Pear! That was pear! Who puts pear in a pastry? That is disgusting!" John ran back into the bathroom to brush his teeth a second time.

"Oops, sorry, John, I forgot the last rule. No pears," he muttered under his breath with a snicker. "Honestly, you are such a child sometimes! A single bite of pear isn't going to kill you, you know!" Jack yelled as he dropped the coffee cups in the sink and grabbed the keys to John's shiny new 1962 blue Aston Martin convertible.

"You gonna let me drive your baby?" Jack asked with a hopeful grin, jingling the dangling keys from his fingertips.

"No! Absolutely not!" John grabbed the car keys out of Jack's hand. "I've seen you drive. Remember Berlin? You drove that motor pool vehicle into the Wall. Nearly started World War III!"

It was a part of the backstory that the TARDIS had provided: Captain Jack Harkness met Captain John Smith in West Berlin in 1953 while John was a British Army intel officer, and Jack was his American contact. They had been best pals ever since. John left the military to become a writer, and Jack went on to work for Torchwood. John had heard about Torchwood in general terms, but had no idea what they did. He thought that perhaps it was a super duper secret clandestine branch of MI:5 or 6, but wondered why Jack would be working for a British agency.

Jack knew the drill by now: improvise. "I did not drive it into the Berlin Wall," he said scowling. "Hit a trash can and got stuck in the razor wire is all," he fabricated, hoping John would believe his
cock and bull, as he had so far in the two weeks that Jack had assumed his role as caretaker.

John made a sound of displeasure. "All right, so you just scratched the paint up a bit across the street from the Wall. You still aren't driving this car. Paid for it with my signing bonus. I love my new car, and I am not going to let anything happen to her," he said fondly.

"Her?" Jack asked.

"Course. All ships are females aren't they? And they all have names. Sexy."

"You calling me sexy, Doc? 'Cuz I didn't think you went for that sort of thing." Jack winked saucily. It didn't get past him that John had called his car a ship.

"No!" John screeched. "My new, midnight blue, 100% paid for and ludicrously expensive car." He sighed dreamily. "I call her Sexy."

Jack was relieved, not because he wouldn't always have a forever thing for the Doctor, but because of Rose. That sort of a development would have even further complicated matters, if they weren't already such a tangled up mess. Did he caress his new car's dashboard or hood the way he used to stroke the TARDIS? Did he talk to it? Hit it with a hammer when it didn't shift smoothly from second into third?

Together they walked to where the car was parked.

"Hello you sexy thing," the Doctor growled, and indeed he did caress the roof before unlocking the door. He climbed in and reached across to unlock the passenger side. Jack climbed in and situated himself. John started the ignition, revved the engine a few times, and then took off like a bat out of hell, barreling through the streets of London, dodging taxis, making the engine growl and rumble at stops while watching the pretty girls saunter down the pavement on their way to work.

"Where do you want me to drop you?"

"At home. I took a taxi and I'm not working today."

They sat in silence for a few minutes until Jack interrupted John's show of automotive machismo to ask a probing question. "So, you been seeing anyone lately?"

"Naw, no one girl in particular." He frowned. "But Jack, I feel like my game is off. Haven't sealed the deal, if you know what I mean, in a coupla months at least. I don't get it. Fantastic flat, sexy car, great new job, loads of money, I dress like a movie star, and look like one too,"

"Still humble, I see," Jack laughed.

"Girls are throwing themselves at me. Literally. And when it comes time to invite them in for a nightcap, I freeze up. It's almost like I'm, I don't know, stifling myself or something." John looked straight ahead, brow furrowed.

"Probably just a dry spell," he replied. "Everybody has 'em, well, except me." He winked at John.

John frowned at him. "But my dreams have been fantastic! I keep having this one dream where I'm with this woman, this fantastic girl, and she is gorgeous! Full pink lips, blonde, curvy, the works. And she is doing things to me that—"

It took a lot of will power to interrupt John. "All right, you can just stop right there. I really don't want to know about your erotic dream life, Doc."
John ignored Jack's protest. "Always the same girl. Funny thing, too. I really never could put a face on Iris, but this girl," he paused, "it's her." He said the last word reverently.

"Who?"

"Iris. Iris Mason."

Jane Smith looked up at the clock on the marble-paneled wall and noted the time: 7:52 am. She would have to adjust her watch as it was slow. She knew that the building clock was accurate, whereas her watch was dodgy. She stepped into the empty wood-paneled lift. "Prescott Publishing, please."

"I know where you work, Miss Smith. S'my job to know. You've been here for a whole week now, haven't ya'?"

Jane smiled a bit shyly, and then pushed her thick-rimmed brown spectacles up her nose. She kept her attention on the numbers lighting up, floor-by-floor at a snail's pace, until they reached the tenth floor.

"Aren't you going to say good morning to me too, Sir Lambert?" Bess teased the man cheerfully.

He had been the lift operator longer than Bess had been alive.

"Of cour' Miss Cooper," Jim Lambert doffed his cap at Bess, with a twinkle in his eye. "Now Luv, ya'know I'm not anythin' special. Don't go givin' me airs or me boss'll think I'm too big for my boots an' gimme the heave-ho." He rocked on his heels. This was a little game that Bess and Jim had played every morning for the past twelve years, when Bess had come to work for the publishing house, a fresh-faced graduate from college with the ink on her Medieval literature degree still wet.

Jane could feel her hair slipping out of the knot into which she had twisted it this morning. Always having been good at improvisation, she retrieved a pencil out of her handbag and pushed it through the center. It would salvage the severe hairstyle until there was time to re-do it during her morning break.

"Big doin's today, Misses," Jim offered conversationally, his Cockney accent thick and friendly.

Jane smiled as Bess continued the conversation with the almost-elderly lift operator. Jane tapped her foot nervously, keeping time to the clacking sound of the pulley. She wasn't sure why she was nervous.

Ever since she had awoken, she'd had an odd feeling about today. "I feel like something big is going to happen today. Something important," she had said to her roommate Bess between sips of tea at breakfast.

"See you tonight, Mr. Lambert," Jane said as the ladies exited the lift. "See you later, Bess."

"Goodbye, darling. Oh wait," she said, stopping on her heel. "I won't be going straight home after work. Niles is taking me to dinner and then dancing at the Tiki Tiki Club." She raised her eyebrows and bit her lip, excited for the evening.

It was only then that Jane noticed that Bess was wearing a lovely emerald green silk shantung dress that could go from work to dinner and dancing with the removal of her jacket. It brought out the
green in her eyes and complimented her glossy dark brown hair beautifully.

"Sounds like fun," Jane replied with a soft smile. "Have a nice time if I don't see you again today."

They parted company. Bess turned right towards the editing department where she was a senior copy editor. Jane turned left to make her way to the typing pool.

She clutched her simple brown handbag with both hands, holding it close to her body as she marched out into the brightly lit hallway and past the posh waiting area with the pretty receptionist. A tall, thin man was casually draped over the new and modern circular reception desk. He said something to the woman that made her blush and giggle like a schoolgirl. Jane rolled her eyes and sighed at the silliness of their interaction. Her sensible brown heels pock-pock-pocked on the parquet floor as she hastily made her way towards her desk.

At the far end of the hall was a large office. It had been vacant when she arrived last week, but there was a rumour circulating that a new author would be occupying the space today. It was highly unusual that an author was given an office, let alone chose to work on-site. Most wanted to work in the privacy of their own homes or cabins or caves. Authors were often like hermits she had been told.

The girls in the typing pool had been gossiping for days about the mysterious author who had been signed on. The guess the author game had reached a fever pitch yesterday when Clive from typesetting had suggested a betting pool, and it had quickly grown to 15 pound 20 by quitting time. Jane had thrown in a guess, as well. She usually didn't give in to such frivolity, but the girls in the typing pool and men down in typesetting had pressured her for a quid until she finally gave in.

"Mr. Prescott offered him five figures a year to sign on, and -- " the girl paused dramatically, "gave him a two thousand pound signing bonus." Kitty Crenshaw spoke in hushed tones, offering the juicy tidbit to Priscilla Bootkins who gasped just as Jane sat her things down by her desk.

"What's happening, Kitty?" Jane asked with a grin, curious to know the secret. "Sorry, Janie, I gotta go! Prissy will tell you."

"Kitty has been telling me all about it," she gushed. "She was in the loo and she overheard Miss Wood talking to someone. You will never guess who it is."

"Guess who whom is?"

Priscilla's eyes widened and she leaned in close to Jane, conspiratorially. "John Smith, the science fiction writer." She said each word like it weighed a thousand tonnes.

Jane felt the blood rush to her fair cheeks. She was sure they were burning pink. "Really? Oh that's," she paused and swallowed hard, "interesting. He's quite popular, isn't he?" Jane asked, trying to portray nonchalance. Of course she knew who he was. She knew his books. Intimately. The man himself was a mystery, though, choosing to write in secrecy.

Every night Jane Smith snuggled up under her covers, pulled a book from the hiding place under her pillow, in case Bess were to come into her room and discover her private indulgence. For two years now, she had been devouring his novels in secret. They were filled with adventure, action, terrifying monsters, complex scientific explanations that should have made no sense whatsoever, but somehow did.

And then there was the romance. She used to pour over Austen, the Brontës, and Dickens to quench her thirst for classic tales of love. Now she found herself carried away by the fantastical
adventures of the Professor and his lovely, though somewhat overlooked assistant, Iris Mason. But Jane certainly wasn't going to advertise the fact that she was an avid reader of his books, especially when the last two had become rather provocative as the will-they-won't-they relationship between the Professor and Iris had taken a decidedly more titillating turn. In the most recent book, after a dozen novels filled with sideways glances, hidden longing, and frustrating dalliances with minor characters, the Professor and Iris had engaged in some rather intimate moments.

"Jane? Jane!" Priscilla waved her hand in front of Jane's glazed-over eyes. "You still here?" she asked, amused.

"Sorry. I guess I sort of..." Her voice trailed off. "Just tired. Late night last night. Reading." She pushed her heavy glasses up her nose.

"Didn't you guess John Smith in yesterday's pool?"

"Yeah." She laughed nervously, "I guess I did. Just a lark, really. I've seen his books in the window at the book shop by my flat. So fantastical aren't they? Science fiction and all."

"I've never read science fiction. More of a romance girl myself really. But good for you winning the pool. Why don't you go out and buy yourself a pretty frock or shoes? Jane, you could be such a doll, but you hide yourself under those potato sacks you call suits. You've never talked about a boyfriend. Are you seeing anyone?" Priscilla pressed.

"Well I haven't--" Jane began with hesitance in her voice, but was cut off.

"Speaking of men, would you take a look at him?" Priscilla said with a growl, nodding her head towards a tall, thin man in a perfectly tailored grey suit walked down the corridor chatting with Archibald Prescott, President and owner of Prescott Publishing.

As the men walked past the women's desks, Jane and Priscilla's heads both swiveled, following the perfectly groomed man. Mr. Prescott led the handsome man into the empty office. He flipped the light switch, illuminating the newly redecorated room, and closed the door, blocking the view of every female eye that had become glued to the man as he had made his way past the typing pool.

"So that's John Smith," Priscilla said, with a cluck of her tongue. The leggy blonde dug into her purse, pulled out a pink compact and examined her makeup. She reapplied her bright red lipstick and adjusted her hair, freshly set at the salon just yesterday.

Jane simply swallowed hard and snapped her attention to her typewriter and her work.

At eleven a.m., the two men finally emerged from the office slapping each other on the back and laughing.

"Attention everyone, I have an announcement." He waited a moment as secretaries, editors, managers, publicists and clerks filled the area. A memo had been circulated soon after the arrival of Mr. Smith. "Gather 'round everyone. Come on in closer. I would like to introduce you to the newest member of the Prescott Publishing family, John Smith, author of the wildly successful Madman in a Box novels."

Excited murmuring gave way to clapping, and Mr. Prescott raised his hands to quiet the group. "As you all know, when I assumed the business from my father last year, the company was struggling. Apparently, no one wants to read the dry-as-desert-sand histories and biographies which had been our bread and butter for forty years. We were doomed," he said melodramatically. "And then two months ago, I received a set of Mr. Smith's novels in the post. Anonymously."
"I promise. I didn't send them!" John Smith spoke for the first time. His beautiful lilting Scottish accent was highlighted by a brighter than sunshine smile and laugh that sent shivers down Jane's spine. She steadied herself against her desk with a shaky hand.

"I read it, and frankly, I didn't understand a word of it. Science fiction nonsense, I thought."

"I'm standin' right here!" Mr. Smith protested with a grin.

"It may be nonsense to me, but everyone else seems to disagree with me. The series has the potential to be a goldmine. He has already gained a considerable following, and I know with the boys from marketing behind him, he will become a household name not just here in England and the United Kingdom, but in America, Canada, Australia, India and New Zealand as well. So joking aside, he is a brilliant writer, and prolific. Typing pool girls, better rest up, because you are going to be busy. Very, very busy."

John winked in the general direction of the women congregated by their typewriters, and Jane found herself weak-kneed.

"We are hoping with the arrival of Mr. Smith, other young innovative authors will follow suit, and return us to the place of prominence we once enjoyed. I invite you all to come and join us in the employee lounge for a reception this afternoon. Have some cake and coffee and welcome John. Make him feel like a member of the family. Now back to work everyone."

Jane sat down in her chair, starry eyed for a moment, but quickly shook herself out of her reverie. She saw the work in her wire in-basket and stretched her fingers. She placed the marked-up copy on the stand, and then inserted a fresh piece of paper into her olive green IBM Selectric typewriter. She began to bang away at the keys, working up quickly to her standard 100 words per minute, trying hard not to let her thoughts drift to the pages she had read last night, imagining herself as Iris in John Smith's arms, circling a nebula in his quirky space ship that disguised itself as a red telephone booth.

She had never been able to picture the Professor before today. Now she had a face to fuel her fantasies.

On the edge of her peripheral vision, she watched as one of the managers and the senior editor each approached Mr. Smith and shook his hand in turn, offering him a warm welcome. In a move that surprised Jane, Priscilla stood up from her desk, smoothed out her powder blue pencil skirt, tugged on her matching 3/4 sleeved boucle jacket and walked right up to the man. Jane stopped typing and watched as Priscilla twirled a strand of honey blonde hair around a finger and conversed with him in hushed tones. They leaned together and laughed quietly, and then Priscilla turned, a grin on her face, and sat back down once again.

Jane scowled at her forwardness, irrationally jealous.

"What?" Priscilla mouthed defensively to Jane who gaped for a moment, and then returned to her flawless typing, fingers flying a bit faster than before, keeping time to the tempo of her heart, which was beating faster than it had in her entire life.

After lunch, Priscilla cleared her desk of her things. She couldn't have been smiling wider.

"What's got you grinnin' like the cat who got the cream?" Jane asked fondly.

"I've been promoted. You are looking at John Smith's new personal assistant."

Jane's heart dropped into the pit of her stomach. "Right. That's -- that's great, Priscilla. I'm happy
for you. Of course you would be. You're senior typist, and have been here the longest." The words spilled out a bit too quickly to be casual.

"Aww," Priscilla said in a patronizing and fawning tone. "You're disappointed. That's sweet." Priscilla spoke with the subtlest hint of patronization as she gathered her things into a box. "Be a dear and carry this for me." Her words were sickly sweet. She pointed her pink varnished nail at a diminutive, withering potted plant on the corner of her desk.

"Of course," replied Jane flatly, picking up the plant and following Priscilla down the aisle towards John Smith's office.
Chapter Two - John & Jane Meet

"Once safely back inside of his beloved ship, the Professor cradled Iris in his arms as she wept. Her body quaked – no, strike that. Her body was a quivering mass of misery and pain. He closed his eyes and re-played the scene in his mind of Iris cradling the lifeless body of her father in the middle of the street."

"The Professor gritted his teeth in frustration. He'd let this girl worm her way into his heart. He'd said yes to her foolish request. How couldn't he? It'd been impossible to resist the look in her eyes as she'd begged -- strike that. Plead? Pledged? I'll leave the grammar to editor. Keep going, Miss Bootkins. 'Just let me try again!' Iris had dried. 'Please! Just once more. I promise I won't push him out of the way this time! I just can't let him die alone!' And he had given in."

Priscilla typed away on her stenograph, frowning in intense concentration, having difficulty keeping up with the writer's rapid fire, sometimes incoherent, dictation.

"He hadn't said no to Iris. He'd risked too much, and the Harvesters -- scratch that. Time Eaters? Never mind. Leave a note and I'll come back to that. And he knew then and there that he had made a mistake. He had fallen in love with Iris Mason. He'd fallen hard, and she must never know. He had to separate himself, distance himself from her so that never again would he let her lack of understanding of the ways of the universe tempt him into doing something so foolish. But he studied her eyes. They were red and swollen with grief. No, not grief. Marked. Yes, that's it. Marked with profoundly deep sadness and misery."

John Smith stopped his manic pacing, and then let out a puff of air through his lips.

"I'm sorry Priscilla, go back to the start. Once they were finally inside the beloved ship, Iris collapsed onto the soft sofa. It seemed like an eternity before her sobbing sobs stopped. Oh, that's horrible. How about this: It felt like an eternity before her sobs stopped. And of course, being a Time Knight, he knew exactly what an eternity felt like. But the reason the sobbing sobs had stopped, was only because his precious girl had fallen asleep, her blonde head resting heavy on his shoulder."

John looked at Priscilla, she was smirking a bit, but he didn't say anything. He knew was rubbish, but he had to get something, anything, on paper. He went to the window and leaned heavily on the sill for a moment until the sound of typing ceased, and then in quiet tones, he finally broke the silence.

"She had tried to change the outcome of history, and in the process had almost destroyed history itself, simply because she loved her father so completely and utterly that nothing else mattered. Love had blinded her from reason, just as it had blinded him. Something changed between them that day. Something fundamental."
I can't think of anything else. It's not the best I've ever written--"

"Oh, it's fantastic, Mr. Smith. Simply smashing," Priscilla gushed. She crossed her legs slowly and leaned over her little desk.

John flushed as he caught a glimpse of her ample cleavage when the scooped neckline of her dress gaped. He shook the lust aside, closing his eyes to clear his head. "This isn't working. I should never have agreed to an office with a door. I need space and trees and fresh air. Maybe I should go up to Inverness for a few days," he said to himself.

"Shall I come along? I can be very inspiring," Priscilla offered provocatively.

He raised an eyebrow. "I'll think about it," he said with a half smile. "But in the meantime, I could use some refreshment."

"Shall I prepare some tea?" Priscilla replied.

"I was thinking more along the lines of a shot of Scotch," he joked half-heartedly. "But being as it is only ten in the morning, tea will have to do. Three lumps of sugar, splash of milk please." He dropped down in a heap on his orange sofa, and then swung up his legs to recline, hands behind his head. He stared at the ceiling.

"Yes Mr. Smith, right away," she said with a smile before leaving. Her grin drooped into a scowl the moment she was clear of his office.

Priscilla went straight to Jane's desk. "He's mad. I'm telling you, he's a nutter. Goes on and on about space and monsters and metaltrons and time monsters and this Iris girl who is an absolute idiot to stay with that Professor bloke. How do people read this rubbish? I don't understand half of what he's saying!"

"Well, give it some time. It's only been a few days," Jane began graciously, but Priscilla began to talk again.

"But then, just when I think I can't take it one single second more, he looks at me with those eyes of his, and I feel like I'm gonna boil from the inside out. Only thing I can think of is running my fingers through his hair and unwrapping him out of those expensive suits of his. What a salary he must make! I know exactly what a suit like that costs, Jane. And know what he drives? An Aston Martin!" she gushed. "And just think of those future royalties. Oh, what I wouldn't do for a night with that man. Just one night, and I will have him him hooked."

The look on Priscilla's face reminded Jane of a cat about to pounce on a poor, defenseless mouse. Except John Smith wasn't defenseless, and seemed to give every indication that he would be more than happy to be pounced on by that temptress, given the looks they gave each other when they thought no one was watching.

"Priscilla Bootkins!" Jane gasped and then continued on in a stage whisper. "You need to be more careful what you say! People will get the wrong idea about you!" Jane frowned.

"Can't give them the wrong idea when they are already right," Priscilla said saucily. "I need to go make that sexy nutter his tea." She skillfully strutted away in her stratospherically high, fake alligator skin heels.

Jane pursed her lips, closed her eyes, and banged harder and faster on the keys than ever. It wasn't the first time that Jane had vented her frustration on her poor defenseless typewriter.
Of course, she would give anything to be his assistant, simply to listen to him natter on about plots and characters, or exotic places and times, or the details of some terrifying extraterrestrial landscape. Her mind drifted as she went into auto mode, her frighteningly accurate fingers flying on the keyboard. She was startled out of her reverie by a man's voice.

"You're Miss Bootkins's friend right?"

Her head snapped up. It was John Smith.

"Yes, well no, not a friend. A co-worker, Mr. Smith," Jane replied politely, trying hard to keep her voice from quivering.

"Do you know where she's gotten off to? I've got some ideas that I really need to get on paper before I lose them. It's a matter of life and death. Well not life and death but very, very, very pressing." He leaned on her desk, his face inches from hers.

"She was here only a minute ago, but then she left to prepare your tea." Jane chewed on her lip.

"Right," he said with a frustrated look on his face. He pushed away with a flourish, quickly turned on his heel, and walked away. But as quickly as he had begun his retreat, he turned back around and was once again leaning on her desk. "You don't suppose you could spare a minute or two do you?"

She opened her mouth, gaping for a moment before she found her words. "Yes, of course. I know shorthand or I could type, whichever you prefer." She couldn't say no, could she? He was a superior. She didn't want to say no.

"Come on then," he said blithely as he shoved his hands into his trouser pockets and headed back into his office, Jane trailing behind, steno pad in hand. "Now then, what's your name?" he asked without even turning around to address Jane to her face.

"I'm Jane. Jane Smith," she replied with a bit of a grin.

"Smith," he said amused, his voice a bit higher than normal. "A good omen, I think."

Jane held her steno notebook close to her chest and bit her lower lip, hiding a smile.

He looked over his shoulder. "What's your middle name?"

Jane's eyebrows twitched. She wondered why she couldn't she remember, so she made something up. "Donna. It's Donna."

He barked a laugh. "My middle name is David! Jane Donna Smith and John David Smith! JDS and JDS! What're the odds of that?" he said merrily. "David and Donna. Donna and David."

They were in his office now. "Where shall I sit?" she asked lamely as she stood in the middle of the office, somehow not feeling it would be proper to take Priscilla's spot.

"You take the sofa and I'll just stand if you don't mind. Do my best thinking on my feet."

Jane lowered slowly to the sofa. She crossed her ankles demurely as she perched on the front edge, pencil poised over the lined paper of her notepad.

"Where was I?" He tapped his cheek with his pointer finger. "Crying. Blinded by love. Loss of reason." He snapped his fingers in excitement. "Got it. I only need general notes. Nothing concrete
yet. It's a thing in progress. Respect the thing."

Jane smiled and laughed quietly in spite of herself, and caught John looking at her, confused. "And what is so funny Miss Smith?" he enunciated.

"Oh nothing. I've just never seen someone so wound up before."

"Wound up, hmmm?" He raised an eyebrow and then smiled back, enigmatically. "You ain't seen nothing yet. All right. Give me some words that describe tragedy, Miss Smith. You seem like an intelligent sort of girl. I bet you are a walking OED." He put his hands into his pockets and rocked on his feet, legs shoulder width apart.

"Loss. Death. Pain. Emptiness." She looked up at the ceiling, trying to pull words from her brain. "Suffering, cataclysm, separation, destruction." She looked at him, and then saw something flash in his eyes for the merest fraction of a moment that she recognized in her own. Loneliness. And then it was gone, replaced once again with a spark of energy and life. "Alone."

The corner of his mouth quirked upward, followed by an eyebrow. "Well done," he said slowly. "So. Iris, she's the heroine in my stories—"

"Oh, no need to explain, Mr. Smith. Iris Mason. Former waitress. Met the Professor when her restaurant was overtaken by an entity from another planet that appropriated the grease in the deep fat fryers to form itself into living fat. He saved her life just as she was about to be deep fried like a chip."

He smiled. "You've read my books, well at least the first one."

"Oh, I've read all of them. Several times." She cleared her throat. "Even the most recent one." Jane caught herself and looked down at her steno pad, suddenly very aware of the flush of pink across her cheeks.

"Oh you have, have you?" teased John. "And you look like such an innocent sort of girl," he waggled his eyebrows. "You sure you're old enough to read that sort of thing?"

Did he just flirt with me? wondered Jane. He just flirted with me. She didn't quite know what to do or say. She didn't have much experience with the practice, and didn't know how to reply. She opened and closed her mouth a few times, hoping that words would somehow magically materialize, but when none did, she cleared her throat and remained silent.

He smiled a bit wickedly, and then put his working voice back on. "Back to the story. Here's my idea. This will be so much easier with someone who is actually familiar with my writings. Unlike Priscilla."

Jane pinched her lips to suppress a smile.

"Again, nothing specific, just general notes please. Iris and the Professor are on this frozen planet. It hasn't always been frozen, but something cataclysmic happened and the ocean in the midst of a perfectly horrendous storm froze in an instant." He snapped his fingers for emphasis. "He's brought her here as an apology for something horrible he said to her. It's a beautiful place and he doesn't know yet how to express everything he has in his hearts to her."

"Hearts?" asked Jane, confused.

"Did I say hearts? I meant heart. Single heart. Just one heart. So he takes her to the top of a wave and he says—"
"See that wave, Iris? It's frozen in time. I wish we could freeze this moment, freeze this memory, because this is the day that I tell you I love you." Jane breathed the words.

John was silent.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have interrupted. I couldn't help myself. I really love the Professor and Iris," she said with a far off, dreamy look on her face.

"That's... that's... beautiful Jane," he breathed. "Sorry. I called you Jane. Wildly inappropriate. I meant Miss Smith. So, Miss Smith, write that down. Exactly those words. Don't change a single thing."

"Really?" Jane asked, looking up from her notepad, wide-eyed.

"Yes. I'm going to file that away, because the Professor isn't quite ready to say those words. But do you want to know a secret?"

She nodded, and leaned forward.

"He's going to take her back there someday, and he will tell her." He raised his eyebrows and then slowly smiled. "But not quite yet."

She smiled back, biting her lip. The hairs on the back of her neck were prickling, but she tamped down the feeling, afraid that her voice would give away her excitement. "Well of course not. Where's the fun in laying the cards out on the table all at once. Let the reader suffer as long as possible."

"Exactly!" John pointed at her enthusiastically and then slapped his thigh.

"At least she got a couple of kisses in the last books." She lowered her voice. "And they did other things." Jane blushed again, surprised with how open she was being with this man, and that she had returned to the topic. "Will he kiss her again in this one?" she asked shyly, again looking down at her stenographer's notebook.

"Those were highly unusual circumstances, Miss Smith. They were both under the influence of an alien pharmaceutical, remember?" he corrected her quite seriously, and then broke into another grin.

"Oh right, of course," she replied with equal seriousness.

They looked at each other and smiled, enjoying the feeling of camaraderie that comes from successful collaboration.

Priscilla broke the spell as she swept into the room gracefully carrying a china teacup on a saucer. "Here's your tea, Mr. Smith." She pivoted her head to the sofa where Jane was still seated. "Oh. Jane. What are you doing in here? Can I help you with something?" she asked, clearly defending her territory.

Jane sprang to her feet and hugged the steno pad tightly to her chest. "Well, uh, Mr. Smith asked me to come in and take some notes for him. Only on a temporary basis. Until you came back. It was an emergency. You were gone as he had sort of a rush of ideas, but I'll just be going now that you are back."

He smiled at Jane. "Thank you very much, Miss Smith. You were a great help. And don't forget to leave me those beautiful words of yours." John winked at her.
Priscilla raised an eyebrow at Jane, and cleared her throat. Jane tore off the sheet containing the perfect words in her feminine handwriting. She laid it with care on Mr. Smith's desk, and allowed her fingers to linger on the paper.

"Don't forget to close the door when you leave, Janie. Mr. Smith needs his privacy," Priscilla said, capturing John's eyes with her own. They were heavy lidded, and hinted at the plans she had for Mr. Smith behind that closed door.

Jane left without another word, gently latching the door behind her. She closed her eyes and held her breath, stopping for a moment outside of his door. She heard the tone of his voice change, taking a decidedly wicked turn. "Miss Bootkins, now where were we?"

"Oh, something about a sofa and Iris crying and the Professor moping. You did say your writing was rubbish, so I think I have something that may even help you more than this tea."

The talking stopped, and Jane was she was sure that she heard the whooshing sound of a man's tie being removed. She held her breath and returned to her desk.

oOo

John's breath hitched as Priscilla Bootkins loosened his tie with hands skilled from prior experience. She untied it, pulled it from under his collar with a flourish and then tossed it across the room. John watched Priscilla's pert, round bottom sway seductively as she walked to the door. She looked over her shoulder as she locked it, tested the doorknob, and then smiled seductively. John's heart raced as impure thoughts formed in his mind. She returned to him slowly, like a tigress about to pounce.

"What are you doing?" John asked, raising an eyebrow.

"What do you think I'm doing?" she purred. Priscilla slipped off her short jacket, and carelessly dropped it to the floor.

"You're hot?" he offered, voice thick.

She nodded once, and then confidently tilted her chin upwards. "Want to know just how hot I am? I'm very..." She stepped closer and whispered into his ear, "very hot." She reached around to her back, and slowly lowered the zip of her form-fitting, sleeveless brown shift. It slid to the floor and landed quietly in a heap. She stepped out of it, and stood before him in her plain white slip, cleavage prominently on display. "Aren't you hot too, Mr. Smith?"

"I suppose I am," he growled, advertising exactly how hot he was.

Priscilla draped her arms around his neck, and pulled him down to her lips, kissing him deeply, with every intention of not stopping until both parties were completely satisfied. He pulled her tightly to his thin body, and she traced her finely-manicured hands down his back.

But then, he heard muffled conversation and then laughter on the other of his wall. "Uh, on second thought," he grimaced, "I don't think this is a very good idea. Doing this in the office, I mean. Thin walls and such, and I'm sort of, well, loud."

"Oh, I like loud. Loud is very, very good. But so is soft. I'm very soft, Mr. Smith, and I bet you could be soft if you wanted to. But just your voice, of course," she added provocatively. "Have you ever tried to stay silent? I can tell you it is absolutely exhilarating."

She moved her hands to his chest, and began to unbutton his shirt, while she placed her lips against
his neck. "Whatever you want me to be, Mr. Smith, I will be. Name your fantasy, and I'll make it come true. All you have to do is say yes. I'm here for the taking." His buttons now unfastened, she hooked her fingers under the white satin straps of her own simple slip.

An image popped into his head. He was in bed with The Blonde Woman. The room they were in was more like a cave than a manmade structure. The ceiling was painted like a field of stars, and done so skillfully that it looked like there was no ceiling at all. She was delicately running her fingers through the hair on his chest as they both stared at the starry ceiling, and then she rolled onto her side and snuggled up close. She draped half of her naked body over his, and quietly said, "I love you," before placing a perfect kiss on his lips.

The simplicity and beauty of her voice, and the softness of her kiss, stood in stark contrast to the brazen actions of the woman standing before him.

The Blonde Woman was perfection.

Priscilla Bootkins paled in comparison.

The lust drained away.

"Miss Bootkins, you need to get dressed. This sort of thing isn't appropriate in the office, at least not when there are thirty people outside that door," he joked, hiding his loss of libido. "But I tell you what. Why don't I take you for dinner on Friday night, hmm? How does the Ritz sound?"

"That sounds lovely. And after dinner, we'll have a nightcap at your place. Pick up where we left off?" she asked seductively.

John cleared his throat, and quickly buttoned up his shirt. "Shall we continue? So, Iris and the Professor. Crying herself to sleep." He reached for his tie. It was splayed across Jane's steno paper. John flexed his jaw. Too bad Priscilla came back so fast. I'd be halfway done with this chapter by now, he thought to himself.

oOo

John's words dried up as the afternoon dragged on. Tea hadn't helped. Even Priscilla's advances hadn't sparked any creativity.

"Miss Bootkins, I'll be right back. I need to go ask Miss Smith a question."

John heard Priscilla's irritated muttering, but ignored it. With long, quick strides, he aimed for the typing pool.

"I'm in a heckuva pickle, Miss Smith!" He leaned hard on her desk. "What's the name of Iris's dog?"

"Her dog?" Jane lifted her eyebrows.

"Yes! I need to know. Right now. It is very pressing."

Jane chewed her lip, and then shook her head. "I don't think Iris would be able to have a dog. She shares a small flat with her mum. I think she'd really like to have a dog, though." Jane looked off into the distance.

"But maybe she used to have a cat," John added, leaning into her.
"A soft, ginger and white kitten with a little pink nose--"

"And Iris called her--" John began.

Jane snapped her fingers a few times as she thought. "Iris called her Tigerlilly."

"Tigerlilly!" John grinned.

"But one day," Jane's voice softened, "little Tigerlilly ran away because Iris's mum left the front door open."

"Miss Smith, I think you may be right!" John ran back to his office leaving a flushed, distracted Jane in his wake.

"Miss Bootkins, Miss Smith is fantastic, she really is," John gushed. "Take down these character background notes. Iris used to have a cat. Her name was Tigerlilly," he cooed. "And kitty was ginger and white with a kind face. But one day, Tigerlilly ran away, breaking Iris's tender, seven-year old heart."

"I hate cats," hissed Priscilla.

"Oh, I love cats!" John countered.

"Of course you love cats, just like sweet little Janie," she said under her breath.

This pattern repeated several times a day for the rest of the week. Mid-sentence, John would freeze and then abandon Priscilla to go find Jane, and then beg her for help.

Once he needed the name of a fearsome tribal leader (Golgaban the Elder); later he was desperate for her to describe the Beddaveddu plant (an invasive vine with poisonous burrs); and a blue planet with three moons (Rare Indigo).

On Wednesday, after searching the offices of Prescott Publishing for over fifteen minutes, John finally found Jane in the lunchroom.

"Miss Smith! Stop right there!" he trilled in that sexy Scottish brogue.

She startled, wide eyed.

"What are you eating?" he bellowed, skidding up to the table she was sharing with a few other ladies.

"It's a chicken salad sandwich."

"She's an amazing cook, Mr. Smith," Kitty Collins from the typing pool chimed in. "You should taste the treats she brings in."

Jane jumped when Kitty nudged her under the table.

"Oh, I bet you are brilliant in many ways," John gushed. I knew I could count on you, Miss Smith!"

The third girl at the table, a bubbly redhead, fanned herself.

"Um, are you hungry, Mr. Smith?" Jane asked timidly. "Because I have the other half if you'd like it."
"Don't mind if I do." He grabbed the tin-foil wrapped triangle, and left the lunchroom whistling a happy tune, and soon he was in his wood-paneled office.

"Miss Bootkins, back to where we were." He put the sandwich on his desk. "Jane and the Professor sat cross-legged on the red checkered tablecloth. She nibbled at a sandwich. 'I thought you loved my chicken salad.' The Professor pouted. 'I made it especially for you.' Iris set the sandwich down on a fine china plate. Her golden hair framed her downcast face. 'It's delicious, Professor. I'm simply not hungry. Seeing all of those starving people today..." John's voice trailed off as he looked wistfully out the window. "'It broke my heart.' With the tenderest of touches, the Professor wiped a single tear from Jane's soft cheek." John paused. "And that's it for now."

"You said Jane, Mr. Smith," Priscilla noted with one raised eyebrow. "I'm sure you meant Iris. I'll just go ahead and correct that for you."

"Oh right. Right." John furrowed his brow and nodded.

"Mm, chicken salad sounds delicious. Take me to lunch. Someplace dark and private," Priscilla said, sidling up to John.

"You go ahead and take your luncheon break, Miss Bootkins. I'm feeling inspired. I'm going to eat this, and then get right back at it."

"Where did you go, anyway? You just ran out on little old me," she pouted.

"Had to find Miss Smith, of course! She always has the most fantastic ideas. And she gave me half of her chicken salad sandwich." He grinned as he unwrapped the sandwich and took a large bite. Priscilla gritted her teeth.

oOo

Jane stood on a grassy bluff. An expansive river separated them from a shiny metropolis.

"What city is that?" she asked.

"New New York," he answered.

"You're kidding me."

"No! I'm perfectly serious," he said lightly. "But strictly speaking, it's the fifteenth New York, which makes it New New New New New New... New New New New New New... New New New York."

She laughed at his antics as she looked out across the water at the sleek and fantastically tall skyscrapers. Flying cars that looked similar to the vehicles in that silly American animated television programme The Jetsons, whooshed overhead.

Next thing she knew, she was laying down on the lush green grass, side by side with John. There was an aroma that she couldn't put her finger on. The perfumed air was delicious and fresh.

She blinked and was inside of an astoundingly modern hospital ward. And before she could catch her breath, she was being pursued by terrifying zombies while John danced the samba with a very blonde, very voluptuous woman. Soon they were kissing passionately. No not kissing, snogging. And she was literally being forced to watch, helpless to turn her head away from the erotic display. She could feel the arousal in her own body growing as she voyeuristically watched John Smith and
Jane woke up with a start to Bess shaking her shoulder.

"Jane! Are you all right?"

"What's -- what's goin' on?" Jane rubbed her eyes with the balls of her hands and sat up in bed.

"Just a nightmare, darling." Bess rubbed Jane's back, a friendly gesture of comfort. "You were screaming at the top of your lungs."

Jane drew in a deep breath. "I think I need a cup of tea."

"Want to talk about it?" Bess asked, pulling her satin eye mask off of her head.

"I don't remember it," Jane lied. She remembered every single detail.

"Why don't you keep a dream journal? I read a fascinating article last month in Harper's Bazaar that your dreams mean something. Writing them down may help you figure out what your subconscious mind is trying to tell you," Bess offered helpfully.

Jane wasn't able to go back to sleep after the dream. She couldn't stop thinking about the images of zombies and grass and kissing. She tossed and turned until 5:45, when she finally gave up, and rolled out of bed. It hadn't been the first time that she'd been awoken by a dream involving the handsome writer, but never had a dream so unsettled her.

The dreams always began the same way: running hand-in-hand with John, but the exhilarating feeling of her hand in his never lasted long, as it was always replaced by terrifying images of monsters and madmen. After John scared the monsters away, the dream would change once again and become intensely romantic and sometimes, passionate. But in every dream, she was blonde, the way he described Iris in his writings. Another thing was bothering her, too. There was now a second man consistently in her dreams, the man with the icy eyes, and her dream-self trusted him just as much as she trusted John Smith.

oOo

Jane's heart wasn't really in her work on Friday. She was bone-weary tired. It had been an exhausting and lonely week. John Smith's constant reliance upon her had been thrilling, but it was also almost painful to experience. He seemed to trust her. And he flirted. And he smiled. And he thanked her profusely. But that's where his attentions stopped. She knew she would never have a chance with that brilliant, handsome man. He was far too good for her.

She missed the peace and quiet of the Cotswolds, her tiny stone home, the blazing fireplace in the grate. She missed the simplicity of a life without false hope and complications like thin men with really great hair and flashing brown eyes and cheeky winks.

She missed Mum most of all. A lock of her hair fell forward, having escaped the knot on the back of her head. It had been giving her fits all day, and she tucked it behind her ear yet again. She felt frumpy, dowdy, and grimy.

Even so, Jane finished her assignments early and began her Friday night tidy-up of her desk. Priscilla walked out of Mr. Smith's office with a wicked smile on her face and an additional swing
in her hips. Her more teasing than usual neckline exposed her painfully pushed up cleavage which all day had been getting sideways looks of disdain from women, and leering glances from men.

"Guess where John is taking me tonight, Miss Smith?" She sat on the edge of Jane's desk, legs crossed for maximum effect.

"I couldn't possibly imagine," Jane replied in an irritated tone, tired of the constant reminders from the woman that was now seeing John Smith outside of the office.

"Oh, just a silly little old place." Priscilla examined her claw like fingernails. "And I certainly won't be having a chicken salad sandwich picnic. John's taking me out for dinner at the Ritz."

"Oh, so it's John now. Can't you at least keep up a semblance of pretense and call him Mr. Smith at the office? You're being improper, Priscilla, and it will get you sacked if you aren't careful," Jane warned.

"Oh, I'm counting on getting sacked," she said, eyes flashing. "Should have seen the way John was looking at me today."

"I can't imagine why he would be staring." Jane rolled her eyes, unable to miss the twin torpedoes pointed right at her. She held up her hands as Priscilla opened her mouth again, ready to brag. "You know Priscilla, I really don't need to hear about it. I really don't, and I need to catch my bus anyway. G'night." Jane stood up and got as much distance between herself and that woman and John Smith as quickly as her sensible brown shoes could carry her.

oOo

Jane stood outside of the lift while she waited for the doors to open. Inwardly, Jane groaned when she heard the already memorized sound of John Smith's distinctive stride.

"Good evening, Miss Smith."

"Good evening, Mr. Smith," she replied, her voice polite, but quiet.

"Help me, please? I need the name of a planet. Remember the planet of the frozen waves? It needs a name."

She sighed as she thought, again trying to impress him. "Woman Wept."

"Oh, plenty of weeping. Lots of weeping. Very emotional chapter."

"No, the name of the planet. You should call it Woman Wept, because from space, the one and only continent looks like a woman weeping."

John stared at Jane, mouth agape.

Her stomach rolled. "Or maybe not. It was a silly idea."

"No. Not silly. Genius, Miss Smith. Absolutely genius. I knew I could count on you." He smiled brightly. "Big plans for the weekend?" he asked conversationally as the lift doors slid open.

"I'll be cleaning and marketing on Saturday, and church on Sunday, just like always," she replied quietly.

"Hello Smiths!" Jim the lift operator greeted.
"Good evening, Jim," Jane said.

"Hello, good sir!" John enthused.

"Marketing? Cleaning? Well that's no fun! What about a date, Miss Smith? I thought for sure a pretty girl like you would have a fellow who took you out every weekend," said John.

She cleared her throat and looked up at the winking numbers. "No. I don't have a fellow."

"Really?" he asked, genuinely surprised.

"Really," she replied after clearing her throat.

"Well, I do believe that needs to be remedied. Perhaps I could introduce you to someone. I have several very fine male friends who would be interested in showing a pretty girl a really good time."

She frowned, and looked at him, shaking her head. "What kind of girl do you think I am?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, confused at her negative response.

"I'm not fast, Mr. Smith. I'm not like -- like --" She stopped herself short of saying Priscilla's name.

"Fast? Fast? I don't think you're fast. Who said anything about fastness? Not me!"

She stood up straighter, frowned and furrowed her eyebrows attempting a masculine look. "'I have lots of very fine male friends who are always interested in showing a pretty girl a really good time!'" Her feminine voice returned. "Everyone knows what a really good time means!" She pulled her purse closer into her body.

"Number one, Miss Smith, that was an extremely poor attempt to imitate my lovely native tongue. And second, I am terribly offended that you would even think that I would ever A, think that I thought you were loose, and B, that you would think that I would keep company with anyone who would take advantage of someone such as you." He tilted his chin upward and crossed his arms.

"Someone such as me? What does that mean?" She frowned.


Simultaneously, her glasses slipped down her nose and her hair came out of its ill-fated knot, tumbling around her shoulders. She grunted in frustration. "I may be a nice girl, but I'm not stupid," she said under her breath, righting her glasses, but ignoring her hair.

"Come again?" asked John, with a single raised eyebrow.

"Nothing," she muttered.

"I really didn't mean to offend you." He crossed his arms defensively. "I'm very sorry."

"I forgive you," she said with a false smile. "Because I'm sweet and nice." She tilted her nose into the air proudly.

Jim the elevator operator raised his eyebrows and made a funny face. The lift doors opened, but Jane stayed in the lift until after John left.

"I'm with I'm, Miss Smith. You deserve a nice bloke. But I don't think he meant any harm, luv," Jim offered sincerely. "You have a nice weeken'. Do it for me."
"Thanks," she replied quietly, mouth dry.

Jane angrily trudged her way to the bus stop. She passed a posh dress shop, and stopped to look at the fashionable and pretty pink cocktail dress displayed on the dummy in the window. She examined her reflection, and then cracked a smile. "He said I was pretty."

oOo

Bess was home, having left work early with the beginnings of a cold. Jane felt badly, concerned that keeping her up last night had contributed to her poor health, but Bess assured her that she’d been feeling it coming on for days.

She entered the flat quietly in case her friend was sleeping. Bess was sitting on the couch, wrapped up in a fluffy powder blue dressing gown. A man was sitting next to her, and Jane assumed it must be Bess’s boyfriend, Niles. He was holding a box of tissues. A vase of fresh flowers was on the coffee table.

"Oh! Sorry, I didn't know you had company Bess. I could go out and catch a film or something. There's that new Doris Day picture at the Rialto."

"Oh don't be a silly goose. This is your home too. Come over here. It's high time you met my Niles."

A trim, well dressed man with dark blonde hair and a pleasant face stood up. He extended his hand in greeting and smiled as they shook. "So this is the famous Jane Smith! John told me about his muse, and he said she was pretty, but I didn't expect someone so charming!"

Jane guffawed, but the man seemed sincere. "John Smith? How do know him? His muse?" Jane furrowed her brow.

He laughed. "Indeed. He told me all about the ways you have saved his bacon this week. How you rescued chapter fourteen from the rubbish bin when he was at a complete loss, ready to pack it in, and retreat to Scotland."

Jane flushed, embarrassed by the praise.

"John's more a friend of a friend, really. I work with his friend Jack, and since those two are nearly attached at the hip, like Siamese twins really, well, except when he's out with his girl of the week. Man about town, that one. Anyhoo," he said, "we've gone to the pub a few times. Went last night in fact. Genuinely nice man. So smart and very creative. I like his books very much."

Jane flushed inwardly at Niles' description of John. Girl of the week. Man about town. More evidence to build her growing personal case against John Smith. "And what do you do, Mr..."


"He can't talk about work. It's top secret," Bess replied, whispering. "Very hush hush. I think he's a spy. My very own James Bond," she said, rubbing her nose to his fondly.

Jane smiled. Their show of affection was natural and endearing, unlike Priscilla's braggadocious descriptions of herself and John.

"You staying for dinner, Niles? Swiss Steak, roasted potatoes, and glazed carrots from my new American cookbook." She picked up the red and white checkered Better Homes and Gardens New
"Bootsie dear, where did you ever find her?" he inclined his toward towards Jane. "She cooks!"

"I wished upon a star, and pouf! She just appeared," she said dramatically with a flourish of the wrist, followed by a coughing fit.

"I think you should lock her in her bedroom, dearest, or else some wholly unworthy man is going to snatch her right from under your pretty little nose."

Jane snorted a sarcastic laugh, "Right," she drawled. "So, dinner?"

"Alas, no. I have to get back to work. I just stopped by to check on my best girl."

"You have to go back to work on a Friday night?" Jane asked.

"Spies never sleep, Jane," Bess interjected.

"I am not a spy," he countered with a snicker.

"Just love teasing you." Bess placed a sweet kiss on his cheek

"I'm going to change," Jane said with a giggle. "Very nice to meet you, Niles."

They had already forgotten she was in the room and were now alternating sweet nothings with kisses. Jane quickly left to change, and by the time she returned, Niles had left. Jane quickly prepared dinner and arranged everything on a tray for her sick friend so that Bess wouldn't have to leave the sofa.

"Niles is very nice. I like him. How did you meet?"

"Oxford. I was at St. Anne's, he was at King's." She wiped her red nose. "Met him at a cricket match. Been seeing each other ever since. Thirteen years now." A far off look came over her face. "Thirteen long, long years." She coughed.

"What? And you never married him?" The crestfallen look on Bess's face caused Jane to wish she had kept quiet. "I'm sorry, Bess. That was rude of me."

"It's all right," she smiled and looked down. "You sound like my mother, and that's not a bad thing. Niles has a difficult job," she said seriously. "I can't get into it really. But the life he leads, it just isn't conducive to marriage and especially not for having children."

Jane wasn't sure how to reply to this and now was afraid to talk.

Bess broke the awkward silence. "It's all right, Jane. We make it work in our own way. See each other when we can, a few times a week. Take a holiday here and there. My parents, of course, are properly horrified by the arrangement. They're properly horrified by most of my life, to be honest."

"How so?" Jane asked taking a bite of potato.

"University wasn't a problem, but they never expected me to actually do anything with my degree," she said with a laugh. "It's the proper thing to do in my circles if you are smart enough, that is. My family is rather rich," she said, almost embarrassed. "So off to the St. Anne's I went. Mother and Father assumed because I was going to study at an all female institution, that automatically meant it would be very traditional and safe. But they didn't do their research." She smiled. "Oh! their faces when they found out just how progressive it was!" She snorted a laugh.
"I'll bet they flipped!" Jane said with a smile, knowing St. Anne's reputation for modern thinking and liberality.

"So, I graduated in 1953 with a degree in Literature, the second class to do so after St. Anne's became a full College of the University of Oxford, I'll have you know," she said proudly, buffing her fingernails on her dressing gown. "Prescott Publishing was booming back then, and since I did take quite a bit of history, I was immediately hired on as a junior editor. We specialized in biographies and history in those days as you probably remember."

"Where did Niles study again?"

"King's, Oxford. Took degrees in British History and Biology."

Jane wrinkled her nose. "That's a rather unusual combination, isn't it?"

Bess laughed. "Niles is an unusual man. So Jane, what about you? I really don't know that much about you, but your references were glowing, and Jack said you were a doll."

"Who's Jack?" Jane asked, confused.

"Jack Harkness, of course, Niles's friend. You must be really tired, darling. Long week?"

"Very. You don't know the half of it." The subject of the mysterious Jack passed. "I grew up in Chipping Norton."

"Oh I love the Cotswolds! Used to walk the fields on weekends with friends. Took the bus from Oxford out there."

"Probably went right past my house then. Lived right on the bus line coming into town."

"Well isn't that funny." Bess laughed merrily.

"My father, Sergeant Peter Smith, was at the Battle of Dunkirk as a member of the British Expeditionary Forces, 1st Ox and Bucks, and was one of 300 casualties at the Battle of Ypres. He died May 27, 1940." She sounded like she was reciting a script. "Mum, Josephine Marion Smith, served on the home front as a nurse, and I was cared for by an elderly neighbor while Mum worked at the cottage hospital. After the war, when the war widow pension began and rationing had ceased, life became easier, comfortable even. But Mum continued to work, and while other widows remarried, Mum chose not to, even though I remember there were several men who tried to catch her eye, but I guess she was just content." Again, Jane sounded like a schoolgirl reciting a memorized speech, but then her speaking became natural once again. "Mum was really beautiful, and was simply happy doing what she did. I really respected her for that. And after school, I worked in the hospital as a transcriptionist. Didn't have any money for college, but would have loved to have gone."

"I bet you would have been quite the scholar."

"Mum always said that too. Said I could do anything I put my mind to. I guess I am like Mum, content to be who I am. Until recently. She died three months ago." Jane looked down at her now empty plate of food balanced on her lap. "But I choose not to dwell on it, so I sold our little house and put the money in the bank for a rainy day. I am firmly committed to living off of my wages alone, to not touch my savings. A girl needs to plan for her own future. Learned that from Mum. Life is uncertain and you never know if-"

"Don't you think you will ever marry, Jane? You're a beautiful girl. But, if you don't mind me
saying so, you hide it very successfully."

Jane blushed and pushed her glasses up her nose, frowning at Bess.

"Oh stop it," chided Bess. "Of course you are! I bet if I took you on a trip to my salon to get your hair done, and bought you a new dress or two, you would be amazed at the transformation."

"Well you certainly don't have to do that," Jane replied.

"Why shouldn't I do that for my new friend? I'm loaded, remember?" she replied without guile.

"Why did you need a flatmate then?" Jane asked, confused.

"I didn't need one, Jane. I wanted one. I was lonely," she replied. "I don't really socialize with anyone at work. Present company excluded. All of the girls are either gossips, looking for a sugar daddy, ancient, or just plain silly. Who else can I tell my girlish secrets to?" she said with a sly smile.

"Well I don't have any secrets, that's for sure. Open book, me."

Bess slapped the sofa with decision. "You know what I want? Wine. Be a dear and open a bottle, would you?"

"Oh, I don't really drink," she said apologetically.

"Religious or health reasons?" Bess asked kindly.

"Oh no, nothing like that. Mum used to have a glass of something every once in a while. Seems such a frivolity though."

"Well then, it is time to splurge. I want you to march right on over to the cabinet above the icebox and get that nice bottle of Burgundy."

Jane stood up slowly, stacked the plates and silverware onto the tray and took them into the kitchen. "No Burgundy, Bess."

"Then look in the icebox, way in back. There's a bottle of Champagne."

"Champagne?" Jane gasped.

"Of course, Champagne. Why not? I'm an heiress! Aren't heiresses supposed to drink Champagne like water, go to the salon every day, and be fed chocolates and grapes by handsome Italian men in togas?"

Jane sputtered a laugh. "Bess, you are fantastic!"

"Of course I am, darling. I chose you to be my friend, didn't I?"

An hour later, the bottle Champagne was drained, and Jane Smith was laughing hysterically at Bess's stories about everyone at work.

"Now the one you really have to watch out for, darling, is Digby down in typesetting. He's an absolute pig!" She spit out the word. "Never walk by his desk unless your are wearing a full length coat. I can't tell you how many times I have walked through that department when he has intentionally dropped something, so that when I go by, he can try to get a look up my skirt."
"What a git!" Jane tossed back the last sip in her glass. "Can ya keepa secret?" she whispered loudly.

"I'm as safe as a vault." Bess zipped her lips.

"Guess who're goin' out." Jane leaned forward, slurring her words.

"Oh do tell!" Bess asked, ready to know.

"John Smith and Priscilla Bootkins." She scowled.

"Priscilla Bootkins? Thought he'd have better taste than 'er. But I'll bet he's havin' a really good time." She winked. "She is a world class trollop. A trolloping whore with cheap taste in lipstick and teased up hair."

Jane gasped, and then laughed hysterically, falling backwards onto the sofa clutching her stomach.

"John's a handsome enough fellow. Dresses nicely." Bess remained calm as she drawled her words. "But I have a feeling he knows just how good looking he is, too, from what little Niles has told me about him."

Jane sighed. "I think he's dreamy, and he's good at sex."

Bess made a face indicating her surprise. "And how would you know that my innocent little friend?"

Jane had revealed that particular secret after her second glass of Champagne.

"Writes about it in his books," she whispered again. "I read 'em. In secret. In bed!" She covered her mouth and giggled. "Oh Bess, the way he writes about it makes me want to have sex-u-al in-ter-course with him." Jane sighed again, and tipped her empty glass upside down in front of her face, looking for more.

"My, my Jane, I think I'm going to get you liquored-up more often. You're fun when you're drunk!" said Bess with a wicked grin, much more skilled at holding her alcohol.

Jane sighed yet again. "But he's with that cow Priscilla. Did I tell you she's a cow? She's a big cow with big boisomes. I have a big brain." She tugged at the collar her shirt and looked inside. "Men don't like big brains. They like big breastsesses." She sniffed emotionally and started to cry. "No bloke's never gonna look at me!" she wailed.

"Oh sweet Jane." Bess shook her head piteously and helped her off of the sofa, leading her into her bedroom. She pushed her onto the bed, smoothed her hair off of her forehead. "Priscilla Bootkins has nothing on you. Sweet dreams, darling. You're gonna have a helluva headache tomorrow," Bess said sympathetically as she turned out the lights and padded off to her room, with one final sneeze.

A still-dressed Jane found her way under the covers and quickly fell asleep.
Chapter Summary

John dates and dumps Priscilla Give-Her-The-Boot-kins.

Chapter Three: John Wakes Up

The Tiki Tiki Club was an exotic, Polynesian-themed establishment, as would be expected of a club of the name. All things Polynesian had been hot in the late 1950's, and capitalizing on the trend, the club was opened seven years prior. Even though the fad had somewhat waned, the nightclub remained vibrant due to the delicious and unique food, the fantastic cocktails, friendly staff, and beautiful decor. The club also attracted first rate entertainment. The owner was gregarious and generous, and his wife was delightful. For most Londoners, a night at the Tiki Tiki offered a taste of South Pacific that they would never have been able to experience.

The first thing one encountered upon entering the club was the beautiful rock waterfall and koi pond. Guests crossed a little wooden bridge to enter the club proper. Lush tropical plants filled the place. Fire-lit torches were mounted on walls, flames flickering brightly against dark wood paneling.

All of the waitresses were attractive, and many nations were represented. They wore sandals on their feet and bikini tops that certainly couldn't be called scandalous, but were definitely sexy. Wrapped around their hips were silk sarongs, each woman wearing a unique design and color. Their necks were graced with leis made of the loveliest and most exotic flowers, most of which were comprised of varieties rarely seen outside of the private hothouses of the elite, or at the Chelsea Flower Show. And of course, they had matching flowers in their hair.

The bartenders wore open necked Hawaiian shirts and white slacks, as did the members of the house band. Scowling tiki-style faces were carved into the dark wood columns, some of which had vines snaking their way around. The lighting was dim, mainly coming from the flickering candles within the multi-colored glass globes in the center of each table. The relaxing melody of Hawaiian music filled the room from hi-fidelity speakers hidden amongst the foliage.

The menu was comprised of a combination of authentic Chinese, Japanese, and Hawaiian cuisine. With enough notice, an elaborate luau-style meal could be ordered, complete with roast pig and other traditional Hawaiian delicacies.

John Smith was wearing an immaculately tailored white dinner jacket over a custom made white dress shirt, accented by a perfectly straight black bow tie. His trim black trousers were of the mode of the day. His black loafers were Italian. Not a hair on his head was out of place, save the one stray lock in front that simply would not stay put. But even that imperfection added to the overall effect, creating that impossible to imitate look of casual elegance that many men try to achieve, yet never succeed to grasp.

In short, he was the standard of manly perfection, and Priscilla Bootkins knew it. She held her head high, showing him off to every woman in the room, proudly flaunting her devastatingly handsome and rich trophy.
Her black shantung cocktail dress swished sensually as it skimmed her knees and hugged her curves. It had a wide, sweeping neckline accented by a large rhinestone pin squarely affixed to the center edge of the neckline, serving to draw wandering eyes to her décolletage. Her honey blonde hair was piled high on her head in an elaborate coiffure. Above her forehead was a demure little black bow.

The couple followed the beautiful hostess and John placed his hand firmly in the small of Priscilla's back, guiding her towards the banquette table for two, far enough to not be bothered by the crowd and noise, but close enough to have a perfect view of the stage.

The dark, tufted leather groaned pleasantly as first Priscilla slid in, and John followed, shifting close to his date. She slipped the white mink stole off of her ivory shoulders and tossed it aside carelessly.

"Have I told you how gorgeous you look tonight?" John growled as soon as they were alone.

"Oh, a few times. But you can just keep on reminding me," she purred, resting her chin on her black gloved hands.

He leaned into her neck and drew in a whiff of her Chanel No. 5. He started to whisper something in her ear, but she pulled away and leveled a look.

"John, you need to know that I am very disappointed that you didn't bring me to the Palm Court for dinner. You promised The Ritz," Priscilla pouted, surveying the room with a critical eye.

"I can't help it if the Duke of Whatsit reserved the entire restaurant for his wife's birthday bash. Now if I were the Professor, we could have simply taken the phone booth and had dinner last night, or tomorrow night or--"

"What does he call it again? I always forget," Priscilla said, feigning interest as she removed her gloves, one finger at a time.

"Bessie."

"If I had a Bessie--"

"It's not a Bessie, her name is Bessie. She's alive."

"Whatever you say. They're your weird--"

"They're weird?" he asked.

She mentally kicked herself. "Of course they're weird, sugar lips," she looked at his mouth as she laid it on thickly. "Weird like wonderfully, weirdly successful! Anyway, I'd go to South Africa and claim a diamond mine at the beginning of the century. If the Professor was really smart, he'd do that. He's be set for life."

"But the Professor never uses his ship for financial gain." He stopped himself, seeing the look of derision on her face. "What's wrong? A beautiful face like yours should never wear a scowl like that."

Priscilla had picked up the tall menu and was reading the options, clearly unimpressed.

"Honestly, there are plenty of other places in London, John," she complained. "This place is a bit passé, isn't it? I thought that Polynesian fad died a couple of years ago. It's a first date. A girl
expects to have her socks knocked off." She put the menu down gracelessly and pulled her compact from her black handbag. She checked her face, pleased with what she saw. "I went to great expense to prepare for tonight. New frock, new shoes, new lingerie."

John's heart skipped a beat and then he smiled hungrily. "What color?"

Priscilla slid her hand up and down his thigh, excruciatingly close, but not quite there. He turned and looked at her hungrily as she slid her hand inside his thigh and trailed a finger tantalizingly northward, again, teasingly close.

He jumped and wriggled in his seat, and she pulled her hand away, smiling coyly.

"It's black. And French."

"Wh-wh-what?" he stuttered.

"My lingerie. And not only is it possible, it is highly probable that you will see it. In fact, you may see it come off, too. If you are a very good boy."

John gulped hard.

She picked up her recently delivered Mai Tai, served in an imitation hollowed-out coconut, and examined at it with a frown before taking a sip through the pink straw. She shrugged and drank.

"I love this place. It inspires me. All of the cultures, people, all jumbled up together." John grinned, looking around. "I can just imagine the Professor taking Iris to a place like this after one of their adventures, giving her a little of bit of twentieth century Earth on the fringe of the universe. But it would be on some out of the way little planet."

"So, how many books do you have planned in that Box series of yours?" asked Priscilla.

"Oh I don't really plan 'em, they just sort of happen. I set the brain on random, and the adventure seems to find them." John stabbed his fork into his Green Goddess salad, delivered to everyone regardless of whether they ordered it or not. House rule.

Priscilla pushed her salad around the plate, dubious of the green topping. "Don't they have normal food? Tell the waitress to bring me a new one with proper salad cream."

John ignored her while she drummed her manicured fingers on the table in irritation.

"Back to your writing," she said abruptly. "If you don't know how many you are going to write, how do you plan for the future? How can you possibly keep that spectacular flat?"

"It's paid for," he said quietly and then kicked himself realizing he had actually said it out loud.

"Oh really," she drawled with a wolfish grin. "You know John, you talk about this Professor and that Iris girl like they are real people."

"Oh, but they are! I am firmly convinced that somewhere out there is someone like the Professor. There is more in Heaven and Earth, Horatio," he quoted sagely, pointing his finger at her.

"Who's Horatio?" She asked, staring at him blankly, clearly not recognizing the quotation. "Shakespeare! You know? Hamlet?" He frowned slightly.

"I don't go in for that old Victorian what-not," she said, with a bored flick of the wrist.
"Shakespeare. He's -- he's -- not Victorian," his voice trailed off. "Oh, look! The band is warming up," he said, wanting to move on from the subject of Shakespeare, one of his favorites.

The house band had started to play, and their first song was a medium tempo, sultry Bossa Nova tune. He extended his hand in invitation trying to revive his waning libido. "Care to dance? I'm really very good."

"I bet you are good at a very many things," she said suggestively, her lips quirked into a seductive smile.

He led her to the dance floor. They were first couple. He did, indeed, dance very well, his trim hips swiveling, agile feet moving like a pro. Priscilla matched his movements beautifully, a skilled dancer herself, her hips swinging like a perfectly timed pendulum. And indeed, his libido sprang back to life to the sensual rhythm of Bossa Nova.

Soon others had joined the pair, including a dark-skinned couple. John smiled as he watched them outshine Priscilla and his moves.

"Oh, they are good," he said, highly impressed, nodding towards the couple.

Priscilla looked over at them, and scowled. "I'm hungry. Let's order. The faster we eat, the faster we can get out of here."

"But you'll miss my surprise," he said, pouting, his lower lip deliciously waiting to be nibbled.

"Surprise? Did you buy me something, John Smith?" she asked, greedily.

The delicious pout retracted. "No, I didn't buy you anything." He sighed. "There has been a last minute change to the entertainment lineup. Robert called me this morning."

"Who's Robert?"

"The owner. He's a friend of mine. Well, met him a couple of weeks ago, but really hit it off. Funny how that happens sometimes," he mused.

"Friends in high places," she said, impressed.

"Nicest man you'll ever meet. He's an American, has roots in Hawaii, hence the theme of the restaurant. He was in Europe during the war, and fell in love with an English girl and ended up settling here in jolly old England."

John led her back to the table. The waitress came to the table and John ordered both of their meals, in flawless Japanese.

"I didn't know you spoke Chinese," observed Priscilla.

"I do speak Chinese, but that was Japanese," he corrected.

"Aren't those Orientals all the same?" she said with a thoughtless smirk on her face.

"Uh, no. Picked it up here and there, traveling."

"I didn't know you liked to travel! I would just love to travel. It's so glamorous and exciting! How about you take me to the French Riviera on a mini break?" she asked, laying her hands on his arm.

"Uh, well..." He tugged his ear. This woman was no longer popping his cork. Every time she
opened her mouth, either her brain seemed to fall out, or she was asking thinly-guised questions pertaining to his financial standing.

"Excuse me for a moment, I need to--" He tilted his head towards the hallway leading to the ladies and gentleman's lounges. He slid out of their cozy and private enclave and headed in general direction of the men's room, but instead took a clandestine and circuitous route sneaking his way out of the club. He headed for the nearest red telephone box.

"Harkness," Jack answered simply.

"Jack, buddy, you gotta help me. What do I do? Priscilla is rather, er, dim, but she's a sure thing! But she doesn't know Shakespeare! I am just so confused, buddy."

Jack groaned inwardly. "You called me at work for relationship advice? Come on Doc! Grow up! Do you really need to ask? It's a no brainier!" He decided to try the blunt approach first. "End it, and fast. No leading her on, she will just grow more attached, and from what you have told me about this one, she will be a hanger-oner. Trust me, I know about these things." He tensed up, hoping John would take the advice without question.

"But Jack," he whinged, "36-24-36! Sure thing! It's been a while, Jack, and I really need-"

"I'm telling you John, this woman is bad news. I know the type. She wants your money. Tell me what you have talked about so far tonight. Go ahead. Tell me. I will prove my point."

"Well, she asked me about my suit-"

"Wanted to know where you got it, ergo, how much it cost."

"Asked me to take her the French Riviera-"

"Isn't it obvious? You couldn't take her there without beaucoup cashola."

"Jack, she told me she was wearing brand new, black lingerie. French." He waggled his eyebrows.

"Reeling you in like a wide-mouthed bass. What else you got?"

"Wanted to know what I did before I became a successful writer. She must be interested in me, at least a little bit, right? And 'cos I couldn't very well tell her I used to be an intel officer so I made something up. Something really, uh, impressive."

"John, what the hell you tell her?" Jack asked.

"Told her I had been a successful physician who gave up my practice to pursue my lifelong dream of writing," he rushed.

Jack could feel his grin through the phone. "Damn John, you're thick for being such a genius."

"What?"

"Doctor Smith." His voice dripped with sarcasm.

"What'd I do wrong?" John screeched.

"John, can't you see her for the first class gold digger that she is? You're a good looking bloke. Really gorgeous. But seriously, this is 1963, not 2005. There aren't many girls who give it up on the first date let alone try to jump your bones in your office with the typing pool ten feet outside of
your paper thin wall."

"What's so special about 2005?" he asked, incredulous.

"Just a figure of speech," he said quickly, back-pedalling. "Please tell me you haven't taken her to your flat yet." He nearly begged him to answer 'no'.

"I'm still at the Tiki. And, uh, yeah, she's been to my place. We had cocktails at the flat after work. She wouldn't let me pick her up at her place, insisted that she meet me at mine."

Jack swore under his breath. "Okay. This is what you're gonna do. You're gonna go back into that restaurant. You're gonna tell her you have food poisoning, that you've been tossing your lunch in the loo for the past ten minutes. And then you're gonna put her in a taxi. Sayonara sweetheart."

John sighed dramatically and there was an awkward pause until he blurted, "But Jack! Sure thing! Black lingerie! French!"

Jack knew it was time to pull out the big guns. "Two words: paternity suit."

John cringed as Jack slammed the receiver onto the cradle. Knowing in his heart that his friend was right, he banged the receiver a few times angrily before replacing it in the cradle. He traced his steps back to the table, hands deep in his pockets in defeat.

"What happened? You were gone for fifteen minutes! I was starting to think I'd been stood up."

"I just...went out for a cigarette."

"You don't smoke," she said, crossing her arms, catching the lie.

He affected a look. "Priscilla, I am so sorry, I didn't want to tell you, but I have been sick in the bathroom." He lied convincingly. "Came on really fast. While we were dancing. Probably all of that hip swinging. Think I got food poisoning from that strange cake-ish thing that Miss Wood brought in for Mr. Prescott's birthday."

"Oh my poor, poor baby!" she cooed, cupping his face.

He pulled away from her hands. "I really need to get home, but I'll put you in a taxi. I'm so very sorry." He started to slide out of the banquette when there was a drumroll, and the spotlight flooded the microphone stand.

"The Tiki Tiki Club proudly presents... Mr. Bobby Darin!" The room erupted with surprised cheers and applause.

The band started to play the familiar beginning bars of a swinging melody. The crooner took to the stage, and gripped the microphone. "Cheerio London!" he said in his New Jersey accent. The crowd clapped heartily. He started to snap jauntily to the music. "Somewhere, beyond the sea..."

"Oh John, you sure you're truly sick? Maybe you got rid of it all. I really want to hear him sing! Oh please? Pretty please?" She selfishly begged in a childish voice. She drew in a shocked breath. "Stone the crows, look who's over there! It's Sandra Dee!" She pointed to a small round table near the band. "I just love her. I want her autograph." She clasped her hands and pleaded with her eyes.

John hemmed and hawed a bit, and she decided to change tactic. She reached down between his legs, and he squeaked until she pulled her hand away.
"I suppose just few more minutes, uh, c-couldn't hurt."

They listened through the first set of four songs as John picked his way through dinner, silently listening to Priscilla criticize her co-workers, libido once again squashed like a bug. Mr. Darin and the band were taking a break, and quiet background music was playing.

"And that new girl, Jane? Never met a duller person in all my life. What a mouse! I bet she doesn't last another three months."

"Actually Priscilla, I think she's rather fantastic."

To Priscilla's surprise, he was defending the girl, and it was the first time he had spoken in twenty minutes. She opened her mouth to say something cruel, when she was interrupted by a visitor to the table.

"How's my favorite Scottish guy who writes science fiction?"

A small Asian man in a slightly dated tuxedo came to the table, smiling brightly, arms wide in friendly greeting. The Japanese man's American accent caught Priscilla off guard.

"I'm think it is safe to say that I'm the only Scottish guy that you know who writes science fiction books," John replied with a quiet laugh.

"Then I'm telling the truth, right?" He grasped John's shoulder in masculine affection and both men chortled.

"Don't be rude John, introduce me to your lovely companion!" said the man.

"My er, companion," he looked confused for a moment. "Priscilla Bootkins, meet Robert Nakamura. Robert is the friend I told you about." John introduced his date politely.

"Charmed." Priscilla extended her hand coolly.

The gentleman took it, bowed, and kissed her knuckles gallantly.

"Such a lovely lady you have with you this evening," he said to John. He turned back to Priscilla. "Welcome to the Tiki Tiki. Are you enjoying yourself? But how could you not? The music is cool, the food is hot, and you have John Smith at your side," he said with felicity.

"Yes. Nice -- nice place you have here," she said through forced smile.

"I'm very sorry I won't be able to ask you to dance Miss Bootkins, but I must attend to business." He smiled, saluted casually to John, and disappeared through a service door.

John watched Priscilla's face grow hard as her eyes followed the man who John was proud to call his friend.

"Really, John, for someone of your standing, you really need to be more careful who you associate with," she said disdainfully.

"I'm not sure what you mean, Priscilla."

"You know what I mean!" she sneered.

"No, I don't. Enlighten me," he said, crossing his arms and tilting his chin upward.
"He's foreign," she said, enunciating the word.

"Oh, you mean he's of Japanese descent," He said, words icy cold.

"We just had a war with that country! He could be a spy! What if he's a saboteur! Those people, they're all the same!" she said cruelly.

"The war was over nearly eighteen years ago," he snapped back. "And there is no such thing as 'those people.'" He quoted with his fingers. "And you know what else? I know a far sight more about that war than you do, Miss Bootkins. Not that it should make any difference whatsoever as to how you treat Mr. Nakamura, but Robert's parents were born and raised in California. You do know where California is, don't you?" he asked sarcastically.

"Of course I do!" she hissed, pursing her lips and swiveling her head away, angrily.

"While Robert's family was imprisoned in an interment camp at Tule Lake, Robert was off fighting the Nazis as a member of the 442nd Infantry, the most highly-decorated regiment in the history of the United States Armed Forces. Do you know what infantry is, Miss Bootkins? Front line forces. Boots on the ground. The see-the-whites-of-their-eyes soldiers. The 442nd had 21 Medal of Honor recipients." His voice was quietly terrifying. "He was one of them. His medal is displayed in a case in his dining room, because he doesn't brag about it. It was his honor and duty to fight."

She flushed angrily and crossed her arms. "I hate this place and I don't like these people."

"Miss Bootkins, I do believe that we are not compatible. Good evening." John took out his wallet, and handed her a thick stack of notes without counting. "And Priscilla," he said darkly, under his breath, "there is nothing you could do now to entice me to want to see your lingerie. Even if it is French." Without any further ado, he left.

"Yeah? Well don't worry! You won't be seein' my lingerie ever, Mr. Smith!" she shouted. Only then did she notice that every eye in the place was drilled to her burning face.

"No one does this to me. No one," she hissed through her teeth. "I have never been so humiliated in all my life." She shoved the money into her handbag and marched out of the Tiki Tiki Club, breaking one of the heels of her brand new black satin Bruno Magli pumps by the grotto pool filled with gracefully swimming koi.
Chapter Summary

Bess spoils Jane.

Chapter Four - Jane Wakes Up

The dim light of a rainy London day bled through the curtains into Jane's room. Even muted, the light pounded Jane's throbbing head. She rolled out of bed, and clutched her heavy head, making her way into the bathroom that she shared with her flatmate.

"How are you feeling, darling?" Bess was sitting on the sofa, drinking a cup of tea.

"I feel wretched. What happened? Did I catch your cold? Maybe it's the flu. It's been going around, hasn't it?"

"You don't remember?" Bess held up the empty bottle of Champagne that hadn't yet been binned.

"Oh. I think I remember now." Jane squeezed her eyes shut. "How long am I gonna feel like this? Never had a hangover before." She rubbed her temples.

"Sorry darling, a while. I do, however, have an old family remedy, if you are game. You will feel right as rain much sooner. If you can get it down your gullet that is."

"Anything to make the bongo drums go away." She squinted at her friend.

Bess left the sofa carrying the empty bottle with her. She deposited it into the rubbish bin. Jane winced as it hit the bottom. Bess mixed an egg with one part each of orange juice and tomato juice. To the thick, brown sludge, she added a dash of Worcestershire sauce, a spoonful of curry powder, and a splash of Vodka. She gave it a few more stirs, and carried it to the small dining table where Jane sat, her head in her hands.

"Here you go, darling."

Jane took the glass, smelled it and nearly retched simply from the scent.

"Go on, bottoms up!" Bess motioned with her hand.

Jane drank the cocktail in one go. She thought she was going to bring it right back up, but she took a few controlled breaths, willing the potion to stay down.

"Go lie down for a while. I'll bring you an ice bag and an aspirin," Bess offered sympathetically.

"No... no aspirin. I'm allergic. I think, or maybe... maybe that was my Mum... or someone else..." Jane said oddly. "Just to be safe, do you have any paracetamol?"

"Yes, I think so." Bess went to check.

Jane slowly made her way to the sofa and waited for Bess to bring her the remedy. "Did I say
anything embarrassing?" she asked Bess once she had taken the tablets.

"Oh yes," Bess smiled.

Jane groaned. "Do I want to know?" She cringed.

"Depends on how good of a friend you consider me to be. Because a good friend wouldn't hold any of it against you." She laid a gentle hand on Jane's arm. "You didn't say anything too shocking. You did, however, tell me that you fancy John Smith quite a lot," she said very seriously.

Jane groaned and hid her blushing face. "I don't fancy him, Bess. Not anymore. He's a prat."

"You may not fancy him, but you apparently want to have sex with him."

"Oh fudge." Jane groaned even more loudly and covered her whole head with her arms, and then started giggling. She was joined by Bess, and soon, felt much better.

"So, did you at least have a good dream last night?" asked Bess with a wink.

"Had a nightmare. Dreamed I was about to be eaten by a giant razor-toothed slug while chained to a wall."

"Freud would have a ball with that one, darling!" "Suppose he would," Jane said with a half grin.

"I have an idea, darling. There is one thing you said to me last night that is complete rubbish, and I refuse to repeat it. However, it did give me an idea. We're going out. Go take a bath, but don't worry about your hair. And wear comfortable clothing. Wear something that is easy to get in and out of."

"Why?" she asked.

"I'm feeling better, and I have an appointment at the beauty parlor. You're going to come with me, and then I am taking you shopping."

"You will do no such thing," Jane protested. "I insist. I'm loaded, remember?"

Jane didn't quite know what to say. She pinched her lips, and then smiled. "Okay," she managed to squeak shyly.

oOo

Half an hour later, they were on their way. "11 Dering Street in Mayfair please."

The taxi made its way to the most luxurious district in town. Jane gaped out the window of the taxi at the women who ambled down the pavement in their exquisite Jackie Kennedy-inspired day suits. The taxi stopped in the middle of the block in front of a glossy green door. A simple brass plaque engraved with the name "Salon Henri" was the only indication what was inside.

Bess paid the fare. Jane stopped frozen outside the door, afraid to proceed. "Come on, what are you waiting for, darling?" asked Bess. "Never been to a beauty salon before. Always cut my own hair."

"Yes. I can tell," Bess said honestly, though she was not being unkind. "It isn't going to hurt, well, maybe a bit," she said wickedly.

Jane squinted at her, in mock anger, and then followed the woman inside.
"Jane Smith and Bess Cooper. We have 10:00 appointments, thank you." The women sat down in the lounge area on gilded Louis XIV chairs, upholstered in peacock blue velvet. They were served cups of tea in fine china, and offered biscuits, which both declined in mild disgust, given their prior night's folly.

A few minutes later, a trim, gray-haired man with a twisted mustache came from around a corner. "Elisabeth, mon chérie!" He spoke with a soft French accent.

Bess rose to her feet elegantly and the man kissed her on both cheeks. He took her hands in his and examined her fondly. "You haven't been here to see me in two whole weeks, my dear."

"I've been absolutely swamped Henri!" she said melodramatically. "You just wouldn't believe me if I told you!"

"Well now you are here to let me make you fabulous." He turned to Jane. "And who is this exquisite creature?" he said with a smile.

"Henri, this is Jane Smith, my best friend."

Jane smiled at the sincerity of her words. "She is an uncommon girl with a common name. What can you do for her?"

He took her hand in his, lifted it above her head and motioned for her to turn in a circle. She obeyed, and the he stepped away, his pointer finger on his lips and squinted, deep in thought. A smile grew on his face. "I do believe you have brought me a diamond in the rough, chérie. Oh, how I do love a challenge," he proclaimed, clasping his hands together.

"You! You!" He motioned at two women in white smocks and they came forward. "Take her to the shampooing suite, after that, the waxing chamber. Then facial, manicure, pedicure. And only when this has been accomplished, you will bring her to me, for I am an artiste and she is my canvas! Elizabeth, when you see her next, she will have been transformed into a work of art."

Jane looked at Bess fearfully, eyes pleading and wide, and then at Henri. "Sir, I mean no disrespect, but...am I that hideous?"

"No, no, no, dearest. You are as the finest piece of marble. I am only here to sculpt, to release Venus de Milo who already lives within."

"Trust him, Jane, he's a genius." Bess nodded knowingly.

Three hours later, Jane emerged, and Bess's jaw fell to the floor.

They had luncheon at a small but exquisite Chelsea hotel. Jane ate carefully, as if her face would break if she opened her mouth too wide.

"You aren't made of glass, you know," said Bess with a laugh. "I feel so strange. All of this makeup. And look at this hair! Don't I look like a poodle?" Jane asked, worried about the elaborate coif.

"You look like Ursula Andress, darling. Believe me, you look gorgeous! It's always overdone when you leave the salon. But then you go home, you shampoo your hair and wash off the makeup, and
"Then why even go to the expense?" she asked, confused.

"It's the cut, darling. It's all about the cut. I promise. You won't look like a poodle forever. Next we'll go buy some cosmetics that are more subtle. Some girls need to paint the barn, but you aren't one of them. Just a little bit of color here and there will make all the difference in the world."

They finished up lunch and walked to Bazaar, a fashionable Chelsea clothing boutique on King's Road.

"Hi, Alexander. Mary here?" Bess asked the gentleman drinking a cup of tea.

"She'll be back in a few, but Cynthia can help. Cynthia!" The finely dressed man hollered for the shopgirl.

A friendly girl, about twenty, with heavy turquoise blue and black-lined eyes dressed in a scandalously short orange shift, at least three inches above the knee, approached. "Can I help you, Miss Cooper?"

"Oh yes, please," Bess smiled. "My friend here needs some new clothes. Nothing too shocking, though. I don't think Mr. Prescott is ready to have one of his girls show up on Monday in a plastic dress, not that they aren't fabulous!" she cooed.

"So, a few dresses for work then?"
"Yes. Four or five, and a dress or two for evenings out."

The girl smiled, her friendly face framed by a perfectly styled black bob. Her heavy fringe skimmed her eyebrows. "Certainly. I have a few things in mind."

An hour later, Bess and Jane left Mary Quant's boutique laden with boxes and bags. Jane was wearing a brand new sleeveless orange dress with a large Peter Pan collar that skimmed the top of her knees. Her dowdy brown suit was in the dustbin behind the shop. Miss Quant had binned it herself.

4:00 rolled around and Jane was feeling restless, like she wanted to go do something fun. Bess was going out with Niles for the evening, so Jane decided to go out on her own.

"I'm going to go to the movies, Bess."

"Alone?" Bess asked, a bit shocked.

"Sure. Why not? Used to go alone all the time back home. Besides, I'd like to take the dress out for a spin."

"Well have fun, darling. Do me a favor and take a taxi, though? Don't want you walking alone at night. Not that it's dangerous, of course. But do it? For me?"

"Yes big sister," Jane said with a roll of her eyes.

"Thank you darling. Have fun!"

Forty-five minutes later, Jane was seated in the cinema, demurely clutching her white patent leather purse in her lap. Her fingertips were perfectly varnished in a frosty shade of coral that matched her
brand new Max Factor Tahitian Tango lipstick. A fashionable ponytail was high atop her head, her smooth brown hair cascaded down in gentle waves just past her shoulders. She’d left hair and makeup intact after Niles had insisted that she not change a thing. She even decided to forego her glasses, which were mainly for reading.

"Maybe a little bit of glamour isn't a bad thing after all," she said, looking at her reflection in the bathroom mirror.

Jane took a taxi to the cinema, bought her tickets, and then found a spot halfway down the aisle. The house lights dimmed. There were a few newsreels, a silly cartoon starring a talking dog, and a preview. Jane swooned a little bit over Sean Connery, and she decided she would definitely be seeing *From Russia With Love*. Finally, the film began. *The Crawling Hand* certainly wouldn't have been her first choice of film. From the moment that the dead astronaut's hand crawled out of the grave in search of its first victim, she found that she couldn't stop giggling.

Ten minutes into the film, a man took the empty seat next to Jane.

"I couldn't help but notice that you also find this film unintentionally amusing. You have fine taste," he stage whispered.

"Oh absolutely, it is absolutely Oscar worthy!" she said boldly, surprising herself.

And then she turned to look at the man who had just sat next to her. She felt her face drain of all color. It was him, and he was sitting next to her, watching the movie and actually giggling. And furthermore, he was wearing those glasses that made her heart race. "Um, did you know that in the States this cinematic masterpiece is called *Don't Cry Wolf*?" she said quietly, trying to make witty conversation.

"Ha!" he blurted out a laugh just as the disembodied arm strangled another hapless victim, eliciting a 'shut it' from an irritated moviegoer one row behind. "That's hysterical! Probably because the studio kept warning them to stop making the movie."

She laughed in spite of herself. He really was a very funny man.

"I'm really here for *The Yesterday Machine*, of course. Giving out this book for free even," she said, as she held up his book, *Revenge of the Cybernauts*, wondering when he was going to say something about her new look.

"I'm interested to see if they break any time travel rules. There are very strict rules that one must adhere to when traveling in time. Can't mess with fixed events. I'm pretty sure that going back to make sure the Nazi's win WWII would break a rule."

"Oh did you make up those rules then?" Jane asked, incredulously.

"Of course not," he replied seriously, and then furrowed his brow, as if confused. "Time travel stories have become rather popular. I rather liked that book actually." He took the book from Jane's hand. "I am a bit of a connoisseur of the genre, well I guess I should be. I'm John Smith, and I'm the author." He held out his hand to shake.

She stared at him, eyes wide, as she accepted his outstretched hand.

"And who do I have the pleasure of sitting next to this evening?" He studied her, simply smiling.

It was obvious to Jane that John Smith had no idea who she was. It was one of those spur of the moment decisions that you usually come to regret later. Jane decided not to reveal herself. She
Chapter Five - John Meets Rose

The moment the name 'Rose Tyler' came out of Jane Smith's mouth, she knew it had been a mistake, and not just a mistake, a monumental mistake. A hugely, monumentally, enormous, and possibly life-altering error in judgment.

Knots immediately formed in her stomach, and those knots formed into knotted knots. Her hands were clammy, her mouth was as dry as cotton wool, and her heart was beating out a samba. She couldn't hear what John was whispering into her ear for the ringing. But she sure could feel his warm breath against her goose pimpled skin, and it was sending electricity up and down her spine. She shivered, and brought her shoulder to her ear, tipping her head. It was that type of habitual reaction that would be made by a self-conscious, shy girl who hated attention, someone like Jane Smith.

She knew what she had to do. She had to run. "Excuse me please," Jane whispered, her throat as dry as the Sahara.

She started to rise from her seat, but John gently placed his hand on her bare arm to halt her. "You stay right there. I'll go get you some popcorn."

"No, I-"

"Would you sit down, woman!" ordered the same grumpy man in the row behind who had previously hushed them.

John gently tugged her back down into her seat by the forearm. "I insist," he whispered. "You stay here and enjoy the film. Take notes, because I want to know everything that happened." He sprang out of his seat to jog up the aisle.

"Oh fudge," she said under her breath, slumping down in her chair. She fiddled with the straps of her handbag as she tried to plan her escape. She saw the dim light of the emergency exit sign at the bottom right of the auditorium. For one very brief moment, she thought about shouting 'fire,' but wisely abandoned that idea.

There was only one way out of this place, and it was straight through the lobby, but John was out there. Most likely, he was alone as this was the last showing of the evening. There wouldn't be any crowd to blend into. She heard the swinging door into the auditorium open and shut, and she whimpered a bit, bouncing her legs on her toes.

It was too late. She had waited too long. She heard his footfall coming down the aisle. He was already back. He handed her a bottle of Coca-Cola with a red-striped bendy straw, and held his own soda, while balancing the largest serving of popcorn that the theater sold between his forearms. He dropped a large wad of paper serviettes into her lap.
"Lots of butter and salt. Eat up. We might need the energy for later," he said into her ear, bumping his finely-shaped nose against her cheek and blowing onto her neck.

*Did he really just say that? Might need energy?* She was a bit frightened, and her stomach flipped again.

"Yes. Uh yeah, o’ course. Energy," she replied, and then kicked herself for feeding his attempts at seduction, but this time she spoke in her best imitation of Cockney instead of her natural soft Gloucester accent. She cringed, knowing it sounded ridiculously fake.

Jane startled at the warm puff of breath against her skin and the fresh scent of his after shave.

"I haven't been able to take my eyes off of you since you walked down the aisle," he husked into her ear. "So I came up with a brilliant plant. I would join the pretty girl with the brown hair after the lights dimmed. And then I would charm her with my witty banter about the ridiculous plot, get to know her better during the second feature, and then whisk her away as soon as the lights came up."

Jane squeaked. John chuckled.

"Don't be afraid, I promise. I'm a complete gentleman. Well, almost."

Jane chewed her lip, and nodded, almost imperceptibly.

He stopped talking and focused on the popcorn. She timed her snatches of popcorn to coincide opposite his, so that their hands wouldn't get caught in the container simultaneously. But, he caught onto her ploy quickly, and synchronized his reaching to occur at the same time as hers. He brushed his fingertips against the back of her hand deliberately or would snatch the popcorn right out of her hand.

His final move was shockingly intimate. He took her hand, still holding a piece of popcorn, and drew it up to his mouth. He stole the piece right from her fingertips, and then ever so subtly, licked her fingertips clean, the tip of his tongue barely poking through his lips. Any voyeur would have thought he was simply kissing her fingers, which would have been forward far less intimate.

*He's trying to seduce me with popcorn,* Jane whimpered in her mind, feeling every single blissful brush of his tongue to her salty fingertips. The tub was finally empty, and the popcorn seduction stopped to Jane's relief, because she was becoming quite uncomfortable in her skin.

As soon as the popcorn was consumed, John started talking again, making hilarious observations, offering a running commentary of the horrible plot. She found that as long as he talked, she wasn't nervous, and loved focusing on his melodic voice and truly funny jabs. Before long, she found herself even replying, throwing witty remarks right back at him, and he in turn, genuinely laughed at her observations and snide remarks. The man behind them eventually moved with a very loud sigh, and a swift kick to the back of John's seat. John sputtered a laugh and looked over his shoulder as the annoyed moviegoer easily found an empty seat in the sparsely populated theater.

Through her peripheral vision, Jane could see John smile slyly as soon as Mr. Grumpypants was gone. He stretched his arms high overhead and feigned a yawn.

*Oh you've got to be kidding me,* thought Jane with an internal eye roll, *he's going to put his arm around me.* Even she, without any experience dating, could see the move coming a mile away, and her nervousness returned.

He turned and smiled at her, and she cleared her throat as his arm settled around her shoulder. Jane
felt him inclining his head, and she braced herself for the blissful sensation as his lips came to her ear yet again. "You smell good enough to eat," he husked into her ear.

She thought she jumped a foot when he started kissing her neck, dropping deliciously soft kisses in a line from behind her ear to her collarbone. He is unbelievable! she winced in her mind, knowing she shouldn't be enjoying it one little bit, that she should be furious. Instead, she found herself closing her eyes, relaxing her jaw, and inclining her head to the side to make it easier for him, not harder. But as quickly as he started, he pulled his lips away, and settled back into his seat.

She sighed in relief, and she saw his wicked grin. He heard me! He thinks I'm sighing because I liked it!

His overt advances ceased as he again focused his attention on the film. Periodically, he tapped his fingertips on her arm, keeping time to the onscreen music. The cinema was older and the ancient red velvet seats had not been updated with armrests. Other movie houses had installed them to curtail exactly what he had in mind. He pulled her closer into his warm side. The fine wool of his dark jumper felt lovely against her skin. While she never went so far as to rest her head against his shoulder, she did relax into the feeling of his arm around her.

During a long onscreen monologue by the evil time traveling Nazi scientist, Von Hauser, about the superiority of German science, John whispered into her ear once again. "Let's get outta here. This film is rubbish." The timbre of his voice was decidedly wicked.

Jane's eyes sprang open as he placed the tiniest kiss on the shell of her ear, just above her white clip-on earring.

"What do you say, hmmm? Leave with me?" he asked again, nuzzling behind her ear.

She turned her head and looked at him. He looked right at her. His dark eyes flashed, even in the dim light of the theater. She found that she couldn't say no. This man had a hold on her. She nodded slowly. A small smile quirked his full lips and he stood up, extended his hand to hers. She took it letting him assist her from her seat. Then he let her hand go, and together, up the aisle they went. A few eyes followed them. They undoubtedly had noticed that she had come in alone, and was leaving with a man.

I'm a pickup, she thought, ashamed. But he'll know who I am soon enough. He'll be disappointed and probably angry and it'll all be over, and I'll just go home and die of embarrassment when I walk into work on Monday to tender my resignation. I can always get another job. There are plenty of typist positions out there.

They quickly reached the light of the lobby.

"Hello," he said in his full voice, smiling warmly, his hands casually shoved into his trouser pockets.

"Hello," she replied, looking down, nervous and shy once again in the bright light of reality. "I um - I don't do - this, Mr. Smith, I'm not a - a pickup. I'm not loose," she said quietly.

"Of course not," he said genuinely. "I'm just very friendly." He winked. "Now don't hide that pretty face."

She blinked hard, heaved a sigh, straightened up, and looked at him squarely, challenging him to recognize her. She waited for the inevitable anger at her deception. But he didn't say anything. He simply extended his hand, and wiggled his fingers in invitation.
"Uh..." was all she could muster. "I don't know you very well, don't know you at all even. Haven't even had a date yet," she gulped nervously. "I don' 'old 'ands wi' strangers." She over-exaggerated the accent, and ended up sounding like Eliza Doolittle.

"Oh, right, right," he said, embarrassed. "A old fashioned girl?"

"Me mum brough' me up proper, she did."

"All right then, Rose Tylah."

The way he said her alias made her heart skip a beat or two.

"Let me do this right. So here I am asking you out on a proper date. Miss Tyler, would you do me the honor of accompanying me this evening? I happen to know a wonderful place with a brilliant floor show."

She looked at the clock on the wall. 8:42. "Well, uh, Bess is expectin' me back, she'll worry," Jane explained. "I shoul' be ge'in' 'ome to Bess."

"So ring her. Tell her you met a fantastic bloke with the purest of intentions, and that he is taking you to see," he waggled his eyebrows, "Bobby Darin at the Tiki Tiki Club."

"What?" she gasped forgetting Bess and her accent altogether. "Really? Bobby Darin?" She grinned brightly. "Yes." She nodded vigorously. The ponytail erupting from the top of her head bounced perkily. "I accept."

He offered his arm instead of his hand, and she looped her arm through his, and off they went.

oOo

The first thing John Smith noticed about the girl in the passenger seat was that she was genuinely impressed by his car, but this girl's attitude was nothing like Priscilla's. She was looking at the gizmos and gadgets on the dashboard, interested in what they did, not what they cost.

"So if I push this button, will the roof fly off and shoot off the ejection seat?" she asked, hovering her finger over the electric window toggle.

"Oh of course! So don't push it, because I would hate for this date to end for it ever started," he said with a grin.

"How fast can she go?"

"She?"

"Don't all blokes name their cars?"

"Sexy," he swallowed hard. "That's her name."

Jane clamped her lips together and stifled a laugh.

"What's so funny, Rose Tyler?" he asked, somewhat offended.

"Compensating much?" Her comeback surprised her.

"Oh, absolutely not," he replied, with a wicked half grin.
"Alrighty then, moving on," Jane flushed, "How fast can Sexy go?"

"I haven't had a chance to let her rip full out, but I hear there's an old racetrack up north. Maybe, uh, you'd like to come with me sometime? We could have a picnic. Make a day of it."

"You're already planning a second date?" she asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I am," he replied, smugly, aggressively taking off when the traffic signal turned green, shifting from first to second to third to overtake a slow moving VW Beetle.

Jane laughed as she felt the tug of the seat belt as they reached their destination with a screeching halt. "Bit of a bumpy landing there," she teased.

"Oi! I'm a good driver!" he defended himself with a smile.

He got out of the car and turned over the keys to the valet. Jane started to get out on her own, but he peeked inside, and shook his finger, with a grin. "My job," he said before hurrying around to help her out.

"Thanks. Looks busy. Ya' sure we'll be able ta' get a table?" she asked, her fake accent more natural now, as she saw people streaming in the front door.

"I have an in," he said with a grin.

"'S'handy," she said, crinkling her nose endearingly.

He opened the door for her, and guided her through, placing his hand at the base of her spine. Her breath hitched at the intimacy of the touch. He wondered if a man had ever touched her there before. He gulped at the implication. Perhaps she had never had a boyfriend before; maybe she had never even been on a proper date. In the bright lights of the cinema lobby, he had realized that she was a lot younger than he had originally thought in the darkness of the movie hall. She certainly wasn't underage, perhaps 21 or 22. He looked at her again noting just how beautiful she must be under all of that heavy eye makeup.

"'M not dressed proper," she said, looking around the room at the well-dressed women and men in dinner jackets and dark suits.

"You look beautiful. And see?" He pointed discreetly at several couples scattered throughout the restaurant who were dressed as casually as they. "Not everyone is dressed in formal wear. This place is very welcoming. Attracts all sorts. I'm wearing a jumper, day trousers and plimsols, and I promise you, no one will care. That is, no one who I care about caring will care." His tongue tripped lightly over the alliteration.

"That's a lot of caring," she teased.

John gulped hard when a hint of her tongue appeared through her teeth as she grinned.

She looked down at his white plimsols and smiled. "I think you look handsome. Plimsols and all." She blushed and turned away, surveying the club, wide-eyed.

"We make a beautiful pair, I'd say," he said, looking at her a bit hungrily, eliciting another, even more pronounced blush.

"Hello my favorite Scotsman who writes science fiction books!" Robert Nakamura approached his friend, arms wide open. "Two nights in a row?" he asked, raising his eyebrow, silently questioning the absence of Miss Bootkins. John knew exactly what he was asking and smirked.
"Rose Tyler, this is my friend, Robert Nakamura." John proudly introduced his friend. Jane thrust her hand out enthusiastically with a smile. "Nice to meet ya' Mr. Nakamura."

"Welcome to the Tiki Tiki Miss Tyler. I hope you enjoy your evening. Hope you two wore your dancing shoes, the band's hot tonight."

John motioned to his feet, and Robert smiled at the footwear. "I see you're ready."

"Always prepared, me," John replied and then turned to Jane. "Robert is the owner of this fabulous establishment."

"Oh! This place is brilliant, Mr. Nakamura. Been past the Tiki Tiki Club lots of times on the bus, but never thought I'd get a chance to actually come. Always liked those flaming torches out front. Very exotic. Makes ya' think something fantastic is goin' on inside."

Robert turned to John, winked and make the 'ok' sign with his fingers on the sly. "Your favorite table is available." He caught the attention of a waitress. "Louise, skip the Mai Tais for these two. Champagne instead!" Robert said with a smile. "On the house. To celebrate last night, my friend." He winked at John, who raised an eyebrow.

They made their way to the same table that John had occupied the previous evening. John frowned for a moment at the memory of the disaster, but then decided this was his favorite table, and it was time to reclaim it.

"Wha' happened last night?" Jane asked, guilelessly as she settled onto the banquette.

He thought for a moment, and then answered. "Someone has been pulling the wool over my eyes, and I gave her the boot." He enunciated the 't'.

John saw Jane pinch her lips, as if she were holding back a smile. This pleased him immensely. "So what keeps you busy? College? Work?" he asked. The Champagne was delivered, corked, and poured. He offered her a glass.

She accepted it, but set it down without taking a drink remembering last night's experience, knowing she needed a clear mind. "A shop. I work in a shop."

"Where?"

"Uh, Henrik's, you know, the department store?" It was the first place that came to mind.

"Oh I love Henrik's! Got this jumper there. Which department? Maybe I've seen you and didn't even know it, though I doubt I would forget you," he said.

"I work in the back office, er rather, the basement. I dress -- I dress shop window dummies. In the basement," she repeated.

"No wonder you have such good fashion taste. Is that dress Mary Quant?" He fingered the round Peter Pan collar.

"Uh, yeah," she answered surprised. "Though I wouldn'ta pegged ya' to be a fan of women's fashion," she said slyly.

"No! No no no. Absolutely not a fan of women's fashion. I find it essential to keep apprised of all fashion for my books. Time travel, you know. Need to understand the era, right? You know, skirts are about to raise scandalously high. Miss Quant herself is going to lead the charge." He said this as if it were a fact.
"Oh she is, is she?" Jane teased. "Can't imagine them gettin' much shorter. Won't catch me in one of them miniskirts."

"And why not? You certainly have the legs." He waggled his eyebrows suggestively.

"Well, we'll see how popular they are. Ya really think they could possibly get shorter? Already above the knee. Can't get much higher than that, now can they?"

John almost had a heart attack when she smiled, as a peek of tongue appeared between her pearly white teeth. "Uh..." He tore his eyes away from her mouth and back onto her eyes. "Just a guess. Been trending northward for some time now. Tell me some more about yourself." He switched the topic in an act of self defense.

"Well not much ta' tell really. Umm," she stalled and closed her eyes for a moment to formulate yet another lie. "Grew up on a council estate. Mum was widowed when I was a baby." The facts were coming to her too easily, and it rather surprised her how easy it was to lie. "Boring life, really. Same old same old, day in 'n out."

"When you held up my book in the cinema, you acted like you were familiar with my writing."

"Oh, I am! I love your books!" she gushed, genuinely.

"Really? Wow. Wouldn't have guessed. Which one is your favorite?"

"Hmm. Let's see," she thought for a moment tapping her finger on the table. "I really love your second book, Spectres of Christmas."

"I love that one too. Don't know how many times I read A Christmas Carol to get that story right. Why do you like it?" John asked.

"I suppose it's because Iris stands up to the Professor for the first time really, not that he isn't brilliant, but he needs someone to stop him, y'know? He'd be lost without her."

"You're right. He would be lost without his Iris." He propped his chin on his fist and looked at her like he was studying her.

"Wha'? Do I got somethin' on my face?" she asked, a bit self-consciously as he continued to look her over.

"You look familiar." He bit his lower lip in concentration. "Can't shake this feeling. I don't know. Seems like I've met you before." He continued to study her, his tongue pressed against the back of his teeth.

"Like you said. Maybe you saw me at Henrik's," she suggested, hoping he would accept this explanation.

"Yeah, yeah. Probably right. Still..." He shook his head. "So, would you like to dance?"

Jane's stomach dropped. She didn't know how to dance. "Oh. I'm terrible. Really, no rhythm at all. You'll laugh."

"Naw. It's not like we'll be waltzing or doing the fox trot. You can get away with making up the steps as you go. Come on, it'll be fun! And I'm a great dancer."

"I bet you are," she replied, surprisingly flirtatious. Jane eyed the glass of Champagne, picked up
the coupe, and drank the contents in one go, much to John's amusement. "Okay. I'm ready now."

He led her to the dance floor. Several other couples were already dancing to a medium tempo cover of a generic pop song. The horns were blaring, and the drums pounding.

"Oh the Watusi! I love the Watusi!" John proclaimed as he began to dance with abandon. He bent towards her while swinging his arms.

Jane leaned back, attempting to dodge his face and his flailing arms, but then realized that is exactly what the other dancers were doing. She quickly caught the hang of it and soon was grooving with the best of them, enjoying herself immensely.

"Knew you'd get the hang of it!" he said.

"Wha?" she asked over the din.

"You're getting the hang of it," he repeated in her ear.

The music stopped and a slower, but still rhythmically up tempo song began. Jane recognized the tune of this one.

"The twist!" she announced with a smile. "I know this one, heard it on Juke Box Jury. Then them actors from Compact had a competition with the blokes from Juke Box ta' see who could do the Twist better."

"Why don't you show me how well you twist, Rose," he said with an eyebrow waggle.

Jane blushed and then hesitantly, at first, started to dance very modestly, barely moving her hips. John followed at her pace, and soon, they were twisting riotously. The song ended, and Jane was laughing happily. John captured her with a single arm around her waist and guided her back to the table. Their Green Goddess salads were delivered soon after they sat down.

"I didn't order this," Jane commented, brow furrowed.

"Oh, it's a tradition. Everyone gets a Mai Tai and a Green Goddess salad. Well except us. We got Champagne, but if you would rather have a Mai Tai-"

"What's a Mai Tai?"

"Oh it's delicious! A bit of rum, a bit of lime juice, a splash of Curaçao and some other stuff. Name came when the inventor of the drink gave one to a friend who exclaimed, Maita'i roa ae! which is Tahitian for Blimey! That's good."

"You speak Tahitian?" she asked, amused.

"Oh, I've picked a bit up here and there. I love to travel," he said, remembering a very similar conversation the night before.

"Oh, I'd love to travel, but seems me feet are glued ta' London."

"Rose Tyler, if you could go anywhere on earth, where would you go?"

She thought for a moment. "Don't rightly know, too many beautiful places ta' choose from. Athens, Kuala Lumpur, the Grand Canyon, Florence, Easter Island..." She stared out into nothingness for a moment, and then blurted out, "Barcelona, that's where I want ta' go most. Barcelona."
"Why Barcelona?" he asked, curious. "Cos I've always wanted to go there too."

"I...I don't know really. You want to go there too? Maybe...I dunno...we could...go there together."

He cleared his throat nervously.

"Or...or not."

"I think I would love that." He smiled, and eventually took another bite his salad.

Jane looked down at the still uneaten salad, and frowned a bit. John sighed, worried that this was the start of a repeat of last night's constant complaints about food. But Jane plunged in her fork and took a healthy bite.

"Mmmm, this is good," she announced.

"For a minute there I thought you were going to say you didn't want to try it, given the look on your face."

"Sorry. Mum always said I scowled when I was thinkin' hard. Just never seen nothin' like it before. 'M pretty adventurous about food, really," she said between bites. "Was just tryin' ta figure out what was in it. 'S'probably mushed up herbs, that's what's makin' the cream green."

out what was in it. 'S'probably mushed up herbs, that's what's makin' the cream green."

John smiled, approvingly. "I know it's late, but I am a little bit hungry. Didn't eat much of anything before the movie. Gave my cook the night off. Would you like some dinner?" he asked handing her a menu.

"The popcorn was pretty filling, but I could do with some little nibbles, maybe," she suggested modestly, not wanting him to pay for a full meal she knew she wouldn't finish.

"We could split something...if...if you want," he suggested, a bit shyly, to his surprise. "That sounds good. How about you pick since you know what's good here, yeah?"

They ordered, and began to talk again, their conversation comfortable and easy. Jane brought up the subject of John's books. "How do ya' come up with the plots? They're so..." she looked up trying to come up with the right words.

"Timey wimey?" he grinned.

"I was going to say complex, but I guess that fits." Jane picked up something wrapped in a waxy green leaf. She unwrapped it to find steamed shrimp inside.

"There is this girl at work, she helps quite a bit. Very quick mind. Creative that one."

Jane nearly choked on a piece of pineapple. "So...so you have an assistant then?" she squeaked out.

"You all right?" he asked.

"Went down the wrong pipe." She patted her chest.

"Good, wouldn't want you fainting on me! Then again, I would have to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation," He waggled his eyebrows, and she blushed at the thought of his lips touching hers. John found her pink cheeks absolutely charming. It had been a long time since he had been around a woman who wasn't asking for something, or throwing herself at him. This girl was so different.

"But to answer your question, I did have an assistant, well, technically I still do I suppose. Will
have to replace her on Monday." He grimaced at the thought.

"Why?" she asked casually.

"She didn't work out," he said charitably, not wanting to appear ungentlemanly in front of his date.

"She isn't the one I was referring to anyway. There is this other girl. Can't have her though. I don't think she's senior enough. Wasn't on the list of names I was given to choose from."

This piece of information was interesting. She decided to probe further. "So then, how will you choose? From the list, I mean?"

"Best legs," he replied flatly.
Jane stopped chewing, and looked at him like he had just kicked a puppy.

He sputtered out laugh, unable to hold his face with the look of disapproval on hers. "You believed me, didn't you? Come on, I can see that smile," he goaded her.

She shook her head slowly, a wry smile coming over her face.

"I do like a nice pair of legs, though," he said with a wolfish grin. He ran his hand on her thigh. She cleared her throat and leveled a look.

"Cannae help a lad for tryin'."

Jane almost melted at the sound of his accent.

There was more laughter, more dancing and Jane was properly starstruck when Bobby Darin came to their table. Mr. Nakamura, who guessed that his friend's date would get a thrill, had made the request. The singer was happy to oblige the pretty girl with the perky brown ponytail in the orange dress.

The rest of the evening passed quickly, and before they knew it, only a few couples were left in the club. John and Jane were swaying on the dance floor, alone in their own little world. Bobby Darin was long gone, but the house band was playing one of his signature songs, Fly Me to the Moon.

"I think I should probably be gettin' home John. You know, I have been having such a good time, I never even called Bess, she's probably worried sick! What time is it anyway?"

"Nearly two," John said breathily into her ear, pulling her closer and breathing in the scent of her hair as they swayed slowly on the dance floor.

"What!" she wriggled free. "Oh fudge!" she blurted in a panic.

She hurried back to the table, grabbed her handbag, but forgot her book. She ran away without saying goodbye, leaving him dazed on the dance floor.

He collected himself, realizing that she meant that she was leaving right now. He saw that she forgot her book, and grabbed it before taking chase. "Wait! Rose! Wait!"

"I need a taxi, please," she said nervously to the valet. One happened to be passing by, and was successfully hailed. Hastily, Jane scrambled in.

"I work at Prescott Publishing!" He careened through the door, and yelled just as she climbed in. "Please Rose, please call me?"
Whether she heard him or not, he didn't know, but as the black taxi pulled away, he saw her looking out the back window at him, her hand against the glass.

"Cinderella forgot her glass slipper," he said, holding the book firmly in his hand, oOo

Jane snuck up the stairs on tiptoe. As quietly as she could, she unlocked and closed the door behind her. She stepped into the darkened lounge. The lamp came on. Bess and Niles were sitting on the couch. Bess's arms were crossed, and her jaw was set. Niles had a look of concern on her face.

"And exactly where have you been, Jane Smith?" asked Bess angrily. "I uh..."

"We were about to call the authorities, Jane." Niles said, firmly. In reality, he was five minutes away from calling Torchwood, at Bess's request.

"I'm sorry, I really don't ever do this. I...I met someone at...at...the movies and we...I mean he...he took me to dinner and dancing at-"

"You went out with a stranger? Someone you have never met before?" Bess screeched.

Jane started to open her mouth to tell her it was indeed someone she did know when Bess continued her lecture. "Oh Jane, I thought you of all people would know better than that. This isn't Chipping-Norton darling, it's London. And Niles could tell you all sorts of things. Believe me, you do not realize what happens in this city after dark. I promise, you do not want to be out alone in London in the middle-"

"Believe me, I know, and it was a huge mistake." The weight of her deception came crashing down on her. She dropped her purse and began to cry heaving sobs. Bess flew off of the couch and hugged her friend.

"He hurt you, didn't he?" Niles said angrily. "Who is he? Tell me who he is Jane, and I promise, he will be dealt with speedily and thoroughly." He picked up the receiver of Bess's cream colored princess phone and began to dial.

"No! No! He was a perfect gentleman," Jane sniffed, controlling her tears. "I think I'm just tired and...well...I feel stupid and foolish and dumb and awful. Can I blame my lack of judgment on the hair and makeup?" she asked, sobbing a laugh in a poor attempt to lighten the mood.

"Tonight, yes. Tomorrow, no. We're going to have a little talk, darling. Now you go wash off the warpaint and climb into bed." Bess gave her one final squeeze and sent her away.

Once Jane had cleared the room, and they heard that the water in the bathroom was running, Bess spoke. "You know what I think happened? A man finally noticed her and she was swept off her feet. She didn't know what hit her. She's never had a man pay the slightest bit of attention to her before. Told me so herself."

"Not that I blame the bloke Bess, she's a knockout. Not that she wasn't pretty before mind, but...wow Bess, just wow."

"Should I be worried?" Bess said teasingly as she put her arms around his neck.

"Absolutely not," he said sincerely. "Just giving credit where credit's due. I have an idea though. She shouldn't get caught off guard like this again. Why don't we set her up on a date? It would give her some experience in a controlled setting. We could double."

"Niles, that is a fine idea. I knew there was a reason I keep you around," she said before kissing
him soundly.

"You better stop, Bootsie. I can't stay. I need to get back to work. There was an odd occurrence in Hyde Park tonight. That's why I was so worried about Jane and came right over when you called to tell me she wasn't back home by midnight."

"What sort of occurrence?" asked Bess, suddenly worried.

"It's probably nothing, but a drunk in Hyde park reported that he saw a bright green shooting star. Happened around 11:45. Other reports have come in, too, and they all say it landed near Speakers Corner, but you know these things. A meteorite looks like it is a just a few feet away when it's really miles and miles out in the country."

"But...always the chance that it could be something more, right?" Bess whispered. Niles nodded and gave her one final kiss before leaving.

OoO

John hummed *Fly Me to the Moon* all the way home. He immediately picked up the phone and rang Jack.

"Yeah?" Jack answered, sleepily. John was a night owl, and had a habit of calling him at all hours.

"Jack, I've met her. I've met The One!" he gushed.

"You called me to tell me you got laid, didn't you?" Jack charged, angrily.

"Jack Harkness. You are crude. And no I did not," he protested angrily. "I called to share a very important and special thing, and you have gone and sullied it," John said with a pout.

"Sorry." Jack sighed dramatically. "Tell me all about it," he said with mock enthusiasm.

"Jack, I didn't even invite her back to my place. You don't treat a girl like this so casually. I'm telling you, this girl, she's different. It's like she stepped right out of a dream, Jack. Most beautiful brown eyes I have ever seen in my entire life. And smart! And nice! And funny and a great dancer even though she says she can't dance, and gorgeous legs and figure and absolutely nothing like that Priscilla woman. She could care less about my money, I could tell. Not a gold diggery bone in her body. And she reads my books, Jack! Knows them better than I do if that's possible! Grew up right here in London down on a council estate. Probably passed her a million times on the street."

Jack was now wide awake and on full red alert. This could be a problem. A big, fat, stinking problem. How was he going to talk his friend out of a dream girl? Jack's common sense dictated that she was probably too good to be true, but trying to convince John of this was going to be hard, he could tell already. John was smitten. He pinched the bridge of his nose. "So who is this Venus, Doc?"

John sighed, and then in a voice as giddy as a schoolboy in love for the first time, he told Jack her name. "Her name is Rose."
Chapter Six: John & Jane & Reality

Jack gaped, speechless at the revelation. Had he heard right? Had John said 'Rose'? He was silent for at least thirty seconds, afraid to breathe.

"Jack, you gonna say somethin' or did you fall back to sleep?"

Jack wasn't sure what to do. He couldn't really say, Aww, that's great Doc! You found the one woman in London in 1963 who happens to have the same name as your wife, who you don't remember by the way. And while this girl sounds like she just happens to be perfect for you, you work right down the hall from your real wife, and she doesn't know who she is, either. Knock yourself out. Have fun.

"Jack?" John asked again.

"Still here. What's her last name?"

"Tyler."

Now Jack thought he just might go into cardiac arrest and die, but he would come back to life of course, and then he would just have another one, and a then, possibly a third. He had to meet this Rose Tyler person. "So, when you gonna introduce me to the future Mrs. Smith?" he asked cheekily.

"Well, uh, it's funny." John laughed nervously after his voice trailed off.

Jack cringed when John didn't have a sarcastic comeback to his marriage jab. This was not a good sign.

John continued. "Thing is, she didn't give me her phone number or her address."

"Sorry pal, guess you're FUBAR." Jack sighed in relief.

"But she did tell me where she works," added John.

Jack sighed. "Where does she work?"

"Henrik's."

"Henrik's," Jack repeated, flatly.

"Yeah, Henrik's. Ya know, the department store. She dresses shop window dummies."

Now Jack wasn't worried, he was suspicious, and downright sure that something was going on. He thought through the evidence so far: name, council estate, Henrik's, shop window dummies in the
basement. He'd heard the story a million times. The Doctor met Rose in the basement of Henrik's when he saved her from dummies that had come to life.

Did Rose travel back in time to keep an eye on the Doctor? Was something going to happen that required her to return and correct his timeline? But that was extremely risky business, forbidden by the Time Agency, in fact. Further, he knew that Rose knew the grave danger of jumping into her own timeline. Surely she would never do that unless something so ridiculously bad was going to happen that would require her to return. Did that mean the Doctor was here too? Or did he send her back? Had she come on her own? Had the Family of Blood found the Doctor? Had the TARDIS sent her? Had she somehow broken through the reprogramming of the chameleon arch? And Rose was now playing the part of Jane? Keeping up the act that she wasn't quite herself?

Understatement.

The video message had explained that Rose was different now. Maybe because of the changes in her, she was even more powerful than the Doctor. Maybe she even knew how to fly the TARDIS. Maybe she was so different that the chameleon arch didn't work so well on her, and...

He stopped himself. He was letting his mind run away from him.

"Henrik's, yeah, I know the place. Why don't we go down there on Monday at lunch, and you can introduce me."

"Oh no. No how. No way. Absolutely not. There is no way in heaven or earth that I'm risking you putting your seduction whammy on her. Hi-I'm-Jack-Harkness. I am not letting you within a mile of Rose. You and your - your - sex voodoo. You won't be stealing my Rose."

"Your Rose, huh?"

"Yes!" he responded firmly.

"I promise John, no sex whammy," he said with a laugh. John's words were probably the same words that the black leather Doctor had been thinking the entire time Jack had travelled with them.

Jack thought of something else. "Hey, when do I get to visit your new digs? I bet there are lots of gorgeous women at your office just waiting for the ol' Harkness whammy."

"Um, come in on Monday. I'll give you the tour. Just stay away from that Priscilla woman. And Jane. She's too nice for the likes of you."

"Who's Jane?" he asked casually.

"Oh, haven't I told you about Jane Smith? She's the only one keeping me sane here. Knows my books inside and out. She's my muse," he said in a far off, dreamy voice.

Jack smiled. At least something was going according to plan in the midst of this madness. "Glad to hear it John. Hey, wanna go to the pub with Niles and me tomorrow?"

"Can't. I need to try and get some words onto paper. That unpleasant Priscilla woman made me lose an entire week of work, and chapter one is due on Tuesday."

"You didn't think she was too unpleasant when she was coming onto you," Jack reminded him.

"Well, that's when I didn't have my head screwed on tight."

"She gave you the old sex whammy didn't she?" Jack teased.
"That she did. But there was no serious messing around, Jack."

"Good. Glad to hear it. Now will you hang up already? I happen to like sleep." Jack ended the call, and then the telephone bell clanged again. "Awww, come on, Doc."

"Jack?" It was a confused Niles.

"Sorry, thought you were someone else. What's up?"

"Report of possible alien activity in Hyde Park."

"Where?"

"Speaker's Corner. I'll meet you at work."

"On my way." Jack dressed quickly and made his way to Torchwood.

oOo

On his way to his desk, Jack stopped by the computing department, and quickly filled out a research request. If someone named Rose Tyler had been born in the United Kingdom any time in the past thirty years, the Cray Supercomputer would find her. He'd receive the results in 24 hours. Next he stopped by the mess hall and picked up a ham and cheese sandwich and a soda. Who knows the next time he would be able to eat.

"Niles buddy, what do we have?" Jack said as he approached Niles's desk.

"Several corroborated reports of a green streak of light crashing into Hyde Park. An old vagrant told a cop that he had seen, to quote the report, 'ghosts coming out of a spaceship.' The cop thought he was drunk, of course, but called it in anyway. Was sent over to us."

"Who's on site?" Jack asked.

"Robbie's team. They've already filed a preliminary report." Niles handed Jack a thin brown folder.

Jack quickly read through the high level details and tossed it aside. He collapsed into his green vinyl chair and rubbed his tired eyes. The chair creaked as he swivelled back and forth a few times. "From this report, it's hard to know if it's just a drunk bum or a bona fide event. Energy readings?"

"Inconclusive," Niles replied.

"Let's head down and check it out ourselves."

Niles pulled his trench coat off of the rickety, wooden coat tree and followed Jack.

oOo

As soon as Jane fell asleep, she dreamed. As her dreams always began, John took her hand and commanded her to run. They found themselves outside of an old, decrepit castle at night. No, not a castle. A hospital, and it looked like something from a Saturday matinee horror film. Jane felt a cold wind blow, and then John was gone. She wandered the halls of the hospital alone, looking for him. Off in the distance, she could hear children calling for their mummies. She was both terrified and heartbroken for the children, lost and alone in the dark hospital.

Out of thin air, a little boy appeared down the corridor a ways. He was wearing old-fashioned short trousers, and couldn't have been more than four or five years old. It was hard to tell for certain, as a
wartime gas mask obscured his face. He stared at her, as still as a statue, and then he tipped his head. "Are you my mummy?"

She felt compelled to go to him, to comfort the lost little boy. She wanted to cradle him in her arms and tell him everything would be all right. She approached him slowly and reached out her hand to show him she was his friend.

"No! Don't touch him, and don't let him touch you!" The man in black leather lunged at her, and dragged her by the waist into a storage room. He locked the door frantically.

The room was dimly lit, but now, she was standing in the shadows, observing him with someone else. The blonde girl who wore her face was teasing the man in black leather. Familiar music from her childhood was playing on an ancient radio. The sound was tinny, so she couldn't quite place the song.

The blonde girl moved towards the blue eyed man, and they began to dance. He seemed to be nervous as he held her, holding her only a bit closer than arm's length, rigidly, as if he were afraid that she would break if he held her too tightly.

They spoke of dancing, but the conversation seemed to be about something else entirely, as if the dancers were afraid to admit to each other the real meaning behind their words.

"I've got the moves," he replied to a question Jane didn't hear.

"Then show me your moves," the blonde woman challenged boldly.

Jane finally recognized the music. It was Glenn Miller. *Moonlight Serenade*. But as soon as she recognized the song, the music stopped. Now she was in a strange room. Or was it a boat? An airplane maybe?

There was someone else in the room now. A shockingly handsome American pilot was leaning against a wall, watching them dance. He was grinning, and his arms were crossed. "Aren't you two cute," he said, cheekily.

The man with blue eyes continued to hold the blonde girl, swaying to unheard music. Jane wished the American would go away. She wanted the blonde girl to have the short-haired man all to herself.

Jane turned to the American, "Shhh," she whispered, putting her finger to her lips. "Let them dance."

As soon as she said the words, Jane felt *herself* in the arms of the blue eyed man. His embrace was no longer rigid, but tender and loving. It was comfortable and safe. She looked deeply into his ice blue eyes, and he leaned forward and captured her lips. The kiss quickly escalated, and soon she felt as if she was burning from the inside out. She felt him lift her into his arms, and carry her down a corridor into what she knew to be a bedroom. Her eyes were still closed, and his kisses became more and more fevered.

Gently, he laid her on the bed, stretching himself alongside. He stroked her face and she opened her eyes. But the blue-eyed man was gone. It was John Smith.

Jane awoke with a start, and looked at the clock. Five am. She switched on her lamp, opened the drawer of her bedside table, and pulled out the brand new notebook she had picked up Saturday afternoon. The paper crackled as she opened the notebook for the first time. She licked her pencil and wrote as fast as she could, putting everything that she could remember on paper. She scribbled
every feeling, sound, smell, and emotion. The last thing she did was draw a rough picture of the Blue Eyed Man and the little boy in the gas mask.

Twenty-five minutes later, she was cuddled under the covers, once again asleep. This time, her mind was at rest, her sleep, dreamless.

OoO

John stared at his bedroom ceiling. He couldn't stop thinking about Rose Tyler. In his entire life, he had never felt so whole. He felt complete. It was as if they were made for each other. She was flirtatious but not a tease, fun-loving yet serious-minded, adventurous, funny, and beautiful. Writing the character Iris Mason had been his literary attempt to describe his ideal woman. *Rose Tyler was Iris Mason in the flesh*, as if she had stepped off of the page and into his life. Only the color of their hair was different. It was uncanny.

"Rose Tyler..." He breathed her name as he drifted to sleep.

The dream started in the same way as all of his dreams had for the past month. The man in black leather took the blonde woman's hand, and told her to run. She smiled at him, her wide grin evidence of the pure joy of being together. John ran behind, following the pair as they ran down along the Embankment, but in the blink of an eye, he found himself underground in some sort of a vault or bunker. He watched as The blonde woman clung to a chain, and swung like a female Tarzan across the room.

John shouted, "No!" as she came perilously close to falling into a pit of molten lava, but as she landed, she knocked one of the shop dummies off its feet, and saved the man in black leather from certain death.

"I'm going to take you to Barcelona. They have noseless dogs!" the man grinned. The blonde woman smiled right back, and then looked over at John.

"You can't have her, she's mine!" John shouted at the man in black leather.

"Oi, pretty boy, don't you mean ours?" the man in black hollered back with a smile and a wink.

John found himself sitting up in bed, gulping for air. His striped pyjamas were soaked in sweat, and he was shivering, chilled to the bone. He swung his feet out to the side of the bed and decided to take a hot bath to collect his thoughts.

He had a new story that he needed to outline as soon as possible. Forget the old plan, this was going to be fantastic.

The Professor and Iris were going to go to Barcelona.

OoO

"Jane darling, may I come in?" Jane heard Bess's kind voice outside of her bedroom door. She was awake, but just barely. Her old fashioned, two bell alarm clock indicated that it was eleven in the morning. She couldn't remember the last time she slept so late.

"Sure, come on in," she answered quietly. She sat up in bed and pulled the covers up around her chest. Her ponytail was still in her hair, but now messily off center. She had been too tired to remove the elastic before collapsing into bed at 2:45.

Jane felt the bed dip as Bess sat on the edge of the mattress. She opened her mouth to speak, but
Bess spoke first.

"Before you say anything, you need to know that the most important thing is that you're safe. Niles and I were truly concerned for your safety, Jane."

"Thank you Bess. I can't tell you how sorry I am about causing you worry last night."

"Well, it's over and done, darling. Now why don't you tell me all about it."

"I think I'll need a cup of tea for that," she sighed.

Jane dressed while Bess prepared tea and something to eat. When the ladies were settled comfortably on the sofa with tea, Jane began her story.

"It all started during the first feature. The film had been playing for about ten minutes when I started to get the giggles. It was awful! I couldn't stop."

"I love a good comedy."

"It wasn't a comedy, it was supposed to be serious! I simply couldn't help myself. The writer of this movie should be banned from writing, it was that bad. So I was laughing, and," she gulped, "a man sat next to me. He was laughing too, and he leaned over and whispered into my ear. He told me I had good taste in films, and he also found it unintentionally hilarious. I recognized him—"

"You know him?"

"No," she hesitated. "But he is someone... of note. He told me his name, and asked me mine."

"Famous." Bess said. "I didn't expect that. Would I recognize him?"

"Yes. Definitely." At least she didn't lie about that, but she still hated this deception. She knew her friend deserved to know the full truth, but she couldn't bring herself to tell her it was John Smith, especially after the embarrassing Champagne-fueled revelations on Friday night.

"And because of who he is, I became even more nervous. Here's this amazing man sitting next to me. I'm just a nobody typist. So I gave him a fake name, Bess."

Bess raised a single eyebrow. "Wouldn't be the first girl to do so, but usually not for the reasons that you have given. What did you come up with?"

Jane blushed. "Well, they were giving away free copies of one of John Smith's books, and I looked at the back, and saw the name Iris Mason, and came up with Rose Tyler."

"Very clever," she complimented quickly.

"You figured it out that easy?" Jane asked, alarmed. "That's just great. Now I'm sure he'll suspect something, considering he's the-um-he's a big fan of those books."

"Why do you care if he figures it out, darling?"

Jane didn't answer.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry about it, Jane. I doubt he'll figure out your clever word play. I'm paid to be a word expert, remember?" Bess took a bite of her breakfast bun. "I started reading one Mr. Smith's books, by the way. I rather like it so far. He is quite good at storytelling."
"Which book?"

"Night of the Living Dolls," replied Bess.

"Oh, I love that one! He's just come through the Chrono Clash, and is the only one from his whole planet to have survived, and he is so very lonely, and then, completely by chance, he meets his brilliant Iris, saves her from the living plastic dolls." Jane sighed, starry eyed.

"Well don't give it all away!" Bess smiled at her friend. "You are a romantic, aren't you?"

"I suppose I am." Jane smiled up from under her eyelids.

"What happened next?"

"He started to flirt. A lot. I didn't know what to do, Bess. He was so handsome and was paying all of this attention to me when no one has ever even looked twice my way, except for well, that creepy Jimmy Stone back in school," she shuddered. "I sort of froze up I guess. And then he started whispering in my ear again, and then he kissed my neck and-"

"Right there in the theater? A stranger? He's a bold one, he is," Bess said a bit irritated, but then got a mischievous look on her face. "Was he good?"


"At least you know he has talented lips," Jane teased. "Go on."

Jane leveled a look, and gently threw the pillow at her. "I decided I had better get out of there, so I stood up to leave, and I guess he thought I was getting up to go get a snack, and he insisted that he buy popcorn for us. I tried to figure out how to get out of there, but before I could come up with a plan, he was back."

"Why didn't you just leave, Jane? No one had chained you to the chair."

"I suppose I was sort of liking the attention, to be honest."

"And his talented lips, too?" Bess added wickedly.

Jane ignored her. "So more flirting, more talented lips," she giggled. "More whispering in the ear and then he put his arm around me. He never tried to touch me improperly, mind, just his arm. Then he suggested we leave early. I guess I thought I could make my escape. Or maybe that he'd see me in the light, lose interest, and that would be that."

"He didn't, did he?"

"No. He didn't. I told him that I wasn't some pickup, that I had been raised properly. I made it very clear that I was not a loose girl. I thought for sure he'd give up then."

Bess studied her carefully. "He didn't lose interest, because he liked what he saw, Jane. And he probably liked that you stood up for yourself, too."

Jane blushed. "He said he wanted to be proper, so he asked me to go on a real date. He took me to see Bobby Darin at the Tiki Tiki Club." Jane smiled genuinely.

"At least he has good taste," Bess said approvingly.
"Speaking of good taste you should see his car." Jane bit her lip. "He has an Aston Martin, Bess. Just like James Bond!"

"You are kidding me!" Bess exclaimed.

She nodded her head and held up two fingers. "Scout's honor. Thing is Bess, once we left the cinema, yeah, he flirted, but it was like he saw me differently. Like I wasn't just some girl. We talked, I mean really talked at the restaurant about interesting things. I was smart and witty and it was almost like I was outside of my own skin, watching this different person who was brilliant and funny and always knew the right things to say. And then we danced." She sighed.

"Good dancer?" she grinned.

"Fantastic dancer. And I don't dance Bess. Too shy to accept any invitations growing up. But with him, it just came naturally."

Bess was quiet for a moment. "You were out awfully late Jane. And I hope you don't think this too personal a question, but did you go back to his place, and, you know...?"

"No! Absolutely not. He never asked. Never even suggested it! Most forward he got was when we were seated at the restaurant, and he stroked my thigh. I gave him a firm look, and that stopped. He seemed a bit embarrassed and then he said, 'Cannae help a man for tryin'."

"Scottish! Oh, I do love a man with a soft brogue." Bess sighed.

"There is something about that accent, isn't there?" Jane gushed.

Bess gasped. "Sean Connery! You went out with Sean Connery, didn't you?"

Jane collapsed into giggles and shook her head. "No, it wasn't Sean Connery. No one that famous."

"Well, I would say you got off very lucky, darling. He sounds like a decent enough fellow. And you won't tell me who he is?"

She shook her head. "I don't want to say." She remained firm.

"Will you at least tell me what he looks like? Is he handsome?"

"Downright gorgeous more like it," Jane growled. "Brown hair, dark brown eyes, a few freckles across his nose. They make him look like a little boy when he smiles, but somehow he is still completely grown up and masculine and well amazing. He's quite tall, very slim. He was dressed very nicely too. Wore an expensive fine wool jumper and casual trousers, perfectly tailored. Fit him like a glove."

"Looking that closely then?" Bess raised an eyebrow and half smiled.

Jane blushed. She took a sip of her tea and then cradled the cup with both hands, looking down into the amber liquid. "One last thing Bess, and I feel rather bad about it because it might send him on a wild goose chase. I told him I work at Henrik's as a shop window dummy dresser."

"That's rather specific. How did you come up with that?"

Jane laughed. "I have absolutely no idea. So, what do I do now?"

"Well, I say you chalk it up to life experience and a lesson learned. Something to tell your grandkids about. Or maybe not," she smirked, and then laughed. "Jane, you are a beautiful girl, but
you haven't allowed yourself to show the world the real you. You've hidden yourself away behind a façade of brown tweed and heavy glasses. So the moment you finally let yourself shine, of course you were noticed."

Jane frowned, and shook her head.

"And darling, you said it yourself. You didn't know what to do when he flirted with you. I wonder if there is such a thing as dating lessons!"

"Now that would be humiliating."

Bess's face lit up. "I have an idea. Jane Smith, Niles and I are going to do exactly that."

"You really don't mean dating lessons." Jane frowned.

"Yes! This is one of the best ideas I have had in quite a while, I believe. We are going to set you up on a blind date, but it will be a double with us. We will go someplace posh. What a wonderful excuse for us to show off our new chiffon evening gowns. And the men will wearing white evening jackets. It will be lovely. What do you think?"

"Uh..." Jane was speechless.

"Good. I knew you'd agree. Speaking of glasses, weren't you wearing them last night?"

"We weren't speaking about glasses," Jane smirked.

Bess laughed. "Of course we weren't. Tell me about your glasses."

"No. I didn't wear them. Truthfully, I only need them for reading or typing, so if he sees me walking down the street wearing them, he probably wouldn't even recognize me. If glasses are a good enough disguise for Clark Kent I suppose they're good enough for me."

"Jane, why wouldn't you want him to recognize you? From how you describe him, he sounds like a lovely man."

Jane frowned and picked at her fingernails. Bess batted her hands away to preserve her nail polish. "I'm not sure I don't, Bess."

The ladies spent the rest of the day paging through fashion magazines as the April rain pounded on the windowpanes. Bess showed Jane makeup tips that didn't make her look like Cleopatra. She also styled Jane's hair down, flipped at the ends, and pulled it off of her face with a thick white headband. Jane decided she would wear it to work the next day in this fashion.

Next, Bess manipulated it into an elegant and elaborate mass of curls pinned in place on the back of her head.

"It looks just like Audrey Hepburn's hair in My Fair Lady when she went to the embassy ball." Jane held a handheld mirror behind her head to get a better view of the of her head.

"I am good, aren't I?" Bess promised to do this for her when they went on their double date. Together they chose her debut ensemble for the following day at work, a blush-colored four button day suit with a waist length jacket, and a straight skirt that skimmed the top of her knees.

Niles stopped by for dinner and Jane retired to her bedroom to read, giving the couple some time to themselves. She went to sleep early so that she would be refreshed for the first day of the work
week. She had a dreamless night.

oOo

Jane dragged herself out of bed on Monday morning. She bathed, dressed, did her hair, drank her cup of morning tea, and ate her morning toast with little enjoyment, more out of habit than anything.

Bess called from her bedroom. "Wait Jane, let me see you!" catching her just as Jane was going out the door. "You're making your big debut today, after all."

Jane slowly turned around.

"Darling, why aren't you wearing that pretty ensembles we picked together yesterday?"

"Couldn't go through with it," she said shyly.

"And your hair? Why is it back in that frumpy old knot? Remember how I showed you yesterday? It wouldn't take but a minute to brush it out and flip the ends up a bit."

"I just can't do it Bess. I don't want the attention. What if someone from work recognises me from the cinema? I'd just die!" she whimpered.

Bess sighed. "Can you wait five minutes? I'll drive you in."

As an editor, Bess kept longer hours than Jane, and normally left home around 6:45, and sometimes worked late into the night, especially when a publishing deadline was looming. She also had her own car. The little red MG roadster had been a birthday gift from her father.

"I can wait," Jane replied quietly. Mindlessly, she picked at a slub in the brown tweed of her short, frumpy coat, and thought of the beautiful blush pink suit hanging neatly in her wardrobe. She looked down at her sensible shoes and imagined the lovely cream and white spectator heels she'd chosen last night. She studied her reflection in the gilt-framed oval mirror by the front door. With a sigh, she looked at her clothing -- a plain brown jumper worn over a white shirt that was buttoned up to her neck, a brown knife-pleated skirt that fell to her calves, dark tan tights, and those awful shoes she'd come to hate.

She slipped on her glasses and waited for Bess.

oOo

The ladies walked from the car park where Bess had a reserved spot to the office. Bess could see just how nervous Jane was, and wondered why, but didn't ask.

While waiting for the lift, they were joined by Daniel Higgins, Senior Editor.

"Good morning ladies." He spoke in a silky smooth baritone. The dark-haired man in the impeccable suit snuffed his cigarette out in the ashtray mounted on the wall next to the lift.

"Hello Daniel," Bess replied courteously and then turned back towards Jane.

"I don't believe I have met your friend," he prompted Bess.

Bess smiled coldly while Jane fiddled awkwardly with the handles of her brown handbag. The doors opened and they filed in.
"Hold the lift!" John Smith skidded inside with a bright grin. "Morning all!"

"Someone had a good weekend," Bess said.

Jane's stomach flipped, and her face burned red.

"I did indeed. Well, absolutely horrible Friday, but a fantastic Saturday."

This time, Jane's heart skipped a beat, and she dropped her handbag.

"I'll get -" John began.

"Allow me." Daniel leaned over and retrieved it. He handed it to Jane, bowing his head.

"So Jane, did your weekend turn out to be more pleasant than it started?" John asked in a friendly manner.

"Uh, yes." Jane pushed her glasses up her nose and stared straight ahead, silently begging that her Clark Kent disguise would hold up.

"I'll say it did," Bess added with a wink in Jane's direction.

Jane gave Bess a desperate, wide-eyed plea to stop.

"Mr. Smith, will you have your chapter for me tomorrow?" asked Daniel coolly.

"Absotively posilutely." John bounced on his toes confidently holding his hands behind his back. "But, funny thing. It will be chapter one of a new book."

"Come again?" Higgins asked.

Jane chewed on her lip as she listened to the awkward exchange.

"I'm putting The Time Eaters on hold, and starting afresh. It happens sometimes. You can't force a story, Mr. Higgins."

Higgins' jaw flexed. "We will be talk about this later, Mr. Smith. Hardly a conversation for the lift."

"Ere we are ladies and gen'lemen," Jim announced as the lift doors opened to the floor occupied by Prescott Publishing.

The occupants spilled out into the reception area.

"See you later, darling. Luncheon?" Bess reminded her.

"Yes. 11:45?" answered Jane.

"That'll be fine." Bess turned right towards the editing department.

"It was charming to meet you, Miss Smith. Perhaps I will see you around the office."

Jane nodded, and then headed towards the typing pool. Halfway to her desk, she heard Higgins' voice. "Expect a call from me, Mr. Smith."

"I look forward to it," John replied.
Jane smirked a bit at the sarcastic tone in John's voice. And then she heard his recognizable footsteps coming up behind her.

"Miss Smith. May we speak for a moment?" John asked.

Jane halted and turned.

"Uh, Miss Smith," John scrunched his face. "Are you still angry with me? I was very rude in Friday."

"No, I'm not angry," she replied shyly. "I don't hold grudges, Mr. Smith."

"Good. That's good. You don't seem to be the sort that would. Hold a grudge I mean." He bounced nervously on his toes and looked like he wanted to say something else.

"Is there something else that you need? I really don't want to be late," she looked at her watch, noting she had three minutes to be seated, or risk Miss Woods's evil eye.

"No, I suppose that's it." He smiled.

"Good luck with your new book," she added. "I couldn't help but overhear what you said in the lift."

"Between you and me Miss Smith, it wasn't going well at all. But I was a bit inspired on Saturday night."

Jane's face burned. Her neck prickled. Her belly became home to a whole flock of butterflies. She cleared her throat. "Inspired?"

"Amazingly, fantastically blown away with a new story that is begging to burst out of my brain. I'll be popping by your desk with a whole new set of questions. Are you ready to inspire me, Miss Smith?"

She looked down, and pushed her glasses up her nose. "Anytime, Mr. Smith." She curled her toes.

"I hope you have a really good day Miss Smith."

John walked away, but turned over his shoulder, looking back at her one last time with a friendly smile. But there was something more in that smile. He looked excited. And at that moment, Jane wasn't so sure she wanted her glasses to hide her identity after all.

oOo

"Miss Bootkins, I need to see you please."

Miss Eve Wood, Executive Secretary to Prescott Publishing's owner Archibald Prescott intercepted Priscilla as she strutted down the hall in her most provocative dress that was still acceptable for work.

"Of course Miss Wood." Miss Bootkins replied to her de facto boss. All of the girls in clerical positions reported to Miss Wood, the Queen Mother of Prescott Publishing. Everyone knew you didn't trifle with the woman who had been the executive secretary to whomever served as president of Prescott Publishing since 1944, including that unfortunate year when Archibald's crazy brother Lawrence nearly drove the company into the ground.

"Please come into my office."
"Yes Miss Wood." The blonde knew this didn't bode well. No one was called into Miss Wood's 'office,' which was really just the luxurious desk outside of Mr. Prescott's executive suite, unless something very good or very bad was imminent. She'd already been here for the good, being named John's assistant. She knew that this was going to be bad.

"Miss Bootkins, you will be returning to the typing pool effective immediately."

"What?" she screeched.

"Miss Bootkins, you will lower your voice," Miss Woods said calmly. "Betty Anderson has been named as your replacement."

"Betty Anderson is the stupidest girl in the typing pool," Priscilla said spitefully.

"I would watch your tongue Miss Bootkins. I could easily send you to the mailroom, or just show you the door," Miss Woods stated calmly.

Priscilla bit back any more words.

"Your personal items are at your previous typing station. You may leave now."

Priscilla Bootkins stood up. She looked the picture of composure on the outside, but inside she was fuming. She calmly walked down the hall, fists and jaw clenched. She arrived at Jane's desk, leaned in closely so that the women were almost nose to nose.

"You will pay for this Jane," she hissed.

The venomous threat both confused and paralyzed Jane. As quickly as the woman staged her silent attack, she retreated, leaving a dumbstruck Jane, fingers glued to the plastic keys of her electric typewriter. She shook off the feeling of dread and nervously resumed her task.

Five minutes later, Betty Anderson was standing at Priscilla's desk, holding a box of her personal items.

"Just want you to know I didn't ask for this Prissy. Please don't hold it against me?" Betty asked.

"No. You aren't the one to blame." Subtly, Priscilla cast her eyes toward Jane.

"Well, bye! Well, not bye, but you know what I mean. I won't see you here every morning, but I'm just down the hall if you want to pop in and say hello or anything," Betty rambled.

Priscilla was no longer listening, but as Betty walked away Priscilla stared daggers into the back of the innocent woman.

Jane tried hard not to look, but she simply couldn't resist. She pinched her lips to avoid a smile when she noted that Betty did indeed have really great legs. Her stomach flushed warmly at the memory of the touch of his hand on her thigh and she closed her eyes for a moment savouring the memory. She was quickly brought back into the present at the sound of Priscilla's hard-edged voice.

"Do you know why I hate you, Jane Smith?"

"No, I haven't the faintest idea," Jane answered, her voice quivering ever so slightly.

"John is finished with me, Jane Smith, both as his assistant and his girlfriend, because I'm not fantastic."
John & Jane & Monday

Chapter Summary

John is desperate. Jane is brave. Priscilla is devious. Daniel is dangerous.

Chapter Seven: John & Jane & Monday

For the past twenty-five minutes, John Smith had been desperately trying to convince Miss Eve Woods to break her precious protocol and allow Jane Smith to be his assistant. The first chapter of this new book was due in less than 24 hours, and since he had joined the Prescott Publishing Family of Fine Authors two weeks prior, he had been unable to arrange his copious thoughts into a single coherent paragraph. He had plenty of ideas, but could make no sense of them.

And now he had this new idea the the simply had to write. This story was screaming in his head to be told.

John worked out the numbers. My books average 100,000 words, and each chapter runs about 5,000 words. If I can crank out 625 brilliant words an hour, and if I have eight full hours of time with an assistant, maybe I can get a rough draft done today.

He hadn't event begun to think about getting the draft to the typing pool. But instead of writing, here he was wasting time at the desk of the formidable Miss Eve Woods, Executive Secretary to the President of Prescott Publishing and Queen Bee of the clerical staff. He had already lost almost twenty-five precious minutes fruitlessly trying to charm the woman. He could feel the clock ticking in his head and he was beginning to feel a bit sick to his stomach from the pressure.

"Please Miss Woods, I'm begging you on bended knee. See?" John went to his knees and clasped his hands together, contrite. "Please? Please Miss Woods? I really, really, really need Miss Smith. She has the distinct advantage that she has actually read my books and even enjoys them! She bright and quick and-"

"Rules are rules, Mr. Smith. It simply isn't fair to the other girls in the typing pool, and I don't care how much of a signing bonus Mr. Prescott gave you to show you how important you are to the health of this company. There is nothing you can say that will convince me to change my mind." Miss Woods challenged him to a staring contest. "Now you need to pick from these three ladies. Hurry up, then."

"But Miss Smith is-"

"Haven't you learned your lesson? I think I know what I am doing Mr. Smith. Believe me. It is better for me to decide who is best for you. I have been a part of the clerical workings of this fine establishment for nearly thirty years, and I have been in charge of the clerical staff for twenty of them. You already deviated from my protocol when you went above my head and requested Miss Bootkins. I will overlook that indiscretion, given it was your first day. See how well that went? I could have saved you a lot of pain, Mr. Smith. I could have told you that Priscilla Bootkins was wholly unsuitable for the position."
"You don't need to remind me, thank you very much," he said with a bit of a sneer as he returned to his standing position. John then turned on the charm. "What is that lovely fragrance? Is that your perfume, because I'm —"

"Really now, Mr. Smith. I thought you would be more suave that that, given your reputation as a ladies' man. Is that all you've got? What are you going to say next? That my eyes remind you of the stormy North Sea? Your flattery won't work on me. I'm too old and too jaded," she countered.

"Well they are very fine eyes," he said with a wolfish half smile leaning forward a bit.

"Do you really think so?" She placed her hand over her heart, batted her eyelashes coquettishly, and then smirked. "Pick from these three." She tapped the list with her finger twice. "I would suggest Betty Anderson. Most senior, and least," she cleared her throat, "distracting."

He'd harrumphed, but kept his gentlemanly composure as he left.

John chose Betty Anderson because her name was first alphabetically, and for that reason alone. He didn't even look at her legs as he walked past her desk.

oOo

There was a knock on the doorframe and Daniel Higgins, John’s editor, poked in his head.

"Good morning, John. I have to say I’m a bit confused by your announcement this morning in lift. From what Miss Bootkins had told me, the two of you were working quite well together on the book," he lied.

John tugged on his ear.

"But this morning, I was told that you requested a new assistant. “This is highly irregular, Mr. Smith. I’ve been patient with your demands up until now—“

“Daniel, I know what I’m doing. I’ve written how many wildly successful books now?" John strained to remember, but he couldn’t pull the number from his memory.

“Fifteen,” Higgins answered.

“Fifteen. And every single one of them worked because I was inspired, not because I was forcing the words.”

“All right then, I’m going to trust you with this, how can I put it? Change in direction. But only because you have been so successful until now. But you will holding your feet to the fire, John. You will stay on schedule, and that schedule is going be aggressive.”

John saluted sloppily. “Yes sir, Mr. Higgins, sir.”

“So, how’s this inspired chapter one coming along?"

"Oh, fine. Fine and dandy. Fine as frog's hair. Fine as -- well it's coming along. Will definitely have it to you by tomorrow afternoon."

"I need it tomorrow morning, John," he corrected him with a cold smile.

"Righty-o," John replied with false cheer. "Morning it is. How does 11:30 work for you?"

"Morning means before nine am in this office. I need it no later than that, Smith."
John nodded as Daniel left.

Betty Anderson was short and round with poorly dyed ginger hair and a youthful face. Her horn-rimmed glasses peeked from under the curled-under fringe of her ridiculously teased bubble-cut. Her heavily applied red lipstick framed a mouth that was prone to nattering on and on and on. People assumed that she wasn't the brightest woman in the typing pool. This wasn't the truth at all. However, her constant rambling about nothing in particular certainly didn't help her case in the least.

Betty was also prone to daydreaming, and now that John Smith had joined Prescott, the problem had grown exponentially. However, she was senior typist, and a good, reliable employee. She was rarely sick, and never called in with false maladies. She wasn't a gossip, wasn't cruel, and wasn't petty. She never sought promotion, nor was it ever offered. She was a cog in the wheels of the company, and she never required grease, but had simply turned day in and day out for the past eight years.

She burst through the door of John's office. "Oh Mr. Smith, I'm so excited to be working for you. Thank you, thank you, thank you for picking me!" she gushed, bouncing up and down and giggling like a sixteen year old. However, she was pushing thirty and it wasn't endearing.

From the moment she opened her mouth, with its poorly applied and too-bright lipstick, John knew that today was not going to be a good day for writing. "Well, isn't this -- jolly," John said under his breath before he sighed and returned to his position, staring out his window, hands deep in his pockets.

"Well, let's get cracking on this chapter shall we?" John rubbed his hands together briskly, turning around. "Chapter one, opening paragraph. The first words need to grab the reader. The Professor and Iris are off to—"

"Oh. You're ready to dictate? I'm not ready yet." Methodically (slowly) Betty advanced the paper tape through the roller. She adjusted the placement of the little machine on her desk, nudging it left right forwards backwards until it was perfectly centered. She adjusted her glasses and shifted in her chair. Lacing her fingers together, she stretched them, cracking her knuckles. And then she shrugged her shoulders and cracked her back. Only then did she place her fingers on the truncated keyboard, poised to record his words.

"Are you ready?" John asked.

"Oh! I almost forgot to do my breathing exercises. How could I forget my breathing exercises? Just last week, I read an article in Woman's Weekly about breathing exercises. Did you know that oxygen feeds the brain?"

"Yes, I do believe I know that fact." John pinched the bridge his nose.

"And did you know if you breathe six times before a task, you will be more successful? And it works. It really does. You should try it." She drew in her first breath, long and loud. And the exhalation was even louder as she pushed the air slowly through her teeth. A minute passed, ten seconds for each round of whooshing and hissing air, and finally she positioned her fingers on the stenograph. "All right. I'm ready."

"Fine." John sighed. "The Professor and Iris are off to Barcelona, the planet not the city."
“Barcelona? I didn’t know that was a planet. Isn’t that in Italy? Sounds so exotic and romantic.”

"It's fiction, Miss Anderson. And no, Barcelona is not in Italy, it is in Spain. But this is not Spain we are talking about, it's outer space," he reminded her with a toothy, fake smile. "So, off to Barcelona, and here we go."

He paced and began to dictate. "Barcelona, the planet not the city, was known throughout the galaxy for many things including, but not limited to, dogs with no noses, ancient pastel-colored castles, and bright, cheery villages hanging from the hillsides. But foremost in the Professor's mind at this moment was his unrelenting craving for curry, and the city state of Standa? Smelda? Leave it blank, we'll come back to that," he said in his rapid fire way.

"Dot-dot-dot was known for the most fantastic curry that the Professor had ever had the pleasure of partaking. Since he had been promising to take Iris Mason to this planet for a year now, this unrelenting craving was a perfect excuse to do so. It also helped that dot-dot-dot was peaceful, charming, boasted pleasant weather, and was therefore the perfect place to rest after a particularly harrowing adventure that had ended with them being chased by a trio of pitchfork-wielding farmers in 14th century Ireland."

"Mr. Smith, what do you mean by 'dot-dot-dot'? Is that a code for something science fictionish?" Betty asked, confused.

"Uh, no, I haven't come up with the name of the city yet. Dot-dot-dot means I'm going to come back to it."


"Fine. I will say fill-in-the-blank instead of dot-dot-dot from now on." He squeezed his eyes shut.

"So this planet, they have dogs with no noses?" She stared at her notepad. "Really? No noses? How do they smell?"

"They don't!" He laughed at his own joke and then his laughter trailed off when he saw Betty staring at him blankly.

"I don't get it. Are they Martian dogs or something?" she asked, completely without understanding.

"Well no, not Martian, Miss Anderson. Barcelonan. And they don't smell. Never mind." He pulled his palms down his cheeks, stretching his face.

John ended up trying to dictate that same paragraph for twenty more minutes, until he could no longer take her constant interrupting. He looked at the clock. It was now 10:13. He felt like he was the Professor, and that Daniel was one of those pitchfork-wielding farmers chasing him down, and that Betty Anderson was the one aiming her bow and arrow at his back.

He dropped down hard onto his sofa and held his heavy head in his hands. Her nasal-pitched voice had started to bring on the beginnings of a headache.

"Miss Anderson, why don't you just sit there and… Here. Take this. I need to think." He tossed her a copy of his first book, Night of the Living Dolls. "Maybe it will help if you are familiar with my characters. I'll just lie down here on the sofa and work it out in my head before we get anything on paper. That's exactly what I need to do. Think deep, thinky thoughts."

"Whatever you say Mr. Smith. I will just sit here with this book. Just let me know when you are ready for me. I'll be right here. Not going anywhere Mr. Smith.... I....... will... be... right......
She stopped talking, to his relief, but then started to hum no tune in particular as she tapped her pencil rhythmically against the wood of her stenographer's desk as she presumably read.

He must have drifted off to sleep because he jumped when she spoke loudly and he saw that half an hour had passed.

"Mr. Smith, you awake? You're snoring. Thought I'd better wake you up. I'm ready and excited to hear all about this Teacher fella you write about, and his assistant. What's her name? Daisy? Such a cute name. Cute as a daisy. I bet that's why you named her Daisy innit? 'Cos she's so cute?"

"Her name it's-- it's not Daisy. Didn't you read any of the book?" he asked, his voice high pitched and desperate. He looked at the clock. "10:42," he muttered.

"Oh! You wanted me to read the book? I thought you gave me the book as a present, being this is my first day as your assistant and all."

John squinted at the woman for a moment. "Never mind. Just-- just-- if you please, I would appreciate it greatly if you would stop talking. I'm trying to think." He wasn't unkind with his words, simply straightforward.

"Oh, so sorry Mr. Smith. I'll just sit here quietly and," she whispered, "read."

Betty opened the book. She licked her finger, and went on to scratch the paper each time she turned a page. Once in a while, she clucked her tongue. And she gasped a few times. These high pitched squeals were always followed by tittering laughter.

"Oh, he's so naughty, that professor is!" she said.

John didn’t answer. Soon, a fruitless morning had passed, and he could no longer stand to be in the same room with her. He sprang up from the sofa.

"Miss Anderson, why don't you take a break and bring us back some tea and biscuits. What do you say? There's a bakery around the corner. Here's a fiver. Buy biscuits for the typing pool, too. No, may as well treat the whole floor while you're at it." He pulled a second five pound note out of his wallet and shoved it into her hand.

"Sure thing Mr. Smith. I'll be back in two shakes of a donkey's leg. Or is a dog's leg? Hmm. Donkey? Or dog?"

"Dog. Buy lots and lots and lots of biscuits," he commanded. "Please?" he added as an afterthought.

She meticulously smoothed out the notes and opened her pocketbook with frustrating fumbling fingers. Finally, she slipped the perfectly flat pounds inside. She stood up, slowly slipped on her raincoat. From some secret place, she produced a clear plastic rain bonnet to cover her comically large, teased hairstyle. She tied a perfect bow under her chin.

John started to feel his first bit of relief in two and a half hours. But then she opened her mouth again.

"So, do you want an assortment or all the same kind, 'cos at this time of day, I'm not sure that I will be able to get all the same kind. I'm sure they'll be picked over by now, so I'll—"

"Assortment!" he said a bit too loudly as he put his hand on her shoulder blade and guided her out
the door. "Thank you very much and off you go. Don't worry about the time. Might as well take your lunch break while you're at it seeing as it is already 11:15. Cheers."

He closed his door quietly and locked it with a groan. He leaned back on it and hit the back of his head several times in frustration. The phone rang, and he sauntered over and picked up the receiver.

"Smith here," he answered quietly.

"I have a Mr. Harkness for you on line one, sir."


"What's wrong, Doc? I thought you'd still be surfing the Tiki Tiki wave of love this fine Monday morning," he said, trying to soften the blow of the information he was about to share.

"Oh yes, of course I am. Been a bad morning. Sorry. I'm planning on heading over to Henrik's in a few minutes in fact—" John said, perking up a bit.

"Well, I may as well save you a trip in this rain. I took the liberty of heading over there this morning first thing and—"

"Jack Harkness!" John growled, "You promised you'd stay away from her!"

"John, I'm sorry to break it to you, but there is no Rose Tyler employed at Henrik's."

"What?" John asked, quietly.

"Sorry John, I think you've been given the old fake-a-roo, buddy boy. In fact, there is no one with the name Rose Tyler near the age or description you gave me in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. Not in New Zealand, Canada, Australia or India either, although the Indian records are a bit dodgy these days. But, I haven't heard back yet from my contacts on Bermuda or the Virgin Islands." Jack sighed dramatically. "But I think you've been duped."

"Why would she do that?" he asked, genuinely confused.

"There are loads of reasons. Maybe she's already seeing someone, maybe she's married even. Or she just didn't like you. It is possible, you know. Unlikely, but possible. And there is also the possibility she is a gold digger."

"I don't believe it, Jack. No way! There must be an explanation."

"Face it John, she put the whammy on you. Do you still have your wallet?"

"Jack!" he hissed, angry again. "She didn't roll me for a few pounds."

"Just a mo'. Got another call." John firmly pressed the flashing red button labeled 'line two'.

"Smith here."

"Um, hello. Is this John Smith the science fiction writer?"

"Why, yes it is." He immediately recognized the voice on the other end of the line.

"This is Rose, from the movies on Saturday night."

"I'd recognize your voice anywhere, Rose from the movies on Saturday night... with the beautiful
brown eyes." He hummed happily.

"Um, first of all, I want to apologize for somethin'. I - I don't work at Henrik's. I lied. I - I got scared and made it up."

"Why'd you get scared, Rose?" he asked genuinely concerned, "Did I do something to frighten you? I never meant to."

"Oh no, not at all. You were an absolute gentleman. Well, almost. Enough at least," she laughed. "But you - being a big writer 'n all, 'n me just a — a girl who grew up in a council flat, out on a Saturday night in the posh part of town."

He could hear the nervousness in her voice.

"I felt sorta in over my head, y'know? And well, I needed to make somethin' up fast and that just, sorta, popped inta my head. Came outta one'a your books, actually," she laughed nervously.

John sighed, relieved, but then he scowled.

"From one of my books?"

"Yeah, sure, ya' know, Night of the Living Dolls."

"Oh, right!" He made a happy sound in his throat. "You are very creative Rose Tyler. So if you were so nervous, why'd you call me back?"

The line was quiet, but he could hear her breathing, like she was hesitating to speak. "I wanted to see you again. I had such a wonderful time, and I really — I like you."

"I'm so glad Rose! I had a brilliant time too, and I was really hoping you'd call!" John noticed that line one had ceased flashing. Jack had apparently given up, and he smiled triumphantly. He'd been right about Rose after all. "What do you say to joining me for a picnic this weekend? In the country?"

"That'd be nice. I'd like that very much. Where should we meet?"

"No, no, no. None of this meeting business. I want to do things properly, remember? I'll pick you up."

"No!" she said forcefully. "I mean no thanks," she restated her answer in a soft voice. "Y'see, I live with my old maiden aunt. She's very old fashioned and doesn't believe in datin'." She cringed at yet another lie coming out of her mouth.

"How does she expect you to meet someone if she doesn't believe in dating?" he asked.

"Arranged marriage?" She cleared her throat nervously before moving on. "Hates how I dress too. Thinks them short skirts I wear are wicked. Can't imagine what she'll think if your prediction about hemlines comes true."

"Oh, but those clothes are wicked and they make me think all sort of evil thoughts," he flirted, his voice low. "You could wear a bin bag and I would think wicked thoughts."

"Wicked thoughts?" she choked out.

"Oh yes. However, I promise I'll try to be a good boy on Saturday. But, it doesn't mean I won't be thinking wicked thoughts. Cannae help a lad," he added. "Saturday then? Where does your aunt
live. Generally speaking?"

"Um," she scrambled. "Aunt — uh — Elizabeth, Bess that is, is rather well-off. She's from Dad's side of the family. Lives in Chelsea."

"Really? I live in Chelsea too!" he said. "But I thought you said you lived in a council flat?" he cleared his throat.

"I only moved in with her on Friday," she said.

"So how will you struggle free from the clutches of your maiden Aunt Bess?"

"Aunt Bess lets me have Saturday afternoons and evenings free. Rather, she told me that I can have them off. I make up a cold supper, I mean — I'll put it in the icebox so she doesn't need me the entire day. I usually do marketing then, see a movie or go for fish and chips."

"She's really not as bad as I make her out to be."

"Sounds brilliant, so she won't mind we make it 12:01. How does that sound?"

"12:15?" she protested with a laugh. "Sounds a wonderful but impractical. How 'bout 12:15?"

He heaved a heavy sigh. "All right, I suppose I can wait that long. Do you know Paulsen's Bakery?"

"Sure. They bake the best banana muffins."

"I knew I liked you from the minute I sat down next to you in that blessed cinema! Their banana muffins are very good. I'll pick you up there. 12:15 on the dot. Not a minute later, Rose Tyler, or I'll have to come and find you!" He wagged his finger in the air.

"I can hardly wait."

"Me too," he gushed. "Uh, can I at least call you between now and then? Or does Aunt Bess have a thing against the demon telephone as well?"

Jane laughed. "No, she's fine with the telephone. Now the telly on the other hand," she joked.

"So, do you trust me enough now to give me your telephone number?"

Without thinking, Jane rattled off the telephone number to the flat she shared with "Old Maiden Aunt Bess." It wasn't a lie.

"I will burn this number into my very brain Rose. Nothing will make me forget. So be ready for an onslaught of phone calls."

"Bye," she said.

John heard the click, grinned, and then pushed the button in rapid fire succession to get a new dial tone. "I got her phone number!" John dialed the number his dream woman had given him. He was pleased that it did, indeed ring, and no one from a fish and chip shop answered, neither a hospital nor a school or some other non-Rose-ish person or place. However, no Old Maiden Aunt Bess answered either. He didn't care. He had a date with Rose on Saturday and he was over the moon.

John dropped into his chair. He'd been on his feet the entire conversation, walking on air. But now he had to face the problem at hand: chapter one.
The moment she ended the call, Jane gasped. She’d made a monumental mistake. “I gave him Bess’s phone number.” She groaned and rested her forehead against the cool, damp glass. The rain had picked up significantly, and she hadn’t worn a coat when she’d run out to make the phone call before her promised lunch with Bess. An elderly woman knocked on the glass, indicating she needed to use the phone. Jane mouthed, 'sorry' and opened the door.

Within moments leaving the phone box, she was drenched. She sprinted down the pavement and lunged into carousel door of her office building, heading straight into the ladies toilet and lounge on the ground floor to dry off. Thankfully, the building was rather elegant, and had a stack of cloth hand towels instead of the more common paper. She patted her hair dry. Rather miraculously, the tight knot on the back of her head was still in place.

“Oh Jane, you stupid, stupid girl,” she said out loud to herself as she looked in the mirror and leaned heavily on the marble counter.

One of the marble toilet stall doors swung opened, and out walked Priscilla Bootkins.

Jane gasped, startled at the sudden presence of the woman.

Priscilla joined her at the marble countertop, set down her handbag purposefully and washed up. "Hello, Jane dear. You know, you really shouldn't put yourself down like that, calling yourself stupid. I'm sure whatever mistake you have made can't be all that bad. You don't strike me as the sort of girl who does anything risky.” She pulled a golden tube of lipstick from her handbag and carefully applied the deep red color to her lips. Once satisfied with her work, she turned to Jane.

"I'm sorry for my behavior this morning, Janie. I hope you don't take anything I said too personally," she cooed. "I had a dreadful weekend, and well, it isn't like the whole office doesn't already know," she waved her hand casually. "John ended things between us both personally and professionally." She examined her varnished fingernails. "I took it out on you. You were the most obvious one, being right there. But, it's obvious that you could never ever be the wedge that drove us apart. You just don't have it in you, do you? So blaming you was rather unfair."

The thinly veiled insult hurt just as deeply as any overt statement would have. Jane swallowed hard and looked down at her sensible shoes. She could feel Priscilla examining her from head to toe.

"Jane sweetheart, I hope I'm not overstepping my bounds, but you do know that you won't catch any flies unless you put out some honey. You really should buy yourself some new clothes and think about a new hairstyle. It would do you a world of good. I bet you are hiding a darling figure under all of that hideous tweed."

Jane's head snapped up, and she scowled. Without saying a single word, Jane left the ladies room and ran for the lift, relieved to find that Priscilla Bootkins hadn't followed her. She heard the doors of the lift slide open. Without paying attention, Jane lunged forward, and ran headlong into John Smith who was walking out. He grabbed her by the arms to steady her and smiled brightly.

"Well, hello there! I was looking for you. The receptionist said you headed downstairs. Oh! You're drenched!"

"I got caught out in the rain. Needed some fresh air," she replied. It was partially true. She had needed fresh air. She had felt suffocated by Priscilla's angry stares and whispered threats all morning long.
"Wh — why d — did you need t — to see me, Mr. Smith?" she chattered.

"You're freezing! Here. Have my coat." John unceremoniously dropped his umbrella, shrugged off his trench coat, and then slipped it over her shoulders.

Jane wasn't sure if her shivering was due to her run through the rain, the run-in with Priscilla, her running into John, or her stream of running lies that would inevitably catch up to her.

She pulled the coat around her more tightly, feeling rather small inside of the long tan coat. She was unsuccessful in her attempts to ignore his lingering scent on the collar, and the latent warmth from his body left within the fabric. She was quickly warming to the core.

"Are you doing anything tonight?" John asked a bit shyly, pushing his hands in his trouser pockets.

Her eyes sprang open from behind her glasses and her stomach tumbled.

"The thing is," he removed his hands and smoothed his hair, "I am in a huge jam, Jane. Ha! Jane jam. Jam Jane. Jam is quite good actually and so are you! Sweet like jam." He smiled fondly.

Jane chewed her lip.

"Anyway, I am really struggling with my chapter, and it's due tomorrow and I was wondering if you wouldn't mind — I sort of hate to ask, well, no I don't hate to ask because you were my first choice for assistant, but crabby old Miss Woods wouldn't release you, so I'll pay you for your time...

"Would you stay late and help me? You seem to be the only person here who has even read my books. You understand the characters and the way their minds think. It's like you are inside Iris's head. Inside the Professor's head too. It's uncanny!" He looked off in the distance for a moment and then back at her.

"In fact, the other day, I told a friend of mine about you. You're my muse! Did you know that? My muse. So what do you say? Help this desperate old man? I have to get this chapter done by nine tomorrow morning, and if I can at least get an outline done, which I know would be a snap with the help of my muse, then I could go home and bang it out on my typewriter. I'm a rather good typist. Did all of my own typ..."

"I'd be happy to help. But not for money," she answered quietly.

"You would?" His eyes went wide.

She nodded, smiling softly.

"Brilliant!" He let go of her arms and in a move that shocked her, hugged her tightly.

Her arms fell limply to her sides, like a rag doll. Jane couldn't breathe for a moment, but when she did, she inhaled the scent of his neck. He smelled wonderfully manly, like soap, books, and spicy aftershave. His body was lean and his arms strong, and she felt that same deliciously dizzy feeling that she had while she'd been in his arms, slow dancing into the wee hours of the morning. She closed her eyes and memorized the moment.

John himself felt dizzy. He was suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of déjà vu. Jane not only smelled familiar, like honey and vanilla, but the feel and shape of her body up against his frame felt perfectly right, like they were made to fit together, that they had held each other countless times. He swallowed hard at his reaction to the quiet girl both within his coat and his arms, and pulled
away abruptly.

"So sorry, Jane, I'm — I'm very tired and feeling a bit overwhelmed. I'm nervous about the book and all. That was rather forward and unprofessional. I hope I didn't offend you. I come from a very huggy family. We hug everyone. Oh would you look at that? Jim there looks like he could use a hug." He ran up to the lift operator and threw his arms around him, but Jim pulled away with a frown.

Jane covered her mouth and laughed quietly at the nervous rambling of the tall brown haired man as he picked up his umbrella.

"Well, I'd better be off and grab some lunch. Put on your thinking cap, Jane Smith! I am going to the need the name of a lovely little mountain kingdom, a handsome prince, and an evil queen."

"Svaldalusia," she immediately replied, with a wide smile.

"Perfect!" he squealed as he walked backwards through the lobby until his back hit the glass door.

"Thanks for holding the lift, Jim," Jane said, breathless, unable to hide her smile.

"Wouldn'ta missed that for the world. I think he likes ya'," he said, winking. "Now Jane you're soppin' wet. You'll catch your death, luv. Better go 'n ask Miss Woods for a bit o' time ta warm up in the ladies' lounge."

"I'm already warm," she answered quietly, as she daydreamed of a darkened movie theater, Champagne instead of Mai Tais, swaying to quiet music at two in the morning, the anticipation of stretching out on a checkered tablecloth next to John Smith, and staying late at work, all alone, late into the night.

oOo

John Smith, the man who'd publicly humiliated her, was talking to Plain Jane Smith. His jacket was around her shoulders! Priscilla’s ire surged even more as she glared at the pair. She crossed her arms and tipped up her nose, staring from across the lobby.

She watched as John hugged Jane, and then oddly hugged Jim the Lift Man. And when Jane went into the lift, John waited for a moment after the lift closed, just staring at it. He turned on his heel after a moment or two, and began to whistle a happy tune as he left the building.

And Priscilla was invisible to him.

She waited for the lift to return to the ground floor. She didn't say a word to Jim other than her standard clipped request for Prescott Publishing. As soon as the doors slid open, she strutted out. Instead of turning left to the clerical department, she made a hard right towards the editorial and executive offices.

"I need to speak with you immediately, Mr. Higgins," she said, entering his office without knocking.

"Miss Bootkins, we are right in the middle of—" Bess began.

Priscilla raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms, leveling a look at Daniel that meant she was serious.

"I'm sorry Bess, we'll have to continue this later. Bring me chapter five when you're done editing
the thing,” said Daniel.

Bess frowned and gathered up her marked-up copy of chapter five. She skirted by Priscilla, who stood firmly in the center of the doorway. Priscilla quietly closed the door and locked it.

"Daniel, you and I have a common problem, and I have a proposal that will kill two birds with one stone."

Daniel lit a cigarette. "Why don't you tell me all about it."

"John Smith," she answered simply, perching herself on the corner of his desk, showing plenty of her shapely legs.

"Heard you met with a spot of bother the man on Friday night, Priss. Seems you've lost your touch."

"Can't help that it turns out that underneath all of that sexy wrapping paper, John Smith is a boy scout." Priscilla took the cigarette from Daniels fingers and brought it to her lips. She took a long drag and skillfully blew out the smoke. "It seems that he has a thing for good girls." Priscilla handed the cigarette back to Daniel. "In fact, I think he has his eye on the goodie two shoes cover girl."

"So who is the object of his affection?"

"Jane Smith," Priscilla replied, smashing what was left of the cigarette into Daniel's crystal ashtray.

"She is rather a sweet little thing, isn't she?" he said darkly. "I am a bit surprised though. I really did think he was more of the type to go for a sure thing, and that little mouse looks like she'd be a hard nut to crack."

"Jane Smith. Ha!" Priscilla exclaimed. "Can you imagine a more boring name? Suits her perfectly. I was thinking that perhaps you could entertain her, in your own special way. I've noticed that you haven't been getting nearly as much attention from the fairer sex since Smith arrived."

"It has been a while my hasn't it? And I do rather enjoy the quiet girls. Breaking the unsuspecting and innocent ones is the most fulfilling."

Priscilla stood up and walked around to his side of the desk. "Seems the women around here have taken quite the shining to the man. He is rather good looking after all, and oh so rich. Not as rich as you of course," she said as she ran her finger across his chest.

"Seems that he considers Jane his muse. I overheard him talking to a friend on the phone last week when I still was in his good graces. So perhaps taking Jane the Muse will take away his inspiration, and then, maybe, he won't be such competition for you."

A slow grin took over Daniel's face. "Thing is Priss, John Smith is poised to make me a lot of money. Why in the world would I want to risk that?"

"I know you'll find a way to make it work to our advantage."

"What do you get out of this arrangement? I highly doubt that Smith is going to ever want you back," he said with a raised eyebrow.

"Oh, I don't want him back, but I don't want anyone else to want him, either."
"You are a wicked woman, Priscilla Bootkins. How come we never made a go of it?" he asked.

"Because I think we both know that eventually, we will stab each other in the back."

He laughed and nodded in agreement.

"But that doesn't mean we can't have some fun along the way." Priscilla sat on his lap and draped her arms around his neck. "This is what I propose. You get me out of the typing pool, and I will serve you Jane Smith on a silver platter," she whispered into his ear. "And don't you think it is time that you had a new assistant? One who is at your beck and call? One who is willing to do this?"

She unbuttoned her blouse, cast it aside and then reached around her back to unclasp her bra.

Daniel's mind was suddenly charged with devilish thoughts. "Miss Smith is going to be quite a challenge." Daniel ran his hand up Priscilla's thigh and reached up under her skirt. "But I do love a good challenge. Door locked?"

"Of course."

oOo

"There you are, darling! You're late." Bess looked up at the clock. "What happened? You're soaked! Who's coat is that? It's enormous!"

"Needed to make a personal phone call and got caught in the rain, and Mr. Smith saw me shivering in the lobby and he gave me his coat." Jane unwrapped the wax paper away from her cold roasted chicken.

"That was nice of him." Bess ate carefully, taking a bite from her own chicken that Jane had prepared for their luncheon, and then set it down. "I have a surprise for you." She smiled mischievously.

"For me?" she asked.

"Yes. On Sunday night you, Niles and I -- along with a very handsome gentleman -- will be having dinner together."

Jane crossed her arms on the edge of the table and dramatically planted her forehead. She looked up, flushing. "You're not serious, are you?"

"Oh absolutely serious, darling. This gentleman works with Niles. Now, he isn't really the long-term type, but he is a whole lot of fun and will be perfect for our purposes."

"Oh fudge."

"Oh come now, Jane, it can't be all that bad. A nice dinner. A bit of dancing. That's all."

"Dancing?" she squeaked nervously.

"Yes, of course dancing. I'll have Niles come over and give you some lessons this week if you're nervous about it. I though thought you said you had a wonderful time dancing on Saturday at the Tik—"

Jane reached across and covered Bess's mouth with her hand. "Shh! Don't talk about that here!" she whispered forcefully.

Bess laughed, and removed Jane's hand. "Don't be so paranoid! Who in the world could you
possibly be worried about knowing that here at work?"

Jane pressed her lips together. "No one," she replied, brows furrowed. "So, what does this bloke
know about me? Have you told him I'm your project?" she asked uncharacteristically sarcastic.

"Now Jane, don't think poorly of Niles and me. We're only trying to help," Bess replied, kindly.
"You're not terribly mad at me, are you?"

"No," she replied with a bit of a smirk that turned into a shy smile. "Uh, Bess, I'll be staying late
tonight. After work. Someone has asked me for help. This person is a bit stuck and thinks that I
may be able to assist."

"It isn't Daniel Higgins is it? I saw the way he was looking at you in the lift. That man is trouble,
Jane. Stay as far away from him as you possibly can," Bess warned her sincerely.

"No, not him, thank heavens." Jane leaned in closer. "Bess, he didn't settle right with me. There's
something about him that I don't like."

"Then your instincts are working properly. Please. Promise me you'll steer clear of him."

Jane nodded. "It's John Smith actually," she blushed. "He's come up against a bit of writer's block,
and asked me to help him out."

"Well now." Bess examined her face.

"What?" Jane asked innocently, as she held her chicken just at her mouth.

"Perhaps you didn't need a makeover to get noticed," Bess lifted an eyebrow and pinched her lips
to prevent her from smiling when Jane blushed even harder. "I'll be working late as well. You let
him know that, all right? So he's clear that you and him are not alone."

"I will, but I trust him, Bess," she said, earnestly.

"You don't know him well enough to make that assessment, darling," she replied sternly.

"I think I do," Jane replied, and took a bite of her chicken, leaving Bess wondering just what her
friend meant.
Chapter Summary

John and Jane spend the night together...but "no funny business, Mr. Smith!"

Chapter Eight: John & Jane Spend the Night Together

Jane watched the slow-as-treacle wall clock with nervous anticipation. Only a few more minutes until she would be slipping into Mr. Smith's office for the evening. Her stomach churned as she bit into yet another piece of shortbread. Mr. Smith had treated the office this morning, and she had savoured each and every bite as if he had been feeding it to her by hand.

"Daydreaming, Jane?" Priscilla Bootkins roused Jane from her reverie. "That's not like you. Has someone captured your fancy? Perhaps that single fellow down in Accounting? He looks like a nice man. Very stable and well-off too. I heard he's single again. His wife just left him for the postman. He is a bit older, of course, but beggars can't be choosers."

Jane turned to Priscilla. Her cheeks were flushed and her neck was prickling but she held her composure. "I am not interested in Harold Bigglesworth."

"He's retiring next week. Getting his 50-year gold watch. You know, I think he was some sort of war hero. World War I, I believe."

"I doubt that an almost 70 year old would have much in common with someone my age, Priscilla." Jane was trying hard to keep the conversation civil.

"I suppose you're right. But like I said downstairs, Jane. Honey? Flies? Have you thought about a different hairstyle perhaps? You would be darling as a blonde, dear. Cut it short like Doris Day, you'd be fighting off the men. Just look at me."

Jane closed her eyes and heaved a sigh. She glanced at the clock once again. She only had to endure five more torturous minutes next to Priscilla Bootkins.

"By the way, Jane, I will be leaving the typing pool tomorrow. I've been promoted. Starting tomorrow, I will be Daniel Higgins's personal secretary. I am much more suited for that position. It is so much more important than being a simple transcriptionist for a second-rate science fiction author. I didn't understand half of what Mr. Smith was talking about. It was for the best that we parted." Priscilla applied some strongly-perfumed hand lotion as she talked.

Betty Anderson approached Jane's desk, hugging her steno pad to her chest. She had a sheepish look on her face.

"What's wrong, Betty?" Jane asked kindly.

"Things didn't work out with Mr. Smith." She giggled. "He's sort of an odd duck, to be honest. I've asked to come back to the typing pool."

“Really?” Jane asked casually, garnering a quick shifty eyed sideways glance from Priscilla.
"Anyhow, I need to be off. I have a date tonight!" Betty smiled warmly.

“I didn’t know you had a boyfriend, Betty,” Priscilla said, raising an eyebrow.

“Unlike you, I prefer to keep my private life just that, Priscilla. Private.”

Priscilla glared.

"Have fun, Betty," Jane offered graciously.

"Oh I will! Bill is taking me to the Tiki Tiki Club!"

"Who's playing tonight?" asked Jane.

"A new up and coming singer. What was her name? Cute name. Oh I remember! Dusty Springfield."

Priscilla frowned. "Never heard of her."

Jane and Betty ignored the prickly comment. "If she is playing the Tiki, she has to be good," cooed Jane. "You're gonna have a great time! I know I di-- I mean, I've always wanted to go there." Jane caught her near slip.

"Rather dull place if you ask me," Priscilla replied, blasé.

"I didn't ask you, Priscilla," Betty replied with uncharacteristic prickliness. "Night, Jane." She quickly put on her raincoat and clear plastic bonnet, and then ran for the lift.

Jane pressed her lips together trying hard to hide her excitement as the clock finally crept past five. The moment it did so, Priscilla left without another word. Jane pulled a scrap of paper out of her pocket and carefully unfolded it.

*Come to my office at 5:15. I'll leave the door unlocked. Lock it, and turn out the lights. Went out to fetch dinner back for us. Back by 5:30. J.*

Next to his initial was a curious doodle that was reminiscent of a smiling face, or perhaps the inner workings of a clock. She couldn't quite decide which. Jane ran her fingers across the writing and then carefully re-folded the paper and slipped it into her pocket. She went into the ladies lounge and sat until her watch indicated it was 5:15. The employees at this end of the floor were notorious for leaving at 5:00 on the dot, so she felt safe venturing out. She followed John's instructions, successfully sneaking into his office without being seen. She surveyed the office, and decided to sit at the small stenographer's desk, as it was up against the wall, giving the greatest chance of staying hidden should anyone peek in.

At 5:30 on the dot, Jane heard a key rattling the lock. The door opened, and John Smith came in carrying two brown paper bags.

Jane sprang from her spot and stood nervously.

John chuckled. "Startled ye did I?"

"A little," she replied, smoothing her skirt.

"Brought dinner, well, not a proper dinner that your mum would probably approve of. No veg or fruit or anything green. Nothing healthy, but definitely tasty. See? Fish 'n chips." He held up a greasy bag.
"I really fancy chips actually," Jane said shyly. "So, I was thinking I would bring in my typewriter and just type as we go. I'm a much better typist than stenographer, and while my shorthand is quite good, why not skip that second step of typing out the notes?"

"Oooohh, good thinking Miss Smith! Why won't Woods just relent!" He frowned as he pulled a newspaper cone out of the bag and handed it to Jane. "I even knelt in front of her! Me! A grown man! On bended knee!" John went down on his knees, clasped his hands and reenacted the scene. "Please! Oh please, Miss Woods! Please let me have Miss Smith!"

For the first time, Jane allowed herself to laugh fully in John's presence. Her laugh was infectious and he joined in as he returned to his feet. He went over to the sofa and dropped down comfortably. Jane had once again positioned herself at the small desk across the room.

"Whattya doin' all the way over there? That can't be comfortable. Sit by me. We'll chat while we eat. Get to know each other, hmm?" He patted the orange sofa, encouraging her to join him.

Jane hesitated.

"I won't bite, Miss Smith, I promise. Despite the rumors you may have heard about me, I am neither Casanova nor Lothario, although I do enjoy a pretty lass by my side." Once again he patted the sofa. He smiled when he saw the pink rising in Jane's cheeks.

"Mr. Smith, you need to know that I did tell someone who I trust completely that I am here. So no, you know."

"Funny business? Miss Smith, I can't imagine what you are implying," he said with a wink. "Just kidding. I understand and promise. This is strictly business." He nodded sincerely. "Now come on over and eat up before it gets cold and mushy."

He patted the sofa yet once again, and Jane finally complied.

"Now that wasn't so hard, was it?"

Jane felt a surge of electricity course through her body when he bumped her shoulder playfully with his own.

"And to get any awkwardness out of the way, yes I was dating your friend Priscilla, but no, I am no longer seeing her."

"She's not my friend, Mr. Smith," Jane said quietly, before taking a ladylike bite from the end of a fat chip. "She is rather rude to me, in fact. I have no idea what I did to deserve it. It's almost like she resents me or something."

John swallowed the bite he was chewing quickly. "Blimey, I think I may be responsible for that," he said, sheepishly. "She said some rather unkind things about you, and I defended you. I said you were... fantastic."

Jane's eyes went wide. "She told me you ended it with her because she wasn't fantastic." Jane thought back to Priscilla's now obviously insincere apology in the ladies room at lunchtime, and a sense of worry began to take root in the pit of her stomach.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Smith," John said apologetically, but then he became stern, "but I would never sit idly by and listen to her speak that way about you, or anyone undeserving."

The sudden fierceness of John's voice overshadowed any vague fears of Priscilla, and she quickly
decided that Mr. Smith was one man she would never want to cross. Of course, this was also was the man to whom she was lying. What would happen when he found out about Rose Tyler? But on the other hand, he had defended her, and her heart was beating from the confusion.

"It's all right Mr. Smith," she said, looking down so he couldn't see the nervousness in her eyes. "No one has ever defended me like that before. I've never needed defending." She turned to look at him. "Thank you. And just to get any awkwardness out of the way," she laughed, copying his own words, "No, I don't think that was any sort of grand declaration on your part. I am enough of a realist to know you were simply being a gentleman."

"Aye," he replied, "I suppose I was. But you do deserve a grand declaration, Jane Smith. Something tells me you are more than simply fantastic. I have a feeling you are extraordinary." He examined her eyes, and saw something flash in them that seemed to prove his point.

Jane cleared her throat and laughed nervously. "You're too kind Mr. Smith-"

"Call me John?"

"All right. John it is, if you'll call me Jane. It's only fair. So why don't you tell me a bit about yourself." She needed to get off of the topic of Priscilla Bootkins.

John took a drink from his bottle of Coca-Cola and set it down on the side table. "I'm from Scotland, as if you couldn't guess," he said, hinting a smile. "From a wee village outside of Inverness. Not even on any map I reckon."

"Family still there, then?"

"Nope. No brothers or sisters, and parents are both dead. I didn't really know Father that well. To his friends and even me, my father was just a simple man with a boring job in the foreign service. But in reality, he was SIS."

"Really?" Jane gasped. "Secret Intelligence Service?"

"Yep. My Dad was a spy. He disappeared in 1939. A few years ago, I found a letter in my mother's things. It was from the Prime Minister himself. An official notification that it was believed Father was in Belgium when he was assassinated by a Nazi operative. The letter thanked Mother for her service. Can you imagine my surprise? Not only was Dad a spy, Mother had been SIS, too."

Jane stopped chewing, and her eyes went wide.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith, in Her Majesty's Secret Service. So no wonder I was sent away to school when I was a wee bairn. That, and I was a genius," he said.

"So, your mom was a spy? Like Mata Hari?" Jane asked.

"No, not like Mata Hari!" he replied with a funny look on his face. "She was a codebreaker. I remember her working at home when I was a wee child. She would sit at our huge dining room table and translate official documents and books and such. She used to always sing while she worked. Somehow, I think it helped her do the work. Music is very mathematical, you know. I always remember her songs," he said wistfully, and then returned to his tale. "So she always had papers and things spread everywhere," he recalled fondly. "Once the war started in earnest, she was recalled to London as a code cracker and language expert. She had a very rare talent, Jane. Not only was she fluent in I don't know how many languages. French, German, ancient Gaelic, Old High Gallifreyan, Russian, Polish, Spanish... But if she saw a language written, any language, she could learn it. It was uncanny! Would have been a really great party trick," he joked with a
bittersweet smile. "So she was in London during the Blitz, and I wasn't. I was 16 when she died."

"Bomb?"

John nodded. "She never had a chance. I was told she had just finished working on a code that ended up saving a whole American platoon when she transmitted it just in the nick of time. She refused to leave her desk because one more message had to be coded."

"She sounds like an amazing person, John."

"Aye, that she was," he smiled. "But soon, I was bored with school. Didn't seem that important or challenging anymore. Sure I wanted to learn, but it just wasn't enough. I wanted to be doing. So I cock and bulled my way into university at 16-"

"Probably didn't hurt that you're a genius," Jane added.

"Probably not," he snickered. "So I went to university. The tuition was paid in full by a rather mysterious grant from the Tardis Foundation for Advancement of Science and Mathematics. Never knew who arranged it though. Just got a letter telling me that it had simply been taken care of."


"I had just turned 18 when the War ended, so never was conscripted. Tried to sweet talk my way into the army, too, but I looked like I was about fourteen, all arms and knees and freckles and wild hair."

Jane had noticed those freckles, and imagined connecting them with a fingertip like a child's dot-to-dot game.

"When I finished up university, I joined up. Got commissioned. Officers were promoted fast those days, and within a few years I found myself in West Berlin, Captain John Smith, bright and shiny intelligence officer."

"So did you tangle with any Soviet spies? Sneak any brilliant Eastern Bloc scientists in through Checkpoint Charlie?" she asked, her eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I think someone has a thing for James Bond."

"Maybe," she replied with a coy smile.

"Or is it just men from Scotland in general?" he teased, imitating Sean Connery. "I happen to have an Aston Martin, just like 007," he sniffed proudly.

"You think you're so impressive," she said with a sly smile.

"I am so impressive."

She laughed a bit. "You are impressive actually. It isn't that I have a thing for spies, really. More like I have a thing for books about exciting people doing fantastic things. I suppose the closest I'll ever get to actually doing exciting things is to read about other people doing 'em. And that's why I like your books so much."

"Aww come on, you don't think this is exciting? Working in the best city in the world in a posh office building? Meeting the impressive John Smith?" He gave her his most brilliant smile and waggled his eyebrows.
"Oh absolutely! The typing pool is chock full of intrigue and adventure," she said deadpan.

"Actually, the typing pool *does* seem to be a rather dangerous place," John cringed.

Rose chuckled. "You might be right. But last Monday when I found out you were the mysterious author who'd been hired on, I though I might die of excitement right then and there. I've read every one of your books, several times. They're brilliant."

"You're buttering me up, aren't you? Let's see. What could Jane Smith possibly want from me? I know! You are trying to get into my good graces so that I will dedicate my next book to you. Wait! No! I got it! You want a job!" he teased.

"You're right about that, I would love to work for you, but since that isn't going to happen," she sighed, "I suppose I'll have to settle for charming you out of the rest of your chips." Her voice was teasing, and her smile showed a hint of tongue poking through her teeth.

John stared at her mouth for a moment, and then slowly handed her the paper cone. "Here," was all he could muster.

"Ta." One by one, she popped the rest of the chips into her mouth and then proceeded to lick her salty fingers without a second thought as to how the sight was affecting him.

He couldn't help himself from thinking definitely funny business-like thoughts… non-work related thoughts… as he watched her plump, pink lips cleaning the greasy salt from her fingertips. Finally, she stopped her unwittingly sensual motions, and John found that he could breathe normally again.

"Good chips?" he asked, clearing his throat.

"Brilliant. I'll have to go back there sometime. What's the shop called?" she asked, as she cleaned her hands.

"Uh, I can't remember," he replied nervously, deciding it was time to loosen his tie and roll up his sleeves. "Is it hot in here?"

"No, not particularly. Rather pleasant, actually," she replied, smiling.

He cleared his throat, and decided to remove his tie and unbutton the top button of his shirt while he was at it.

"Was wondering when you'd get around to making yourself more comfortable." Again, Jane playfully poked her tongue through her teeth.

John left the couch, suddenly feeling the need to distance himself from the girl. He didn't understand why such a simple, silly mannerism was affecting him so potently. Seeing that smile had flooded his mind with all sorts of ungentlemanly thoughts about Jane Smith: thoughts of licking, nibbling, and tasting. He kicked himself mentally when he realized that they were the very same ungentlemanly thoughts he had entertained when he thought about Rose, recalling that she had smiled that very same smile.

But then he looked at Jane again. She was sitting primly on the orange sofa, looking about the room, completely unaware of the thoughts trampling through his head, and he realized it wasn't the tongue peeking grin at all that was prompting his fantasies. It was the way she really listened to him when he spoke, how she hung on every word. It was how her eyes danced when she talked about his books; how she blushed when he said anything remotely teasing or flirtatious. It was how grateful she had been to learn he had defended her. His thoughts then drifted to Rose, and he
frowned, suddenly feeling like he was betraying The One, thinking about Jane in the same way that he thought about Rose Tyler, the girl of his dreams.

He looked back at Jane and found himself wondering what she looked like under all of those layers of tweed armor that she hid under. If he peeled back the layers, loosened her hair, and slipped off her glasses, what would she look like? Something was nagging at him, challenging him to pull them off, to take a good look at her. He took a halting step forward and sat down awkwardly next to Jane. He lifted his hand, reaching towards her face.

"John, are you all right?" Jane was scowling at him. "You've been staring at me for about a minute with the funniest look on your face."

"Oh, sorry, I -- I think I must be nervous or tired, or nervous and tired and... nervous. Did I say that already? Deadline you know. Do you like working here at Prescott?" He changed the topic quickly.

"I do. And I hope you don't think I'm complaining, because I'm not. Not really. It's steady and it's fine, and I am happy to have the work. And if you had asked me a year ago if working in London would have been exciting, no doubt my answer would've been yes. But so much has happened since then. I don't have any family anymore since Mum died."

They both believed they were alone in the world.

"I've sold my childhood home and most of our possessions. I've moved from the Cotswolds to London without knowing a soul. Accepted a job sight unseen. Moved in with an heiress who has an actual honest to goodness career, and is more successful than most men are. So I'm surrounded by interesting people with big, interesting lives. It's not like I want to be famous or anything. I just want to make a difference, like she does, like you do. I want to go places, see things. Just be bigger! My life is so small, John."

Jane turned and looked at John.

"I feel like I'm a nobody, which has never bothered me before. I've always simply been content to be a nobody, to be invisible, but you're the first person that I've met who I think maybe... that maybe... for some reason... I feel like... like... I feel safe telling you this."

John listened quietly as the girl poured her heart out to him. He had an overwhelming urge to wrap his arms around her and comfort her. He started to act on his impulse, but then she stood up to dispose of the fish and chip wrapper.

"I can't believe I just told you all of that. I'm sorry," she said, embarrassed.

"Why are you sorry?"

"That was far too personal and not anything I have ever told anyone before. It's the sort of thing I should write in my journal, not tell a work acquaintance."

"And I've never told anyone about my parents' secret before either," he countered quietly. "I guess we both needed someone to share our secrets with. Thanks for trusting me."

John returned to his spot next to Jane, and took her hand and squeezed it. Their hands fit together perfectly.

"I want you to look at me, Jane." With a gentle finger on her chin, he nudged her head. "You are not a nobody. I don't care what Priscilla Bootkins said about you, Jane Smith. You are beyond
fantastic." He meant every word he had just said.

Jane looked down at their joined hands and flushed. "I need to use the ladies. Do you think it's safe for me to sneak out of here yet?"

John glanced at his wristwatch. "6:20? Already? I feel like I could talk with you all night, but I suppose we should really get to working on the book."

"I'll be back in a tic, and we'll get started." Jane scurried out of his office.

John ran for the phone and dialed Jack at work. "Jack, buddy, I've got a problem."

"Hi Jack, how are you today?" Jack imitated John’s accent. "Oh fine, John, buddy old pal, I am just great! Thanks so much for asking." Jack barked a laugh. "Doc, why is it that you only call me when you have a problem?"

"Because you're a very good listener, but I only have a minute. You know how I said that I thought I had found The One on Saturday night? Rose Tyler? Well Jack, I have found a second The One. Is it possible to fall madly and sincerely in love with two women at the same time?"

"So who is it this time?" Jack sighed, frustrated.

"It's Jane Smith, from the office."

This time, Jack almost burst out laughing. "You're joking, right?"

"Absolutely not joking. Never been more serious. Rose is fun and full of life and amazingly beautiful and smart and caring and a bit of a mystery. Jane is honest and kind and trusting and open and so, so intelligent. She's a bit reserved, or maybe she's just shy, but that now that she's opened up it's like they're two sides of the same beautiful golden coin! They even look alike! Rose is a bit more polished I suppose, but Jane is pretty in a natural sort of way, like the sunrise or... or... a field of flowers."

Jack snickered at the sentimental picture that John was painting, imagining the Doctor in black leather speaking this way.

"She just moved here from the Cotswolds so I think she's a bit of a country girl. I wonder if she likes going on nature hikes? You know, I really miss simply pointing my feet and seeing where they lead me. My feet had been itching to move since I moved down here from the Highlands. I wonder -- maybe they're related. Long lost cousins or something. Common genetics would explain their similar facial structure, as well as their identical bust, waist, and hip measurements," he mused.

"You know their measurements? I thought you said you had been a gentleman with that Rose woman."

"Of course I was a gentleman!" he protested. "I happen to have very acute observational skills, Jack. So, what do I do?"

"Ask her out," Jack suggested plainly.

"That's it? That's the best you've got?"

"Yep." Jack said with amazing nonchalance and self restraint as he silently punched his fist in the air, and did a happy dance in his chair.
John heard her footfall in the distance. "Oh, I hear her. She's coming back. Gotta go." John quietly replaced the receiver in the cradle and casually sat on the edge of his desk with his arms crossed. He heard a commotion out in the common area and went to take a look. Jane was deep under her desk, her rear end the only thing visible.

"Uh, let me get that for you Jane," John called from his office after he allowed himself to enjoy the view for a moment.

"Oh thanks." Jane unplugged the electrical cord and extracted herself from under the desk. She picked up a thick stack of blank paper, a sheet of correction paper, and an extra ribbon just in case John got wordy.

John carried the heavy machine into his office and set it on his desk, and motioned for her to sit in his big, comfortable, expensive, leather chair. She sat down, and he pushed the chair in for her, and then she adjusted it until it was at the proper height. He stood next to her, resting his hand on the seat back, and drew in a deep breath. She smiled up at him, wiggled her fingers and then positioned her hands on the keyboard and nodded.

"Ready?" he asked, like a racehorse waiting for the gate to fly open.

"Ready." She smiled her brightest smile, fixed her eyes on the paper, and her mind on the sound of his voice.

Their collaboration began.

John dictated rapid-fire as he paced, bounced, jumped and even ran around the room from time to time. When he couldn't come up with a thought, all he had to do was look at Jane, ask his question, or even just say one word, and she'd think of something.

"Iris and the Professor stood on the hill overlooking the fairytale city below. His hand found hers and he dragged her down the path-"

"John, what if Svaldalusia wasn't just a city, but an itsy bitsy little country like Andorra or Monaco. Like a city-state," said Jane, for the first time offering a suggestion without being asked. "And what if it was nestled high in an alpine valley? Landlocked?"

John nodded in agreement as he tapped his finger on the side of his face. "Hmmm... keep going..."

"And high above the city is a sprawling palace full of tunnels and hidden rooms and a properly scary dungeon. It hangs on the mountainside, looking just like something out of a fairytale to the citizens in the city below, but..." she passed the thought to John to complete.

"But what if the fair citizens down below don't know what is going on up in their beloved castle on the mountain? High above them there are intrigues, and plots, danger, romance, deceptions, even murder and-"

"Spies!" Jane exclaimed.

"Of course there are spies, Jane Smith."

With ease, John dictated nearly nonstop save an occasional sip of water, gulp of coffee, or the occasional request. "Jane, what is the waitress's name?"

"Azynda. With a Y. And she has light pink hair, deep brown skin, and Iris is jealous 'cos the Professor keeps sneaking peeks at her when he thinks she isn't looking."
"Oh, but he isn't sneaking peeks, Jane, he is simply fascinated by the culture. He is studying it, taking it all in."

"The Professor is a flirt," Jane stated.

"He is not!"

"What about that tree woman?"

"That was their first real trip, and he was simply being polite. She was royalty. And what about Iris and her tight little Capri trousers and clingy jumpers?"

"She's your character, you're the one giving her those little outfits," Jane countered with a laugh.

"Suppose you're right on that count," he replied, scratching his face sheepishly.

"Well he's still a flirt, and it hurts Iris's feelings. Makes her feel vulnerable."

John stopped his pacing and looked at her with a pained face. "You think so?"

"I think it makes her wonder if she is going to be left behind sometime or somewhere. She needs to know he'll never just leave her, or try to send her away again."

"Well maybe it's time she knows he's never going to leave her."

"Thought you were saving that for a future book," she said with a sly smile.

"Maybe you've changed my mind, Jane Smith," he said low, with heavy eyes.

Jane was afraid to acknowledge what he had just implied, and the matter was dropped.

They returned to the task of writing chapter one.

"By the time Miss Minchin returned to her lounge carrying the delicious looking confection of berries and cream for her impromptu overnight guests, Iris was starting to feel even more uncomfortable than she had even two minutes prior, if that were possible. What had felt like a hot, flushing in her cheeks had now encompassed her entire body, like a thousand tiny ants were marching in formation over every inch of skin. The Professor, however, was oblivious to her suffering, and was only thinking about sinking his teeth into the cake-"

"That's not what it felt like..." Jane said quietly.

"Hmm?" John asked.

"That's not what it felt like... I mean," she shook her head to clear her tired, addled mind. "I meant to say, I don't think that's what it would have felt like. The curry poisoning. She felt..." she cleared her throat and blushed.

"What? What did she feel like?" John came and sat on the edge of the desk next to her.

Jane looked up at John. "She felt like she was burning from the inside out, and if the Professor didn't kiss her right then and there, she might drag him down the hall and tear that pinstriped suit right off of him." Jane gasped, clapped her hand over her mouth and blushed.

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John looked at her, eyes wide, and mouth gaping for a moment, and then he burst into hysterical laughter. "You're telling me that the spices in the curry were some sort of hyper aphrodisiac? And
turned sweet Iris Mason into a wanton love goddess?"

Jane slunk down into the chair and nodded shyly.

"But, would the Professor give in? Or would he gently reject her advances given she wasn't in her right mind? It's not like in the last book when they were forced into that epic kiss and... other things..." He blushed, but was unsure why it embarrassed him to speak of that particular scene in front of Jane, knowing she had already read the book. “…from eating those psychotropic mushrooms.”

"The thing is, the spices wouldn't be forcing her to do anything she didn't want to do, it would simply magnify her unrealized desires. It would lower her inhibitions," countered Jane, shyly.

"So the real question is, when the Professor is finally confronted with the truth of what is in Iris's heart, how will he respond?" John stared out the window at the lights below reflecting on the rain slick street. He turned around and faced Jane. "Guess we'll find out in the next chapter, hmm?" he said with a slightly wolfish grin. "I do know one thing, though. The Professor would never ever take advantage of Iris in her altered condition."

"So this is the book then? This is it? Finally? He's gonna tell her?"

"Yep," he answered simply. "How are we doing on word count?"

Jane looked done at her tally sheet and did a quick calculation in her head. "You've come up with approximately 5,200 words."

"I have?"

"Mm hmm," she replied.

"We did it then!" He broke into a smile, ran around to her side of the desk, dragged her chair away, and pulled her out of it into a celebratory hug, lifting her off of her feet and swinging her from side to side as they both laughed gleefully. He set her back down, but they stayed in their embrace.

Their giddy jubilation had now been replaced with that feeling of emotional intimacy that comes from shared victory.

He pulled back, and with tenderness, touched her cheek with a single fingertip. "Maybe..." he swallowed hard, "maybe our shared last name isn't just a silly coincidence after all. Maybe it's a sign of things to come," he said quietly.

Jane couldn't take her eyes off of his. She was frozen in the moment.

"Jane, will you go out with me tomorrow, I mean... tonight?" he laughed nervously, "tonight?" It was an impulsive request. He hadn't thought it through. It had simply popped out of his mouth.

Jane just stared, still unable to say anything, but now she was shaking in his arms.

"I'm sorry I think I just overstepped-" He retracted his words, misreading her silence for rejection.

"Yes!" she blurted, and then her voice softened. "Yes, John Smith, I will."

"You will?" he asked shyly. For the first time that he could remember, John felt like a woman had taken the upper hand. He felt like his heart was at the mercy of the quiet girl with glasses, old fashioned hair, and sensible shoes.
"Yes. But why?"

"You have to ask why, Jane? Because you are fantastic, that's why," he said.

"But I'm just Jane Smith," she said, nervously looking away from his smoldering gaze.

John pulled back, just a little bit, and moved his hands to her upper arms. His hold on her was firm, but not forceful.

“And you're... you're a famous writer, and... and... you have your pick of glamorous women and... and... I... I... don't do... those things that you are probably used to... doing,” she said in a voice so quiet that it was almost inaudible.

He led her to the sofa by the hand, never breaking eye contact.

"Uh, what are you doing?" she asked, suddenly terrified. "Are you -- are you going to try and -- John, I just told you I don't. I won't..."

"What?" he exclaimed, somewhat aghast. "Jane I would never ever never force myself on you! Or any woman!"

"I'm s-sorry! I didn't mean to upset you! I - I - I have no experience with men, John. None. I've h- heard stories of - of h-handsome worldly m-men like you t-taking advantage of... of... shy girls like me and I -- I..." Tears started to well in her eyes.

"I guess I will have to prove to you then that my intentions are completely gentlemanly." He examined her eyes, and was saddened by what he found: it was the look of panic that a small helpless animal would have when they are about to flee. "I promise Jane, I would never ever ask you to do anything you didn't feel right about doing. I promise."

"I believe you," she replied, finally relaxing a bit. "I think I had better get home though. It's really late, and Bess'll be thinking the worst."

"Bess?" he asked, straining to recall why that name was triggering a memory.

"Bess Cooper, from editing. She's my flatmate."

"Oh, right, right," he said nervously, but then looked at his watch. "Jane, it's just after 2:00. I won't let you take a taxi alone at this time of night. I'll drive you home."

"No!" She shook her head in protest. "What if someone saw me get out of a man's car at 2:30 in the morning! What would they think?"

He rubbed his hands down each side of his face in frustration. "You're right. They would think exactly what you are thinking they would think. You'll have to stay here."

"And show up at work in the morning in the same clothes? How is that any better?" Jane wrung her hands.

"Call your flatmate and ask her if she'll bring you a change of clothing, and then try and get some sleep. I know I'm exhausted, you must be too."

Jane noticed that shadowy stubble was starting to appear on his face. She wondered how the masculine roughness would feel against her cheek or neck. She had never been kissed before. Would it hurt? Scratch? Tickle? She decided it would feel wonderful and her stomach flipped at
the thought of his mouth dropping kisses to her lips, down her neck and—

"Jane? Are you all right?"

She nodded. "'M really tired is all." Jane squeezed her eyes shut as she waited for her friend to answer.

"Sorry to wake you Bess..."

oOo

John and Jane dropped off to sleep around 4:30 am, having completed the finishing touches to chapter one of the still-to-be-named novel. It wasn't perfect, but it was a more than adequate first draft, and ready to be presented to Daniel Higgins for first editing.

Around 6:15, the morning light was just beginning to soften the darkness of John's office. Sometime between 4:30 and then, John and Jane had moved close to one another. Jane's head was resting on his left shoulder, and his arm was around her back, pulling her close into his warm side. Her left arm had snaked its way around his waist, and she was turned slightly into his chest, perfectly comfortable.

The door to John's office creaked open, and the light came on startling the pair awake. They jumped away from each other like a couple of teenagers who'd been caught in the dark by a disapproving adult.

Bess looked at them, one eyebrow cocked, and jaw set. In one hand she held a hanger bearing the blush pink, four button jacket with the matching skirt.

"Here is the change of clothes you requested, Jane," Bess said with a slightly judgmental tone. "And some other things so you can freshen."

"Miss Cooper, this is completely innocent, I assure you." John held up his hands in surrender.

"Oh, I'm sure it is. I trust Jane implicitly. It's you I don't know, Mr. Smith," Bess said plainly, looking him in the eye.

"Bess, I promise! Nothing happened! He was a perfect gentleman!" Jane said.

It had been an emotional twenty-four hours. Priscilla's thinly-veiled threats, working closely with John all night, and his sudden revelation that he wanted to date her, were crashing into her fatigue and the stress of keeping up the façade of being Rose Tyler. Jane was having difficulty keeping a tight reign on her composure.

"Go put yourself together, darling." Bess never took her eyes off of John as she spoke. Jane stood quickly and grabbed the things from Bess, and nearly ran out of the room trying to hold back her sobs until she was clear of their sight.

"Jane," John called after her, sensing how upset she was.

"Did you even stop to think, hmm? Or were you so worried about your precious book? Do you realize that you have put this girl in a very awkward position? If this gets out, Mr. Smith, it could ruin her reputation."

"Miss Coop—"
"I'm not done with you," she pointed at John. "I truly hope, for her sake, that no one noticed that Jane never left the building last night. And for your sake, I hope that if they did, they have the good sense to keep their mouth shut, because Mr. Smith, if Jane's reputation is compromised... if I hear one rumor, one hint of gossip, you will have to deal with me. And when I'm done with you, Niles will come after you. And I promise you, Mr. Smith, Niles has ways to hurt you that would make the Marquis de Sade whimper for mercy."

"I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking, Miss Cooper. You are right. It was selfish of me."

Bess's hands were clenched, and her normally perfectly placed navy blue pillbox hat was cocked to the side. Her face showed her fury. "I mean every single word of it, John Smith. Don't you dare ever pull anything like this again, do you understand?"

He nodded once.

"Good. Now that we are clear on that point, what are your intentions towards Jane? She has no one to look after her but Niles and me. No one. And I've seen the way you look at her. She's told me how you have started to stop by her desk, asking for advice on your book. You are giving her an awful lot of attention, but what is your motivation? I'm not saying that she doesn't deserve the attention, because she does, probably more than most. But she deserves attention from someone who is sincere. She likes you John, but I'm sure you already know that. What woman doesn't want you? Well, there is me, but I know I am of the few exceptions," she said.

John muttered something under his breath.

"I asked you a question, Mr. Smith. What are your intentions?" Beth demanded.

"If you would stop talking for a minute, I might be able to tell you," he replied. "I like Jane very much, and I wish to get to know her better."

"And you have plans for this? How do you intend to get to know her?"

"As a matter of fact, I have already asked Jane on a date for this evening, and she has accepted," he said, nose tipped upward.

"All right. At least that is above board, and not another clandestine rendezvous."

"That was never my intention, Bess Cooper, and I think you know that."

"You ready to stop dating other women? I know that you are not exactly exclusive in your social habits. Niles has mentioned that you have a bit of a reputation with the ladies."

"No, you're right. I haven't been exclusive, Miss Cooper."

"Does Jane know this? Because I can assure you, she is not the type to casually give away her affections."

He crossed his arms and swore under his breath. "I know Jane is different. That's one of the reasons I like her so much."

"Well then, there you have it. If you value her, I suggest you tell her, and soon. I will not stand by and see her hurt because she thought that she was the only hen in the henhouse when you were visiting the whole coop."
"I'm not going to hurt her, Miss Cooper. I'm not playing some game." He closed his eyes, saying the words like he believed them, but churning inside knowing that is exactly what he was doing, and he knew it would be a game that someone was ultimately going to lose: Jane, Rose, himself, or all three.

"Fair enough then, if that's the case, you will stop seeing other women, or you will cancel your date with Jane."

"Now just you wait a minute, Miss Cooper. It is just a date." He knew it was himself that he as trying to convince. "Just dinner. Nothing fancy or impressive. I was simply going to take her to get some Indian food. We were talking about curry last night and-"

"You will tell her about these other women."

"Not women," he growled, "woman." Rose. Only Rose. "I have one date on Saturday with one woman." John stood up angrily, finally finding his own voice.

"Is she important to you too? As important as you claim Jane to be?"

John made a rumbling sound in his throat that should have scared a grown man, but Bess stood undaunted.

"She is, isn't she?" Bess smiled coolly. "I can tell by the look in your eyes, Mr. Smith."

"I am interested in this other woman, yes. Just like I am interested in Jane."


"It isn't exactly illegal, Miss Cooper, for a healthy man to want to... Who do you think you... I am a grown man and... What right do you have to..."

John couldn't string together one coherent thought, he was feeling a sense of dread overwhelming him, so he took the defensive approach. "Don't interfere with my life, Miss Cooper! And maybe you should stop interfering with Jane's. She deserves some happiness, you know. And furthermore, she's an adult and so am I!"

It took Bess Cooper every bit of strength she cold muster to prevent herself from collapsing into a fit of hysteric right then and there in John Smith's office. She breathed in and out a few times. From John's perspective, it looked like she was seething, keeping a tight reign on her anger.

Oh, how she wanted to just blurt out the truth and save everyone a lot of heartache and confusion. John wasn't such a cad after all. And he was right. They were adults, and those two adults had each dug themselves into their very own deep holes; and out of their very own holes, or maybe it was a shared hole, they would have to climb.

Bess took one more deep breath. "Don't string her along," Bess turned with a flourish on her expensive heel, and then pause at the door and looked back at John. "Don't string that other woman along either." Bess made her exit and then swiftly made her way down the corridor with both of her hands over her mouth to stifle her laughter.

"I need to call Jack," John said with a groan as he dropped back onto his orange sofa.
Chapter Nine: John & Jane & the Morning After

Jane looked in the mirror and bit her lip. She felt a bit guilty to admit that she rather liked what she saw. She was wearing a boxy four-button jacket of that modern cut that floated just below the bottom of her ribcage, and afforded a peek-a-boo view of the feminine curves of her trim waist and hips. Under the jacket she wore a crisp white shirt. The matching straight skirt was a good three inches shorter than any skirt she had ever owned prior to the shopping trip with Bess. She felt the need to tug it down, but Bess slapped her hand each time she fidgeted. The blush-pink of the boucle' fabric perfectly suited her fair complexion, golden hazel eyes, and light brown hair, particularly bringing out the natural pink of her cheeks and lips.

Jane stood still and watched Bess's reflection in the mirror as her friend finished pinning her hair into an elegant French twist. The hairdo was certainly a change from that severe knot at the base of her skull. Jane squeezed her eyes shut and covered her face as Bess sprayed the coif with copious amounts of hairspray.

Next, Bess produced a pink zipper-topped makeup bag and pulled out a compact. She opened it and dabbed the round applicator in the pink rouge powder.

"No rouge please," Jane protested. "Can I... I want to take this one step at a time, all right? Well, two steps. New clothes and new hair is enough for one day. Or week. Or maybe even a month. My stomach is already knotted up enough as it is."

"All right darling, I understand. But what about just a little bit of lipstick, hmm? Play up those pretty lips of yours!"

"Theses lips are big enough on their own and don't really need to be played up," Jane said, with a raised eyebrow.

"I would kill for your lips, darling. Ya' got 'em, flaunt 'em!" Bess snapped her fingers.

Jane turned around and scowled mildly at Bess.

Bess just smiled back. "Consider it practice, darling. You never know who could walk into the office one of these days. When Prince Charming walks by your desk, you want to be ready for the ball, don't you?"

"All right. Who are you, and what have you done with Bess Cooper? Fifteen minutes ago, I could hear you dressing down John from all the way in here, now you're telling me to flaunt my lips? For whom, exactly?" Jane asked suspiciously.

"Would you look at the time," Bess replied, ignoring her friend as she glanced at her delicate gold wristwatch. "I need to get to my office. I have an early editing meeting with Dreadful Daniel. It's
definitely going to be a late night editing that boring novel again, so don't worry about dinner. Niles is coming by to keep me company."

"Uh, Bess, I need to tell you something." Jane laughed, nervously.

"Yes, darling?" Bess wore a small, knowing smile.

Jane sighed and adjusted her already-crossed arms into a more protective hold. "John asked me to go out to dinner with him tonight," she mumbled.

"I know," she said with a saucy wink. "Don't forget the lipstick." Bess held the tube out to her, and then left the ladies room when Jane took it from her fingers.

Daniel Higgins was born into wealth, but it was not the kind that came endowed with a long history. Neither had it come with a title, though his childhood home was a grand mansion. There was no grand corridor lined with a long row of portraits of proud-faced forefathers and matrons counting backwards to some famous Earl of Whatsit.

Grandfather Higgins had started with very little but had died having amassed a fortune. He had the good luck to have been born at a unique time in history, one of those rare moments in time when someone without two coins to rub together could strike it rich if they worked hard enough and had a whole lot of good luck. He'd clawed his way from the bottom to the top of the heap, and by the time he was forty, had bought the factory at which he had started working when he was just a lad of twelve.

The old man was smart, and had been paying attention to news on the Continent, as most of his business was located there. In 1912, his fellow industrialists had scoffed when he converted the Higgins Woolenworks from a mill which produced wool fabric domestic use into a fabric which produced army blankets, and then into a factory that also manufactured lighter-weight wool fabric for uniforms; he then expanded to become a full-blown uniform manufacturer employing a few hundred seamstresses. When 1914 erupted in a hail of shells and gunfire, the Higgins Woolenworks was called upon by His Majesty's Army to outfit the boys going across the Channel.

Daniel Higgins Senior inherited both his father's factory and excellent business instincts, and he kept the business alive and even thriving through the Depression. When World War Two began, the Woolenworks again changed to meet the needs of the modern military. Five years after VE Day, Daniel Higgins, Sr sold the family business, made a ridiculous profit, and retired. Three years after that, he was dead and the fortune was passed to his son and sole heir, Daniel, Jr.

Daniel's mother was a jet-setting heiress, chosen for her beauty, American connections, and bank account, not her maternal instincts. His father wanted an heir to whom he could pass the family empire, not a child to nurture. Once his mother's duty to produce an heir was complete, she returned to her jet-setting life, though her lifestyle had been somewhat hampered by that pesky World War Two. Daniel was left in the care of a sour-faced governess and then shipped off to a prestigious school. It was his father's belief that childrearing should be left to the 'experts'. Lavish gifts were given every Christmas and birthday and many dates in between, but familial love and moral instruction were not. When his father died of a premature heart attack in the bed of some Hollywood starlet, a hefty bank account and the deed to the estate served as the only evidence that he had been a member of the Higgins family.

Daniel also inherited his father's handsome face and physique, and grew up with a roving eye. He had never had to force his way into the affections of the fairer sex. Women had always sought him
out. His movie star looks and confident manner had emerged when he was still a youth, and giving him the aura of a man much older and more experienced than he was. He had that undefinable male magnetism that women found irresistible. When he was just 16, his father handed over a thick envelope of cash to the chauffeur's daughter, and their son's bundle of joy conveniently disappeared into the home of a deserving childless couple in far away Kent.

While Daniel absolutely prized both money and power, and would do almost anything to increase his store of both of these commodities, there was one thing that he craved even more than a padded bank account, and it was a precious thing, indeed: the attention of women. This was his Achilles's Heel.

The very willing Priscilla Bootkins served her purpose adequately. She was a temporary release for his very active libido, but that was all. Daniel knew she didn't want him, and he didn't want anything more from her either. Priscilla wanted what he could give her: upward mobility, a few sparkling baubles, and maybe a bit of a thrill. Their coupling was a simple transaction: she got the things she wanted, and he got the temporary rush he craved.

When John Smith arrived at Prescott Publishing three weeks prior, the attention of the women of Prescott Publishing immediately shifted. The eyes of the young (and older) ladies of the office no longer followed only Daniel down the hall. John Smith, it turned out, shared a few of Daniel's prized traits: devastating good looks and magnetism.

Daniel decided that he didn't need the money that he knew John Smith's books would inevitably bring in. He needed his female fix even more. But there was a problem: Smith's legal representative had artfully negotiated a masterpiece of a contract. As long as he was producing publishable books, and they were selling at a reasonable rate, he couldn't be sacked. The contract was iron-clad. John could, however, walk away from Prescott of his own accord. No questions asked.

When Priscilla approached him yesterday with her proposition, 'Make me your secretary and I'll serve up Jane Smith,' Daniel had indulged her. He had nothing to lose, as having Priscilla as a secretary would be handy. But Daniel had already set his sights on the girl from the elevator; the shy one with the soulful brown eyes; the one he'd heard through the grapevine that John Smith wanted for his assistant.

One look at Jane Smith, and he had known that her heart had already been captured by the writer. He had a sense for these things honed from years of playing the seduction game, knowing when women were dissatisfied with their husbands, boyfriends, or lovers. He knew when they were ripe for the picking, and Jane was most definitely unripe, and this made her all the more delicious.

One of the few things that Daniel had shared with his father was a common interest in hunting. He had been taught how to prepare for the chase. It was necessary to understand the prey for a successful outing. He knew he had to study Jane Smith before he ever made his first move. He already had one compiled quite a bit of intelligence: she was habitual, quiet, didn't appear to know how to defend herself, and didn't have a malicious bone in her body. She was humble, smart, and alone in the world save her roommate, Bess Cooper, whom Daniel despised. Jane worried what people thought of her and her reputation. She was principled. He would turn these strengths into weaknesses.

A very interesting piece of news was brought to his attention this morning which would be his first bit of leverage: Jane Smith had spent the night with John Smith. It had been innocent, of course, he would have expected nothing less from the girl. She had simply helped him out of a jam. Daniel didn't pay the cleaning staff just to clean after all, they were his eyes and ears.
It was with a silver tongue that Senior Editor Daniel Higgins gave the bad news to his secretary, Mrs. Crenshaw. The woman had been more than happy to be given her walking papers. She was weary of the man's shenanigans, and frankly didn't need to work. She had been paid well during her long tenure at Prescott Publishing, and was rather frugal by nature, and her late husband's generous pension more than adequately covered all of her expenses.

"Good riddance to you, Mr. Higgins," she had proudly exclaimed as she held her head high and vacated her desk.

It was only after her termination that he informed Miss Eve Woods. She was powerless to say no to the man who may not have held the title of President of Prescott Publishing, but was the de facto power behind the man with the title.

"Yes, I understand Mr. Higgins. I will see to it that charges are pressed against Mrs. Crenshaw." Miss Woods knew, of course, that the kind old woman could not possibly have stolen that gold cigarette lighter from Mr. Higgins' office, and Miss Woods was determined to put off the report to the authorities for as long as possible. "I'll have Miss Bootkins report to your office immediately."

Miss Woods ended the phone call and swore under her breath. She felt like punching her fist through the thin veneer wall behind her, but knew she would be sacked immediately if she acted on her impulse.

As soon as the call was complete, Daniel snuffed out his cigarette. He stood up from his mahogany desk, slipped on his perfectly tailored suit coat, and smoothed his jet black hair. He pulled down each of his shirtsleeves with a snap, adjusted his black onyx cufflinks so that they were perfectly aligned, and tightened his silver and black tie, snug to his neck. Daniel decided he would take a walk down to the other end of the building to personally pick up John Smith's draft, and pay his first visit to Miss Jane Smith on the way back.

With the confidence of a panther on the prowl, he made his way down the marble-floored hallway.

Priscilla had vacated her desk first thing that morning, and proudly assumed her new position as Higgins' secretary. Betty Anderson had called in sick, claiming food poisoning; Jane wondered if a hangover was the real reason. Sandy-haired, lithe, capable and fun-loving Kitty Collins had been assigned to be John's new assistant, and it was with a heavy heart that Jane watched her long, well-toned legs carry her down the corridor. Samantha Moore was filling in for the receptionist, who was on her break. This left Jane Smith all alone in the typing pool, feeling like a lone goldfish in a very big fishbowl.

Jane saw him coming from the edge of her vision. She felt a vague sense of dread but was unsure why the mere presence of Daniel Higgins made her skin crawl. Her instinctual fight or flight reflex engaged. She left her desk and headed for the ladies' room. She could feel Higgins' eyes boring into her back as she made her way towards the relative safety of the loo, but when she opened the door, she went from the frying pan into the fire.

"Watch it, you oaf!" Priscilla exclaimed as she ran into Jane, but then shifted her attitude immediately. "My, my. Someone has been shopping. And look at your hair! What an improvement! You look like you stepped out of magazine advert for Pan Am. You should be a stewardess, Janie."

Jane gingerly touched her immobilized hair and cringed.
"That suit looks expensive. How ever did you afford it on your salary?" An evil grin grew on Priscilla's face. "Mmm, you do work fast, Jane Smith. I'm impressed."

"What are you talking about?" Jane stammered, unwisely engaging the woman.

"John of course, you wicked girl. No need to be embarrassed, Jane. We all do it. You give him something, and he gives you something in return. Although, it wasn't too hard to give him whatever he wanted, was it? He was good, and I am going to miss that. Oh, the things he can do with that gorgeous mouth of his. Or was it your mouth that did the work last night?"

"I... I... don't..." Jane stammered, reeling as the blood rushed from her head leaving her lightheaded.

"I won't tell a soul. I promise," she whispered wickedly into Jane's ear. "Did he do that thing where he swirled his tongue while he pinched—"

"I didn't do anything with Mr. Smith, Priscilla," she replied with a hitch in her voice. "The suit was a gift from my flatmate, Bess."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Did I offend you? I just assumed since you were with him all night that you had he, well, you know." Priscilla raised her perfectly groomed eyebrow. "Then again, you really aren't his type." She painted on a cruel smile. "He wants a woman, Jane, not a little girl who's afraid to unlock her knees."

Priscilla left with a smirk, and Jane promptly got sick.

"Oh, I am good," Priscilla told Daniel when he returned to his office.

"I need some good news," he replied with a scowl as he lit a cigarette.

Priscilla sat on the edge of his desk. "Guess who I ran into, literally, in the loo? Sweet little Jane Smith. In one conversation I have confirmed that she was indeed with John last night, and that he hasn't made a move. I really don't think she believes she's good enough for him, the poor little thing."

Daniel took a long drag on his cigarette and smiled wickedly at his agent.

OoO

Jane was ringing her. Bess just knew it the moment the phone rang. She had been having the oddest flashes of precognition lately, and even before Bess picked up the phone, she knew something was wrong. An overwhelming feeling of protectiveness for her friend washed over Bess.

"Darling, what's wrong?" she asked.

"I need to talk with you Bess, I think I'm in trouble," Jane asked with a hitch in her voice. "I wanted to come and see you, but I was afraid because Priscilla’s desk is ten feet from your office."

"Where are you?" asked Bess, already standing up.

"Break room," Jane replied weakly and then rang off.

OoO

Jane’s hands shook as she replaced the telephone handset. She turned from the wall that she'd been facing to find that John was standing right behind her.
"Jane, you look ill, are you all right?" John put his hands on her shoulders and hunched so they were eye-to-eye.

Jane couldn't look at him. Her eyes darted to and fro about the room. "No. I'm not all right. I'm very, very not all right," she said in a quivering voice as angry tears started to form in her eyes. "We were seen last night, John. And... and..."

Bess walked in, and Jane pulled herself away from John’s touch. John furrowed his brows, and put his hands into his pockets.

"Bess, Priscilla Bootkins just called my character into question. She knows about last night."

Bess felt the hair on the back of her neck prickle, but she had a feeling that Jane needed her to be strong, so she attempted a casual air. "Oh is that all, darling? You played it cool didn't you?"

Jane's lip quivered, and she turned and looked at John. John, in turn, looked at Bess, with a sheepish look on his face.

"I said nothing, Bess, I promise. I would never–"

"Oh, I know you’d never say anything, John. You aren't that sort of man," she flipped her wrist at him. "And I know what I said earlier to you about this getting out. I was tired and more than a bit irritated about being awoken so early."

She turned to Jane. "There is nothing to worry about. We'll make a preemptive strike. I will go speak to Miss Woods right now. John, you’re coming too. We'll put up a united front. I did know about it after all. Don't worry your pretty little head."

"But–" Jane started to protest.

"Hurry back to your desk before Miss Woods sees you missing and really has something to say! I'll take care of everything. Now go! Scoot!" Bess pushed Jane in the direction of the door until her feet were moving on her own. Bess peeked her head about the door and confirmed that Jane was seated at her station. "John, I told you this would happen, and frankly it won't be easy to dig Jane out of this hole."

John dropped into an orange plastic dinette chair with a defeated look on his face.

"You ready to stand up for her?" Bess asked with her hands on her hips.

"Of course. But why the change from this morning? You can't tell me that you were simply tired. You don't strike me as the 'I was just tired' type."

"You're right." Bess sat down next to John. She knew that the game had changed. In good conscience, she couldn't come right out and tell John about Jane's secret, as she had promised Jane her confidence. But she did realize that he really needed to know Jane's secret. "That other woman that you're seeing. Rose, right?"

"Aye, Rose is her name. Why are you bringing her up now?" he asked, perplexed.

"I just saw you here with Jane a moment ago, and it is obvious that this is more than an infatuation. I truly care about Jane. She's become like a sister to me, John. If Rose were the one in Jane's shoes, would you be as protective of her?"

"Of course, I would!" he answered, angrily.
"Don't you think it is odd that you have such strong feelings for two women at the same time?"

John sighed and slumped his shoulders. "I've been wondering the same thing myself."

"I'm going to offer you a piece of advice. You need to take a good, long, hard look at these two women. Open your eyes," Bess said, hoping that would be enough to get the ball rolling. "By the by, did Jane tell you that she has blind date that she can't break on Sunday? I'm sure you don't mind. You said it yourself, you're not exclusive. So why should she be?"

"Who arranged the date?"

"Niles. He has set it all up with a nice fellow from work. I believe you know him. Jack Harkness?"

"Niles set Jane up with Jack?" he screeched.

"Yes, why? Is that a problem?" asked Bess.

"Jack is very experienced, Bess. He gets around. A lot," John said.

"Oh that's why Niles chose him," she replied blithely.

"What? What!" John was horrified. "You mean to tell me you arranged a date, and I use that term lightly, with Jack, so that she can... be with... have her first..." he made a rapid set of vaguely recognizable motions with his hands, "with someone with... experience?"

Bess nearly screeched. "Not for that, you silly man! Who do you think we are? It's just a good old double date! Dinner. Dancing."

"Oh ho ho, there's dancing, and then there's dancing," he said with a knowing look.

"No, when I say dancing, I mean dancing as in, actual feet on the dance floor dancing. I am not speaking euphemistically," she said rolling her eyes. "Niles and I will be there the whole time. We thought that perhaps she needed learn how to handle herself with a man who is suave. Someone gallant. A man who knows to open the door. Is a good conversationalist. It will be like finishing school. But for dating."

"But -- but -- but why? How'd you come up with this crazy idea?"

Bess thought through her reply very carefully. "The other night, Jane went out on her own and was, well, approached by a man. She accepted his attentions, but got in a bit over her head. She was very lucky, because it turned out this man was a gentleman, and didn't try to take advantage of her." Bess looked him straight in the eye. "She has very little experience with men. She needs to be handled carefully. Like a delicate... flower."

John furrowed his brow and turned to look at Bess with a confused look on his face that made him look like a bit like a little boy. "Are you telling me that she's never even dated before?"

"That's exactly what I'm telling you. Now, shall we go speak with Miss Woods before she hears about last night from Priscilla herself?"

"Yeah..." he drawled. "And after that, I really need to call Jack," he said, with a bit of envy in his voice.

oOo

Bess and John had a successful meeting with Miss Woods. If there was one thing that she had
learned over the years, it was how to read people. Bess Cooper was trustworthy, and if she said that Jane and John's interactions the night before had been innocent, then that was the case. She smirked as she recalled John's show of begging on bended knee to allow Jane to be his assistant. He had been desperate to get the chapter done; and apparently, desperate times called for desperate measures. Miss Woods could tell that Jane Smith was not the sort of girl to play temptress, and she wasn't Smith's type anyway, so all of the evidence was telling her to believe that John had simply needed her help on a strictly professional basis.

Miss Woods also came to second decision. Kitty Collins had put in her notice today, so she was going to say to heck with protocol and assign Jane the position. She didn't need anymore headaches stemming from office intrigues, and it was obvious they worked well together considering he had produced an entire chapter in one night, with her help.

Jane was called into Miss Woods's 'office' before lunch, and given a very stern lecture about propriety, given an official warning, and was dismissed. Her stomach finally settled down after lunch, which had consisted of several cups of tea, and a half-hearted conversation with Kitty Collins.

oOo

When Jane returned to her desk, she was cheered by two things. First, she found a note that John had slipped under her typewriter while she was on her lunch break.

"So happy to know that everything turned out well with Miss Woods. I'm looking forward to tonight, and I really hope you are too. Don't worry about Priscilla GiveHerTheBootings (PGHTBK). I could care less that she knows. Miss Woods really is a really, really lovely woman. Really. -J"

Jane smiled as she read the note, re-folded it carefully, and slipped it into her handbag, right next to the first note.

Second, Bess stopped by her desk and pulled her into the ladies room. Bess's luncheon appointment had turned out to be a trip to Henrik's, where she bought Jane yet another ensemble. Jane nervously looked at the outfit, and Bess had made her promise that she would wear it tonight, no matter how self-conscious she may feel.

"Jane darling, trust me, you will look smashing. These trousers are very fashionable, and if you want to impress John, these will do the trick." Jane had been completely dumbfounded by both the gift and Bess's attitude change, and agreed to wear the clothing, even though she knew she would feel completely exposed in the outfit.

At 5:00 on the dot, John stopped by her desk, and she reluctantly agreed to allow him to drive her home so that she could change prior to dinner.

John was disappointed when Jane asked him to stay in his car while she went up to her flat to change.

"John it simply wouldn't be proper," she said, blushing. "The building is full of little old ladies with wagging tongues who would be thrilled to tell Bess that her new flatmate brought a man upstairs while she was out. It'd be horrifying. I'll be down in just a few minutes, all right?"

He agreed with a great dramatic and teasing show of disappointment, to which Jane blushed again.

"Remember, casual, Jane. This place is very modest, but they make the best curry in London."
"Just as long as they haven't doctored it up with some alien spice mixture. I don't want to end up in the same fix as Iris," she said with a shy smile.

Privately, John agreed that Jane was right to be cautious, and he certainly wasn't ready to receive another dress-down for ungentlemanly and thoughtless behavior from Bess Cooper. He didn't want Niles angry at him, either. He knew quite a bit about the British intelligence structure, and although Jack had never fessed up to it, John had a strong suspicion that he worked somewhere within that system. And if that were the case, and Niles worked there as well, then Bess was right. Niles would know how to inflict pain a million different ways.

His thoughts floated back to Jack. He wasn't sure what to do with the new knowledge that Jane had a blind date with his wild friend. He wondered if he should simply come right out and ask her about it. He didn't come to a conclusion, and decided to ponder the problem. He decided to have a conversation with Jack first.

Thanks to the amazing amounts of hairspray that Bess had applied to Jane's hair that morning, the French twist still held. She examined herself in the mirror by the front door, and then Jane decided to take Bess's advice and put on some lipstick. Her hand shook as she dabbed a bit of the frosted coral lipstick to her lips. It was just enough to add a bit of shimmer, but not enough to draw too much attention. She knew the trousers would be attention-grabbing enough. Her heart was beating madly, and she felt like she just might throw up again. She let herself out before she lost her nerve, and locked the flat.

John leaned against his car as he waited impatiently for Jane. He found that he didn't like being away from her. While it had only been 24 hours since they had spoken their first meaningful words to each other, he found that he missed her voice and presence immensely. He looked at his watch and saw that only seven minutes had passed, but it seemed like an eternity.

He drew in a fast breath and then swallowed hard when he saw Jane emerge through the leaded glass doors of the beautiful Victorian building. He had assumed that she had a nice figure hidden under all of those layers, and the light pink suit she had worn today had given some evidence to the suspicions, but he was wholly unprepared for the reality.

The black cropped toreador trousers that she was sporting clung to her curves like a second skin, and the button-front white shirt that tied to the side accentuated her trim waist and hips. She had draped a sea green cardigan over her shoulders, and the color seemed to glow against her fair skin, causing her brown eyes to dance.

The particularly unusual and beautiful shade of green triggered a hazy memory from his childhood. He was standing by a big, round table. There were all sorts of gadgets on that table. Maybe they were his father's. He must have been very small, as the color seemed to encompass him, or perhaps it was at his eye level. Was he clinging to his mother's legs while she wore a dress of that same color? Or was the light within the room itself green? His mother was singing to him in one of the many languages she knew, and while he couldn't understand what she was singing, it was soothing. John couldn't quite pull the image into the foreground of his mind, and it slipped away.

John opened the door, took Jane's hand, and then helped her into the low seat.

"We won't get too far if you don't let go of my hand, John," Jane joked nervously as he continued to hold her hand for a long moment after she was settled.

He rubbed one of her fingers for a moment before releasing, but not before noticing her coral-varnished fingernails which were beginning to chip in places. The color looked familiar to him, but he couldn't place from where. John walked around to the driver's side and scowled, deep in thought
for a moment. He shook off the feeling of familiarity and got in, a smile on his face once again.

Jane sat primly with her hands in her lap, trying to pretend it was all new. "So," she said, nervously. "Wow. A real honest to goodness Aston Martin. Never thought I'd get to ride in such a nice car." She ran her hand along the door handle, examining the trim and electric window switch.

"She's pretty isn't she?"

"Gorgeous," she replied still somewhat in awe even though she'd ridden in the vehicle once before. "Seems so much bigger inside than it should be."

"I thought that too! I think it must be the large windows. It's one of the reasons I chose her."

Jane looked out the window, watching the world go by until John broke the somewhat awkward silence. "I told you all about myself, now it's your turn, Jane."

"Um, well, not much to tell. Grew up in Chipping Norton with my mum. Dad was a career army man, but I never knew him. He died at the Battle of Dunkirk, before I was even born." She smiled wistfully. "He was a real life hero. Saved about a hundred of his men."

"Seems both of our fathers were extraordinary men," John offered with a smile. "So you're what, 22? 23?"

"I'm 22. Sometimes I feel a lot younger, though, like today," she said a bit downhearted. But before John could say anything, she continued. "I was always bright, so I thought about being a teacher, and I would've easily qualified for a grant to go to university. Even got my A Levels, but when the time came to make a decision about continuing on to university, I was frightened to leave home. I couldn't go through with it, so I left school when I was 18. I ended up working as a transcriptionist at the hospital where Mum was a nurse. I was content. I was settled. But when she died--"

John squeezed her hand. "It's never easy to lose someone you love, Jane. It was recent, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Only three months now. It was cancer."

"I hate that disease," he growled angrily. "And there are so many cures out there just waiting to be discovered. It would've been so easy for me to take her to that hospital on... on... that... where they... where they..." he drifted off with a confused look on his face. "Um... sorry. Not... sure what I was saying there for a moment."

"S'allright," she replied. "I don't mind. It's okay to talk about it. Besides, you were behind kind."

"Seems we are two wandering orphans," he said, swallowing hard.

"I suppose we are," she replied, looking at him fondly.

They dropped the subject of her background, and were silent the rest of the way to the restaurant. It wasn't an awkward silence, though. Somewhere along the way, John and Jane found each other's hands. They never let go once, not even when he needed to shift.

John's mood changed as the car slowed to a stop in a humble neighborhood. "And here we are! Old Delhi. Best curry in the greater London metropolitan area." John quickly found a parking space, as this part of the city was rarely busy, especially on a Tuesday night.

Jane started to open her door. "Nope! That's my job," he said. A wave of déjà vu overcame him and he looked over at the girl sitting to his left. He unfolded himself out of the car, his brow furrowed.
"Everything all right?" Jane asked nervously, sensing that the wheels in his head were turning.

"Yep. Right as rain," he said, opening her door and helping her out by the hand. John locked the car, and then placed his hand at the small of her back to guide her toward the entrance of the restaurant.

Jane shivered at the touch, and yet again, John felt like he'd been through all of this before. But this time, he realized when. Saturday night. He looked over at Jane and studied her profile. The resemblance she bore to Rose was more than uncanny, it was identical. He felt the compelling urge to remove her glasses.

"Do you have any relatives? Any distant relatives even, Jane? I know someone who bears a striking resemblance to you."

Jane's stomach lurched violently. She tripped over the old wooden threshold as she walked through the door that John held open for her, but John caught her before she could stumble and fall.

"N-no, just me... th-that I know of. Last of the Smiths."

"So no rich Aunt Bess, then?" he probed, on a hunch.

Jane's eyes went wide and she laughed nervously. "Only Bess I know is my roommate, and no, she's not my aunt. She's just Bess," she shrugged one shoulder. "Best friend a girl could have."

He froze. I never even rung up Bess. She's probably worried sick. What time is it anyway? Rose's panicky, cockney-accented words at 2:00 am at the Tiki Tiki rang through John's mind. Rose hadn't worried about not ringing her Aunt Bess, she'd simply called her Bess. It wasn't until the phone call on Monday that she'd referred to her as her rich Aunt Bess.

And then there was Bess. Bess had been trying to tell him something. Bess Cooper. Bess Cooper... She went out alone on Saturday. She met a man. She was in over her head. Treat her like a delicate flower.

His first attraction to Jane, if he were being honest with himself, wasn't primarily physical. Not that she wasn't a very pretty girl when one peeled back the distracting layers that she wore to avoid unwanted attention. What had drawn him to Jane Smith was her mind, her kindness and sincerity. Even her shyness and timidity were endearing. He'd wanted to be the one to draw her out of her shell, to make her trust him.

Rose Tyler, on the other hand had dazzled him with her beauty. She was like a shining star, and he couldn't look away. It was only after he had been hooked by the immediacy of her physical charms that he had realized she was much more than a beautiful woman, and he had become ensnared by her personality.

Jane turned slowly and looked up at him, hands shaking, hoping she wouldn't have to speak, because she probably wouldn't have been able to find her voice. His brows were furrowed, his face severe as he tried to work out the puzzle that was Jane and Rose. He reached out his hand and brushed her flushed cheek with the back of his fingers. He looked beyond her glasses, deep into her eyes, but he saw a look of terror in them, so he pulled his hand away, not wanting to further frighten this precious girl.

It was like a bell rang in John's head, or blinders fell from his eyes, or he saw the light, or any one of those million other descriptions that described the feeling of his Aha! Moment. He really looked at Jane, maybe for the very first time. He studied her face. He scrutinized her eyes. He noted the
color of her hair, the bow of her lips. He thought of the tongue peeking smile that drove him nearly mad, that made him desperate to know how her lips would taste, how it would feel for their tongues to dance.

John had described Jane and Rose as two sides of the same golden coin. He couldn't understand how he could be so completely in love with two women, and now he knew that he wasn't.

*Treat her like a delicate flower.* He swallowed hard. *Treat her like a Rose…*

The two women were one and the same.

He swallowed hard, relaxed his face and smiled softly at the woman beside him. He felt no judgement at her deception, and wasn't sure why, as he should have been furious. Instead, he felt even more drawn to her. The 'why' of her actions didn't matter right now. There would be time enough to discover her reasons. Instead, all he felt was relief washing over him as he realised that he wouldn't have to choose between Jane and Rose. It would have been impossible. But now, none of them would be losers in this complicated love triangle.

John brought Jane's hand to his mouth, closed his eyes and kissed her knuckles, pouring relief and happiness into the touch of his lips. He could feel her small hand trembling beneath his lips. He squeezed it tenderly, desperate to calm her fears.

And then he opened his eyes and led her to the hostess stand, his head held high.

"Table for two please. Is that private one in the back corner available?"
Chapter Summary

John is patient. John recites poetry. John is a gentleman. John is a wonderful kisser.
Lucky, lucky Jane!

Chapter Ten: John & Jane & Robert Burns

Just one hour ago, Jane had been quaking in her brand new Audrey Hepburn black ballet flats. But now here she was sitting across from John. And she was having the time of her life, and possibly eating the best food she'd ever tasted, too. She wasn't sure if it was the chef's skill, or John's company, though.

One hour ago, John had studied her in such an intense way that she felt like he had X-ray vision into her mind. Jane was positive that he had figured out her secret, that he knew that she and Rose Tyler were one and the same. But then the fierce scrutiny had simply stopped. A beautiful smile had taken over his face, the one that put those endearing, soft wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. And that smile had not disappeared ever since.

Dinner had been delicious, as promised, even if it was ridiculously spicy. He'd teased her about alien curry as she fanned her mouth and gulped water seeking relief from the heat. He spoon fed her cooling cucumber raita and tore off pieces of naan encouraging her to eat it to soothe the burn, while she laughed so hard she had a difficult time swallowing.

Most of the time, the conversation had been light and easy. But a few times, Jane had found herself blushing fiercely as he teased, flirted, and complimented her hair, clothing, intellect, any and everything about her. She had never been the recipient of such attention, not even that night she spent as Rose.

"You have such lovely eyes, Jane. Pity you hide them behind those glasses. Would you take them off, just for a moment? For me?" he asked boldly.

Jane's shy eyes popped open wide, and her body became tense. Her disguise would be gone. She couldn't remove her spectacles. "I-I can't see without them properly." She saw the disappointed look on his face. "Maybe... maybe later?" she offered, with no intention of following through.

John's mouth twitched into a small, knowing smile for the briefest of moments, and then the flirtatious look in his eyes resurfaced.

Jane frowned. "I hate these glasses. I don't feel pretty in 'em." She didn't mean to say it out loud.

John sat up straight and crossed his arms. "Let me tell you something, Miss Smith. You could wear a paper bag on your head. You could cut out holes for your eyes," his voice softened, "and I would still think you had the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen in the universe." He leaned on his elbows staring at her face. "But I'd rather you didn't wear a paper bag on your head because then I wouldn't be able to see the beautiful face that surrounds those beautiful eyes."

For the thousandth time that evening, Jane felt her cheeks burning. What she didn't know was that
John had decided it was his goal to keep Jane's face tinged with pink as much as possible.

"So Jane Smith, how are you feeling? Tired? We had a very long night, after all," John said, as he casually leaned back in his chair, and took a sip of jasmine tea.

"I should be, but I'm not." Jane ran her finger around the rim of teacup. She laughed a bit. "Can't believe we fell asleep in your office. Glad it was Bess who found us," she said with a half smile. "She's probably the only one who'd believe that nothing happened." Jane looked up at the handsome man across the table from her, again, blushing fiercely.

"Who says nothing happened?" he asked, leaning forward suddenly.

Jane's eyes went wide. "You mean while I was asleep you weren't asleep? You promised--"


"Oh?" Jane asked, looking down into her tea.

"Oh yes. I think something happened that is going to have the office gossips buzzing for weeks."

Jane's eyes snapped up to meet his. "W-what?" she stuttered.

"Didn't you hear? John Smith asked Jane Smith to go out for dinner with him. I heard they had an awfully nice time together, and that he even stole a kiss." John sat back, crossed his arms and scrutinized Jane's face, watching with anticipation for her reaction. He was thrilled when he saw the corners of her mouth quiver before forming into a shy smile.

"I think that could be arranged," she replied quietly and then quickly changed the subject. "I didn't tell you about the strange dream I had while we napped. I dreamed that you and me and this really handsome bloke with dark brown hair were traveling together. These silly looking robots kidnapped me because they were trying to trap you. They made it look like--"

"You'd been turned to dust," John interrupted.

"Uh... huh..." Jane agreed slowly.

"I was... heartbroken." John had an odd look on his face.

"But then you came for me..." Jane added wistfully.

John raised an eyebrow. "Jane, I had that same dream. You and me and a friend of mine, Jack, and yeah, he's really good looking... we were traveling together in the Professor's red phone booth."

"Yes! Except it was blue, like a police box, and inside it looked like--"

"A cave, right?" John interrupted. "And the lights were green... the color of your jumper--"

Jane picked up the description. "And in the middle of this huge cave room was this round table with stuff all over it like pumps and wheels and--"

"Like a Rube Goldberg contraption?" John suggested.

"I don't know what that is, but if you say so. And above the table thing were the green lights, and they sort of pumped up and down." Jane leaned forward. "Don't you think that us having the same exact dream is a bit--"
"Unusual?" John offered.

"That's one word for it," Jane said nervously.

Before they could discuss their dream further, two women approached their table. They flanked John, each woman looping an arm through one of his. They were identical: ginger, tall, slender, buxom, beautiful, and extremely comfortable entering personal space.

The woman on his left leaned over just a little more than necessary, and her loosely fitted shirt gaped open, revealing a peek of her ample bust. "Hi Johnny," she whispered in his ear.

"Johnny, aren't you even going to say hello?" the second woman asked with a pout.

John looked at the second woman blankly.

"Don't you remember us, Johnny? The three of us caused a sensation when we won the dance contest at the Tiki." The first woman shimmied her shoulders and giggled.

"Oh. Right. You're Veronica Nightingale," he replied, sheepishly. "No, Veronica's in your left. I'm Vanessa." The second woman laughed herself silly.

"Jane Smith, this is Vanessa Nightingale, and her twin sister, Veronica. We met at the Tiki Tiki Club a few weeks ago," John said awkwardly, introducing the women.

"Johnny, you didn't tell us you had a little sister. How sweet of you to take her out to dinner," Veronica said, treacly sweet. "We were wondering when we would see you again, Johnny. We were just talking about you the other day, weren't we Vanessa?"

Veronica ran her hand up and down his upper arm.

"That's right, just the other day. We were wondering what had become of you. You put us in that taxicab and we never heard from you again. We were awfully good together, Johnny, and we thought you liked us," Vanessa said with a little pout.

Veronica turned to Jane. "So Johnny hasn't mentioned us then?"

"She's not my sister. She's my date," John answered firmly, reaching across the table and taking Jane's hand.

Jane smiled softly.

"Oh, so, so sorry! My mistake. You just don't seem to be Johnny's type," Vanessa said with a forced smile, looking at Jane.

"I guess we will leave the two of you alone then. Call us sometime Johnny," Veronica looked at Jane critically, and then turned her attention back at John, "when you're ready to have some fun."

The two women walked back to their table, and their dates, matching hips swinging rhythmically.

"I wouldn't worry too much about gossip, John." Jane retracted her hand from his, folded and re-folded the cloth in her lap nervously. "I doubt that anyone would even believe that we went out, me being me and you being, well, you," she stated quietly.

Jane looked over her shoulder at the two ginger-haired beauties.

"You heard them, I never called them back, now did I? Am I here with them? Or am I here with
"you?" John said plainly.

He stretched his hand out to her, and wiggled his fingers. Hesitantly, she placed her hand into his. He squeezed it, and then rested their joined hands on the table.

"I really couldn't give a toss what other people believe or don't believe. I only care about what I think, and I think I'm... I think you're the best thing to happen to me in, well, forever. So why don't we finish this evening with a walk along the river? Or maybe we could take a stroll through Victoria Gardens? There's an old friend of mine I'd like you to meet."

Jane smiled at that, and then looked down at her empty plate. "Won't the Gardens be closed by now? It's nearly dark."

"I'm counting on it," he replied with a wink. "Well? What are we waiting for? Let's go walk off dinner."

oOo

The lights of Parliament shimmered and rippled in the water of the Thames, and Big Ben showed it was 7:37. It was an unusually warm evening for April, though cool enough that Jane decided to slip on her green jumper. Yesterday's rain had blown through, leaving behind a nearly dark sky sprinkled with stars, and a silver sliver of a moon hanging low in the sky.

As they ambled across Westminster Bridge, Jane licked a strawberry ice cream and John, vanilla. They had stumbled upon a street vendor who was still open, taking advantage of Londoners enjoying the rare warmth on this beautiful night.

"You're awfully far away," John commented, breaking their comfortable silence.

"Hmm?" Jane replied absently, as she ate her ice cream.

"You seem preoccupied."

She turned to him. "Sorry. I guess I am."

"Penny?"

"Only thinking that I feel like this is sort of a dream. A few weeks ago, I had only started working at Prescott, I was reading your books in secret--"

"Secret? Why?" he laughed.

"I thought Bess might make fun of me. And well, they're a bit... racy."

"Have to keep the readers hooked somehow," he said, winking.

"You do a good job of it." Jane bit her lower lip for a minute. "Bess likes 'em, too. I suggested she read them, and I think I've got her hooked."

"Fantastic. I'll be able to pay my housekeeper this month," he joked.

"I actually have a best friend now, a beautiful place to live in the most beautiful neighborhood in London. I feel like I'm Cinderella, and Bess is my fairy godmother. I keep waiting for midnight to strike."

"So if you're Cinderella, what does that make me? One of your footmen who was a mouse? The
lizard who became the coachman? Um, the dog who became the horse? You better not tell me I'm the pumpkin."

"The prince," Jane offered shyly.

"Of course I am," he said with a half smile. He ate the last bit of his ice cream, quickly munched the cone, and then glanced a hers greedily. "Can I taste yours?" They exited the bridge and turned the corner onto the walkway by the river.

"But I've been licking it. It's got my germs all over it," she replied with a curious look on her face.

John stopped walking and tapped her shoulder to halt her. He looked at her lips, and then back at into her eyes. "I'm not too worried about your germs."

She blushed at his quick scrutiny, but was quickly snapped from her silence as he snatched the treat right out of her hands. "Hey! That's mine!" she laughed, and tried to take it back.

He held it high above his head and Jane jumped. Her efforts were futile as he had a distinct advantage in height.

"I will give it back on one condition," he said seriously.

"What?" Jane put her hands in her hips in mock anger.

"Let me have a taste of it," he said with a teasing grin.

"Well, there's not much I can do to stop you, now can I? I am a bit shorter than you, ya' know."

With a glint in his eye, he swirled his tongue around the cold, pink ice cream. "Mmmm, good. Not as good as banana of course, but strawberry is nice too, and both are an excellent source of potassium and vitamin A."

"Banana ice cream? Sounds interesting," she replied with a giggle.

"Oh no, not simply interesting, Jane. Banana ice cream is brilliant. You should try it sometime. Best I've ever had was on Zambala. We should go there sometime."

"Zambala? Where's that? Africa?" she said, giggling.

John got an odd look on his face and then scratched his cheek. "You know, I can't rightly remember. Must've been when I was in the army. Guess it'd be hard to pop on down to Africa for an ice cream."

John handed her the cone back. She looked at it for a moment, hesitated and then resumed eating. He smiled as he watched her out of the corner of his eye.

"Not so afraid of my germs then, are ye'?"

Jane blushed at the implication, but deflected. "It's really good ice cream. Didn't want to waste it."

"I wonder what strawberry-flavored Jane tastes like," he mused, just loud enough for Jane to hear.

Jane felt her stomach lurch and then she stumbled over a crack in the pavement, giggling nervously.

"Would you look at that sky. It's beautiful!" John stopped and looked up. He halted Jane, pulled her
close to his side and pointed upwards. He plunged one hand into a pocket. "See that? It's Hydra, the sea serpent. And there's the Crow and the Cup. And oh, that's an interesting pair. Canes Venatici and Coma Berenices. The two hunting dogs, Chara and Asterion are dragging their owner by the hair."

Jane looked up, following the line of his hand pointing skyward. John took the opportunity to steal her ice cream once again.

Jane squealed in protest. "Again with the thievery!" She rolled her eyes and crossed her arms, exasperated. "Do I get my treat back?" she replied, letting her guard down significantly.

"I need to think through my options. I think I see an opportunity here. I could simply give you your ice cream back, which is of course," he licked again, "the gentlemanly thing to do. And as I keep reminding you, I am a complete gentleman. Or," he said, taking another long lick and a small bite, "I could hold it for ransom. Which is not the gentlemanly thing to do."

Jane raised a single eyebrow. "Ransom? For ice cream?"

His eyes sparkled. "I could ask for something in return. Something equally as sweet and delicious, and enjoyable, perhaps even more enjoyable than this ice cream. You would get something, and I would get something and well really, we would both be getting something." He took another lick.

"Just tell me before you eat the whole thing up, you greedy man!" she laughed.

"Eh, eh, eh, no need to get tetchy. All I am asking for is a kiss."

"A-a kiss? What kind of kiss? Like on the cheek?"

"Mmmm, nope." He took a little bite.

"Uh... uh..." Jane stuttered, and nervously looked from side to side until her eyes rested on another couple not too far away. They were leaning on the railing looking out over the rippling water of the Thames, quietly talking. They appeared to be a bit older than John, perhaps in their forties. The man had his arm protectively around the woman's waist, and she was leaning her head against his shoulder. They looked perfectly content. She found herself wondering how they had found each other and how long had been together. She could see a golden wedding band glinting on the woman's finger.

She looked back at John and imagined herself a few years from now, walking along the Embankment. They’d be hand-in-hand, or maybe one of them would be pushing a pram. She knew she was letting her imagination run away from her. It was far too soon to be thinking of such things. He was the first man who had ever looked at her twice, and the first to even ask her out. She knew she was being silly and childish and far too romantic, and absolutely putting the cart before the horse, and probably setting herself up for heartbreak. But because he was the first man with whom she had ever imagined that she could spend the rest of her life, Jane Smith decided to be brave.

She took one step closer to John, squeezed her eyes shut, held her breath, grabbed his lapels and planted a firm kiss directly on his lips. It was the sort of kiss that a schoolgirl would give a boy on a dare, or during a game of Spin the Bottle at someone’s 13th birthday party. It wasn't soft, in fact it was rather hard, and it was definitely a bit awkward, but lips had touched lips, and even through the deficiency of technique, they both felt a spark.

She released his lapels and abruptly pulled away, opened her eyes feeling a bit dizzy, and saw a dazed John staring back at her with a goofy grin on his face. He handed her cone back with a hard
swallow. Jane bit her lip and looked away. Her face was burning pink from embarrassment.

"If I steal your cone again, can I have another?" he finally asked.

Jane nodded her head once. He took her cone from her hand and tossed it over his shoulder. The older couple had moved on, so they were now alone under the starry sky. John brushed the back of his hand on Jane's burning cheek.

"Are you nervous?" asked John tenderly.

Jane found that she couldn't answer with words, so she simply nodded.

John put his hands on her shoulders and hesitated for a moment before he leaned in. He brushed his lips across hers, feather light; it was more of a foretaste than a kiss, to ease Jane into the idea.

Jane's breath hitch when he pulled his lips away, and her arms felt like lead against her sides. Instinctively, she fought gravity, raised them slowly, and placed them on each side of his chest.

"Feel my heart beating madly? I'm just as nervous as you are," he whispered, an inch away from her mouth. "I've never had the privilege of giving a first kiss. And oh, how so very deserving you are, Jane Smith." Without further hesitation, he pressed his lips to hers again.

Jane's restless hands spread open, wanting to feel as much of John's lean and muscular chest as she could. She pressed herself closer to him, trapping her hands between their bodies. John moved one of his hands from her shoulder to cradle her head, and moved the other to the center of her back, so he could rub gentle circles, hoping to ease her nervousness.

She craved even more contact with his warm body, so she pulled her hands free and wrapped her arms around his back as he continued to massage her lips. He didn't deepen the kiss past her lips, but he did draw every last bit of pleasure from the her pink soft mouth, first sucking the lower lip, then moving to the top, then licking her lips.

Jane was breathing hard now, clearly affected by his physical touch. John felt himself becoming quickly aroused, and not wanting to startle her, he pulled away, gaining a bit of space between their bodies.

Jane touched her pink, swollen lips with her fingertips, her chest rising and falling, still breathing hard.

"Good kiss then?" he whispered.

She blinked slowly, mouth slack, and gazed into his eyes.

“I’ve rendered you speechless,” he boasted.

She bit her lip and looked away for a moment. “N-not that I have any ex-experience, but," she smiled shyly, "yes, it was… fantastic."

John waggled his eyebrows. “There are plenty more where that came from." John held out his hand to her. "I want to take you somewhere. It isn't far."

John led her along the Embankment walkway to the Victoria Embankment Gardens. The park was closed at this time of night in the spring, but he ventured onwards anyway, quickly pulling her along with a grin. She kept up with his jogging pace and before long they were inside the unlit gardens.
"Here we are. Bobby Burns." John looked up at the statue of the beloved Scottish poet.

"Are you going to recite 'Red Red Rose'?' she laughed nervously, but then blanched at the slip.

He half smiled at the allusion to her secret identity, and shook his head. "Better."

He took both of her hands into his, and paused for a moment before speaking softly.

"Humid seal of soft affections, Tenderest pledge of future bliss, Dearest tie of young connections, Love's first snowdrop, virgin kiss!"

Jane blushed and averted her eyes when John kissed her knuckles, his lips lingering far longer than a gentleman’s greeting.

"I'm not done, don't blush yet," he said with false seriousness. "Speaking silence, dumb confession, Passion's birth, and infant's play, Dove-like fondness, chaste concession, Glowing dawn of future day!"

He led her a few feet away to a bench, and sat her down. He went down on one knee keeping one of her hands tenderly between both of his.

"Sorrowing joy, Adieu's last action, Lingering lips must now disjoin, What words can ever speak affection, So thrilling and sincere as thine!"

Their eyes locked for a lingering moment. He arose from his kneeling position and sat next to her.

"That was beautiful. I don't know that one," Jane said quietly.

"It's The Parting Kiss."

Jane swallowed hard. They were completely alone in the darkened garden, save a Nightingale singing in a nearby tree.

"Never would've guessed you were a Burns scholar. There's so much about you I don't know."

John put his arm around her shoulder and pulled her nearer. "So Jane Smith, the question is, do you want to know me better?"

"Yes, John Smith, I do." Jane unclasped her folded hands, and allowed her pinkie finger to graze his leg. With a bit of hesitation, she leaned her head onto his shoulder.

"I have news," he said quietly.

"News?" Jane repeated.

"Very good news. Fantastic news." He paused. "Miss Woods has relented. Tomorrow, you will be my assistant. Officially."

"I will?" Jane's face lit up and she threw her arms around John's neck and hugged him tightly.

John put his arms around her, turning the hug into an embrace. "We are going to make a great team. Smith and Smith. We will have a lot of work to do. Are you up to the task?"

"I am. If we have half as much luck as we did last night, you'll have the book done in a month."

"There are some things you need to know, Jane. And I am in earnest, all right?" His sudden
seriousness caught her off guard, and she pulled out of his embrace.

"Priscilla and I... we never, well," he cleared his throat, "you know. And I'm very glad because she's a horrible person, and, well, because I met you."

"You didn't? She told me the two of you had, been intimate." She winced and looked down, "And she teased me saying well, that I wasn't woman enough for you." She blew out a puff of breath through her lips.

John placed a finger on her lips, but then smirked. "She's angry and jealous. You know what they say about a woman scorned. You're just going to have to take my word for it. We were never intimate. Second, I will never ever push you farther than you wish to go. But that doesn't mean I don't want to go farther with you. I am patient. And I certainly think you are woman enough." He cleared his throat.

Jane's eyes were wide as she understood the full implication of what he was telling her. He wanted her in a way she had never been wanted before. It was a both terrifying and thrilling. She needed to be forthright. He was a worldly man, and she was a simple, old-fashioned girl. "I-I believe in waiting until marriage." She couldn't meet John's eyes.

"I wouldn't have expected otherwise from you," he said quietly. "Lastly, I have a date on Saturday with someone." John still wasn't quite sure how to proceed. He wanted Jane to know that he valued her just as she was, and that she didn't need to be anyone else. However, he also knew that she must have had a reason for inventing that Rose person. "I met her last week. We are going on a picnic on Saturday."

John observed her carefully. She looked down at her fingernails and began to pick at them. "Do you like her?"

"I do," he replied. Of course it was the truth. "But she's not Jane Smith. The two of you are different."

Jane decided to change the subject quickly. "I have a confession then as well. I have a date on Sunday night. A blind date. Bess's boyfriend, Niles, has made arrangements for me to see someone from his workplace. I really don't want to go, but I promised and, well, Bess has done so much for me, I feel like I owe it to her to go through with it."

"How about this. I go on my date on Saturday, you go on your date on Sunday, and we'll compare notes on Monday." John pushed a stray lock of hair out of Jane's face that had broken free of the hairspray.

"Isn't that a bit rude? To talk about our dates like that?" Jane asked, trying to be casual.

"Actually, I know the person you'll be seeing," John replied with a smirk. "He's quite handsome. I don't know if you'll look at me twice after you meet him. He may just sweep you off of your feet."

"Believe me, you have nothing to worry about," Jane said under her breath. John heard her, and smiled. "Hey! How do you know?"

"Bess told me this morning."

"She knew about this date too, didn't she? Before I knew that she knew."

"Yep. Gave me quite the lecture about how I should treat you, too. And she knows about my date"
on Saturday. She wanted to know what my intentions were towards you, and demanded to know if I was seeing anyone else."

"Are you seeing anyone else? I mean other than the woman on Saturday?" Jane asked, a bit disappointed.

"No one else, Jane." He put his finger under her chin to meet her eyes. "No one. You have quite a protector in Bess. You're lucky."

"Well I'm a grown woman, and sometimes she acts like she's my guardian, not my friend and flatmate."

"Maybe you need someone to look after you. You don't have a lot of experience with men, from what I can see."

"What?" she screeched. "What does that mean?"

"Well, uh, Bess just told me that you hadn't dated before and well, I would have to assume that, well…" His voice trailed off.

Jane furrowed her brows and crossed her arms angrily. "I told her that in confidence! I could just die of embarrassment right here on this bench." Jane covered her burning face with her hands.

"But why are you embarrassed?" John gently removed her hands from her face and held them.

Jane rolled her eyes, and hot tears welled up. "I feel like they're handling me. Like I'm some sort of project. Bess and Niles set me up on this blind date because I had one close call."

"What do you mean, close call?" John asked, worried. "Did someone try to take advantage of you?"

"No. No! No! He was a perfect gentleman," she stuttered. "I, um… met someone a… few days ago who… was interested in me and I didn’t, really, know how to handle myself. And well, I told Bess about it, and she thought I was unprepared. Told me that I got off lucky this time." Jane looked away, worried that her face would betray her nerves.

"So this man, was he good looking?" John asked slyly.

"Um, well, yes. He was very handsome. And nice and fun and intelligent, too."

"Sounds like you met your dream man. I'm sure I pale in comparison," he said with a pout.

"You're pretty much my dream man," she said to herself. "I said that out loud didn’t I?"

John raised his eyebrows, nodded, and smiled.

"Are you going to see him again?"

"He... he... I..."

"What?" John leaned in closer, breathing the question into her ear.

"I didn't let him know the real me."

"How's that?"
"Well, I sort of, um, lied to him. I was dressed differently and... and... I tried my hardest not to be shy... and... I... didn't wear my glasses and I felt like a different person. He made me feel... special."

"A fake persona then?" John's lips were again within inches of hers. "Why?"

"Was scared. Like I am now. I... just... Oh John, you need to know that I--"

Her declaration was silenced when John wrapped his arms around Jane and pulled her close, kissing her fervently. And this time Jane opened her mouth in invitation, and John accepted. Their tongues explored, danced, and battled as they savored each others' tastes. Jane pressed herself up against him and ran her fingers through his hair, mussing the style until it was ridiculously sticking up in a million directions. John moved his hand under her shirt to feel the soft skin of her lower back and then moved it around to the front between their bodies. His hand crept upward, and his fingertips grazed her ribcage, dangerously close to her breasts.

Jane pulled away, breathless. "Too much! I need, I need you to stop."

John swallowed hard, just as breathless as Jane, and then he broke into a wide grin. "Told you that you are definitely woman enough."

Jane pressed her lips together to stop herself from smiling, but couldn't help it. She looked away avoiding his eye contact, blushing fiercely. John snuck one more kiss on her cheek and she turned and smiled at him.

"Are you ready to go home? It's getting late, and you need your rest. Big day tomorrow."

John stood up, and pulled her from the bench, and hand-in-hand they walked back across Westminster Bridge to his car, which was parked on the other side of the river. The ride to her flat was nearly silent, as they simply held hands and smiled at each other from time to time, and before they knew it, they had arrived at her flat. He ran around to her door and escorted her out of the car and up the steps to the landing.

Jane put her hands on his chest and pressed a soft, lingering kiss to his lips. "Thank you, John. It was a perfect night. Everything about it. I couldn't have dreamt up a more perfect first kiss."

“Aye.” He smiled softly. “Which window is yours?” John looked up at the building behind him.

"We're on the second storey, and my bedroom," Jane's voice hitched at that word, "is the second window from the left corner, right up there."

"Second storey, second from the left. Got it. Let me know you're safely inside by turning on your light and waving to me from your window, all right?"

“Okay.” She placed her hand on his arm, and then slipped through the leaded-glass front door of her building.

John looked up, watching for the sign that she was safe. A soft light glowed, and then she appeared in the window. They both waved goodbye. Satisfied that she was safe, he climbed into his car and made his way home, only a few blessed blocks away.

oOo

When John arrived at his flat, the first thing he did was pick up the phone and ring Jack.

"Rose is Jane, Jane is Rose," John blurted.

"Is that you, Doc? Of course it is. Who else would call me at this time of night and just start talking my ear off."

"Jane. Smith. Is. Rose. Tyler. They are the same person!"

"How? What?" Jack said as he started to put the pieces together in his mind. "Start at the beginning Doc."

"I spent the night with Jane Smith last night and-"

"You what!" exclaimed Jack.

"Not like that. At the office. Her friend knew about it, and now her boss knows, too. Anyway, we worked on chapter one of my new book. Got it done. Took all night. So this morning, really early, she called her flatmate Bess, you know her right? Niles's girl?" John was speaking so quickly that Jack was having a hard time keeping up. "Jane asked Bess to bring her a change of clothes when she came into work this morning. I kept wondering why that name was so familiar. Anyway, Bess brought in the clothing, and ripped me to shreds for possibly damaging Jane's character. We both assured Bess that nothing had happened. But then I told her that I'd asked Jane to dinner tonight. And listen to this. Bess says, 'handle her carefully, like a delicate flower,' and of course I am thinking she's saying this because I am this worldly man about town and Jane is a sweet innocent girl, which she is, by the way and speaking of that Harkness, you had better not pull any sex whammy on her on Sunday night on that blind date. You didn't know that did you? Niles set you up with Jane! But back to me. So Bess is telling me without really telling me that Jane is Rose. Get it? Delicate flower? Rose? Flower? So we are waiting to be seated at the restaurant earlier tonight and I look over at her and it dawns on me. Just out of the blue. I look at her profile and Jane doesn't bear a resemblance to Rose, Jane is Rose."

"Okay, John, breathe. Calm down you or you are going to hyperventilate and you aren't... Anyway you need to breathe. You're sure about this? Did you ask Jane about it?"

"No, I didn't. I wanted to give her a chance to explain it to me herself."

"And have you heard from Rose at all? What happens if you run into her again. I mean, run into Jane pretending to be her?" Jack pinched the bridge of his nose.

"Well, I haven't thought that through. And I did hear from her. She called me today, that's who was on the other line when we were talking."

"Was wondering why you ditched me."

"We're going on a country picnic on Saturday. Thought we'd go to Stratford upon Avon."

"Promise me you'll tell her, John," Jack implored. "Tell Jane you know about Rose. Don't let this go too far or someone is going to end up getting hurt, and it will most likely be her."

"You're right." John sighed. "Hey Jack, I have to tell you about the weird dream I had last night while I was sleeping on the couch at my office."

"Don't tell me. You dreamed about the dancing banana again. I'm pretty sure I know what that means."

"No dancing banana. You were in it. I dreamed that you and me and Jane were traveling together. I
thought Jane had been killed, but she wasn't really dead. And remember Metaltron? That robot that I came up with a couple of weeks ago? Well, there were thousands and thousands of them. They wanted to make me think she was dead, but they had actually kidnapped her to lure me into their trap. And you were there rallying all of these people to fight the Metaltrons."

Jack didn't say anything.

"Isn't that a crazy dream?" John laughed.

"Yeah, John. That sure is crazy all right." He laughed dryly.

"But that's not even the weirdest thing. Jane had the *exact* same dream. At the same time. Honest to Pete. Same exact dream, complete with you."

"Oh... that is... that is... just... one gigantic coincidence that is." Jack cringed and felt his stomach tie into knots.

"Hey, thanks for the advice, Jack-o." John rang off without saying goodbye.

oOo

Jack pulled out a small computer tablet that certainly didn't belong in 1963 London. He made a few swipes with his fingertips and watched as the Doctor and Rose's faces appeared. He re-watched the instructional video recording that the Doctor had left for him to see on the TARDIS.

Jack closed his eyes and scrubbed his hair as worries tumbled through his mind. "He's remembering. I wonder if falling in love with Jane is making him remember too soon. Is she remembering too? I think I need to talk to Bess. Maybe she's told Bess her dreams. Or maybe I should just tell Bess the truth. No, that's not a good idea. Maybe I should tell Niles. Oh, I don't know what the hell I'm supposed to be doing."

Jack slammed his fist on the counter. "Damn it Doc, you told me why you need to be kept safe, but you didn't tell me what to do if you actually fell in love with your wife and started remembering too soon."
Chapter Summary

Jane and Bess chat. John can't stay away from Jane.

Chapter Notes

I'm tired of staring at the next five chapters. Yes, I am sure there are typos and grammar problems that I have missed -- even after combing through the chapters ten or so times.

Chapter 11 - John & Jane After the Date

Jane let herself into her darkened flat. Bess's coat and handbag were not hanging on the coat rack by the front door, so Bess was still at work. As she had promised John, Jane went to her bedroom window to let him know she was safely inside. She watched as his car pulled away, already missing him desperately.

Floating on a cloud of happiness, she drew the drapes, dreamily humming, *Que Sera, Sera*. She changed into her favourite nightgown. White cotton lawn was trimmed with lace around the cuffs and collar, and a tiny pink bow graced the neck. It was old-fashioned and soft and comforting, and even though it covered her from neck to toe, she still felt pretty when she wore it. She prepared tea, and then sat on the sofa to calm herself.

Jane brought the fine china teacup to her lips. The warmth of the fragrant tea flooded her mind with memories of John's warm lips caressing hers. Her stomach flipped and she flushed recalling the foreign and somewhat startling feeling of his tongue touching hers! She hid a little smile behind her hand.

It had been thrilling when he'd traced the seam of her lips with the tip of his tongue. That first kiss... It had been bliss. And just like in a romantic, Doris Day movie, her leg had popped. Jane released a happy sigh, curled her legs underneath herself, and leaned against the sofa. And then she started to think about the kiss by the statue. Now *that* kiss... She’d never felt *anything* like that! She'd read about French kissing in *his* books! Jane flushed again letting it all sink in. The man who had kissed her tonight, the one who'd she'd been pining after, he actually wrote about this sort of thing! And now she'd actually shared *that kind* of a kiss! With *him!*

The remembered how his tongue caressed hers. She’d felt so *naughty* at first, but still, it had given her a secret thrill. She bit her lip and pondered for a minute, *But is it really? Is it really wrong? What would mum think about me if she knew? It’s me who let him kiss me like that! And on the first date! He’s the one who asked if he should stop.*

Jane closed her eyes, sighed, and relaxed her head against the sofa. Memories of her mother's voice washed over her.
"Wait for the right one, my sweet, darling girl. Don't be fooled by a man who promises you the moon and the stars, but asks for something in return. It's better to never marry than marry the wrong man. But that's not going to happen to you. He is going to find you, or you will find him, and I have a feeling you will know right away. Me and your dad, we knew. But if you have doubts, go slowly. Please be careful, sweetheart."

*Is this what it feels like to be in love?*

Jane was jarred from her reverie by the clanging of the telephone.

"Did you have a good time, darling?" Bess asked.

"It was lovely," Jane replied, dreamily. "When will you be home?"

"Niles is bringing the car around right now. You'll still be up in fifteen minutes, won't you? I'd love to hear how it went, that is, if you would like to tell me."

"I doubt I could even sleep, actually," she laughed. "See you in a little bit then."

She bit her lip, and smiled, feeling an urge to read, for the umpteenth time, the scene where the Professor and Iris kissed shared their first kiss. She wanted to read John’s words, now that she knew how his lips felt on hers, to imagine she was Iris, and John was the Professor.

Her room felt stuffy, so she opened the window a few inches more. Another wave of fresh air washed over her, so she stayed there, pausing to look at the night sky -- to look up at the twinkling stars that she'd been kissed under.

Movement below caught her eye. Partially obscured by shadows, she could see the figure of tall man looking right up at her window from across the street.

*John?* She smiled to herself, and then waved at him. But as soon as she did, the man disappeared deeper into the darkness. Jane scurried away from the window and switched off the lamp on her bedside table. She felt unsettled. She went straight to the front door and double checked the lock. She wrapped herself in a protective blanket to stave off the cold shiver that was running up and down her spine.

A few minutes later, she nearly spilled her cup of tea when she heard the lock rattle. Jane could feel her heart racing.

"Oh, what a relief. It's you."

"What's wrong, darling?" Bess asked, hanging up her coat and handbag.

"When you came home, did you see a man loitering about across the street? I saw someone watching me when I was looking out my window a few minutes ago."

"You sure it wasn't John preparing to serenade you or recite Keats?" Bess replied blithely.

"I waved at him, but he ran off."

Bess furrowed her brow. "Do you want me to call Niles?" She inserted her finger into the rotary dial.

Jane shook her head. "Maybe it was John, and he was embarrassed that I caught him," she said, trying to calm her own nerves.
"Probably right," Bess agreed.

"Cuppa?" offered Jane, holding up her teacup.

"Sounds lovely. I'll go get my night things on, and we'll have a nice chat."

Bess quickly changed and returned to find Jane sitting on the sofa with a faraway, utterly contented look on her face.

"That good, huh?"

"Hmmm?" Jane slowly came out of her daydream of ice cream-flavoured kisses and starlight.

"Tell me all about your night," Bess said, making herself comfortable.

Jane was quiet for a moment. "I had the best night of my life, Bess," she said in an almost whisper, as if she were afraid to speak too loudly or the moment would disappear like a soap bubble on the wind. "He took me to dinner at this little Indian restaurant. It wasn't impressive on the outside, but the food was so delicious. And we talked and laughed. It felt so natural. I wasn't nervous at all. But then these two women that he knew from one of those nights of his out dancing or something came up to the table, and were fawning all over him. I thought they were going to kiss him right then and there. They were twins, even. Gorgeous ginger haired twins."

"You don't seem too upset about it," Bess observed.

"Because I'm not. I was at first. But then when one of them said something unkind -- she actually said that it was nice that he'd taken his little sister out for dinner--"

"What'd you say to that?" Bess gasped.

"Nothing, but I felt like crawling under the table."

"And what did John say?"

A slow smile grew on Jane's face. She ran her finger around the rib of her teacup. "He let them know, in no uncertain terms, that I was there with him. As his date. And the way he said it. He wasn't just being kind. It seemed like he wanted me to know just as much as he wanted them to know."

Bess raised an eyebrow. "Go on."

"One of them said that he should call them when he was ready to have fun. Said that I didn't look like his type."

"Spiteful cow," Bess said.

Jane laughed but then sighed. "I said something about no one ever believing that I'd actually gone on a date with him."

"Oh, Jane," Bess said, disappointed in her friend. "You've got to stop thinking such terrible things about yourself. He was there with you, not those two bimbos, right?" Bess’s ears rang, but the feeling quickly faded.

"Bess, how…? That's exactly what John said." Jane shook her head.

Bess she shrugged it off.
"And he told me that it only mattered what he thought, not what other people thought." The dreamy look returned to Jane’s face. “He told me that my eyes are beautiful. And then he told me that he planned on stealing... a kiss. But the way he said it, it was sweet, like he was asking without coming out and asking."

Again, Bess raised an eyebrow. "What next?"

"Since it was such a lovely evening, we went for a walk along the river. Had ice cream. We talked some more.” Jane looked down and blushed.

"Just talked?" Bess asked.

"Bess, how does a person know they are in love?" Jane said, sidestepping Bess's question.

"Do you think you are?" Bess asked quietly.

"I..." She shook her head. "I have nothing to compare this feeling to. It's not like I am hearing singing or anything. But the minute he dropped me off, it was as if a part of me was missing. And the whole night, I felt safe with him. Never worried that he'd try anything, well, you know…” Her face pinched.

A small smile appeared on Bess's face for just a moment and then disappeared. "What about him? How do you think he feels about you?” Bess asked, gently.

"He did it. He kissed me," Jane answered quietly, "several times."

"Unfortunately, that doesn't mean anything definitive, darling. It could mean he simply finds you attractive." She leaned forward. "But was he any good?" Bess asked wickedly.

"Bess!" Jane protested.

"Well, was he?" she pressed.

"I thought I just might melt from the inside out," Jane finally replied, laughing. Bess patted Jane's hand.

"He recited Burns," Jane added.

"Well, now.”

"Down on one knee," Jane elaborated with a girlish giggle.

"You can't be serious!" Bess gushed.

"Completely! In front of the Burns statue in the Embankment Gardens. And then he kissed me again and it got to be a bit too much for me, and I stopped him, and he said... he said he'd wait for me."

"Wait for you in what way?" Bess knew what Jane was alluding to, but she wanted Jane to say it out loud.

Jane blew a puff of air through her lips. "He told me he would never push me to go farther — intimately — than I felt comfortable going."

“He sounds like a true gentleman,” Bess offered, sincerely.
"But he said something else. He didn't want me to think that he didn't want to, you know, go further. Oh this is embarrassing," she blurted out.

"Oh, it is not," Bess admonished in a rather lecturing tone before she softened her voice again. "You need to be able to talk to someone."

"I told him... I- I told him I always planned on waiting until I was married to, well, do... things, and he said..." her voice trailed off.

"What did he say?" Bess asked breathlessly.

Jane looked directly at her friend. "He said he expected nothing less from me."

"Jane Smith, I do believe he is smitten," Bess said brightly.

Jane paused. "But how long will he wait? I mean, it's one thing for him to say he'll wait for me, but what happens when he gets tired of waiting?"

"He may very well get tired of waiting, and he may try to persuade you to change your mind, and when that time comes, I suppose that's up to you. But you need do what you believe is right, Jane. Don't go changing your convictions for anyone, even someone who loves you and you love in return. Understand?"

She cleared her throat. "How did you know Niles was the one for you?"

"It took quite a while. I overthink everything." Bess shared that it hadn't been an immediate realization, but a slow process. "Niles claims that it was love at first sight for him, though."

"Is it possible to fall in love this quickly?" Jane asked, nervous.

"I think it can be, if the conditions are right. I'm just too analytical to fall in love without a great deal of deliberation," Bess laughed.

"I thought I was practical, too. All of this has caught me off guard. I feel like I'm in a tailspin. That I'm not in control."

"Is that a bad thing?" Bess asked.

"Maybe." Jane shrugged a shoulder. Mum and I never talked about this sort of thing. But then again, I never asked her. Never crossed my mind that I'd be lucky enough. Especially not with someone like John Smith. The handsome, brilliant writer."

"So what is he like?"

"He can be very silly. And he's attentive. Listens to what I have to say. A bit proud, but he is a genius, after all. He lied his way into university at sixteen!"

"Now that, I didn't know. How scandalous!" teased Bess.

"Thing is, I feel completely safe with him. Like nothing bad would ever happen to me when I'm with him. He's defended me twice now. Once to Priscilla, the night they ended it. He told me that last night. And then tonight, to those twin... bimbos."

Bess looked down into her tea, thinking. "Darling, I don't think that John is toying with your affections. And I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't make some sort of a declaration soon — desiring a permanent relationship."
"What? Bess! But it's all so new! I always thought that women were more emotional, and men more standoffish and slow and wanted to play the field. Like everyone said John was like."

"He may have been all of those things. But that was before he met you." Bess heard that overwhelming, almost painful ringing in her ears. She saw John in his office, talking to someone on the telephone. You know how I said that I thought I had found The One on Saturday night? Rose Tyler? Well Jack, I have found a second The One. Is it possible to fall madly and sincerely in love with two women at the same time!

Bess’s hands shook. Jack? He was telling all of this to Jack? Jane's blind date? Yes. It was Jack Harkness. Her vision returned to normal, and Jane's lips were moving.

"...and he flirts with me all the time. And he takes my advice on his writing! And he's the writer!"

Bess nodded, still catching up. She cleared her throat. "Jane, don't think me too forward. How much do you know about sexual relations?"

"What?" Jane exclaimed, but her voice was low.

"How much do you know?" Bess repeated the question, her attitude, matter of fact.

"Enough, I suppose," Jane answered, averting her eyes. "Mum told me about it, how children are conceived and such. So I understand the way it happens. She was a nurse, remember? It was all rather clinical. And it never really came up again after I was given that particular talk. She probably didn't think I needed to know anything more than that. It's not like I was being courted by anyone. Wasn’t ever even asked out on a date. Never went to a single village dance, either."

"But Jane darling, it's about so much more than having children. Physical intimacy is just that. Intimacy. It's two people who love each other, well hopefully they do. It’s about people in love showing each other, telling each other with their bodies and hearts, being completely vulnerable and trusting--"

"Trust." Jane breathed the word.

"Yes. Trust. That is exactly what it is. And it is beautiful and," she smiled a bit wickedly, "very, very enjoyable. My mother was very uptight. I think the new psychological term is repressed. She told me absolutely nothing about the beautiful reality of sex. And being the curious woman that I am, I took it upon myself to find out all I could. I read. I asked my more progressive instructors questions. I'm sure they were horrified, but I found out what I needed to know. And when the time came for Niles and me to--"

Jane cleared her throat.

"I'm sorry I made you uncomfortable, darling. I can be very direct, can't I?"

"Not half," Jane laughed nervously.

"Quite. But this is the point, I think, and I'm not saying you aren't able to exercise any self control, or am I implying that I believe you are going to jump right into the sack with John. But should you change your mind, you will want to be prepared. Things are moving very quickly between the two of you, and you might find yourself in a situation..." Bess stopped herself. "You might find yourself married very soon, and facing your wedding night unprepared."

Jane squirmed.
"You don't have a mother or a sister to talk to you about this, and most of the books out there are rubbish. Sex can be very beautiful and fun and wonderful, but it isn't always perfect or easy, especially at first."

"But Bess, I do want to wait until--"

Bess held up her hand. "Your body doesn't care if you are married or not, darling. You only have one first time, and it will be a lot better for you if you go into it with eyes wide open, both physically and emotionally. Being prepared doesn't mean you have to change your standards. But there is no virtue in naïveté, darling. Even if you can honestly call yourself a blushing bride on your wedding night, you don't want to be blushing because you are terrified or embarrassed. But because you are excited and thrilled and well honestly, burning from the inside out because you are tired of waiting."

Jane puffed out her cheeks and curled her legs up underneath her dressing gown.

"So, if you ever want to ask me anything, and I do mean anything, don't hesitate. Come to me with any question or fear. Nothing is too personal or embarrassing. All right?"

"Thank you, Bess." Jane picked at her fingernails. "Bess, there's something else you need to know."

"What's that, darling?"

Jane pinched her face up, and squeezed her eyes shut. "John was the man at the cinema," she blurted. It seemed like an eternity before she opened her eyes.

Bess raised an eyebrow, and then took a dainty sip of her tea. "I know. I figured that one out this morning."

"What?" Rose stared at her friend. "How?"

"I have my ways." Bess felt the ringing in hers ears, but it subsided before any sort of vision flashed in her mind. "So, Rose Tyler, when are you going to put that sweet man out of his misery and tell him?"

"The minute I see him next." Jane again covered her face and then fell against the sofa, laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"All of it. Everything. He finds me at the movies. I lie to him. He asks me out. We go dancing. And then he asks me out. And he actually kisses me. Me! Dull, dowdy Jane Smith! And you know what else he told me? That he was never physically involved with Priscilla. And the way he said it, Bess, it was like he needed me to know. So I wouldn't think less of him, I think. I’m in a state of shock. This has been a strange and wonderful week."

"Didn't I tell you that Prince Charming would walk by your desk one day and notice your lipstick?" Bess teased.

Jane blew her a kiss.

"Now go get some rest," said Bess. "You’re going to do a bit of reading?" she asked, glancing at the copy of John’s novel that Jane was hugging.

She nodded.
“You’re a lucky girl, Jane Smith. If John Smith is half as talented at… things… as he is writing about them.” Bess winked at her.

“Oh, I wish I’d never told you to read his books!” Jane had the urge to throw a pillow at her, but instead, she turned on her heel and scampered away.

Once in bed, she opened the book to well-worn page 452 and for the umpteenth time, read the passage where the Professor and Iris kissed. And she read it again. She felt such a connection to these characters. She could see herself and John. It was as if her memories were written on that page, as clear as her memory of tonight’s kiss.

Tink. Tink. Tink.

Jane frowned, and then peeked through the curtain gap. It was John down below, and he was throwing pebbles at her window. He waved at her, and then beckoned her to come downstairs. She quickly slipped into trousers and an old wool jumper.

“Darling! John’s throwing rocks at your window! Oh, that man really is your Prince Charming,” Bess gushed, standing in Jane’s doorway.

"John wants me to come down."

“I told you he is smitten."

“Should I go? Is that proper?“ Jane asked nervously.

“Sod proper. You’ve obviously already made up your mind. You changed your clothing. Romance is in the air, Jane darling. Go to him.”

Jane chewed on her lip, and then nodded.

oOo

Jane emerged through the front door to find John pacing nervously in front of the building.

“I know I shouldn’t have awoken you," he apologized.

"You didn't wake me, I was up reading."

“It couldn’t wait. I needed to see you. Been walking around your block for the past hour trying to get up the nerve."

"That explains it, then. I knew I saw someone down here." Jane ducked her head. "Is everything all right?" She gently placed her hand on his arm.

"Well, that sort of depends upon you, really," John stated, running his hand through his hair. "Jane Smith, will you come with me?"

"Where? It's the middle of the night," she asked.

“Do you trust me?” he asked. "Please say you do."

Jane nodded, blushing. Sex is about trust. She shook the thought from her mind.

John offered his hand, and Jane accepted. He led her a few blocks down and over until they stood in front of a small, intricately designed, wrought iron gate. He pulled out a skeleton key and
inserted it into the old lock. When he pushed it inward, they both winced as it groaned on its hinges.

"Where are we?" Jane asked.

"I couldn't stand not having trees and grass when I moved down here from Scotland, so I bought admittance to this private park. I don't think they usually allow non-residents to buy into it, but I sort of charmed them."

"Why doesn't that surprise me?" Jane laughed sweetly.

John led her to a secluded part of the garden, obscured from view by an early-blooding hydrangea. Once in a while, a gentle breeze rustled the leaves, otherwise, it was dead calm.

"Before I say anything, before I tell you what I want to say, I need you to know that I am not angry." He shook his head. "Not one little bit."
Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

This chapter is rated a strong PG-13 for clothes-on semi-intimate scene. In Jane-speak, John helps Jane feel uh, {{she blushes}} something, um, new. And it is surprisingly plot-centric.

Chapter 12 - John Sees Hearts & Jane Sees Stars

“Angry?” she asked. “Have I done something wrong?”

“No.” He cupped her cheek, and stroked it with his thumb, before he withdrew his hand. “I discovered something recently, a secret as it were, about someone for whom I care a great deal. And I think this person seems to think that I don't like them as they are. That they have to be different for me.”

“Someone you care for?” She bit her lip to hide the quivering that was threatening ahead of tears.

“Aye. But hold that thought. Jane Smith, I care for you deeply. Just the way you are. I don’t need you-- No. I don’t want you to be any different. With or without glasses, you are beautiful. Breathtaking. In brown tweed covering your legs, or in an orange dress above your knees—“

“I’m Rose Tyler” she squealed.

"I know you’re Rose Tyler,” he said softly.

And then they both fell silent.

Jane sprang up from the bench. “I’m sorry! I’m so, so, sorry! I was terrified and I tried to tell you tonight at the statue.” Tears flowed from her eyes. “But you kissed me and it blew what I was trying to tell you right out of my head. The instant I lied to you, I knew I was in trouble. I understand if you don’t want to see me ever again. I should never have deceived you.”

“That’s enough of that, Jane. Didn’t you hear what I said before? I’m not angry.” He smiled softly, took her hand, and pulled her back to the bench. "I only sussed it out tonight." His voice was calm and unwavering. "You flinched when I touched your back. There were other things I started to notice too. Your profile, your figure, your eyes, your lips, the way you torture me with that little tongue poke thing that you do."

Jane groaned and covered her face with her hands, but John chuckled.

"You know," he said in a mock serious voice, "I don't think that Bess will think too highly of being
called your Old Maiden Aunt Bess. I may have to tell her about that."

Jane groaned again and removed her hands from her face, dropping them heavily into her lap. "You put your arm around me and you whispered in my ear, and then there was the thing with the popcorn. Oh my stars, I thought I was going to die right then and there when you licked my fingers. Why would you ever do that? That is sorta strange, John, you have to admit.” She raised an eyebrow.

“I was compelled. I like to lick things.”

Jane laughed when John waggled his eyebrows.

“Well how about you keep that mouth and tongue of yours licking normal places from now on.”

He put his arm around Jane. “Is this a normal place?” he asked, voice lowered, as he dropped a wet, open-mouth kiss to the pulse point below her ear.

“No,” she breathed. “But it’s a— a good place.” She shuddered. “Please, you need to stop or I’ll never finish explaining myself, and you need to know why I did it.”

John kissed her once more, and then pulled away. “All right. Go on.”

She drew in a long breath. “It was obvious you didn't recognize me, and I started thinking about your reputation and was terrified that you might try and seduce me, and who knows what would’ve happened then,” she said under her breath.

John took one of her hands into his, calmly tracing a curricular pattern into her palm.

"But then you were a perfect gentleman in the lobby and- and..." Jane slumped her shoulders and pulled her hand away. She stood up again, pacing and wringing her hands. "And then at the Tiki Tiki, when we were dancing, I felt like a different person. I'd never danced before that night, not really other than when I was home alone listening to the radio, and there you were holding me and it felt wonderful and I knew you wouldn't look twice at me as Jane, and I thought if he likes me as Rose, maybe I could keep up the ruse for a little while longer." She closed her eyes and her shoulders fell. "I called you because I wanted you to look at me the way you looked at Rose. I wanted you to hold me again, the way you did while we were dancing.”

"You need to stop explaining yourself Jane. I am not angry.” He stood up, put his hands on her shoulders and looked her squarely in the eyes. "If you think I told you this because I don't want to see you again, you couldn't be more wrong. I'm frankly relieved. I didn't want to have to choose. I couldn't choose!” he exclaimed. "I really did like Rose, and yes, you were beautiful in those clothes, and I loved the way you wore your hair loose around your face.”

He pulled her back onto the bench and reached around, pulling out the hair pins she had forgotten to take out of her hair earlier. It cascaded down around her face, still heavy with hairspray. "But I wouldn't have stayed with you dancing until two in the morning if I didn't see something beyond all of that. Do me a favor though."

"What's that?" she mumbled.

"Don't wear that rubbish blue and green eye gunk anymore," he laughed and stroked her eyebrow.

"Okay." She said shyly.

"That night, when you told me how you felt about my books, I was so proud to have written
something that made you smile. You made me feel important, and that is a wonderful feeling, Jane Smith. But you know what? Last night, when we were working on my book, I felt something even better. I felt a connection, like a bond with you. It was as if you could see inside my mind, and I have no idea how you do it. You know what is in my head. You know what makes me tick. And that shared dream? Jane, that has to mean something! I never thought I would believe in love at first sight, but you've made me a believer."

Jane's eyes snapped to meet his. He swallowed hard as he looked into her eyes, reached out and caressed her cheek. He pulled off her glasses and carefully set them on the bench. "You don't really have to wear those glasses all the time, do you?"

"No." She shook her head, and her stiff hair loosened a little bit more. "They're only for reading. I kept them on all the time hoping you wouldn't recognize me. I figured if it worked for Superman."

"I really wouldn't care if you did have to wear them. But right now, I want to see your eyes without anything in the way."

"You always know the right thing to say."

"I have been told I have quite the gob." He cleared his throat. "I've told you how I feel. Could you give this old man some hope? Could you ever find it in your heart to love me in return?"

Jane shifted on the bench, moving slightly closer to him. At that moment, she knew. Without hesitation, without a second thought. She knew. "I don't need to find it in my heart. I already do love you."

John pulled her into his arms and they simply held each other silently. He smoothed her hair, savouring the feeling of this woman in his arms.

"I should probably walk you back home. You need your rest," John offered quietly as they embraced.

"I'm not tired. I could stay like this forever," Jane replied. Resting her chin on his shoulder, relaxing into the nighttime stillness.

“Did you hear that?” John whispered into her ear.

“Hear what?” Jane sighed, and nestled even closer into him.

“Rustling. In the bushes. Behind us. And a click.” He paused to listen. “There it is again.”

“Probably just an animal or a bird or something,” Jane said. “The wind, maybe.”

“No, it’s not that, or I’m hearing things, because I could swear I heard a camera.”

“A camera? That’s just silly, John.”

“You’re right.”

Jane breathed deeply, memorizing the scent of his neck, the sound of his breathing, and the warmth of his arms.

"You really thought I wouldn't like you? Wouldn’t like Jane Smith?" John asked sadly.

"I thought you wanted a woman who was more,” she shrugged a shoulder, “grown up.”
“I’m not sure what you mean. Not grown up?”

Jane crossed her legs, blushed, and looked away.

John nodded, now understanding. “Sweet Jane, being untouched doesn’t mean you aren’t grown up. And you are very beautiful. You know that, don’t you?” he asked quietly.

She didn’t answer.

“Why do you think I kept coming to your desk? I wanted to look at you. I noticed you before the posh clothing. I do have to say, though, I definitely like the shorter skirts you’ve started to wear.” He teased her thigh, moving a fingertip slowly up her leg.

She didn’t bat his hand away, but she did look down. He stopped his ministration, and moved his fingertip to her nose. “Cannae help a lad for trying.”

Jane laughed. “I love when you say that.”

“I mean it. And you are beautiful.”

"No one has ever told me that before you, other than my mum."

"I'll keep reminding you until I am blue in the face. But don't make me do that because I don't know that I would look quite so handsome with a blue face," he bumped his nose against hers fondly. "So, how did you come up with the name Rose Tyler?" John asked as he rubbed her back.

"I was holding your book in my lap at the cinema, and I saw the name Iris Mason. And right away, I thought of a rose, just like Iris is a flower. And then Tyler came to me. A mason lays bricks, and a Tyler puts up, well, tiles. You know, they’re both trade-names. Like in the old days."

"Why didn't I think of that? You are very creative. And that entire history you conjured up?"

Jane laughed into his shoulder. "I have no idea how I came up with that."

"Well, no more worrying about keeping up the Rose Tyler façade. From now on, it's you and me, John Smith and Jane Smith. That is, if you want to be an us,” he asked. He pulled away, cradled her face, and looked into her eyes.

"I want that very much," she replied.

"It's official then. You and me are an us. And if it wasn't the middle of the night, I would probably jump up on this bench and herald it for everyone to hear!” he said gleefully.

"What about work tomorrow? Should we keep it a secret?" asked Jane.

"I don't see why we should. Are there rules about employees socializing?"

"You socialized with Priscilla," she teased.

He groaned. "Do not mention that woman's name ever again."

“That shouldn’t be a problem. And I don't know, to be honest. Not something I ever thought I'd have to worry about.” She bit her lower lip. “But can we keep it a secret for a little while? So people don't think that I’m, you know, doing things just for a better job? That’s what Priscilla implied this morning when I showed up wearing those new clothes.”
“Don’t you give a second thought to that bi—that horrible woman,” he said sternly. “But, I didn’t think about that. Probably a good idea. Okay. We’ll keep it a secret, just between the two of us.” He kissed her nose. "So, I guess I have a date to break, and a date to make," he said with a smile. "Sorry Rose Tyler, but I am going to have to cancel. Someone came along. This lovely girl named Jane Smith. And she has stolen my heart." He kissed her softly. "Jane, will you accompany me on a picnic to the country this Saturday?"

"I would love to." Jane looked down and then exclaimed, "Oh fudge! What am I going to do about that blind date on Sunday?"

John tugged on his ear and screwed up his face.

"I really don't want to go," Jane said, shaking her head. "But I suppose I should. It'll help keep up our secret, too. And if he's a friend of yours, I can trust him, right?"

"Eh... yeah..." he said, unconvincingly. "I need to have a talk with good old Jack-o. If he pulls anything..." he almost growled and then leveled a hungry look at her. "Jane, kiss me." It was a demand.

John felt Jane's lips descend upon his, and then she wrapped her arms around his neck as she kissed him as if she were making up for lost time, for all of those kisses she had missed. He allowed her to control the kiss, to take the lead. Soon the pace of their kiss slowed to a languid, leisurely pace. They caressed each other’s lips, gliding, sliding, softly, and sensually exploring.

Unhurried hands began to move, exploring places neither had dared to touch earlier. Jane slowly trailed her hands down John's back. He shrugged off his overcoat, letting it fall against the bench. She moved her hands lower down his back and hesitantly ventured to his hips. A bit of skin was exposed between his shirt and the waistband of his trousers, and she dared to skim her fingertips just above the edge, but no further.

With a feather light touch, John caressed the curve of her waist until his hands reached her hips. He gripped them tightly, squeezing from time to time, as his thumbs rubbed circles into the softness just inside her hipbones. He removed his mouth from Jane's lips and began planting soft, wet kisses up her jawline to her ear, only stopping long enough to whisper, "I love you.” His warm breath sent a delicious chill down her spine, and the roughness of his stubble, prickly against her soft skin, kept her grounded in reality, reminding her that this wasn't the best dream of her life.

"I love you, too, so, so much," she said as she nuzzled her cheek into the softness of his hair. “Is this real?” she asked breathily, needing reassurance from his voice.

"It's very real," he said, leaning his forehead against hers.

"And it's fast. I'm a bit dizzy. How is this possible? I've known you a few weeks. And tonight was our first date."

"When you know, you know."

She kissed him once again, plunging her tongue into his mouth hungrily. He pulled away, and peppered fevered kisses down her neck and into the well of her throat. She threw her head back, exposing more skin for him to caress with his tongue and lips.

For the first time in her life, Jane Smith began to feel. Soft little moans began to form in her throat as she felt heat pooling in the lowest regions of her stomach as her womanhood sprang to life. She had experienced excited little butterfly flutters before when a handsome man walked by, while
reading a romantic book, or watching a romantic film. But those innocent little twinges of excitement paled in comparison to the reality of real arousal. Her need quickly built and gained momentum like a snowball rolling down a mountainside. She wasn't sure she could, or even wanted to stop what was quickly becoming an avalanche.

Never before had she felt such desire, such need — a primal craving was driving her heart-deep want for more and more and more of John. She wanted him to touch her in places that had never been touched before. She knew what she believed about sex before marriage, but she also knew what her body wanted, and she knew she loved this man wholly and completely.

Boldly, Jane moved to sit on John's lap, and then she straddled him, instinctively centering her warm core over him, seeking to relieve the coiling need that was deep down inside of her.

"Oh John, I love you so much, I never knew it would be like this. Feels so good!" Jane moved her lips back to his, kissing him deeply and desperately. She grabbed his arms, squeezed them tightly for support as she began to move, setting a slow, rhythmic pace, even though her tongue was feverishly devouring his mouth.

John pulled away from her lips. "Jane, you don't know your own power," he laughed nervously. "If you don't stop now, I won't want to stop. Might not be able to stop. I mean I'd never try to—"

“But I don't want to stop!” She again lunged for his mouth, ardent and passionate, grinding hard against him, seeking more, seemingly unable or unwilling to stop herself.

John was torn. His body was more than willing to comply, though his mind and heart felt guilty doing so, knowing that Jane was riding a wave of never-before experienced pleasure, not thinking clearly about her long-held convictions. But he, too, was losing himself in the moment, so happy to see the look of joyful abandon, and the yearning for completion on his Jane's face.

He became an active participant, doing what he could to help her reach her fulfillment, but trying to do so without crossing any line that he knew she would immediately regret. He never touched any skin that was covered, keeping his caresses over her clothing, even though he was aching to feel the softness of her breasts, to taste the tight peaks of her nipples, and plunge his fingers into the hidden heat that was currently in his lap.

He knew it wouldn't take much longer for her to climax, as she had never been touched in this way. He doubted she had experimented, given how quickly she had become aroused from the simplest of touches. He was right. After only a few minutes, and his relatively chaste caresses and touches, Jane increased the intensity of her rocking.

She groaned, the sound coming from down deep in her soul, the sound of a woman yearning for a never before known pleasure. Begging and longing for something — anything — to happen.

“I need… I need… Help me, John! I don’t know what to do. How do I make this happen?” she whimpered.


“Under… my jumper,” she begged. “My breasts. Touch me?”

“No, love. You told me no before.”

“Please! I… I… I’m… I need,” she whimpered. "I'm desperate!"
“I’ll happen.” John slid his hands over her jumper, and simply cupped her breasts, lightly stroking the sensitive undersides with the pads of his thumbs, but going no further.

She nodded. “Yes. Do that.” Jane threw her head back. She squeezed her eyes shut. Her mouth was open wide. Her jaw was slack. And she screamed in silence as for the first time in her life, Jane Smith experienced ecstasy.

With a gasp, her whole body went rigid. Her most intimate place contracted and she heard ringing in her ears. She panted, swallowed, and then panted some more.

“That’s right, just breathe. Just breathe, love.” John moved his hands to her back, rubbing circles to bring her down slowly, calming her as much as was calming himself. He breathed through his own arousal, doing what he could to stop himself from having her experience a second, and probably shocking, surprise that night, the release of his own pleasure.

She shuddered a few more times, and then her rigid body went limp, and she collapsed onto his shoulder. “John,” she husked into his ear.

He continued to rub her back, breathing steadily into her ear. “That was beautiful, love. How do you feel?”

Slowly, she pushed her weight off of him. She saw him smiling softly through wide eyes. She could feel her face burning, and her forehead felt a little bit clammy. She locked eyes with John, and swallowed hard.

"I'm... so... sorry..." she panted, immediately nervous and self-conscious, looking off into the darkness.

John smiled at her and shook his head. "None of that," he said, touching her chin and turning her face towards his. "Never felt that before, eh?"

She shook her head nervously.

"I am thrilled that not only did I give you your first kiss, but I gave you your first orgasm."

She silenced him with her fingertips. "Don't say that word. I'm so embarrassed."

"Please don't be, sweetest Jane," he said kindly, kissing her forehead. "How do you feel?"

"I- I’m not sure," she said, almost whimpering. "Felt so good while it was happening, but now... I mean it still feels good, but was I supposed to let that happen? I mean before I’m even married?"

She chewed her lip.

He didn’t know how to answer her. “Jane Smith, I hope that is the first of many times that you and I... feel that.”

She nodded, and then covered her lips.

“But we may want to be someplace a wee bit more private next time.” He nodded towards a home bordering the green wherein a light had been switched on.

A figure with hands on hips was silhouetted against the window. "Oi! Go snog someplace else! People are trying to sleep!"

"Come on, let’s get you home." John lifted Jane off of his lap, and stood up rather gingerly. He
wrapped his long trench coat around him to hide the evidence of his own arousal, which miraculously, he had kept under control. He took her hand, leading her silently out of the garden.

As they passed under a street lamp, John looked over at the woman walking next to him. She was positively glowing. He squeezed her hand and made a decision. He didn't care if it had been only a fortnight since they met. Jane Smith was going to be his wife, and the sooner, the better. This was not about impatience to have sex with her.

John wanted to see joy on Jane's face as she made dinner, or typed his words, when he offered to change their baby's nappy, when they walked hand-in-hand on the embankment, and yes, when they were in their bed, intimately tangled, lost in each other, shuddering, panting, and glowing. He wanted Jane's face to be the last thing he saw as he closed his eyes at night, and the first he saw when his eyes opened at dawn. He craved intimacy, communion, true union with this woman. He wanted to build a life with her. He wanted her to bear his children and to share the joy of grandchildren with her.

He wanted to see into her very mind, and share his mind with her.

If only that were possible.
Chapter Summary

John and Jane together, both at work and in love. Daniel makes a move.

Chapter 13 - John & Jane Together

Bess was sound asleep by the time Jane let herself into the flat, and when Jane woke up the next morning, Bess had already left for one of those early morning meetings with Dreadful Daniel.

After her shower, Jane wrapped a towel around her body, walked to her wardrobe and pulled out one of her new dresses, a peacock blue, sleeveless shift with a boatneck that showed off her delicate collarbones. Bess had a bonnet-style hairdryer that she had told Jane she was free to use anytime she wanted. She dressed quickly, towelled off her hair as well as she could, prepared breakfast, and set up the hairdryer near the dining table so that she could dry her hair while eating. Once it was dry, Jane brushed it, flipping up the ends, and pulling it off of her face with a white headband. It felt good to wear her hair down instead of tightly wound and pinned to the back of her head. She even applied a bit of makeup, but not much. Just enough for a bit of colour.

She examined herself in the mirror by the door and smiled at her reflection. She double-checked that her glasses were in her handbag, and let herself out of the flat. She tripped lightly down the stairwell into the fresh, but overcast April morning to walk to the bus.

"Jane Smith!"

She turned around, and John was leaning against his car, arms crossed casually. "Do you really think I'd let you take the bus to work?"

Jane ran up to him, threw her arms around his neck and hugged him. "Good morning," she said cheerfully before giving him a kiss on the cheek.

"Well good morning to you, too," he said with a half smile. "Pleasant dreams last night?"

Jane blushed.

"Sorry. I didn’t mean to make you feel uncomfortable.”

“No, I’m all right.” She grinned up at him.

Once she had finally fallen asleep, she had indeed had pleasant dreams. John had as well, though he wasn't about to tell Jane the explicit details of his. The two of them were on their honeymoon on a beautiful tropical beach. Strangely, a lobster had stolen their bathing costumes -- hers was the teeniest red bikini he had ever seen -- leaving them naked, which had led to all sorts of fun.

On the way to work John detailed his plans for chapter two.

“So the Professor, after the, ahem, awkward events of the night before—“
“Thanks to some very potent alien curry,” Jane added.

“Very potent. So he decides to take Iris on a proper date. A real date. He doesn’t call it an adventure. He doesn’t even call it an outing. He asks her out on an actual, honest-to-goodness date. But, as is the way of things for them, the adventure finds them.”

“A real date,” Jane said dreamily. “She’s thrilled, of course.”

“Of course. The Professor is brilliant! And out of the blue, when she least expects it, he finally gives her that real kiss that she’s wanted for a year. There’s no alien brain controlling her, no mushrooms with pleasant side effects—“

“Unpleasant side effects,” Jane corrected.

“They both enjoyed their… activities, didn’t they?”

“Not of their own volition, though. I read that chapter again last night, and—“

“Again?” John raised an eyebrow.

She cleared her throat. “I may have read it a time or two before,” she admitted. “It’s very well written. And you made it very clear that neither of them were emotionally prepared for that to happen yet, nor were they thinking clearly. They both carry such guilt. They’re both afraid they’ve ruined their friendship, and any chance of having a romance.” Jane held her hands in her lap.

“Quite right. So when this kiss happens, this real kiss, it absolutely blows her socks off,” John said enthusiastically. “It happens when she is completely caught off guard. No moonlight, no violins, no roses or chocolates. Just, bam! Kiss of a lifetime!”

Jane frowned and turned in her seat towards him.

“What?” he frowned. “They’re people of adventure. They don’t do things conventionally. They take things out of order! Why should this be any different? She’s wanted that kiss. Dreamed about it, right? You’ve wanted him to give her that kiss, too, I’m guessing,” John asked.

“Of course, but I think she might punch him if he has that attitude.” Jane examined her fingernails.

“Really?” He scrunched up his face.

“Well, yeah. He’s just flirted with the queen, and he’s gonna be having dinner with that awful woman later, and poor Iris is being forced to have dinner with that prince who’s probably got only one thing on his mind the way he’s looking at her. So if the Professor kisses her, and then swans off to have dinner with the queen, she’s gonna be furious.”

“Because…?”

“Of course. That’s their life. But all the same, she needs him to be tender right now. There may not be any moonlight or flowers, and they may be in the middle of an adventure, but that doesn’t mean she wants him to kiss her out of the blue, without any warning. She needs to know why he’s finally decided to do this. He needs to listen to what she’s thinking about, too. She’s just had that mortifying curry experience, remember?”

“So he knows she loves him…”

“But she isn’t sure how he feels about her. Not really. She’s still feeling a bit rejected and torn.”
John was quiet. “I think you’re right. But maybe… Jane, what if this is the thing that finally forces him to face his fears of being with her properly? She stands up to him. Shows him just how much they need each other. That it isn’t about her getting what she wants, or him giving it to her, it’s about both of them? About letting go of their fears?”

Jane sat quietly.

“He kisses her. He’s cavalier and arrogant,” suggested Jane.

“And she slaps him,” suggested John.

“And it knocks some sense into him,” she replied.

“Are you advocating violence, Jane Smith?”

“Hardly. But you have to remember, her mum slapped him for being a prat, too. Seems sorta poetic.”

“How so, love?” asked John.

“He did something wrong, and then she did something awful, too. They both need to ask forgiveness. Neither of them are perfect.”

She reached for John’s hand, and they were quiet for a moment.

“I’m so glad I have you, Jane. We really do make a fantastic team.”

“Better with two.”

“I like that.”

“I think the evil queen needs to have a big deep dark secret. Maybe she's not quite as evil as everyone thinks. What if she's been manipulated for years? Of course, that couldn't be revealed until the end of the book, but it would color the way she is described in this chapter,” Jane suggested.

"I rather like that. The tragic figure,” he said grandly. "How very Shakespearean. Speaking of The Bard, I am going to check into getting tickets to a play on Saturday. Do you like Shakespeare?”

"I adore Shakespeare!”

"Good, because I don't know if I could ever entertain entering into a relationship with anyone who didn't love Shakespeare." He waggled his eyebrows.

A relationship. With me. Bess was right. Jane's heart sped up.

"What are you smiling about so brightly?” John asked.

"Oh... things." She looked out the window, bit her lip and closed her eyes. She had no doubt. She was head-over-heels, having completely bypassed infatuation, completely in love with John Smith. But she already knew that.

When they arrived at work, they entered the lift together, but kept a proper distance.

"G'mornin' to my two of my three favorite people," Jim the lift operator greeted them cheerfully.
"And who's the third?" John asked.

"Miss Cooper o' course," he replied with a tip of his hat. "I hear congratulations are in order, Miss Smith."

Jane looked at John with a shy smile. "For what, Jim?" she asked, trying to feign naïveté.

"Old Jim here always knows what's what," he replied with a cackling laugh. "New job for ya' today eh? I heard Miss Woods talking with Mr. Higgins this mornin'. But I didn't need no one to tell me the second bit o' good news." He winked at the couple. "The two o' you never looked 'appier. Now don't go denying it. You two are a proper pair o' lovebirds you are."

John and Jane's heads snapped towards and each other and they both gaped.

"How'd you know?" John asked.

"I know true love when I see it. Knew ya' two were meant for each other from the moment I saw the two o' ya' together here on me lift, fighting like a pair of old married people. Got a special gift for seein' these things. The Missus fancies me a mystic." He tapped his temple with an arthritic finger. "Me wife 'n me'n married nigh forty years now. Jus' as 'appy as the day we met."

"Can you keep our secret, Jim?" Jane asked, concerned. "We really don't want it getting out just yet."

"Course. I know 'ow the office gossip goes." He mimicked zipping his lips.

The lift doors slid open, and they walked out together. Purposefully, Jane slowed her gait, so that she was walking a few feet behind John.

"Miss Smith," she heard a male voice call to her from behind. Jane turned around, and John glanced over his shoulder. It was Daniel Higgins.

"May I have a word with you?"

"Me?" she asked, pointing to herself, confused.

"Yes, you," he replied, with a charming laugh.

John stopped, pretending to look at a bulletin board covered with announcements and publishing schedules.

"I understand that you have been promoted. I wanted to offer you my congratulations, and to invite you to lunch to celebrate your new job."

"Um, new job?"

"Oh, I do believe I have let the cat out of the bag. Now about lunch."

"I - I have lunch plans," she replied nervously.

"No, I insist. I'll pick you up at 11:45 sharp, so be ready. We'll go someplace nice."

He walked away before she could protest further. She furrowed her brows and looked at John nervously. "What do I do?" she mouthed.

John offered a smile, encouraging smile.
"Janie, Miss Woods wants to see you right away," Betty called, interrupting their silent conversation.

"Me?" Jane feigned ignorance, as she put down her things on her desk, and John turned to smile at her, waggling his eyebrows.

He disappeared into his office, now whistling a happy tune, the specter of Daniel Higgins gone for a moment.

"You wanted to see me?" Jane asked quietly as she arrived at Miss Woods’s desk.

"Ah you're here, Miss Smith. Early as usual, I see. I'll get right to it. I'm tired of Mr. Smith's begging, and the constant carousel of assistants with whom he has found fault. He seems to think that you are the only one for the job. So you're it, effective immediately. Clean out your desk and report to his office."

Jane smiled and said thank you. She willed herself to walk slowly back to her desk, even though her feet were itching to run. She hastily cleared the few things from her work station, and then stopped by Betty's spot to tell her the news. The woman was genuinely happy for Jane. She made her way to John's office walking as quickly as she could.

"Please close the door, Miss Smith," he ordered, extra loudly with a humorously stern face and voice.

Jane put her things down, closed the door gently, and ran to him. He pulled her into a crushing hug.

"Hello," she said into his shoulder.

"Hello," he replied, rubbing her back and releasing her. "All right Miss Smith, ready to get to work?"

"At your service, Mr. Smith!" she saluted.

They worked diligently all morning, and made great strides outlining chapter two. Before they knew it, 11:40 had rolled around.

"John, why do you suppose Mr. Higgins wants to take me to lunch?" Jane asked as she folded her steno pad and neatly set it next to the typewriter, which had been permanently moved to John's desk.

He scratched his head. "I don't know, but you need to stay on your toes," he replied seriously. "That man doesn't do anything without a reason. He has a nasty reputation with the ladies."

"So do you," she teased.

"Not this kind of reputation," he replied seriously. "I am going to follow you and keep an eye out."

"Thank you, John." She was relieved to hear his plan.

John kissed her cheek, and protectively laid his hand on her arm.

There was a quick rap on the door, and the pair quickly separated. Daniel let himself in without waiting for an invitation. "Ready Jane? Your carriage awaits," he said with a cold smile.

Jane shot a nervous look in John's direction. He nodded and smiled, but his jaw was firmly set and his eyes were trained on Daniel. Jane picked up her handbag and coat, and then exited John's office.
As soon as they were gone, John put on his coat, pocketed his car keys, and followed the pair at a safe distance, but instead of taking the lift, he chose to run down the stairwell two risers at a time. Once he was out of the building, he sprinted to his car as fast as his long, made-for-running legs could carry him.

As Jane and Daniel entered the lift, Jane saw Bess walking down the hallway. She caught Jane's eye, and gave her a look of confusion. Jane smiled nervously back at her.

"Hold the lift please," Bess called out, and luckily, Jim heard Bess's plea. Jane saw Daniel's face twitch ever so slightly at the request.

"Hello Jane, Daniel, where are you off to? I thought we were having lunch together, Jane?" Bess asked, casually.

"I am taking Miss Smith out for a celebratory luncheon, Miss Cooper," Daniel said before Jane had a chance to answer her friend.


The lift doors opened, and they all filed out. A chauffeur-driven vehicle was waiting in front of the building. Daniel opened the door, but Jane hesitated to get into the car.

"After you," he said, touching her back, encouraging her to climb in.

She shuddered almost painfully at the feel of the man’s hand. This spot was now reserved for John's touch alone. She took a deep breath and entered the luxurious car, sliding across the seat as close to the far window as she could. Daniel pulled the door shut after himself, tapped the glass that separated the passengers from the driver, signalling his readiness to proceed, and off they went.

oOo

Bess stood on the pavement, desperately trying to hail a taxi so she could follow the vehicle containing her dear friend and the dangerous man. A blue Aston Martin squealed around the corner and came to a screeching halt at the kerb.

The passenger window lowered, and John shouted at her. "Get in! We're following them."

Bess scrambled in without hesitation.
**Chapter Summary**


**Chapter Notes**

You thought Daniel was creepy last chapter? Sorry. It's only going to get worse.

**Chapter 14- John & Bess & Jane & Daniel & Jack & Niles**

The silver Bentley floated through the London traffic. Daniel pulled his silver lighter from his pocket and lit a cigarette. While appraising the young woman seated to his left, he pulled in a long drag and casually blew out a stream of smoke, filling the back seat of the vehicle with a haze. Daniel examined her from head to toe. Her light brown hair was pulled off of her face revealing expressive eyes, rosy cherub cheeks, and full lips. With her hair loose and her face free of spectacles, Jane Smith was a woman transformed. The boat-neck of her dress exposed her creamy neck, the curves of her throat, and her clavicles. While the dress was not tight, it was well-fitting enough to hug the curves of her chest, trim waist, and hips.

Daniel noticed that Jane's hands were glued to her thighs, trying to obscure the four or five inches of shapely skin above her knees that was exposed by the modern hemline of the frock. His eyes continued their journey down her toned calves to her feet. The new look she had debuted yesterday had certainly been a surprise. After weeks of heavy brown tweed skirts that fell to the middle of her calves, shapeless and blandly-coloured day dresses, and chunky knit jumpers buttoned all the way to her neck, seeing her creamy skin was setting him on fire.

He had wanted his seduction to play out slowly, and had coldly calculated each step. But having her next to him in his car, doe-eyed, nearly shivering with fear, perfectly centred in his crosshairs, and being able to smell her faint perfume, and seeing all of that skin she used to hide, and being so close to the hidden treasures under her dress.

Bloody hell, this couldn't happen fast enough. He reigned himself in, successfully controlling his surging lust.

Phase one, the information gathering stage, was complete. He had learned all he could about Jane Smith, though there was precious little to know. Her past was something of a mystery. Records had been lost in a fire a few years back, but he had learned from acquaintances at work and her official employee file that she had no living relatives. She listed Bess Cooper as her emergency contact. Her father was long dead, and she’d recently lost her mother.

Last night, he had shadowed her. He’d watched her enter that dilapidated restaurant with that ridiculous John Smith. She'd been slightly hunched over as he'd guided her through the door. Shy. Restrained. But they had emerged hand-in-hand, and John had been grinning like an idiot.
And he'd followed them as they had walked along the Embankment. There'd been a flirtatious teasing tussle over ice cream. And then she had kissed him. Fast and sudden and hard and completely without finesse. It had been exhilarating to watch her give what had obviously been a first kiss. John had kissed her back, and with her consent. She'd melted into his arms, her lips glued to his, one leg popped up. A true first kiss. And that had sickened him. That should be me, he'd hissed to himself. I wanted to be the first one to touch her.

Near some statue of a yet another war hero, that sap had recited a poem about kissing. But he could hear the real meaning, the double entendré, the veiled references to lost virginity. How archaic. I'm almost embarrassed for him. Probably didn't even know what he was telling her. Jane Smith is probably the only woman left in London who'd fall for such rot. But it had obviously worked as they'd exchanged more kisses in the Victoria Gardens. Passionate, heated kisses. John had dared to touch her skin, and she'd simply asked him to stop. Only once. And the fool had! John Smith hadn't even tried to sweet talk her, or make her feel guilty for how she'd led him on wearing those wicked, tight trousers. I wouldn't have stopped no matter how much she begged. She wants it, she just doesn't know it yet.

He'd followed her home, and watched her look down to the street through her bedroom window. She'd been wearing a diaphanous, white nightgown. Silk, he assumed, as he could nearly see through the sheer fabric. He had sucked in a hiss of air, holding himself back from reaching between his legs as he fantasised about Jane in that room all alone in her bed, under the darkness of night, not thinking of John. Thinking of him.

And then... then... Jane had saved her best performance for the last act. Jane and John had a midnight garden rendezvous. She'd let herself ride a crest of passion for the first time. John had even done him a favour. That hated man had been such a boy scout, he hadn't even touched her with his foul hands, and hadn't accepted the gift that was literally in his lap. And now delicious Jane Smith had tasted ecstasy, and surely she would want more of it. And more and more and more! And he would be the one to make her beg for it.

But through this observation, he had learned something that was most troubling, indeed. Jane Smith fancied herself in love with that idiot, and he claimed to love her right back. She obviously believed his lies. And if he didn't step in, it would only be a matter of time before Sweet Innocent Jane Smith was no longer so innocent, because he knew John Smith’s game. John was softening her with his ever-the-gentleman act. His sentimental moonlight “I love yous”. Making her feel important and wanted and intelligent by choosing her to be his assistant.

Daniel Higgins drew in another long drag of his cigarette. It was time to hasten his plan or he'd lose his chance. Simple seduction wasn't going to work with this girl. He was going to have to persuade her through alternative means. He’d manipulate her sense of propriety and precious character.

It was time to get down to brass tacks.

"Doesn't my vehicle impress you? You don't seem very taken with it, Miss Smith,” he said after the drawn-out, painfully crackling silence.

Jane's hands were clasped tightly in her lap, and she was staring straight ahead. "It's lovely. Very posh," she said, her voice thin and dry. "Never been in anything so posh before."

"An Aston Martin is nothing to sneeze at, Miss Smith."

"How--" Jane didn’t finish her statement.

The corner of Daniel’s mouth twitched upwards.
"Some may frown upon my ownership of a car normally reserved for royalty. Gauche, they might say. But it's a damn fine car, and I do enjoy damn fine things." He raked his eyes up and down her body.

She clenched her jaw and looked back out the window.

"So Miss Smith, you've been at Prescott Publishing for what, two and a half, three weeks now?"

Jane coughed quietly into her hand, and then started to wheeze. "Could you please... would you please extinguish that cigarette? I'm a bit sensitive to smoke." She rolled down her window and breathed in the not-so-fresh London air. Of course it wasn't only the smoke that was causing Jane to seek relief. An instinctive sense of dread was creeping up her back. Her hands were clammy, her neck sticky, and her was throat dry. She hadn't looked at the man directly in the eye, but was keeping him in the periphery of her vision at all times.

"Oh, so sorry. Of course, of course." He smashed the offending item into the ashtray in the armrest of the door.

"Only a few weeks with us, and you have already been promoted," he mused. "Miss Woods — that old battle axe — isn't easily impressed. Or maybe it's Mr. Smith who sees something he likes?" He draped his arm along the back of the seat. "Either that or you have some dirt on somebody," he chuckled. His fingers were within mere inches of the back of Jane's head, though he didn't touch her.

"I certainly didn't coerce anyone to get my position, Mr. Higgins, if that is what you are implying," she defended.

"Oh, I was teasing you, of course!" He chuckled.

"I enjoy working at Prescott. I've made some good friends. Miss Cooper is my flatmate."

"Miss Cooper is a very determined woman. Bloody fine editor, if a bit too outspoken for her own good." Daniel drummed his fingers on the seat back. "And how well do you know Mr. Smith?"

"Um... well... he's... I've... I've been familiar with his writing for quite a while now. Sort of... a... fan." She cleared her throat.

He turned his head and drilled his eyes into the side of her head. "So the two of you are close?"

Jane swallowed hard and her cheeks flushed pink. "Well, I'd say we are friends." She looked out the window. "Recent friends. I... we seem to get along... well. I understand his books, and am familiar his characters, and we... work well together."

"Oh, you can't fool me," he said, pasting on a smile. "You're not a very good liar, Miss Smith. I think it's more than simple friendship," he said with a teasing grin as he wagged his finger at her.

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"It's plain that you've set your sights on Mr. Smith. Those girls in the typing pool have loose tongues. They see you watching him like a tigress ready to pounce. Waiting for just the right time to devour him. Not that I blame you. You see a golden opportunity. He's well on his way to becoming famous and extremely wealthy. He's already quite well off. He's single, handsome, or so I've been told by quite a few of my lady friends. Not that I understand what they see in him. He's as skinny as a beanpole, and looks like he's barely out of his teens, but what do I know? I'm an
aficionado of the fairer sex."

Jane shook her head violently. "No."

Daniel smiled seeing Jane shudder under his fingertip as he dragged it along her bare upper arm. He examined Jane, licking his lips as his eyes rested on her chest. "Gorgeous." He fingered her hair ever so slightly.

She closed her eyes, but remained silent.

"I would hazard a guess that you have never had a man pay any attention to you, Jane. May I call you Jane?" Daniel paused for her answer, but she remained quiet. "I can see that you are nervous. Please, don't be, there's really no need," he said in a voice as smooth as one hundred year old Scotch. "I find it frankly charming after all of the jaded, obvious women I have been with lately. You are a breath of fresh air, Jane."

She looked out the window and winced.

"Do I make you nervous?" Daniel knew he'd hit the mark when he saw Jane nod, and then look away. He saw her feelings of helplessness surging.

"I know I can be intimidating, but really, I'm a rather nice fellow. Don't believe everything you may have heard about me, especially anything that Miss Cooper has told you. She still holds a grudge that she wasn't promoted last year. I am neither a cad, nor a dangerous man. I am just an everyday bloke."


He raised an eyebrow, surprised that she'd found her voice. "An inherited Bentley," he corrected. "Can't help a lad for trying... to impress a beautiful woman."

Cannae help a lad for trying. Jane's eyes and mouth snapped open.

Daniel had seen Jane's delightful blush whenever that stupid skinny Scotsman uttered those words, when he had pretended to be so innocent and faithful to his word that he'd never ever try to seduce her.

"Did I say something to disturb you?" He flexed his jaw, and touched drew a circle on her knee.

"Please, Mr. Higgins. Don't touch me."

He slowly withdrew his hand. "Normally I drive myself around town in my Jaguar. I only pull the old girl out for special occasions."

"What's so special about today?" she asked.

"Why you were promoted, of course! You and John Smith make a formidable team. Chapter one was brilliant, Jane, and I credit you for much of Mr. Smith's success with the chapter. Your pairing means money in the bank."

Jane nodded slightly.

"You probably don't realise this, because it is all a bit hush hush. I am majority owner of Prescott Publishing. The company would have gone under if it weren't for my sisable investment. So you see, I have a vested interest in your partnership with Mr. Smith."

Daniel lied convincingly. He
could have cared less about the profits that would be coming from John's pending novel, which was sure to be a success.

"John is a very talented writer. I'm happy to be a small part of his success," Jane offered, humbly.

Daniel drummed his fingers on the armrest. "So, how does it feel to be living in the big city? You're a simple, innocent girl from a country village. First taste of freedom, right?"

"I suppose," she furrowed her brow.

"You were rather lucky to have found Miss Cooper, I think. She has taken a shining to you. Dressing you like her personal shop window dummy, acting as your protector and confidante. Other than her, you are all alone in the world."

"I am not alone, Mr. Higgins. I have friends. Very good friends who care a great deal for me," she said firmly.

The tone of his voice became harder and a bit mocking. "Let's see, there's Jim the lift operator, Betty the chatty typist. Miss Cooper of course, and her long suffering boyfriend, Niles, I suppose."

He blinked slowly. "And of course you have John Smith."

She closed her eyes and held her breath.

"I feel it is my duty to warn you, as a man of honour, that John Smith has a bit of a reputation with the ladies. From what I have heard, he is known to be a, how do I put this politely? A lady killer, and I think that you are his next conquest."

"Don't talk about John that way! He's my friend, and that simply isn't true. He would never treat a woman like that!"

Daniel smiled wanly. "Sweet, innocent Jane. You've had the wool pulled over your eyes. Why do you think Priscilla is so angry with you?"

"What does Miss Bootkins have to do with this?" Jane asked.

"Priscilla and I are old friends. She has some excellent qualities, but she also has her flaws. She is quite an unpleasant person when she has been crossed. She's very proud and easily jealous, Jane. The fact that Mr. Smith ended it with her one day, and picked up with you immediately, well, you are number one of her hit list."

"Picked up with John?" Jane replied nervously.

"Let me have a word with her. I'm sure she can be reasoned with. You aren't involved with him, are you? Beyond simple friendship?" Daniel studied her reaction, but was surprised when she remained calm. "You say you have never done anything to seek Mr. Smith's attention, right? I think we both know the truth, Jane. But still, I'm very protective of my employees. I take good care of you. So I will tell her it's been one big misunderstanding, and you were simply caught in the middle of her failed love affair."

Jane set her jaw and looked out the window. "Why do you care?" She turned back and stared at him, eyes flashing. "Why do you care with whom I form an attachment? You don't know me. You know nothing about me. I'm just a girl from the typing pool. I'm nothing special. I am no one you'd look at twice. I have no idea why you even invited me to lunch!" Jane was nearly yelling.

"Do you want me to look at you twice Jane?" He slid closer to her and moved his hand to her thigh.
"Take your hand off of me, Mr. Higgins," she said firmly, keeping her voice strong. "I don't want your attention, and I certainly have never sought it!"

"You didn't have to seek it, Jane. You captured my attention without even trying. You are captivating." He leaned in and nuzzled her neck, his breathing heavy and hot. He ran his hand up her thigh even further.

"Get away from me!" Jane pushed Daniel off of her.

Daniel's face became serious. "I could make things very easy for you at Prescott." He thrust his hand under her skirt, and pushed it high up her thigh.

Jane slapped his hand hard. Daniel chuckled, and withdrew it, trying to ignore the sting.

"I don't want a better job. I'm content where I am, thank you very much," she said vehemently.

Daniel simply shook his head. "You are more innocent and naive than I imagined. Perfect, absolutely exquisite." He bit his lip as he looked at her hungrily, his eyes dark and predatory.

"I don't want your attention, Mr. Higgins." Jane's eyes flashed angrily. She drew in a deep breath and blurted out, "I'm already involved."

"To whom have I lost your heart?" he mocked.

"That's none of your business," she replied curtly as she straightened her skirt.

"Well now, Miss Smith. No need to be rude. I'm man enough to know when I've lost the battle. Friends instead?" Daniel thrust his hand out, inviting her to shake.

Jane wrapped her arms around herself protectively, refusing to accept his offered hand.

He pulled it back with a smirk. *Have it your way,* he thought to himself angrily. "Ah, we're here. You look like the kind of girl could use a good piece of meat," he said with a wolfish grin.

The thinly-veiled double entendre didn't slip past Jane, and she flushed angrily. She wanted nothing more than to get out of the vehicle, kick off her heels and run away from this man as fast as her legs could carry her, but she was afraid to make a scene. Her mother had warned her about worldly men, and Jane felt compelled to prove to herself that she could face this situation head-on, without running away. She decided it was time to grow up, to be an adult, so she didn't flee.

Daniel slipped out of the vehicle and Jane ignored his proffered hand, following at a significant distance from him. She eyed her routes of escape should the need arise. He’d already entered the exclusive hotel when she heard horns blaring, and then the screech of tyres. She turned and saw John's Aston Martin careening wildly through the intersection. She felt a wave of relief. Her John had followed her as he had promised. Knowing that he was close behind gave her a bit of peace. But she shuddered when Daniel caught her by surprise, sneaking up from behind. He placed his hand low on her back, nearly pushing her through the doors, and her through the richly appointed lobby.

**OoO**

As soon as Bess was in the vehicle, and before she had even shut the door, John pulled away from the kerb and into traffic.

"Jane told me about Rose last night," John told Bess, without taking his eyes off of the vehicle that
held his Jane. "Thanks for the hint. Jane is my delicate flower, Bess, and you have no need to worry about her when she is with me. I will keep her safe, matter what." He turned and looked at Bess, noting the look of worry in her eyes. "I don't know that I would have caught on. I can be rather blind sometimes," he added.

"Glad that falderal is over. Would you be careful?" Bess growled, as she braced her hand on the dashboard.

John wove in and out of the black taxicabs that were clogging the street during the lunchtime rush. "Gonna ask her to marry me," he said as he studied the traffic intensely.

“What?” Bess exclaimed. “Don't you think that's a bit fast? You've only known her for two weeks! Oh, they just turned left!” Bess pointed.

"I can see that! Hold on, I'm going through that light. Why wait? When you know, you know." John sped through the intersection, narrowly missing the crossing vehicles.

Bess screamed as several angry drivers tooted their horns and slammed on the brakes.

"You don't need to screech woman! It wasn't that close!" John whinged loudly.

"Oh yes it was close! I could see the gold fillings in the teeth of that man back there when he swore at you! You better stop driving like a-- a maniac! You're going to get us killed! Jane is head over heels in love with you. Told me one night when she was tipsy. But marriage? I don’t think she’s ready for that!“

John grinned at hearing this. "You set her drunk? What else did she say?" he asked, prodding for information.

"As if I would tell you! And I did not set her drunk!" Bess gasped. "Oh my stars! He's taking her to a hotel!"

"He'd better be taking her to lunch in the restaurant, not to some private lair upstairs. So help me! If he lays one finger on her, I will rip his bloody head right off of his neck with my bare hands."

"Only if I don't get to him first!" Bess said coldly.

"I knew I liked you!" John grinned at Bess.

John pulled up to the valet stand and they both jumped out of the car. John tossed the keys to the attendant and they followed Jane and Daniel quickly, but at a safe distance, through the shining glass doors of the fine hotel.

"Over there," Bess said, indicating the dark restaurant to the right in a quiet voice.

John and Bess walked across the elegant marble floor and sat on the large circular sofa in the centre of the lobby. Carefully, they peeked around the high middle portion, and watched as Jane and Daniel waited to be seated in the dimly-lit, sparsely populated restaurant. John could easily see, even from a distance, that Jane was nervous. Daniel had his hand on the small of her back, and she visibly shuddered. She repeatedly tried to remove it, but he persisted. John felt his blood boil at the sight of his precious Jane being treated this way. Once the couple were led into the dark restaurant, Bess and John left their perch and approached the maitre d'.

"Two for lunch please," John said confidently, keeping his eyes on Jane.
"Under whose name might I find your reservation, sir?" the uptight man asked, speaking frustratingly slow.

John smirked as he looked in the restaurant and saw that very few tables were occupied. Bess watched as Jane was led deep into the dark recesses of the restaurant to a secluded booth in the corner. But then she saw Niles and Jack seated toward the back of the restaurant as well, on the opposite side of the room.

"Our party is already here. We'll seat ourselves, thank you," she said politely to the gentleman.

Bess grabbed John by the arm and pulled him along until they had reached the table. Bess and John didn't wait for an invitation, and simply sat in the two free chairs.

"Hello Jack, so good to see you two were able to meet us here." Bess picked up the menu and hid behind it, peeking around the edge at Jane and Daniel from time-to-time.

"Couldn’t very well say no. You demanded to meet us. Now what’s that cad Higgins doing here with Jane? And why are you here with John?" Niles asked Bess, confused. "And hello John, by the way, don't mean to be rude," Niles added.

"Dreadful Daniel has forced Jane to go to lunch with him. We don't trust him, he's up to something, so we followed them here," Bess explained.

"Hey Doc, hope you’re paying for lunch. Isn’t twenty pounds a bit steep for a steak?"

"Yeah, yeah, fine. Lunch is on me," he muttered, distracted. “Jack, I was right. Rose is Jane. She admitted it herself," he answered, peering around the edge of the menu, mirroring Bess. "Going to ask her to marry me," he said, casually.

Jack opened his mouth to speak when Niles patted Bess's arm. "Hey," Niles patted Bess's arm. "Daniel has said something to her. Looks like she is quite out of sorts."

"Has Daniel noticed us yet?" Bess asked from behind her tall dark green leather menu.

"Don't think so. He's too busy staring at her—"

Bess elbowed him.

"Uh, staring at her."

"What's he staring at?" John asked, angrily.

"He's leering," Niles replied quietly.

"That's it. Lunch is over." John stood up and the wheeled red leather barrel chair shot backwards.

Jack pulled John back down into his seat. "Let me handle this. Trust me." Jack stood up and casually sauntered over to the table on the far side of the dark restaurant.

"Higgins, old boy? Is that you?" Jack slapped the man on the back.

"Do I know you?" Daniel asked, irritated.

"Don't tell me you forgot that poker game. I lost my shirt! Literally," he lied, winking at Daniel.

"I'm sorry, I don't recognize you." He turned away from Jack and fiddled with his silverware.
Jack turned his attention to Jane. "Well hello, there. And who is this charming creature?" Jack took Jane's hand and kissed her knuckles gallantly as he winked at her.

"I'm Jane," she replied shyly.

"And how do you know this scoundrel?" Jack grinned as he nodded his head in Daniel's direction.

"We both work at Prescott Publishing," Jane said. "Mr. Higgins, uh, told me to come to lunch with him."

"Prescott Publishing. Ya' don't say," Jack replied with a grin. "I have a buddy who works there. John Smith? Fantastic fella. I'm sure you know him. He's right over there." Jack turned and waved at his friends. "You know Bess Cooper too, I bet, right? She's an editor over at Prescott. Now there's a quality woman. My friend Niles is one lucky man." Jack looked over his shoulder. "I'm having lunch with them, in fact."

Jane looked around the corner of the high banquette back, and smiled up at Jack, nodding hopefully.

Jack winked at her, and then turned back to Daniel.

Daniel looked across the room and flexed his jaw when he saw Bess, John, and Niles all watching him. The look on John's face sent a chill down his spine. The two men made eye contact. Daniel smirked, the first to break the stare-down.

"So Jane, do you know John? He definitely knows a pretty girl when he sees one, so I'm sure he's already introduced himself." Jack winked at her.

"Mr. Smith is my... I'm his assistant," Jane replied with a small smile.

"Oh! I know you then, you're Jane Smith aren't you? John can't stop talking about you. Calls you his muse." A brilliant smile grew on his face.

"Yes, that's me," she replied.

"Looks like Sunday's blind date won't be so blind after all. Jack Harkness at your service, ma'am." Jack grinned and bowed slightly. "I have heard through the grapevine that you and I have been set up. John spilled the beans."

"You're Jack Harkness?" she replied with a curious smile.

"The one and only! I am certainly looking forward to Sunday night now."

Jane looked down and blushed.

"I'm Senior Editor and controlling owner of Prescott Publishing. So what do you do Mr. Harkness?" Daniel asked smugly.

"Oh, nothing as impressive as that," Jack laughed. "Niles and I work together, but we can't really talk about what we do. Let's just say we protect people in an official governmental capacity." Jack laid his hand on Jane's shoulder and squeezed gently. "Why don't you come over and say hello, Jane."

"Pardon me, but I do believe Jane is having lunch with me."

"Surely you can release her from your clutches for a minute or two, Higgins old boy."
Jack offered his hand and Jane more than happily stood up and followed him to the safety of the other table.

"Are you all right?" Jack whispered into her ear as they walked.

She nodded. Jane was visibly relieved when she was finally standing next to John. He slyly touched her hand and felt it shaking.

This was the first time that Bess had seen John and Jane together outside of work. She couldn't tear her eyes off of them. They were beautiful together. If two people had ever been meant for each other, it was John and Jane. As she watched them simply being together, side-by-side, she heard that odd ringing in her ears, that same sound that had preceded the strange visions she’d been having lately. Her mind's eye erupted in a flash of color and emotion.

In the distance, John and Jane were laying together on a grassy plain on some sort of brown blanket. No, it was a brown coat not a blanket. They were holding hands, and smiling at each other. They sprang up from their prone positions, and then they were running with joyful abandon across the grassy plain towards an enormous, modern skyscraper. John's long brown coat billowed behind, and Jane's hair blew in the wind, messy and free. The vision faded, replaced by two voices whispering to the edge of her mind. "Keep us safe... Keep us safe... It isn't time... Not yet... Keep us safe until it's our time."

Bess was startled out of her trance by the cold, steely voice of Daniel Higgins.

"Bess, John, I certainly didn't expect to see you here. You here to keep an eye on me?" he said with a cold laugh.

"Is there a reason I should?" John asked, one eyebrow raised.

"Daniel." Niles addressed the man coolly.

"Niles," Daniel replied equally icy, tipping his head proudly.

"Bess and Jane originally had luncheon plans with Harkness and me. John here is an old friend of Jack's so we invited him along." Niles answered, well-skilled in the art of improvisation.

A muscle in Daniel's jaw flexed and he turned his attention to Jane. "Miss Smith, our lunch has been served. Why don't you come back to our table. I am your luncheon date, after all."

Jane's face fell and she turned to go, but she was halted by John's gentle hand on her forearm.

"I expect you back at 1:00 sharp, Miss Smith. We have much ground to cover this afternoon," John said, firmly.

"I am sure that Mr. Higgins will have you back in plenty of time, Jane. He, more than anyone, understands the importance of meeting a deadline, especially one of his own making." Bess said. "You have a chapter due on Monday, don't you John?"

"Yes, I certainly do," John answered Bess, but kept his eyes on Daniel.

Daniel ignored Bess and addressed John, having never kept his eyes averted from his adversary. "Of course, John. Miss Smith will be delivered to your office no later than 1:00."

John rose from his chair, and stood eye to eye with Daniel. "Safe and sound, Higgins," he added with a cold smile.
Daniel smirked, and pushed Jane back to their table.

oOo

Jane and Daniel shared an awkwardly silent lunch. Jane pushed her food around her plate without eating a single bite. Daniel had ordered for her, not asking for her preference, and the extraordinarily rare slice of beef that was set before her nearly turned her stomach.

"I thought you said you were involved," Daniel suddenly spoke, throwing his napkin down on the table. "Yet you are going on a blind date with that ridiculous Jack Harkness man? And then Niles says that you had luncheon plans with, Bess, Harkness, and himself? Before your blind date? There is no way you could possibly already be involved with Mr. Harkness if you are having a blind date with the man. I believe you have a truth problem, Miss Smith."

"It's really none of your business," she replied. She dropped her fork onto her plate and it clanked loudly. She decided to give up all pretense of appearing to be interested in her lunch.

"I am making you my business, Jane." He leaned forward and grabbed Jane by the wrist.

She winced. “Let go, you're hurting me!”

“You see, I get what I want. Always. And I want you.” He released her wrist. “I know that you spent Monday night with John at the office, and although I know nothing happened sexually between the two of you, no one else has to know that. It’s really much more believable that you were with him for illicit reasons. But for now, your chaste little secret is safe with me. But I could very easily turn you into the Whore of Babylon with a few well-planted rumours. You know how the office gossip mill goes."

She closed her eyes and flushed.

"That idea terrifies you, doesn't it? The thought of your precious good-girl reputation being tarnished? People thinking all sorts of dirty things about you? They will fantasise about you and John doing all sorts of delicious things behind his office walls. I bet you can do wonderful things with that mouth of yours. I hope you don't have any old fashioned hangups about--"  

"Shut it, Daniel," hissed Jane, looked anywhere but at the hateful man.

"Sex terrifies you." He observed her even more closely. "Or does the thought of finally experiencing it excite you?"

"Stop it," she said under her breath.

"I know your secret Jane. You and John Smith are seeing each other. The two of you fancy yourselves to be in love, but you have yet to give yourself to him fully. You did come close last night though, didn't you? And I do mean come," he said with a dirty grin.

"I'm leaving. I will get a ride back to the office with John."

"With John. Of course." He smiled wanly. "Did you know that I own the building where you currently reside? Just think of all of those dear, elderly ladies and gentlemen, suddenly thrown to the kerb. They moved in before it became such a desirable district. Their rents have been locked for years. I think it is time that I gain a new property in Chelsea. I think I might make an irresistible offer to the owner." Daniel stood up, adjusted his tie snugly against his neck. "I know you would hate to see so many innocents suffer. Tomorrow, I will be offering you a proposal. An arrangement. And I truly hope that you will give me your answer to my satisfaction." He placed a one hundred
pound note on the table, and left.

Jane slowly walked to the safety of the other table. Tears were threatening, stinging her eyes. "Jane darling, you're shaking!" Bess exclaimed.

"I don't know if I can go back to work ever again," she said, her voice watery. "John, he threatened me. He said— he said— I think I had better tell you the specifics in private, but he said that if I didn't comply with his wishes he would buy the building where we live, Bess, and he'd evict all of the tenants. Oh Bess, all of those elderly people! They'll lose their homes!"

John stood up and pulled her into a hug. "We're leaving. Niles, would you take Bess back to work? I need to take care of Jane."

"Of course," Niles replied.

"Hey Janie, I'm sorry about the little show back there, I had to get you away from that bastard, pardon my French. I suppose that our date is off?"

"I don't now if I really need dating lessons anymore," Jane muttered. "Seems I have been baptized by fire."

"And you handled yourself wonderfully, darling. Standing up to Daniel was the best thing you could have done."

"But what about our building?" Jane asked with desperation in her voice.

"I think that Higgins will find that we aren't as helpless as he thinks. I'll hire good legal counsel and fight him. Easy peasy. My father has powerful connections. Don't you worry your pretty little head, darling."

John paid for all of the uneaten lunches, put his arm around Jane’s shoulders, and gently guided her away from the memories.

oOo

Jack scrubbed his hand down his face.

"This isn't good. Oh this isn't good at all. In fact it is very, very bad on so many levels. Niles, we need to go to The Bench."

"That serious, eh?" replied Niles.

"Oh you have no idea," Jack stated with melodramatic flair.

"What's the bench?" Bess asked, but her question was ignored.

They left their uneaten meals and the three of them left. The drive to Prescott Publishing was nearly silent until Bess spoke a few minutes from the office.

"I think it's lovely that John wants to marry Jane. It might make things easier for her, if Daniel is planning what I think he is." No one answered her, and she let the subject drop.

It was the last place that Bess wanted to be, but she did have work to do and people were counting on her. To her relief, Daniel did not return to the office after lunch.

oOo
The Bench, as it was known, was a particular park bench in a rarely used park near the pub that Jack and Niles frequented often during when off of work. They knew it to be free of listening devices — domestic, foreign, and alien - and was even comfortable. It was shielded from inclement weather by a gazebo and had a view of a pleasant pond.

Niles and Jack sat on the bench, their hands pushed into their pockets. The unseasonably warm and sunny weather of yesterday had disappeared, replaced by typical London drizzle and chill.

"How much do you know about the Doctor?" Jack asked to Niles after he was tired of watching the raindrops pattering into the pond.

"Just that he's considered an enemy of the Crown per the original Torchwood Charter," replied Niles.

"You already know my secret, Niles. I'm about to tell you another secret. And this one is much bigger. Much. And if you think my secret needs to kept under wraps? Multiply that by one gazillion. It's Earth-shatteringly important. Universally—"

“I get it, Harkness. Just tell me, would you? It’s bloody freezing out here.”

"John Smith isn't who he appears to be. John is actually an alien. He doesn't know it, but he is. And Jane is his wife, and she's just as in her dark as him. They are my very best friends. I love those two people more than my own life."

“You have my attention. Go on.”

"John is the Doctor, Niles. And Jane is Rose Tyler, you know, Dame Rose of the Powell Estate? They are hiding from a deadly group of aliens called the Family of Blood. I found them after they had changed themselves, gave themselves these personas. I don't completely understand what he’s done to himself or Rose. He didn't have a whole lot of time before he did this thing that rewrote his biology and made him human. These Family of Blood aliens want to steal his life force or something. And apparently, they want Rose more than they want him, even. She used to be human, Niles, but she did something both foolish and wonderful to save his life, and it changed her.”

“She's the one who changed me. She brought me back to life without even knowing it. Probably had no idea that it was a one-way trip from the grave.” Jack laughed wryly.

Jack drew in a breath and blew it through his lips. Slowly, he reached into an inside pocket of his long, blue coat. He paused, and then pulled out two fob watches.

“These watches hold the real Doctor and Rose. Their memories, personalities, everything — it’s all stuffed in these. When the threat passes two and a half months from now, it will be safe to open them, and I will have my friends back, and Earth will once again have its best defender and ally. But if either the Doctor or Rose open their watch too soon, the Family will find them, and they'll be dead. Gone. And the aliens will be invincible. The power that the Doctor and Rose control, it’s immeasurable." 

"So what's the problem?" Niles asked, confused. "You have the watches, John is falling in love with his own wife. Yes, Daniel is a threat, but nothing we can't handle. We'll just make him disappear if we have to. He's been a thorn in Bess's side for too long anyway."

Jack smirked. “Good old Niles. You are so pragmatic. You do know that we can’t kill Daniel because he’s a cad, right?”

“Of course not. But if he ever crosses a line…”
Jack chuckled. “Besides, the Doctor was adamant that I wasn’t to let him hurt anyone. That he couldn’t change history. That he and Rose were to simply live the lives that they were given. But John is remembering, and he's remembering too soon. He is going to start looking for the watch and won't stop until he finds it. And Rose too. Did Bess tell you about Jane and her Rose Tyler at the theatre thing?”

“Yes.”

“Did she tell you that John is the man she met at the theatre?” Jack asked.

“No, she didn’t.” Niles pondered for a moment. “That is interesting. But it makes sense now.”

“Well, that story she came up with for John, it’s from her own memories. Rose Tyler. How’d she come up with that name? Jane shouldn’t have thought of that. And she told John that Rose grew up on the Powell Estate. That’s true, also. And Rose worked at Henrik’s. Again, true. She told him she was a shop window dummy dresser. That’s partially correct. Rose was attacked by shop window dummies controlled by an alien consciousness. That’s how she and the Doc met. I hate to do it to them, but we have to do what we can to throw a monkey wrench into their romance, and hopefully stall their memories from returning, ‘cos I have a feeling the closer they get, the stronger their memories will become.”

“Oh that's going to go over great,” Niles replied. "I bet Bess has already started planning the wedding."

"Believe me, if there were any other way." Jack groaned in frustration. "I don't like it any more than you do."

"What do you need me to do?" Niles stared out at the water. "Tell me how I can help."

"First things first. I need you to requisition a cargo lorry and a forklift."

"What for?"

"Wanna take an afternoon road trip to Cardiff? There's a big blue box I need to bring to London."
John and Jane know -- so why wait? Jack and Niles are nervous. Bess is ecstatic. Daniel stalks. Father of Mine hunts.

Chapter 15 - John & Jane Can't Wait

Once safely in John's car, Jane let all of her pent-emotions come to the surface. She buried her face into her hands and sobbed.

"I'm taking you home," John said quietly.

"No! Please!" she stuttered through her tears. "Not my flat, he knows where I live!"

"Then I'll take you to my flat. Is that all right?"

Jane nodded. By the time he reached his home, her intense crying had subsided into quiet, constant tears. Jane was frozen to her seat, gaze locked on eternity, as streams of salty tears ran down her face.

John opened her door, helped her out, led her into his building, and up the stairs to his flat. He let them in, walked her to the sofa and eased her down. She rolled over onto her side and curled up into herself, knees to chest. John was taken aback by the intensity of her reaction. He would have expected her to be afraid, angry even, but her near brokenness was puzzling and concerned him greatly.

What neither of them knew was that the reason for the intensity of their reactions was rooted deep in their psyches, beyond the reach of their memories, in a hidden place that they neither recognised nor remembered. Jane's fears stemmed from a fear far deeper than simply being horrified by the thought of Daniel touching her. The fear of their bond being violated overwhelmed Jane. And the urge to protect their connection began smouldering in John's heart. Neither knew the reasons, but both were driven to act by this unknown force protecting them.

Jane felt a weighty, oppressive feeling in the back of her mind. She knew without a doubt that she would never ever agree to Daniel's devilish terms, whatever they may be, but even still, she couldn't shake the sensation of doom. She felt like she was dying from the inside out.

John knelt down beside her, dabbed the tears from her red, puffy eyes with a clean handkerchief, and then pressed his lips to her cheek. He let his mouth linger against the salt-stained softness of her pink cheek for a moment, and then leaned his head against hers.

"I understand that you are afraid, but you're safe now. I promise, there is nothing that man can do to hurt you. I won't let-"

"You don't understand! If he gets ahold of me, if he forces me, I will die, John! I'll just want to die!" Her voice shook as she spoke.
"Don't ever talk like that, sweetest Jane! This isn't you speaking. I know it isn't! You aren't one to be defeated so easily! I know you feel powerless right now, but I promise, you aren't. You are stronger than you know, and when you think you can't be strong, I will be strong for both of us, just like I know that you would do the same for me." John moved onto the sofa and pulled her into his arms, comforting her with hushing sounds while he stroked her hair.

The need to protect Jane, to be strong for her, to bring his beloved out of the mire, overwhelmed John. He knew what he needed to do. It was suddenly instinctual.

He pressed his cheek to hers, closed his eyes and imagined absorbing the searing, burning, twisting pain from her body. He envisioned taking all of her agony and terror, boxing it up and throwing it into the centre of a burning supernova. Her shoulders stilled as he imagined the pain consumed, gone forever, not simply burned up, but literally never having existed, erased from time.

Jane cradled his cheek in her hand and pulled him closer. She blinked a few times to clear her eyes of welled-up tears, sniffed quietly, and touched her lips to John's, lightly and softly. John returned the kiss gently, without a hint of pressure, without force. He pulled his lips away, and cradled her face in his hands, his long, thin fingers gracing her temples. A vision of their future life together washed over them.

John's eyes flutter open and he is holding Jane in his arms. She is still aslee, her bare chest is rising and falling. He concentrates on the feeling of his wife in his arms in the dim, cool light of their first morning together. He clutches her hands more tightly and pulls them into the softness of her chest. His chest is pressed into her back, and she nestles back into him as she rouses slowly to wakefulness. She stretches out and turns in his arms so that she is facing him, eyes heavy with sleep, looking at him with desire. She traces his cheek with her fingertips, and then brings them to rest them on his lips. He takes her hand that is now wearing the ring that matches his, and kisses it.

"Good morning Mrs. Smith," he whispers and kisses her lips. She wraps her arms around him, and he settles on top of her, kissing her softly and slowly, preparing to once again become one with his beloved Jane.

Sometime during the daydream they had started to kiss. He was unsure who offered their lips first. The only sound in the flat was the blissful sweetness of their lips meeting and parting, slowly and softly. Time was not important, and they felt like they were the only ones in the universe as they pressed and released their lips, their pliable flesh giving way, ever so softly, over and over to gentle, whisper-soft, slow, unhurried kisses.

John pulled away and stroked her cheeks with the pads of his thumbs. "You're safe with me, Jane." He looked with longing into her dark hazel eyes.

"I know I'm safe with you. Always safe with you. I trust you. You'll never hurt me or leave me. Will you? Promise me you won't leave me." Jane whispered as she leaned her forehead against his. She ran her fingers through his thick chestnut hair, scraping his scalp gently with her short, trimmed fingernails.

"How long you gonna stay with me?" he asked, his voice quietly desperate.

"I'm never gonna leave you John. I've made my choice. You're my future. I'll stay with you forever."

John pulled away, put his hands on her shoulders. His eyes blazed, serious and earnest. "Marry me, Jane. Be my wife. Please?"
John searched her face for a hint of what she was thinking as she was suddenly silent. The expression on her face had changed to something between surprise and confusion. He wondered if he had been hasty. Of course he was being hasty! Two and a half weeks was the very definition of hasty. But then he saw the look on Jane’s face transform into pure joy and love. She pulled him close and held onto him as tightly as she could.

"Jane?" he said her name quietly, a plea for any kind of a response, for her to break her silence.

"Yes," she replied into his ear. "Yes, I'll be your wife."

"You will?" He paused, and asked again, smiling this time. "You don't think it's too soon? Because my head knows it's too soon, but my heart is telling me something completely different, and—"

She silenced him with a quick kiss. "Yes, of course it's too soon! But I don't care. When you know, you know."

John quirked an eyebrow, remembering he had said those exact same words to Bess just a few hours earlier.

Jane moved her hands around his back, and laid down, pulling him with her so that he was now stretched out on top of her, his right knee nestled between her thighs.

John kissed her forehead twice with soft, open mouthed, wet kisses. His body blanketed hers and the weighty reality of his frame enveloping hers left her shivering for more. She moved her hands down his back, paused for a moment at his waist. She was breathing harder now, and he could tell she was thinking, making a decision. Without hesitation, she pulled the tails of his shirt from his trousers, and slipped her hands under the fabric of his trousers, but over his pants. She didn’t move her hands, but simply felt the warmth of his body under her touch.

His breath hitched, and then he growled quietly, ever so slightly tipping his hips into hers. And then his lips were on hers, hungry and needy. Her mouth was open, welcoming and wanting. His tongue sought hers. Her hands began to move, she kneaded and grabbed, greedy and wild. His hands roamed her small frame, frustrated, unable to find any access to her creamy skin through the sheath dress. He arched up, and desperately pushed her dress up around her waist, exposing her more than she'd ever been in her entire life. Skin-toned, sheer tights covered her from waist to toes, but still gave a peek of her simple white cotton knickers. They were far from provocative, but the sight of them, and the thought of what they hid, stoked the flame that was quickly escalating into a blaze. He touched the waistband, but then withdrew his hand, looking up at Jane.

“I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t be doing this,” he apologised, briskly shaking his head and squeezing his eyes shut.

Jane breathed hard, chest heaving, face flushed. “It’s—”

The lock on the door rattled, startling John right off of the sofa. Jane sat up and quickly righted her clothing, frantically smoothing it down with her hands.

An older woman pulling a wire shopping trolley filled with groceries came through the door. "Mr. Smith, what are you doing home so early? Oh, you have company." John's housekeeper, Mrs. Huckleberry, was slightly hard of hearing, and spoke quite loudly.

John's face was flushed, and he was standing behind a chair to shield himself from Mrs. Huckleberry’s eyes. He smoothed his hair nervously. "I wasn't planning on coming home early, Mrs. Huckleberry. This is Jane Smith. She’s my..." John looked over at his precious Jane. "Jane is
the woman I am going to marry."

"Oh my giddy aunt! What lovely news," Mrs. Huckleberry exclaimed.

"I told Jane last night that I wanted to proclaim my love for her to the whole world. Guess I'm starting with you!" John kissed Jane hard on the lips with a smack and then pulled her into his side.

John’s housekeeper flapped her hands at the couple with a cackling laugh, and then pulled her groceries into the kitchen. "I'll just be makin' your supper, don't mind me." She laughed again.

"I'll be taking Jane out tonight to celebrate, don't worry about dinner Mrs. Huckleberry."

"You are?" asked Jane.

"Tiki Tiki Club. What do you think? Seems only appropriate," he said.

"Sounds perfect," Jane said with a smile.

"Well I'll just put these things away then, and be off. I'll leave you two love birds alone." Mrs. Huckleberry put the groceries away far more quickly than one would have expected for a woman of her age. Within five minutes she was out the door for the day.

John pulled Jane back to the sofa and sat down next to her, sensing it was a good time to begin an important conversation. "You ready to tell me about the lunch with Higgins?"

Jane closed her eyes, nodded and faced him. "I feel like I can face anything now," she said with a new strength in her voice. "Short or long version?" she asked.

"Whichever you wish," replied John, pulling her snugly into his side. His fingertips rubbed a gentle circle into her arm.

"Sometime soon he is going to ask me a question. He told me if I didn't answer to his satisfaction, he is going to spread rumours about me. About us. He said— he said..." Jane’s face flushed red. "He said he'd turn me into the Whore of Babylon. John, he followed us last night. He saw us together. He saw me, um, in the garden." Jane turned away, embarrassed.

John turned her face towards him. "Jane Smith, you have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. I love you! You love me! Sure, you got a bit carried away, went further than you probably wanted to, but you didn't do anything, well, technically you didn’t do anything. You’re still, you know...”

He closed his eyes and cleared his throat trying to clear his mind of the erotic memory and get back on track. "The point is, you and I, no we— Jane, I don't care what people think. No one who knows you and cares about you will believe him anyway, right? And as for his ridiculous threats to have everyone in your building evicted, you heard what Bess said, that can be sorted."

"But it’s my reputation, John! I do care! I can’t just snap my fingers and pretend it doesn't matter to me! To make that go away! I’ve lived my life knowing that I wanted to wait until I was married!” she protested. “And frankly, last night? And just now? I’ve done much more than I ever wanted to. But it’s like... I can’t stop myself! I don’t even really know what I’m doing, but I keep on doing it!”

“I’m trying to keep my hands to myself, love, I really am. But you’re just so damn beautiful. And I can hardly wait until we’re married. It’s been what, ten minutes? And I’m already impatient.” He laughed quietly. “And if it becomes intolerable for you to be at Prescott, I’ll leave. We’ll both leave. I have an out clause in my contract. I can take my book and leave anytime I want, Jane Smith. I could go back to my prior publisher. They told me that I was always welcome back. Of
course, there wouldn't be the ridiculously generous royalty checks, and the promised success, but who needs that? I know I don't. We could leave London, sell this flat and my Aston Martin—"

She shook her head. “Not your Aston Martin. If I have to give up getting new dresses or having my hair done, I will, just so you can keep your fantastic car.”

“You are amazing. My sweet, sweet Jane.” He kissed her head. “But the point stands. We could move up to my home in Inverness. We could write from there. In fact, I think I rather like the idea. It would leave me free to make another change."

"What do you mean, another change?" she asked.

"Would you be my co-author, Jane? This book is going to be just as much yours as it is mine. Can't you just see it? The Madman in a Box series by John and Jane Smith. Has a lovely ring to it, don't you think?" he grinned brightly.

"You'd do that? You'd do that for me?"

"I'd give up my life for you, Jane Smith." Before she could reply, he pulled her close and kissed her like the world was about to end, like her life depended upon it, and for a moment, it felt just like that. He imagined her dying in his arms after kissing her for the last time. He knew he would never be able to bear losing her, that he would go down fighting for her, whether it be in defence of her honour, her love, or her existence.

Jane pulled away from him gasping for breath. "Oh John, how soon can we get married?"

"I say as soon as the law allows. I really don't want anything big or fancy. What do you want?" he asked.

"Small. Simple. Only want to invite our closest friends. I don't even care about a special dress. I just want to be your wife."

"Too bad Gretna Green doesn't do quickie marriages anymore. We could leave right now and be married in the morning."


"There's always Las Vegas," he joked.

"No thanks," she replied.

"I'm afraid of flying, anyway," he admitted with an embarrassed chuckle.

"We could apply for a special license," she said with hopeful eyes.

"At present, I don't have any connections to the Archbishop of Canterbury," he said, in a mocking, serious voice.

"Me neither," she giggled. "Banns? It's only three weeks. Three weeks isn’t too long," she said.

"I don't think I am on any church rolls here in Chelsea. I'm listed back home, though. Could transfer."

"You went to church?" she furrowed her brow.

"Yep," he replied with a grin. "Why? Do I seem to be the unsavoury type."
"No, just can't see you sitting still long enough to make it through a service on a hard wooden pew," she teased, bumping her shoulder against his.

"I can be very patient. I'm going to have to be patient for three weeks, right?"

Jane kissed him again.

"You feeling better?" he asked.

"Yes, I am. I'm nervous about tomorrow," she said, cringing a little, "but I’m not afraid anymore."

"I'm going to request a new editor. Do you think Bess would agree?"

"I'm sure I could convince her," she said.

"And look over there, I even have my own typewriter. If worse comes to worst, we could work here," John motioned towards a Danish modern styled desk up against the wall next to the window.

“All right," Jane said cheerfully. She got up and walked over to the desk. She sat down and put her hands on the typewriter keys. "I have an idea. Why don't we make our dinner tonight into an engagement party? A proper celebration!" Jane suggested.

"I sort of didn't want to share you with anyone tonight, but if that's what you want, let's do it," John replied in agreement.

John called Jack's office and learned that he and Niles were out, but would be back late afternoon or early evening. He left a message requesting that they meet them for dinner at the Tiki Tiki. Jane called Bess, who was relieved to hear that she was safe at John's flat.

"John and I are having dinner at the Tiki Tiki Club. We've left a message for Niles and Jack. Would you come over after work? Don't even change. It's casual."

"Sounds nice after the day we have all had. I’m famished already considering we didn’t get to eat are ridiculously expensive meals. I will be there around 7:30. See you then, darling."

John surprised Jane from behind as she rang off, wrapping his arms around her. "She's coming then?" he whispered into her ear as he rested his chin on her shoulder.

Jane turned around in his arms. "Yes."

They shared one more languorous kiss which they both were loathe to end.

"I could do this forever, but there is something I want to do right away, future Mrs. Smith," John said, resting his forehead against hers, holding her around the waist.

"What's that?"

"Come with me, and you'll find out." He let go of her, held out his hand and wiggled his fingers. She slid her hand into his, and he pulled her out the door.

oOo

John covered Jane's eyes as he walked her down the pavement. He stopped for a moment. Jane heard the tinkling of a little bell, the type that was attached to the front door of a small shop. He uncovered her eyes as he quietly whispered into her ear, "You can open your eyes now."
She took a moment to take in her surroundings, and quickly realised that she was in a jewellery store. He took her by the hand and walked her inside. A white-haired gentleman was seated at a workbench at the back of the store.

"Excuse me please. I'm here about an engagement ring for my Jane."

"My daughter Esther will be right with you. I'm sorry I can't help you myself, but I am right in the middle of a very delicate bit of a work, and I am afraid I will lose my concentration if I stop. Why don't you have a look at what is available in the cases while you are waiting?"

John and Jane started to peruse the exquisite rings on display. She swallowed hard. She could only imagine what they cost, probably more than she would make this year.

"Now, I am pretty sure I know what you are thinking, Jane love. Don't," John ordered with a wag of his pointer finger.

"What am I thinking?" She asked as they looked at the many rings set with large diamonds displayed on black velvet trays.

"You are thinking that these rings cost more than you make in a year, am I right?" he poked her in the side with his elbow.

"How'd you do that? That is exactly what I was thinking," said Jane, turning to face her fiancé.

"Because we are so in tune with one another that I can read your mind, of course!" They grinned at each other for a moment until they were interrupted by a pleasant voice.

"Hello, I'm Esther. My father told me that you are looking for an engagement ring."

"Yes indeed, we are," he gushed. "I'm John Smith, and this is my intended, Jane... Smith."

Jane grinned at John, and they both giggled like a couple of teenagers.

Esther grinned. "At least you won't have to get used to the idea of a new name Miss Smith. Is there anything you have seen that catches your eye?"

"Jane? Anything strike your fancy?" John asked fondly.

"They are all so... big," she frowned. "Beautiful, but... big."

"I told you not to worry about the price, my sweet Jane," he reminded her kindly.

"I understand that John, I do. I just can't imagine any of these on my hand. May we look at some others?" she asked, her eyes pleading with him.

"If I may ask, what is your happiest memory with your fiancé, Miss Smith?" Esther asked, leaning on the counter casually.

Jane thought for a moment. "Sharing a park bench under the stars." She turned and smiled at John who winked at her.

"I think I may have just the thing." Esther moved to the next case and pulled out a tray holding rings set with coloured gems. "Have you considered a gemstone other than a diamond?" She set the tray in front of Jane.

"John, may I look at this one?" Jane hesitantly pointed at a ring of silver-toned metal set with a
generously sized princess cut sapphire. Small diamonds were set in the band and around the bezel which held the deep blue stone.

"Let me help you try it on," he said, with a smile. John picked it up and took Jane's hand into his, and slipped the ring on her finger. "With this ring, I thee... engage," he said cheekily. It was a perfect fit.

Jane stared at her hand. "I love this," she said with a hitch in her voice. "It's perfect."

"This the one then?" he asked. "You're sure that you don't want a diamond?"

"It's the colour of the night sky," she said quietly, "and space. The little diamonds remind me of stars. The sky, the stars, and space. Everything that reminds me of you."

John's felt a warmth in his chest as he listened to her words, and even felt drawn to the ring himself. "Thank you Jane, I... that's beautiful. I think it's perfect, too."

Esther smiled, sensing pleased customers. "This is a very fine stone. It is a vivid medium dark 13% violet blue sapphire, probably mined in Siam given the colour and quality. The ring is by Tiffany, it's vintage Art Deco from early in this century. My father has re-set all of the stones as some of the tines were a bit thin, so it is very secure."

"How did you come into possession of the ring?" asked John as he examined it on Jane's finger.

"A gentleman came in here about a month ago, and had original ownership paperwork with him detailing the provenance. Ironically, he looked an awful lot like you, except he was dressed really quite strangely in the most modern fashion. And he had the funniest hair." Esther crinkled her nose and giggled. I think he may have been a gem dealer, as he asked for a large uncut emerald in return."

"We'll take it. And we will need simple platinum wedding bands as well," John announced without further discussion.

Their fingers were sized, the order for the bands was placed, and the transaction was completed. Jane couldn't keep her eyes off of her ring. She held out her hand, wiggling her finger, looking at the diamonds and sapphire glisten and flash in the sunlight. They were one step closer to being husband and wife.

Niles

Niles had been to Jack's Cardiff hideaway several times before, and knew about Jack's personal cache of alien tech that had come through the energy rift that ran through Cardiff. Jack pulled a key hanging on a chain from around his neck and unlocked the anachronistic and abandoned blue police public call box in the industrial warehouse district near the docks.

Very little surprised Niles, but this time, he was truly taken aback. "It's bigger— bigger— on..." Niles breathed the words, his face blanched white.

"Yep," replied Jack with a grin, almost mimicking the Doctor in leather. "Hey there, girl. Missed ya." Jack patted a strut and then tucked Rose's TARDIS key back inside of his blue shirt.

The lights had been dim when they first walked in, but the room had lightened just enough so that Niles could see the cave-like interior. Jack hadn't given Niles any hints about what they were retrieving other than the approximate size of the object in question so that proper transport could be checked out.
"This is the TARDIS, the Doctor's space ship. I don't know how to fly it, or else I'd just pop us back home."

"If it's a spaceship, how in the bloody hell are we going to use a forklift to put it on a lorry? Doesn't it weigh tonnes?" Niles asked, a look of incredulity on his face.

"I'm sure it does. There was this one time back when the three of us were traveling together. The Doctor landed in a no parking zone on some weird planet. We came back after dinner at this crazy restaurant. You shoulda seen that waitress. Yowza! She was terrifying. Anyway, the cops were in the process of impounding the TARDIS by the time we got away from that restaurant. Six guys, and I use that term loosely, had somehow slid a couple of two by fours underneath her and were carrying it away on their shoulders. The Doctor was furious!"

"But how is that even possible? This place is enormous!" Niles spun around, taking in the cavernous console room.

"Time Lord science," Jack replied blithely, with a wave of his hand.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Niles asked with an irritated click of the tongue.

"I dunno, but that's how Doc explains everything," Jack said with a laugh. He cued up the recorded video message that he'd watched a million times since the day he'd discovered Rose and the Doctor unconscious on the console room grating.

After he watched it, Niles walked backwards and found the worn, white bench. He sat down, face blank, processing all he had seen and heard.

"So that's the real them? John and Jane?" he finally said, pointing at the monitor.

"The Doctor and Rose in all of their magnificence." Jack leaned against the railing, arms and legs crossed casually.

"He looks so normal. Like a regular person," he scowled. "I thought he'd be more alien."

“Oh, believe me," Jack chuckled, "he's plenty alien, and definitely not normal."

"And that man is the enemy of the crown?" Niles asked, still incredulous.

"Yeah. Ironic, huh? If only good old Queen Victoria knew how much the Doctor had done, and will do for England, she never would've dared to banish him." Jack pushed himself off of the railing. "So, shall we get the old girl back to London?"

"Why do we need to move this thing anyway?" Niles asked as they walked out of the ship.

"If the Doctor and Rose wake up too early, they are gonna need the TARDIS. She may be their own chance of survival."

Jack and Niles managed to safely use the forklift to hoist the TARDIS into the back of the lorry. "Won't people think its odd to see an old police box in the back of this truck?"

"Perception filter. You see her because you want to see her, and you know she's here. Out of sight, out of mind for everyone else. There's an abandoned warehouse close to Torchwood where I've hidden a time or two. We'll drop her off there."

Jack used the time on the approximately three hour drive back to London to tell Niles about his
time with the Doctor and Rose, and the little Time Lord lore he knew.

"...so he looks at me like he's going to kill me if I take one step closer to Rose. She's just standing there in this gown, looking absolutely gorgeous, obviously dying to be asked to dance. But the idiot, he won't dance with her. He's taken her to this amazing coronation ball, and he won't dance with her. But the thing is, he won't let anyone else dance with her either. Stares anyone down who even dares to come near her, including the newly crowned king. And it wasn't just that time. There may as well have been a flashing neon sign permanently hanging around Rose's neck that that said, 'Off Limits,'" Jack said with a smirk.

"So they were never a couple while you travelled? What do you think happened to make them come to their senses?"

"Not them, him. It was all him who was holding back. Rose loved him. I knew it before she even did. Of course, she'd never admit it. I teased them both without mercy — 'How was that lift ride you two? Your jumper's riding up, Doc. Or 'Rose, you might want to touch up your lipstick. Most of it's on the Doctor's neck.'"

Niles laughed.

"Rose would blush, and roll her eyes, and the Doctor would bluster and fuss. It was too easy to wind those two up. But when they thought I wasn't looking, she'd lay her hand on his arm, or he'd look down at her with such tenderness. He'd give his life for her. I know he would. I'd get frustrated. The two of them in the same room? Painful to watch. I wanted to smash their faces together and make 'em kiss." Jack shook his head.

"The way you describe him reminds me of John this afternoon with Demon Daniel," Niles said.

"Exactly."

Jack sat quietly.

"I thought Rose was dead, you know, that is until I found them about four weeks ago, now. But obviously I was wrong. Maybe almost losing her is what did it for the Doctor. Or maybe it was the regeneration that knocked some sense into his head."

"So it's plain as day to me that John can hardly wait to propose and marry to Jane. What's to stop them from hopping a plane to Vegas? He's got plenty of money," Niles asked.

"John's afraid of flying."

Niles laughed heartily. "That's rich. The Time Lord with his own time and spaceship is afraid of flying. That ship of his did do her best to keep them apart, didn't she? Can't even hop a flight to make it legal."

"Yeah, who'd have thought that swinging bachelor would have fallen in love so hard for that quiet, shy girl." Jack grinned at the irony. "One thing we have on our side is that I highly doubt Jane will jump into the sack with John before they're married," said Jack.

"Other than Jane compromising her morals, why is that important?"

"I think the Doctor and Rose's minds are somehow linked."

"What in the world gives you that idea?" Niles asked, surprised.
"So get this. You know the other night when they worked on the book together? They fell asleep on the sofa in his office and they had the exact same dream, the same details about an actual event that they experienced together as their real selves. I was with them on that trip."

"Okay, so they are showing psychic aptitude. That's not unheard of. Maybe that's one of the reasons they are so attracted to one another."

“Sometimes I think Bess is a bit psychic," Niles joked.

"I think most women are," Jack replied. "Anyway, my theory is that the more intimate they become whether physically or emotionally, the more they're gonna remember."

“Logical,” Niles agreed.

"So the Doctor is a Time Lord. The last one. His planet is gone now. And back in my Time Agency days, I heard things about his people. First of all, most of us thought they were actually a myth, because the stories about them were nuts. Some claimed they invented black holes. I ever heard that they could travel between dimensions into alternative universes."

“Really? Parallel universes?"

Jack shrugged. “Who knows. Not much surprises me anymore. I’d heard stories about them being able to change their faces, but honestly, I didn't believe a word of it until a month ago when Rose and the Doctor dropped onto my doorstep."

“This regeneration thing you mentioned before."

"Yeah. Well, there were other stories about them too. If the regeneration rumour turned out to be fact, why not the other things I'd heard?"

"Poor logic, but continue,” Niles said with a slightly judgmental tone.

"Of course, any story involving mating or sex made my ears prick up," Jack said with a grin, and Niles just shook his head. "One of my favourite rumours was that Time Lords had telepathic sex." Jack winked at Niles, but then quickly became serious. "So let's assume that was true, that Time Lords really were telepathic. There are many telepathic races, and often they have marriage rituals that involve mind linking, sometimes called bonding or mind melding. Sometimes it’s temporary, or it requires physical contact, and sometimes it’s permanent. Once the bonding ritual has taken place, the partners are basically stuck together. For life. So what if the Doctor and Rose didn't just marry? What if they forged some sort of telepathic link? Maybe when Rose looked into the TARDIS, she became telepathic? She brought me back with her mind, Niles, it's not that far of a stretch. The Doctor did say that Rose was different now."

"All I know is that I've seen you shot and come back to life, and I know you've been with Torchwood for too many years to believe, so I'm just gonna take your word for it."

Jack chuckled. "Fair enough. To get back to my point, I really don't see how any chameleon arch-whatever thing could take that sort of a connection away, not completely. There seems to be evidence that something is still there, at least in part. Even before he met Jane, John was having dreams about his life as the Doctor. Those dreams are the basis for his books."

"Speaking of books, if he's only been human for what, a month now? How in the world did he write all of those books?"

"I guess the TARDIS planted them somehow, or he came back in time and did it himself. Life with
the Doctor is never linear."

"So what's his current book about?" asked Niles.

"Dunno. He hasn't talked about it too much. You know, we should ask him. I wonder if there are any clues in it that could help us. All of his other books are based upon adventures. I've read them all. I'm in some of them. 'The Captain' he calls me. The one set in Kyoto for instance. But I have to say I'm pretty disappointed that Doc didn't put the part about me rescuing Emperor Go-Daigo's wife, the Empress consort Junshi, from his ex-best buddy, Ashikaga Takauji."

"Stop showing off. Tell me more about the books. About the Professor and Iris."

"Yeah, the thinly-veiled Doctor and Rose. I'd be willing to bet that this book of his, the one he's working on now, might give us some clues. He told me that he was starting a new book. Dumping the one he'd been working on. And that Rose had inspired him. Maybe this book will explain how and why they're the way they are now?"

"I'll get a copy of the draft from Bess."

"Steal a copy, you mean?"

"Needs must."

They were quiet for a few minutes until Jack broke the silence. "We could break them up. What do you think about this. What if we throw a really wild party and invite John. A few beautiful girls, a stripper, booze, big fat Cuban cigars, poker, the whole shebang. We could take some pictures and show Jane he isn't quite ready to settle down yet."

"Well that's just cruel," replied Niles with a scowl. "Imagine how that would make Jane feel. And Bess would throttle me."

"Yeah, probably, but sure sounds fun." Jack winked at Niles. "I could flirt with Jane, distract her," Jack offered. "I am pretty charming after all."

"And then we will all stand around your bloody corpse and watch you come back to life. Did you see the way John looked at Daniel? Death rays were shooting out of that man's eyes."

"Speaking of Daniel, I want to put a surveillance team in place over at Bess and Jane's."

"Good idea."

The Torchwood two-way radio squawked. "Torchwood One to Field Unit Bravo Niner, over."

Jack picked up the handset. "Infinity Man here. What's up?"

"We are picking up real time level four artron energy readings in Sector Three."

"Any additional activity, over?"

"Negative, Infinity Man. Field team has been dispatched. FYI only. Keep eyes and ears open. Over and out."

"Could be related to that Hyde Park anomaly last week," Niles theorised, keeping his eyes glued to the road. The rain had picked up significantly, slowing their progress. But at least they were now within the city, and Niles estimated they would reach their destination within twenty minutes.
"So back to our star-crossed lovers," Niles said, returning to the previous topic of conversation.

"I got it. We'll take John fishing up in Scotland," Jack suggested. "Strand him in some really remote cabin."

Niles only needed to say one word to strike down that particular plan. "Daniel."

Jack sighed. "Convince Bess to take Jane on a Parisian shopping spree?" Jack suggested.

"Bess is overwhelmed at work right now," Niles countered.

"Kidnapping. We could have some trusted boys from work hide Jane away someplace safe from Daniel and hidden from John."

"And scare the bloody hell out of her? Come on Jack, these ideas are bollocks." Niles was quiet for a moment, obviously thinking. "Can't we simply try and reason with John? He seems to be a reasonable fellow, if a bit excitable and impulsive. He needs to see that he should slow things down a bit for Jane's own sake. All of this attention is new to her. From what Bess has told me, she really has very little experience with men. John has come on rather strongly," Niles observed, really not wanting to permanently harm their relationship.

"Ah. The voice of reason. Why didn't I think of that?"

Traffic broke, and Niles quickly navigated through town. Jack pointed out the abandoned warehouse. Niles backed the truck up to the loading dock, Jack manned the forklift and they safely parked the TARDIS in a dark corner, away from windows, and then Jack secured the building. They returned the truck to the Torchwood motor pool, filed paperwork falsifying the purpose, and headed upstairs to check in, and wrap things up for the day.

"Looks like we'll have a chance to talk to John sooner rather than later," said Niles, holding up the pink 'While You Were Out' message slip. "John and Jane have invited the gang for dinner at the Tiki Tiki."

oOo

The club was quiet, as it was a Wednesday night. No special act was booked. Robert, the club owner, wasn't even on-site. The mid-week version of the house band, a pianist, drummer and upright bassist, played *You Go to My Head*. John and Jane had the dance floor to themselves, and swayed to the music, clinging to each other, as they awaited the arrival of their friends. It was already 8:00 pm, and they had yet to see or hear from any of them. Finally at 8:10, Bess, Niles, and Jack arrived together.

"Darling, I'm so sorry we're late," Bess said apologetically. "Work went kabloomooey this afternoon. Come sit down, I have news for the two of you."

They made their way back to the round table set for five. John and Jane sat together, and Bess sat directly across for them. Niles sat to John's right, and Jack to Jane's left.

"Daniel Higgins has taken a leave of absence. Indefinitely. He sent word to Mr. Prescott this afternoon. I was called in and given the news just before five. That's why I'm late. We were going over work in progress manuscript reassignments."

Jane smiled and turned to John, who embraced her happily. "Looks like your problem has been solved, my sweet Jane," John stated, happily.
"There's more. Priscilla has been returned to the typing pool. You should have seen her! She was furious! And oh, does that woman have a foul mouth! She stormed out like the place was on fire."

"Oh poor Betty, I hope she doesn't have to sit next to her," Jane said with sympathy, biting her lip.

"And John, I've been assigned to be your editor," Bess said with a smile. "I read your first chapter right away. Fantastic! I love the curry part. Very sexy." She winked at John. Jane flushed and John blushed and then recovered.

"This day just keeps getting better! That's fantastic news!" John reached across the table to shake hands with Bess.

"I hate to be the wet blanket here, but why did Higgins take a leave of absence?" Niles asked.

"Said he wanted to travel. And frankly, I could care less why he's gone, I'm just thrilled that he is, and I want a glass of that Champagne, because I feel like celebrating!" Bess exclaimed, words spilling out of her mouth happily.

"I think that is a brilliant idea," agreed John, pouring the already uncorked Champagne into the waiting coupes and handing them around. John cleared his throat, and became serious. "Jane and I invited you here for a couple of reasons. First, because we all need to eat considering none of us got to have our lunch," he chuckled, "and second we have an announcement. As you know, Jane and I, well, fell in love rather quickly." John looked over at her fondly.

Jack squirmed in his seat a bit, and Niles shot him a knowing glance.

"And we know that we are being far too hasty, and everyone will wonder why the rush, and rumours will fly, but we frankly don't care. So I am proud and thrilled to announce that Jane Smith, this lovely woman next to me, has agreed to be my wife."

Bess squealed so loudly that the people sitting scattered far on the other side of the restaurant turned to see the source of the shriek.

"Oh darlings, I am so happy for both of you. I don't know how I know, but the two of you belong together."

"Aren't you going to say something about it being too fast?" Jane asked with a laugh.

"No, I'm not," Bess replied, resolute. "It would be too fast for anyone else, but not for the two of you."

"We spoke with Reverend Whitesmith at Old Church this afternoon, and we've reserved the chapel. The banns will be posted beginning this Sunday." John explained.

Jack's jaw went slack, and his eyes were as wide as saucers. "Three weeks Doc? That's not too fast, that's reckless!" Jack said, shocked.

"Reckless? How do you mean?" asked Jane, brows furrowed.

"Jane, I don't know you at all," Jack swallowed hard, "but sweetheart, think about it. When you say 'I do,' you will have known John for one single month! One month Jane! What's your hurry?"

Jane blushed and looked down at the table.

"What's his favorite color? How does he like his eggs? Does he like his shirts starched heavy or
light? Favourite book? Does he want to travel? Does he vote labour or conservative? Cat person or
dog person? What about kids? Does he want 'em? How many? Has he asked you if and when you
want them? Does he know your favorite flower? What about your size so he can buy you
something pretty now and then. And what about—"

"We'll have the rest of our lives to discover those things together, Jack," she replied rather
defensively. She rested her hand on John's and squeezed lovingly. Her engagement ring flashed in
the firelight that was radiating from the flickering candlelight within the glass jar on the table.

Jack looked at her hand. "You already bought her an engagement ring? When?" Jack asked John,
his jaw stiff.

"This afternoon," John replied, his voice showing his growing irritation.

Jack picked up Jane's hand and examined the ring closely noting the familiar colour and the square
shaped stone. "That's a gorgeous sapphire ring. Very blue. Does it remind you of anything?" he
asked Jane and John boldly.

Jane spoke up. "I loved it the moment I saw it. It reminds me of John. He first told me he loved me
under the midnight blue sky, with the stars twinkling above. I want to always remember that, to
carry it with me." Jane replied, completely in love with the man to her right, whose arm was
holding her around her shoulders. "It reminds me of him. It reminds me of my… spaceman." She
turned and kissed his cheek.

Jack choked on the water he had just nervously gulped.

oOo

Daniel sat in his leather chair by the fire holding a glass of warm brandy. He swirled the amber
liquid around the glass and watched it cling to the sides of the fine clear crystal.

Editing had become tiresome. Priscilla was a bore. Bess's scrutinizing looks during editorial
meetings were making him unsettled. He was ready for a break.

He'd watched Jane and John walk out of the jewellery store. It had been impossible to miss the
extravagant blue sapphire on her ring finger. He'd followed them to Old Church in Chelsea, and
had made an inquiry after they left.

"My fiancée and I are hoping to reserve the chapel for our wedding, and I'm wondering, when is
the wedding of that handsome couple who just left?" he'd lied.

"Oh, aren't they lovely? Three weeks from Sunday. They will be posting the banns beginning this
Sunday."

Daniel had finally found his trump card. He took a small sip and smiled in anticipation of his plans
for sweet Jane Smith.

oOo

For nearly three weeks they had been searching for the Time Lord and his bride. Their hunt had
been methodical, patient, unhurried, knowing that time was still on their side. They still had almost
thirteen Earth weeks to find their prey, consume them, and after that, time would no longer be an
issue. How to fill eternity would be their only concern.

They had begun their search in Cardiff, but it became quickly apparent that the pair had left the city
soon after landing there. Son of Mine had suggested they pick up the scent in London. It was a favourite destination of the Time Lord's after all, and their research had produced proof that the bride was from the city, in the future. Father of Mine agreed that this theory was valid, so they moved their ship to Hyde Park.

The patriarch of the Family snaked and slinked around the outside of the warehouse. The tangy scent of time was unmistakeable, and growing stronger. He found a broken window and poured his gaseous form through the gap. He found the source of the aroma: the Time Lord's TARDIS. There it was, hidden away, quiet, sleeping, waiting for the return of its Time Lord. He reached out to his Family and gave them the news. Son of Mine could now begin his work, creating their army.
Chapter 16 - John & Jane Surprise Their Friends

“Jane,” Jack drew out her name, “what do you mean by, your *spaceman*?”

“Well, he writes books about a space explorer, of course.” Jane took a small sip of Champagne.

“She’s my Iris, and I’m her Professor,” John said with a goofy grin, and then he kissed her nose.

“Speaking of the Professor,” Niles jumped in, seizing the opportunity to learn more about John's current project, "what is your new book about, *spaceman*,” he teased.

“Oh, it's brilliant! The Professor and Iris go to Barcelona-"

"The planet, not the city,” Jane clarified.

"The dogs there have no noses, and they're telepathic," added Bess, chiming in happily.

"So the Professor decides to take Iris to Barcelona." John leans forward, excited to tell the story, face animated, hands actively telling the story. "It's peaceful and lovely, and they've just had a particularly harrowing adventure so he decides he needs to take Iris for some peace and quiet, to give her a holiday."

"Like a proper holiday could ever happen without an emergency for those two," said Jack, under his breath.

"Did you say something, Harkness?” asked John, irritated at his friend's increasingly sour attitude.


"The bottle? You planning on going to work tomorrow?" asked John

"Jack holds his liquor well," Niles cut in, defending his friend.

"Anyway,” John said dramatically, "the Professor takes Iris to this restaurant that is known for its curry, but this national dish, this curry that they serve, has a certain *reputation* for being an aphrodisiac. But not just an aphrodisiac, a bit of a truth serum, too. So no one would really do
anything they weren't wanting to do, only act on feelings they already have. Neither them know this, of course." John waggled his eyebrows at Jane, who blushed.

"So after dinner, Iris and the Professor end up accepting the hospitality of a friendly Barcelonan woman who pulls them into her home because her talking, telepathic dog, whose name is Horatio, has been in contact with his ship. The woman hollers at them through her window, tells them they have to get inside because they are about to be stuck out after curfew. The Professor knows about the curfew, but hasn't taken the threat seriously so-"

"Well of course he wouldn't. Why would the Professor ever take a threat seriously," interjected Jack. "For being such a genius, the Professor sure doesn't act like it sometimes."

John ignored Jack, took a drink of water, and continued. "Soon, Iris starts feeling odd. She teases and flirts and says all sorts of provocative things while eating this delicious creamy cake that their hostess has offered. And this behaviour, which is highly unlike her, meaning completely out of character, alerts the Professor, of course."

"Because the Professor is allowed to flirt, but Iris isn't, right?" Jack added.

"Well, the Professor is very gregarious. He has to be. His responsibility as a Time Knight requires that he use all of his faculties to his best advantage," John explained to Niles.

Jack rolled his eyes, which didn't get past Bess, who giggled.

"Oh look, here comes the waitress. I hope everyone's ready to order," Bess announced with a smile. "I could just murder a steak!"

Orders were taken, and menus removed.

"So John, what do you have planned for chapter two?" asked Bess. "It will be hard to top that embarrassing and sexy frosting scene in chapter one." Bess set down her empty Champagne glass, eyed her Mai Tai in the fake pineapple, and took a sip through the twin pink straws.

"Well," said John, drawing out the word, "Iris's behavior in chapter one was alarming, to be sure. But in chapter two, she is going to say some things which will make it difficult for the Professor to continue to ignore how he feels about his assistant."

"Details! I want details!" Bess goaded.

"Well, the aphrodisiac is going to kick in full force, and she's going to blurt out that she's in love with him and——"

"And the Professor will smile at her, pat her on the head, and tell her it's just the aphrodisiac talkin', right?" Jack predicted. He knocked back the remainder of his glass, and then refilled.

"Yeah," John replied with a weak smile. "So the rest of chapter two will be of course, his attempts to ignore it. The action will start in chapter three, but I need to establish that the pull, the strain that has been building between these two travelers for how many books now?"

"Fifteen," Jane answered without hesitation.

"Well of course he ignores it. That's what the Professor does best!" said Jack. "The Professor holds everything in, and you let it all hang out. Isn't that how it goes, John? You say whatever the hell comes to mind. Everyone has to know exactly what the brilliant John Smith is thinking. Face it, subtly isn't your strong point." Jack said sarcastically, and lifted his glass.
"What's that supposed to mean, Jack?" The muscles in John's jaw flexed.

Jack hated using this tactic, considering he had spent so much time and effort trying to draw the truth out of the Doctor when they had been travelling. "You wear your heart on your sleeve, Smith." Jack winked and clicked his tongue.

"Jack," Jane said, looking down at her champagne coupe. "please stop."

"John, you are rushing poor Jane here." He slammed back another glass of Scotch. "Couldn't you have pondered your feelings? Ruminated a while? Drawn out the tension a bit? Like the Professor and Iris. Makes the payoff that much sweeter when—"

Bess's eyes followed the verbal volley over her coconut cup.

"I suppose you are trying to tell me in your oh, so subtle way that I was far too hasty telling Jane that I love her. And I certainly shouldn't have asked her to marry me. Well sorry, Jack, I spent too many years alone, playing the swinging bachelor game."

Jane sat by quietly, while John defended himself to Jack. She stared into the bubbles in the glass of Champagne as they rose to the surface of the creamy liquid before breaking. The trio began to play *Moonlight Serenade* and she closed her eyes, lost in the music. She found herself imagining that she was dancing, but John's strong arms were rigid, holding her at bay. She could tell he wanted to say something to her but he was holding back. He was nervous, hiding behind bravado about his purported moves and humorous words about dancing across the universe.

Bess had already had three glasses of Champagne, and was now nursing her Mai Tai, and hadn't eaten anything of substance since breakfast, which had been her usual tea and toast, hardly enough to hold her through dinner. Her head was light and the air around her was sparkling. She couldn't help but stare at Jane and John. They *did* belong together. She didn't understand what Jack was trying to accomplish. It was obvious to her that they were soul mates, and just as she was about to inform charming Jack of this fact, that odd ringing in her ears began once again. The Tiki Tiki Club faded, and Bess found herself staring at Jane.

Her hair was blonde, wavy, long, and rather unkept. She wore shockingly tight dungarees and a t-shirt, boldly emblazoned with the Union Flag. Or was it the Union Jack? But Jane didn't appear to be at sea, so Union Flag it was. Jane was dancing with a man who was quite a bit older than her. His dark hair was shorn, and he was clad from neck to toe in black. They were dancing in a dingy, dim room to music coming from a tinny radio. The man looked nervous and stiff, but his eyes were drilled into Jane's.

"Bess." Niles tapped his girlfriend's shoulder. He was itching to get away from the quickly intensifying argument that was brewing across the table, and assumed from the odd look in Bess's eyes that she was preparing to become a participant. "Let's dance." Niles took her hand and led her from the table to the dance floor.

"May I dance with the bride-to-be?" Jack asked Jane, abruptly halting his argument with John.

John glared at him and smirked, but Jane didn't hesitate to say yes, knowing it was polite and there was no harm in a dance, although she was slightly nervous to dance with someone other than John, let alone the man who was berating her future husband. Jack led her to the dance floor and held her at a discreet distance.

"Jack, why did you talk to John that way?" she asked quietly.
"John is my best friend, Jane, and I don't want to see him— I don't want him to jump into something as important as marriage without taking the time to think about it. This is too important, to both of you."

Jack's voice was kind, but tinged with an earnestness that alarmed Jane. They danced quietly for a moment, while Jane thought about what he had just said.

"You don't think I'm after his money, do you?" she asked, furrowing her eyebrows in worry. Because that's what Daniel said. Well one of the things."

Jack stopped dancing for a moment, but then resumed.

"Of course," she said with a frown. "The poor country girl sees the rich bachelor with the posh car, the amazing flat, and the big, fat book deal and—"

Jack interrupted her. "If there is the one thing I am sure of Jane, I have no doubt whatsoever that gold digging is the last thing you are capable of. From everything that John and Niles have told me, you are a wonderful girl. He couldn't have found better. I mean that honestly. It's just that you are very young and inexperienced. I am convinced he loves you completely, and I know you love him. Anyone would be blind not to see that. But can't you see how the two of you are rushing into this?"

Bess and Niles watched Jane and Jack talking, and John observed as well, seeing the unhappy look on Jane's face.

"I know I'm young, but that's not exactly the worst thing in the world. Fifty years ago, no one would have thought twice about our age gap. And haven't you ever met someone with whom you simply clicked? I don't necessarily even mean romantically. Haven't you ever felt that certain spark with someone?" She waited for his reply, but it didn't come. "Maybe we're just special then."

Jack jumped in. "Yeah, I have Jane. Both romantically and in friendship." He didn't admit that the friends and the objects of his affection were the Doctor and Rose themselves.

"Believe me, I am amazed that I have let myself fall in love this quickly. I am probably the most careful person you will ever meet. And it isn't so much that John swept me off of my feet. It's more like he— he's my soul mate." She closed her eyes for a moment. "I don't know how else to describe it. It's like we're psychically linked somehow, fused together even. Bonded." Jane frowned. What does bonded mean?

Jack’s heart stuttered. If that wasn’t the confirmation he needed to know his theory was right, he didn’t know what was. The Doctor and Rose were bonded. He was sure of it now.

He brought himself back into the conversation. "Aren't there things you want to know about John? What his life was like before you met? How he came up with his books? What he did in the army?"

"We've talked a lot. I know quite a bit about him already. He's told me things that he's never told anyone else."

"So he says," Jack said, skeptically.

"I believe him, Jack! Why would he lie? What would he possibly have to gain? He's not gaining anything by— by— seducing me!" She blushed. "I'm not an heiress. I have nothing to speak of except a modest savings account. I can't advance his career. He's already given me an engagement ring, so he's not dangling some carrot that I'll never catch. He's not going to love me and leave me! And not that it's any of your business, but we haven't even been... you know!" She blushed fiercely.
"And we aren't planning on even doing that until our wedding night!" Jane gasped, pulled away, and covered her mouth. "I'm so embarrassed. I'm so, so sorry. That was private. Please don't tell John."

"I won't, Jane." He squeezed her shoulder. "Don't be embarrassed. Please."

Jack wished he could kick himself in the arse. His frustration grew as he questioned himself. If only there was a way to simply keep them safe, to let them have their happiness, blissfully ignorant of the swirling danger. It was glaringly obvious that there was no way on Earth that these two people were going to be convinced by either himself or Niles to slow down their romance. They were on a crash course towards matrimony.

Niles tapped Jack's shoulder. "May I cut in?" Niles asked with a smile. "Give Bess a whirl, would you?"

The trio was now playing a moderate tempo tune. Niles was a very smooth dancer, and Jane felt like she was gliding across the floor.

"So what did Jack have to say to you? You didn't look too pleased there for a moment," he stated.

"He thinks I am too young and too inexperienced to know what, or whom, I want," replied Jane tightly.

"Are you?" Niles asked.

"Funny, I thought this was an engagement party, but it seems to have turned into gang up on John and Jane night," Jane said.

"I'm sorry if it seems that way, but I promise, that is not our intention. We simply want what's best for both of you," he replied.

"Oh, so you and Jack, the two of you are in this together? Is Bess a part of your gang?" Jane asked angrily.

"No. If Bess had her way, she'd have the two of you standing at the altar tonight." Niles laughed quietly. "I don't believe that either of us are saying that you and John shouldn't marry. But would you consider giving yourselves a bit more time to get to know one another?" His voice was kind and brotherly.

"Let John and me decide what is best for us, please," she replied proudly, tilting her nose in the air. She looked at John sitting all alone watching her dance with Niles. She blew him a silent kiss. John caught it with his hand and placed it on his lips.

Bess and Jack made a beautiful pair, and danced like professionals. Bess was a brilliant conversationalist and kept the small talk light and engaging, if a bit slurred, but Jack wasn't particularly paying attention to her witty repartee. She'd apparently forgotten the unpleasant conversation at the table in her alcohol-warmed state. While she waxed eloquent, he decided to make one last ditch effort. If they were ever going to have any chance at slowing down the lightning fast development of John and Jane's relationship, Bess had to be included in their scheme.

"Bess, I need to tell you something. It's important." The urgency in his voice alerted Bess to the seriousness of what he was about to tell her.

He decided to be as forthright as possible. "How much do you know about Torchwood?"
"Never heard of it. Should I have?" she asked.

"No, I suppose not. Niles and I work for Torchwood. Do you know what we do?"

“Niles is a spy,” she whispered loudly, and then giggled. “He denies it, of course, but I know he is!”

Jack half smiled. “We protect people from all alien and unusual threats using technology you wouldn't even dream was possible, let alone existed."

"I knew it!" Her face lit up. "Niles is a spy, isn't he? You both are!" Bess bit her lip and scrunched her eyes in concentration, imagining all sorts of fantastic scenarios. "I bet you work directly for the Queen don't you? What's your secret name? Pretty Boy? Dimples? Jackie Blue Eyes? Do you have a double-0 number?"

Jack grinned in spite of himself. "No, we're not spies. Like I said, we defend England from alien threats." He paused. "Alien, Bess, do you know what that means?"

"Of course I do. Foreign. Other nations. I'm sure there are all sorts of advanced technologies that the Soviets use that we don't know about, right?"

"That's not what I mean. Alien, as in not of this Earth. Little green men. Baddies with tentacles. Ugly freaks with big guns. But I've yet to meet one who was either little or green. Blue, yes... big and green, but-"

"Oh come on now, don't be daft. You've had too much to drink," Bess charged, slapping his arm playfully.

"I haven't had too much too drink. In fact, I don't even feel a buzz. I'm unique that way." He smirked and then continued. "I'm a good friend of... Rose Tyler."

"Rose Tyler? How do you know about Rose Tyler?" Bess stopped dancing. "Did Niles tell you about Rose Tyler?" she asked, suddenly angry that Niles would share that particular secret of Jane's with Jack.

"No, Niles didn't tell me. John called me after his date with Rose. I did some research, worried that he was being targeted by a gold digger after that awful Priscilla woman. When Jane showed up on the scene, I put two and two together all by myself."

Bess looked at him with growing distrust.

"John isn't really who he appears to be, but he doesn't know it. His real name is the Doctor, and Jane isn't Jane Smith, she really is Rose Tyler. John and Jane are both suffering from a very unusual form of amnesia. It was self induced in a desperate attempt to save their own lives. Jane came up with that name because it was in the far recesses of her memory." He cleared his throat. "John and Jane are already married, and I need you to convince Jane to slow things down with John because-"

"What?" she screeched.

Jack's voice sped up as he became more urgent. "I said, John and Jane are already married, and they're in danger of remembering their real selves, but that can't happen yet. The Doctor made me promise to protect them, to keep them safe.

*Keep me safe. It's not time.*
"Bess? Are you all right?"

Bess shook away the ringing in her ears.

"Of course, darling. It's probably the champagne."

Jack nodded. "All makes sense now doesn't it? Why they can't keep their hands off each other, right? All those latent passions bubbling up, ready to ignite," Jack stated, laughing nervously.

"I have no idea what you are talking about, Jack Harkness. I don't believe it. Not one word of it. I don't even understand what you're talking about!" Bess replied angrily. Her voice was loud and slightly slurred. "Next you're going to tell me that Jane and John are... are... aliens!" she spat.

"Oh, Jane isn't an alien, but John is," he said with a chortle.

Bess's hand met Jack's face with a crack. "I don't care if you are James bloody Bond, no one talks about my friends like this! Jane? Married to an alien?" Bess marched off of the dance floor muttering about Martians, spies, nutters, and bloody stupid men without an ounce of romance in 'em.

"That didn't go well," Jack said to himself as he rubbed his stinging cheek.

Bess walked straight to John with her hands on her hips. "Do you know what your friend Jack just told me?" She pointed at Jack. "He told me you are a Martian or a Saturnianite... or something, and that you and Jane are already married and I'm supposed to convince the two of you to slow things down! Of all the ridiculous things I've ever heard in my life!" Bess bellowed. She grabbed Jane's Mai Tai and gulped it down, and then slammed the plastic pineapple down on the table.

"What? What?" John contorted his face and stood up quickly.

He walked up to Jack and stood nose to nose with his friend. He pressed a single finger into Jack's chest. "What's your game, Harkness?" He hissed the question.

"No game, John. Simply looking out for you and Jane."

"By telling my fiancé's best friend that I'm a-- a Martian? And that we're already married? And that you want Bess to try and break us up?" John poked Jack in the chest.

Jack threw up his hands in surrender. "Hold on, hold on, buddy. I never told her break the two of you up. I told her to encourage Jane to slow down, to step back and take her time--"

John drew back his right fist and swung. Jack intercepted John's arm before he could land his punch, spun him around, and painfully pinned John's arm up behind his back.

"John!" Jane screamed. She lunged for her fiancé, but Niles carefully blocked her with his arm so she wouldn't be caught in the crossfire.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, John. I'm a bit bigger than you are," Jack warned.

"Oh, now you're saying I'm a scrawny Martian, Jack-o?" John panted angrily, struggling to free himself from Jack's grip. "Cos believe me, Martians aren't that scrawny. They're pretty bloody terrifying."

"Just because you write about aliens doesn't mean you know about them first-hand," he half-joked. "I'm warning you not to start something you can't finish. Now why don't you calm down and we'll
talk about this like men, not schoolyard bullies.” Jack released him.

"You know what Jack? I think you're jealous. You've always had an easy time getting women. And men,” he added with a sneer. "And now you've come across someone who doesn't want you. She wants me. Just me. I saw the way you were looking at Jane before. How you were dancing with her. You want her don't you? You were awfully quick to jump to her rescue this afternoon, be the big damn hero, to save her from Higgins. Well not this time, Harkness. No one is going to come between us, do you understand? Especially not you!"

Jane walked up to John and put her arm through his. John pulled her close into his side, and she placed her hand on his chest.

Jack stood up straight. "Understood. And for the record, no, I'm not trying to take Jane away from you. Jane is the best thing that has ever happened to you, John." Jack walked out of the restaurant.

And he forgot his coat.

oOo

"John, is Jack really jealous of you? I don't think he is." They were nearly to Jane's flat before the heavy silence was broken.

John didn't answer.

"John?" Jane asked again.

"What?" he snapped.

"I didn't do anything wrong. Don't be angry at me," she stated simply.

His voice softened. "No, sweet Jane. You did nothing wrong. I'm sorry I snapped at you. Forgive me?"

"I've made a decision." Jane swallowed hard. "John, I— I want… I mean… I don't want— I don't want to wait any— any longer. I don't want to wait until my wedding night. I want— I want to…"

Jane's voice faded away.

John slowed the car and pulled over to the kerb in front of her flat.

"My Jane," he took her face in his hands. "You're upset about what Jack said tonight. You're trying to prove something to yourself, or even prove something to me. I don't need you to prove anything. I know you love me, and I know that we're meant to be married, and the sooner the better! But I don't want you to change your mind because of something that man said to you because he is jealous of me."

"Don't tell me what to think!" Jane said. "I am going up to my flat, I'm going to pack a bag, and I'm coming home with you tonight. And then I want you— I want you to— I want to be with you. Tonight. I don't want to wait any more! This afternoon, when we were on the sofa, I— I would have let you, you know." She tried to hide her shaking hands by clasping them in her lap.

John ran his hand down his face, frustrated. He was sure this was not the truth. He could see hesitancy both in her eyes and her posture. "No Jane. You told me you have always wanted to wait until your wedding night. That is what I believe." John tightly gripped the steering wheel and stared straight ahead. The rain beat steadily on the window. "So my love, go upstairs, climb into bed and have sweet dreams about me, all right?"
"Oh." It was the last thing Jane said that night.

She let herself into the flat. Bess was not home yet. She closed the door behind her quietly, leaned on it and cried. On one hand she was devastated that he had rejected her. On the other hand, she was relieved that he had not taken her up on her offer. She felt so confused. She didn't know what to think. Maybe Jack was right. Maybe she wasn't ready to be married.

Jane slipped between her feminine, flowered sheets, switched off her lamp, and promptly fell into a deep, dream-filled sleep, the type fueled by tears and intense emotion.

She is sitting on John's lap as he sits on the edge of a bed. She wants him so badly, she thinks she might burn from the inside out. John looks at her lips, and moves his head a fraction of an inch closer. He blinks, swallows hard, and then breaks eye contact. He whips a thin silver torch from his front pocket, fiddles with it, and aims it at a bottle of wine that is sitting on the bedside table.

"Wine?" he asks, and then he pushes Jane off of his lap and rolls across the bed, quickly getting away from her.

"I'm not thirsty for wine, and you know it," growls Jane.

"Wine will only make things better, hmmm?" His voice is low and seductive, but Jane senses he is not being forthright.

"How about this." She slinks towards him and walks her fingers up his chest. "I'll drink some wine if you take off your shirt and tie." She wraps her arms around his torso, and begins placing fevered kisses into the hollow of his exposed neck.

"I— um— shirt and tie— Okay," he squeaks nervously.

She massages his Adam's apple with her tongue and then shifts her attention back to his neck, dropping soft open mouthed kisses up to his ear, and then back down the ridge of his pronounced jawline to his chin. John's eyelids flutter and his mouth gapes open at the sensation of her mouth laving his skin as she licks and sucks her way across his face.

Her fevered pace stops and she pulls back. She looks up at him with tender eyes. "Oh John, I love you." She stands on tiptoe and gently places a kiss on his lips and then pulls away, almost shyly, shifting her glance downward.

He rests his forehead against her cheek, and their noses lightly bump. Their lips are so close. She can feel his warm breath puffing against her lips.

Slowly, hesitantly, he moves his hand to the back of her head and cradles it. The other arm is now wrapped around her waist, and he pulls her into him. This kiss is gentle, but passionate nonetheless. Their lips glide and slide slowly, patiently, unhurried. Jane moves her hands into his hair, and tugs at it, encouraging him onwards, and the kiss escalates. She opens her mouth, inviting him in.

Tentatively at first, he touches his tongue to hers, and then he fully enters her mouth. John moves his hands down to her shoulders, allowing himself another moment of bliss, and then slowly and gently pulls his lips away.

"If you want me to remove my shirt, Jane," he pants to catch his breath not out of physical necessity, but from the emotional loss, "we're going to have to stop at some point, though I think could do this for a very long time."

Her eyes are glazed over in pure, wanton lust. "I can think of a better piece of clothing to take off,"
she says as she looks down at his trousers, and inserts her fingertip into the waistband and tugs.

"Nope. Shirt and tie first. We'll," he closes his eyes, "negotiate pants," he shakes his head, "er, trousers, but only after you drink your wine."

"Oooo, I like where your mind is going, John." She moves away from him, sits on the bed and hastily unbuttons her shirt, slips out of it, and tosses it aside.

"Oh Jane, you're so beautiful," he murmurs to himself as he sees her for the first time, almost bare from the waist up. Her creamy breasts strain against her sheer lavender bra. He flexes his hands and toes and looks up at the ceiling, gritting his teeth and then rakes his hand down his face, as if wiping the thoughts from his mind. "I take off this shirt and tie, and then you will drink the wine. Deal?"

"Deal. I promise." She holds up her hand as an oath, and then falls back on her elbows, thrusting her chest out, watching John remove his clothing. "I have wanted this so long John, and it's finally happening." Her voice hitches, and she gets off of the bed.

He unfastens the final button and takes off his shirt, and with a sigh, carefully drapes it across the chair next to his blue swirly tie.

He pours the wine into a glass and holds it out to her. "And here is your wine, Jane. Cheers." He hands her the glass.

Jane is staring at his bare chest, and reaches out for the small patch of hair in the center, spread out over his lean, trim muscles.

"No touch. Wine first," he says through slightly gritted teeth.

She takes a sip of the wine, and then a second, and then downs the remainder of the rich red wine. "I did my part. Time to negotiate your trousers, John," she says as she sets the goblet down on a table.

"Trousers. Right." He needs to buy time for the tannins in the strong red wine to take effect, to burn away the alien aphrodisiac. "How about you go first." He kicks himself for what he was about to say to her. "Do it slowly. I want to," he sighs, "watch."

"Thought you'd never ask, John." She walks towards him, and guides his hands to her waist. "But, can you do it? I've always wanted you to be the one to undress me."

John shakes his head slightly, muttering something under his breath, lips moving without a sound.

"Excited there, John? I've rendered you speechless! I always imagined you'd be more vocal."

"Well we," he swallows as he fiddles with the button of her skirt, "we haven't gotten to the good part yet. Won't be able to shut me up then, not that I have as much experience as you may think, mind you."

"I'm getting a bit impatient, John." She sing-songs as he fumbles with her button. She gently moves his hands aside and guides them to her hips. In one fluid move, she unzips her skirt, lets it fall to the floor, and kicks it away.

John reverently takes in her nearly bare body.

"Sorry my lingerie doesn't match." She looks down at her at her simple, white cotton knickers. "I
Jane wasn't expecting this to happen tonight. But I'm so glad it has." She bites her lip a bit shyly. "Are you? Glad I mean?"

"Oh Jane, you have no idea what I'm feeling right now," he says in an odd tone of voice.

"John, please. I don't want to wait any more. Please make love to me."

Jane falls backwards onto the bed and settled onto the pillows, ready for the love of her life to come to her and make her his own, but John doesn't follow her. Instead, he pulls his eyes away, walks over to the chair, picks up his shirt and puts it back on. He drapes his tie loosely around his neck.

"You're not ready Jane. You're too young. You're too inexperienced. I want the ring back."

Jane lunges off of the bed and reaches out for him, but instead of pulling her into an embrace, he holds her at arm's length. He pulls the ring off of her finger and throws it out the open window into the cold, dark night.

Jane woke up in a cold sweat. She immediately felt for her ring, and was relieved that it was still on her hand. She looked over at her clock and saw that it was 2:43 am. She switched on her lamp, pulled out her dream journal and painfully recalled her dream.

oOo

Jane awoke on Thursday morning. She showered, dressed in a safe, brown suit and styled her hair in the old way, that familiar tight knot, low on the back of her head. She didn't apply any makeup, and she slipped on her glasses. She made her way out to the kitchen and found Bess sitting at the table, writing.

"Good morning, darling. You have to take tomorrow off. John won't mind. Well he may a little, but I'll convince him. We'll start shopping for your dress first because that will be the biggest challenge and needs to be tackled right away."

"Bess, what are you doing?" Jane asked shaking her head.

"I got up early, which was no small feat considering my hangover. But Grandfather's magic cure worked like a charm, and I'm feeling fine now. I've been making a list of everything we need to do for your wedding. We have little over three weeks," Bess mused with a heavy sigh. "That's plenty of time to plan this affair."

"Bess, we don't want anything elaborate. I don't even care about the dress. A lovely and simple white dress from Henrik's is all that I want."

"Oh pish posh. If I can't plan my own wedding, I'm going to live through you. No arguments. Oh my stars, what are you wearing?" Bess looked up from her list for the first time, and surveyed the drab, old clothing that Jane had chosen.

"Just felt like being comfortable today," Jane lied. She didn't want to stand out. She felt like hiding her femininity, especially from John. "I'm a bit tired after last night."

"I don't even remember last night! I think I may have been a bit tipsy," Bess said with a giggle. "Niles drove me home in his car. I'll take the bus with you this morning. Did John and Jack really have a fight, or did I dream that?"

Jane sighed. "Unfortunately it wasn't a dream." She sat in the chair and picked up a piece of toast.
"Oh darling, I'm sorry. What was the fight about?"

Jane didn't answer the question. "Bess, are we rushing things? John and me? Getting married so quickly?" Jane poured herself a cup of tea.

"I certainly don't think so. But I can understand how some might think that. What about you? Do you think you are?"

"I'm more worried about something else at the moment," Jane replied with a blush. "You said I could ask you anything about... sex. Well here I am asking." Jane looked directly at Bess. "Am I attractive? Am I... sexy?" she asked, her face showing her hesitancy.

Bess laughed, and Jane frowned. "Jane, you are a beautiful woman! And obviously, John sees plenty that he likes from what you told me about your first date. Remember? Ice cream?"

Jane half smiled at the memory. "I told him last night I didn't want to wait until we were married." Jane said it quietly, under her breath. "He rejected me."

"Jane? Did I hear you right?"

Jane nodded.

"But, darling, why?"

"I just... don't... I was... I thought... maybe..." Jane couldn't finish her though. Her bottom lip started to quiver.

"Oh Jane, you don't want that, did you?"

She shook her head.

"Do you think perhaps you it was for another reason? Perhaps trying to convince yourself of something?" Bess asked.

"I had a dream last night. A horrible nightmare. I dreamed I was... I dreamed I was Iris, and John was the Professor. I ate that alien curry from the chapter we wrote, and I came onto him and he rejected me. He led me on until I was almost naked and then he rejected me when I told him I was ready to, well, you know... And then I realized it was me, not Iris, because I was wearing my engagement ring, and he grabbed my hand, pulled the ring off, and threw it away." Jane rested her head in her hand.

"Darling, it was just a dream. Don't take it to heart. Now go back into your room, and change out of those awful clothes. Go put something pretty on, and we'll go to work together. Remember, Daniel's gone! I haven't been so excited to go into work in ages, and I can hardly wait to read what you and John come up with in chapter two, so you had better put on your thinking cap and be ready to be brilliant for your fiancé!"

Jane smiled, dabbed her eyes and nodded. "You're right," she laughed quietly. "You know, John was said that too. The exact same thing you did just now. That I was trying to prove something to myself or to him."

Bess stood up and hugged her friend.

*Keep me safe. It isn't my time.*
"Of course I'll keep you safe, darling. None of us are going to let Demon Daniel hurt you." said Bess.

"I know."

"Now get changed into that cute yellow frock -- the one with the daisies embroidered on the neck, or I will rip that ugly brown thing off of you and burn it."

Jane changed into the cheery dress, slipped into white shoes, and topped off her ensemble with a stylish white pillbox hat. She decided she'd leave her hair in the knot, as she didn't have time to re-do her hairstyle. Bess and Jane left together. John was sitting on the steps waiting for her.

He stood up from the step, picked Jane up and spun her around, kissing her all the while. "Good morning, love, I missed you." He smiled into her mouth as he set her down. "Come on, my car is down here. Hi Bess. Climb on in, the both of you." He opened the door, and pushed the front seat forward so that Bess could climb into the small backseat.

"Sorry about last night," John said sheepishly to Bess over his shoulder. "Not the most stellar engagement party ever."

"It's all right, darling. I don't remember the fight. I was shnockered," Bess said blithely. "Jane told me a little bit about it."

"Glad you don't remember," John said quietly.

"I have Jack's coat, John. He forgot it at the restaurant. Niles had to leave early this morning on business, and I'm not sure how to get in touch with Jack. Would you call him and let him know that I have it?"

"I don't think he wants to hear from me," John answered, looking in the rear-view mirror with furrowed brows. "And I don't know that I want to talk to him either."

"What? Are you nine years old?" Bess laughed. "If you won't call him, give me his number, and I will."

"I'll give you his number," John said flatly.

oOo

John and Jane sat on the orange sofa in his office, both staring straight ahead. John's mind felt thick. He couldn't come up with any words. The ride to work and the past half of an hour had been awkward and quiet. Jane had seemed nervous, and John was equally so.

Jane couldn't stand to remain silent any longer. "John, I'm so sorry about last night. You were right. I was trying to prove something to myself. About what Jack said to me last night. Maybe he's right." She picked at her fingernails nervously. "I'm very young, and have no experience, and it has been very fast."

"Next time I see him, he's getting a punch in the nose," John said calmly before turning to his fiancée. "He had no right to speak to you — or to us — that way. I have absolutely no doubts. None. You need to know that. Please, don't let what he said worm its way into your mind. Don't doubt us," John said pleadingly. "I need you Jane. Tell me you need me too."

"I do. I need you so much." Jane hugged him tightly around his neck. "I had a horrible nightmare last night," she said, whispering into his ear. "I dreamed that— that I threw myself at you and you
rejected me and you took back your ring and broke our engagement."

John firmly put his hands on her shoulders. "Jane Smith, that is never going to happen. Ever. And last night, I did not reject you. I would never reject you. That was me loving you. I wasn't telling you what to think, or thinking for you. I could tell you weren't ready. Now before you go and say that I can't read your mind, you're right. I can't. But sometimes," he smirked, "I think I can. And last night was one of those times. I knew. Don't ask me how, but I knew there was some other reason that you were asking me to make love to you."

Jane's cheeks reddened. He'd never referred to sex that way before. But he was right. That's exactly what was going to happen when they finally came together. On their wedding night. They would be making love.

Jane touched his face lovingly. "Thank you, John. And I do want to wait until we're married. I want it to be special. Perfect. So I think between now and then, please, let's not get carried away."

John frowned. "No kisses even?"


John sighed dramatically, and then pulled her into another hug. "Anything for my Jane." He rubbed her back and closed his eyes as he rested his chin on her shoulder. "And I promise. When it happens, when you are my wife, it will be better than perfect." John felt Jane's heart speed up, beating hard as he held her tightly against his chest, anticipating all that his words meant.

Jane sighed and nuzzled her nose into his neck, smelling his clean, soapy scent. "I think my dream might make sense in chapter two. Minus the stripping off the clothing part," she laughed.

"Or… maybe with the stripping off the clothing part."

Jane slapped his arm lightly. "Naughty man."

"It was your dream, not mine," John teased and dropped his lips to hers.

John's phone rang, and they reluctantly ended their kiss. Jane jumped up to answer it. "Mr. Smith's office, this is Miss Smith."

"Well hello, Jane. This is Daniel Higgins. You and I need to have a little talk. Meet me in the lobby in ten minutes. Alone. And don't tell your fiancé who you are meeting. Make something up. I know you'll come up with something. You are quite an accomplished liar, Rose Tyler. Now do as I say or there will be consequences. And Jane, I'll make sure your first time is special. Perfect. Better than perfect. Although, nothing quite so innocent as making love."

Jane gasped as he quoted their private words back.

"I'm going to teach you some things that John will sincerely appreciate on your wedding night."

oOo

Daniel ended the call and left his nearby penthouse flat. He made his way downstairs, unaware that he was being watched. Lifeless heads turned, stony eyes spied, and carved ears eavesdropped.

Son of Mine's army of granite, marble, and cement sentinels kept watch over an unsuspecting London, patiently waiting for the Doctor and his bride to pass by.
Chapter 17 - Jane & The Gift

Jack Harkness sat at his desk at Torchwood, perfectly still. His eyes were closed and his arms crossed, but he was not sleeping. He was waiting. He'd much of the past twelve hours in this same position.

After the fight with John, he had gone straight back to Torchwood to make arrangements to have Daniel Higgins surveilled. Jack didn't believe for a single minute that Higgins had any plans to leave London. Jane must be protected. So on the spot on the triplicate requisition form labeled *Justification*, Jack had scrawled 'suspected alien threat'. He knew he was stretching the truth, but he preferred to call it word-smithing. It wasn't an *outright* lie. Daniel Higgins *was* a threat, and there was an *alien* involved. The way it was worded could be read several ways, after all. He just didn't want to come right out and say that the threat was *to* the alien, not *from* the alien, especially when said alien was an enemy of the Crown. The requisition was approved, and the had been team assigned and dispatched at 2:00 am. Unfortunately, his request for an around-the-clock tail was denied, as there was simply not enough manpower for a *suspected* threat, not with the odd artron energy readings that kept popping up all over London.

The earphones on Jack's head were connected to a radio which was linked to a bug that had been planted on Higgins's home telephone just hours before.

At 9:50 am, Jack was startled out of his deep thoughts by the clicking sounds of Higgins' telephone being dialled.

"Mr. Smith's office, this is Miss Smith." Jane answered the phone.

"Well hello, Jane. This is Daniel Higgins. You and I need to have a little talk. Meet me in the lobby in ten minutes. Alone. And don't tell your fiancé who you are meeting. Make something up. You are quite an accomplished liar, Rose Tyler. Now do as I say or there will be consequences. And Jane, I'll make sure your first time is special. Perfect. Better than perfect. Although, nothing quite so innocent as *making love.*"

Jack heard Jane gasp.

"I'm going to teach you some things that John will sincerely appreciate on your wedding night."

Jack swore and jumped up from his seat leaving the headphones dangling. He glanced at his watch while he ran as fast as he could to his assigned vehicle. It was 9:51. Traffic would be thick, but if he was very, very lucky, he might be able to arrive at Jane's office by 10:10 at the earliest.

oOo

Jane put down the phone, pursed her lips, and shut her eyes. She wondered why the villain always
expected the victim to comply without question? Why did he always assume his prey wouldn't tell the one person who could help them the most? She felt a little bit like she was in an Alfred Hitchcock film.

It was apparent that he had bugged John's office. Bugged. She suddenly felt like she was living in a horror film. How much had he heard? How long had the bug been there? And if she didn't follow his instructions, what would he do? He had promised to spread rumours. He'd threatened to have her flat sold out from under them. Both of these were very bad things, but not life-threatening. She could live with a bad reputation. John had said he'd take her away, move to Scotland for her, but she didn't think she could ever ask him to do that.

She continued to work through her options. Higgins hadn't directly threatened John, just told her not to tell him. But she couldn't risk John getting hurt in a fight with Daniel. She had seen John's failed attempt to swing at Jack the previous night. Daniel, while a match for John's height, had a larger build. She knew John was far from weak. But Daniel was bold. The fact that he had called her right in John's office proved that. Would he be the type of man who would carry a weapon? Daniel isn't someone who wouldn't carry a weapon, and I just can't risk John's life!

She made her decision. She would go downstairs alone, but Daniel didn't say not to tell anyone, now did he? She would tell Bess on her way down. The lobby was a public place after all. Nothing would happen in the lobby. Daniel couldn't be that foolish. And it was a busy Thursday at nearly ten o'clock in the morning. There would be plenty of people milling about. She was feeling so much braver than she had yesterday. She looked down at her engagement ring. The sight of the sapphire on her finger made her feel bolder than she ever had in her life. She felt self-confident. And these new feelings were all thanks to John.

She really believed that there was nothing Daniel could do or say that could hurt her. So what if he spread some false rumours? John was right. Anyone who cared about her wouldn't believe them anyway.

"What was that about?" John asked.

"Uh, John, there's something I need to take care of. Would you mind if I popped out for a bit? If I take my break early?" Jane hated lying to John. She fiddled with her engagement ring and then quickly added, "Wedding things." She smiled unconvincingly after she said it.

"Oh! Well then by all means, go! Off with ye!" he said with a gentle wave of the hand and a smile. "I think I'll take some notes or do some outlining."

Jane started to walk out.

"Wait a minute, you can't leave without giving me a proper goodbye," John said with a cheeky grin. He was at her side in two long strides, and in his arms in less time than it took to blink. He kissed her lovingly. "Hurry back," he whispered into her ear.

Jane nodded and left.

On the way out of the office, she had to walk right past the typing pool, and Priscilla Bootkins's desk. And from the sour look on her Priscilla's face, she hated every single keystroke she tapped.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't sweet little Jane," Priscilla mocked as Jane approached. "Look at that gorgeous ring you wearing on your hand, Janie dear!" she said, her voice biting and cold.

She ignored Priscilla and continued walking.
"Off to a secret tryst?" Priscilla asked.

Jane stopped, turned and returned to Priscilla's desk. "And what do you know about that? Hmm?"
Jane's eyes were flashing as she leaned on Priscilla's desk. Her voice was low and brave. "Are you his partner in crime?"

"I don't have the foggiest idea what you are talking about." The smug look on her fact confirmed the opposite. Priscilla looked straight into Jane's eyes as she grabbed her hand to get a close look at the ring. "Look at that rock. Are your knees sore?"

Jane felt her right hand tingling. There was nothing more that she wanted at this very moment than to slap Priscilla across the face, or better yet, punch her perfect little nose. But she knew that was imprudent at best, and likely to get her fired at worst, so she opted to employ self control.

"I've had enough of your insinuations and lies, Priscilla Bootkins! John and I are engaged, and the only reason I am heading down to speak with that devil Higgins is to tell him that there is nothing, nothing, he can threaten me with that will ever convince me to agree to any plan of his."

"I wouldn't be so sure, Jane Smith. He has big plans for you, and he can be very convincing. Who knows, you may find that you like being with him after all. He is really very good," Priscilla said, with a dirty grin. "You may decide you don't want to marry John once you've had Daniel. He is a bit scrawny after all. Daniel is so big and manly."

Jane leaned in close to Priscilla, so that their noses were almost touching. "John is a thousand times the man that Daniel Higgins could ever hope to be." She pulled back wearing the fiercest face she could muster, and turned on her heel with her head held high.

However, as soon as she was out of Priscilla's vision, the fierceness faded and her stomach flipped. She hastily made her way to Bess's office.

"You just missed her Miss Smith, she went to the loo," Bess's secretary whispered.

Jane hurried to the ladies' room, but Bess wasn't there, either. She looked at her watch and bit her lip. 9:58. She couldn't look for Bess any more. She muttered to herself as she ran down the stairs, opened the stairwell door, and stepped out into the marble lined lobby. Daniel was not in sight. She leaned against the wall next to the building directory.

oOo

There was something off, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He tapped his pencil on the pad of paper, And then it hit him. *Jane would never frown while thinking about 'wedding things'*!

He decided to call Bess to ask her about said wedding things, but her secretary reported that Bess had stepped away from her office for a moment, but should be back any minute, so he headed down to speak with her in person.

"Bess, have you seen Jane?" John popped his head into Bess's office as he held onto the door jamb.

"No darling, I haven't," Bess replied.

"Did she said anything to you about running some errand for the wedding?"

"No, but speaking of wedding errands, I want to take Jane dress shopping tomorrow. Give her the day off, would you?"
"Sure," he said not really paying attention, his brow furrowed.

"Miss Cooper, I couldn't help but overhear you speaking with Mr. Smith. Miss Smith came by looking for you about fifteen minutes ago. She looked upset."

Bess stood up from her desk. "Do you know where she went, Rita?"

"She headed towards the stairwell."

John flexed his jaw.

"What's wrong?" Bess said, alarmed, as she followed his quick pace.

"Daniel's threat!" he said through gritted teeth. "I was an idiot to forget about it."

"But he's gone! Travelling!"

"I was a fool to think he'd give up so easily. Jane took a phone call about fifteen minutes ago. She looked liked she'd seen ghost, and I was an idiot not to push her."

"Oh no!" Bess gasped.

"You go down I'll go up," he ordered, motioning his head at the stairwell.

oOo

Hidden from view, Daniel peered through a heating grate. He watched Jane as a hunter stalking his intended kill. He noted how she swallowed hard as she studied her surroundings, the way she scrunched her eyes and furrowed her brows from time to time. He watched her play with her fingernails and tuck the same stray lock of hair behind her ear over and over. She glanced at the clock, compared it to the time on her watch, fiddled with that new engagement ring, and chewed her plump, pink lower lip. Jane was nervous, he could see that clearly. He knew she had not told John. The hidden microphone had proven that.

The goal of today's little exercise was to test Jane, to determine just how scared she really was. If she was no longer frightened, she would have told John, or wouldn't have come down at all, and the success of Daniel's plan hinged upon fear. Jane had just now shown him that she was, indeed, ripe for the picking, that she was still the nervous girl after which he lusted. He looked at his watch, and right on schedule, in walked his lackey.

His breathing increased, his heart rate sped up, and his body flushed with heat at the thought of Jane opening the gift that was about to be delivered.

oOo

A shifty-looking man in his early twenties skulked into the lobby. It appeared he hadn't bathed in several days, and stank as if it had been weeks. He was carrying a manila envelope in one hand, and a flat gift box wrapped with a red ribbon in his left.

"'Allo sweet lips," he stated with a leering grin.

"Do you need something?" Jane asked.

"Some posh bloke shoved a coupla quid into me hand told me to give this stuff to the pretty brown-haired bird in the lobby named Jane Smith. So're you 'er or not?"
Jane nodded reluctantly. "Yes, I am she."

"'Ere." The greasy man handed her the envelope and elegantly wrapped present. He propped himself against the wall with one hand and leaned in closely. "An' if things don' work out wi' im I'd be 'appy ta take 'is place, luv. Howabout ya' give me your telephone number? I'll ring ya' up sometime and you 'n me 'ave a little bit o' fun." The man licked his lips and surveyed her body.

Jane grimaced as his putrid breath reached her nostrils. She held the packages close to her body, protectively covering her torso, and turned her face away.

"Don't I get me tip? 'Ow about a little kiss?"

Jane glared at him, and the man laughed, winked at her and left, whistling a tune through his teeth.

Jane frowned at the parcels. Slowly, she walked over to a bench and sat down, placing the envelope to her left, and holding the box on her lap. She swallowed hard and pulled the tails of the red silk ribbon. She lifted the glossy white lid away. White tissue hid what was inside. Gingerly, she unfolded the tissue revealing lingerie the likes of which she had never seen. It was black, completely see-thru, and it looked like it would be horribly uncomfortable. She blushed fiercely, and shoved the lid back onto the box, and then pushed it away like it was white hot and had burned her lap.

She picked up the envelope and stared at it for a moment before turning it over. She hesitated before pinching the end of the fine string and unwinding it from ten two paper disks in a figure eight pattern. A small piece of cello tape sealed the flap. The sound of the water thin piece of paper pulled off by the tape assaulted her ears, and seemed unnaturally loud in the empty lobby. Jane winced as a smudge of blood marked the envelope. She sucked her finger to relieve the sting of the paper cut.

With a deep breath, she peeked inside. There were a few photographs, a mimeographed copy of an official looking document, and a handwritten letter. She swallowed hard in fearful anticipation as she pulled out the stack.

The first photo was of herself walking up the exterior steps to her flat. She was wearing her old brown tweed suit. The picture could have been taken at any time during the past month. She slipped it in the bottom of the pile.

Next was a photo of her emerging from her building wearing the slim-fitting trousers that Bess had purchased for her to wear on the Tuesday night dinner date.

The third photo had captured her precious first kiss. John was holding Jane's ice cream cone in his hand, his eyes were wide open in surprise, and hers were shut tightly as she kept a white-knuckle grip on John's lapels. But the second photo — it was Jane’s first real kiss. She touched her mouth with her fingertips, remembering the thrill of his sweet lips on hers. Her leg was bent, and the discarded ice cream cone was on the pavement behind him.

There was a photo of John on one knee, reciting Bobby Burns.

"He was following us the whole time?" she whispered to herself.

Jane gasped as the final photo was revealed. While the black and white image was dark, it was perfectly clear what he had captured: the very moment of her first ever cry of ecstasy. He had been right there in the private park with them. He'd been listening, photographing, watching that most-private moment. She then remembered the rustling in the brush that she and John had both heard,
but chose to ignore.

She shoved the stack of photographs back into the envelope out of her sight. She collected her thoughts and pulled out the mimeographed document. It was French, and she knew enough of the language to realise what she was holding: a wedding certificate documenting the marriage of John David Smith and Jeanne Antionette Poisson on November 21, 1958 in Paris, France.

A teardrop splashed onto the paper, and it was only then that she realised she was crying. Her hands shook and crushed the paper as she forced the document back into the envelope, pulled off her glasses and batted the tears out of her eyes. She slipped her glasses back on and pulled out the last item. A letter.

My Dearest Jane,

It grieves me that I am unable to meet you in person to deliver what I'm sure is news that will break your heart. Pity. Your scoundrel lover, John, has deceived you. He proposed marriage when he knew he was already married. All he cares about is getting into your very scrumptious knickers, even if he has to lie his way in. He uses deceit whereas I have been completely honest of my desire to enjoy your womanly treasures.

You see, pet, I have evidence that Johnny married a rather curvy French dancer whom he met at one of those raunchy parties while he was in the army. That's right sweetie, he can't marry you. And if the evidence of his folly were to ever reach your church, well, what better challenge to the banns than one party is already married? Last time I heard, the Church of England frowned upon bigamy.

I'm sure this must shock such an innocent, sweet girl like you. Of course, I can offer you what you really need, and oh! do I know what you need. Let me take you away and show you a bit of the world. Let me be the one to teach you about all that you can have. A girl like you could have anything she wanted if she knew how to use her endowments. Let me take you to Paris and teach you how to be with a man, a real man, not some half rate pulp fiction writer.

I know you are capable of feeling passion, Jane. I've seen you. I can't tell you what it did to me to watch you crying out your pleasure. I am a connoisseur of beauty my pet, and was so overcome with you that I had to capture it on film. I know you'll enjoy the pictures as much as I have. I have so many more. If you wish, I could create an album. Or better, have a book bound. I am controlling owner of a publishing house, after all.

Now then sweetness, I expect you to meet me at Victoria Station one week from this Sunday at 9:00 pm. It goes without saying that you will come alone. If you even think about telling anyone, or choose unwisely to decline my offer, I will have no choice but to publicize John's marriage and the rather salacious film of your little tryst in the park with Johnny. And just in case you are wondering, there is a very high quality soundtrack so that everyone will know exactly what kind of girl you really are.

Carefully think before you make up your mind, Jane Smith, and use the enclosed photos to help you come to your decision. What would your friends think if they saw what a little porn star dear sweet Jane is? And you better get used to that industry since that will be the only work you will be able to get by the time I'm through with you should you refuse my generous offer.

I know that you will see reason so we can avoid any unpleasantries. I look forward to seeing you my sweet. I have also enclosed a little gift to offer you must a small taste of the pleasures you will know in Paris. Wear it for me on Sunday next.
Most passionately,

Daniel

She stared straight ahead, frozen, the letter weightless in her hand. She had thought that a bad reputation wouldn't be so bad, but now that it was a very possible reality, she didn't know that she would be able to face it after all.

oOo

The look on her face had was priceless when she opened the gift: wide-eyed, lips parted, cheeks flushed pink as adrenaline began to course through her soft body. She wore the frozen look of terror, or had passion ignited at the sight of the provocative lingerie? His pulse raced as he envisioned her letting her hair down out of that tight knot she so often wore, and then pulling off her glasses. She'd slip out of one of those demure brown suits of hers. The skirt would drop to the floor, and her shirt would be removed last, revealing the woman underneath the girl's clothing. He began to breath hard as he imagined her in the sheer black bustier and g-string that would leave absolutely nothing to the imagination.

He almost let out a growl of pleasure, his pulse racing as he watched her look at each photo, and then shove them back into the envelope with shaking hands. He knew the photos had terrified her.

Next came his trump card, the wedding certificate. He could immediately tell that she believed it was real. Sweet, innocent Jane, falling for a counterfeit wedding certificate. A masterpiece, a work of forged art, but fake nonetheless.

Finally, she read the letter. He could see fear, anger and devastation in those brown eyes. Satisfied with his work, he left his secret perch, made his way through the maintenance corridors, and out the back door into the dirty alley.

oOo

Bess took the steps two at a time, and emerged from the stairwell into the lobby to find Jane sitting stoically, leaning up against the wall, eyes red, limply holding a Manila envelope in one hand and a sheet of stationery in the other.

"Jane! Darling! What in the world?" Bess ran to her friend and sat next to her. Wordlessly, Jane handed her both the letter and the envelope. Bess read it quickly and then thumbed through the other items. She cleared her throat several times.

"Come on darling, let's go upstairs and find John." Bess put her arm around Jane and urged her off of the bench. She looked back at the box, and picked it up with a frown.

"He's married, Bess," she whimpered quietly. "He lied to me. He's already married."

Bess pushed the call button for the lift.

"Well if it ain't my two favourite ladies. Now then Miss Smith, what's got you looking so upset?" Jim asked with genuine concern.

"Good day Jim," Bess replied quietly, keeping her arm protectively around Jane. "Jim, has Mr. Higgins been in today?"

"Why yes he was. I thought it odd considin' he's taken a leave and such. He was my first customer
this mornin' in fact, 6:30 am, bright and early. Didn't come back down in my lift, though. Musta taken the stairs."

"Hmmm," mused Bess, with a worried look on her face.

"Say 'ello to that Mr. Smith of yours for me, Miss Smith, an' tell 'im I'm havin' a mighty good time readin' 'is books. Rippin' good yarns!" he said with a smile.

Jane nodded.

The two ladies left the lift. Bess headed towards John's office, but Jane stood frozen in the lobby.

"I can't go in there Bess. I just can't," whispered Jane.

"No, darling, you must. He has to explain himself, and the sooner the better."

"What's there to explain? He lied and I was deceived," Jane said, her voice watery.

"He owes you an explanation, Jane." Bess's voice turned cold. "You know, something has been bothering me ever since I saw that wedding certificate and it just hit me now. The name of the bride. Jeanne Antoinette Poisson. Recognize the name?"

"No, but she's probably some nudie can-can dancer at the Moulin Rouge," Jane said venomously.

"Madame de Pompadour. Official mistress of Louis the Fifteenth. I bet that's her stage name! The French tart!" Bess now showed her anger.

Jane was no longer devastated, now she was furious. She clenched her fists, straightened up, and with head high, marched towards John's office. She pulled open the door violently and slammed it behind her.

"That was Daniel on the phone wasn't it?" John charged, arms crossed, face and voice serious.

"So what if it was?" She walked right up to John and slapped him across the face with a force that knocked him off balance and sent him to the sofa.

"Jane?" Her name was all he could muster, and his mouth fell open.

"When were you going to tell me? After you finally seduced me into bed, huh? All that talk about waiting for me, waiting for our wedding night." She spat out the words like they were poison. "It was all part of your game wasn't it?" Jane was fuming. "I didn't see you complaining yesterday on the sofa. You didn't lift a finger to try to stop me! Not once!"

"That is untrue, love," John said. "I stopped myself. I told you that I shouldn't have done that. Forgive me for that if you misunderstood."

"Lucky for me your housekeeper interrupted, or else I'd have... I'd have... given in!" She squeezed her eyes shut and stifled a scream. "Oh you are good," she growled. "You are really good, Mr. Smith! And I am... I am... so, so stupid!" she cried and ran out, slamming the door with such force that the wall shuddered.

She looked down at her hand and saw her engagement ring. She flew back into his office, struggled a bit to pull it off of her swollen finger, and set it down firmly on John's desk. "You'll be wanting this back, I'm sure."

She breathed hard a few times. "And you'll be needing a new assistant, too. Back to the old typing pool for sweet, innocent, stupid, gullible Jane Smith. Probably just a matter
of time anyway, once you got what you wanted out of me, I'm sure you would have found something about me you didn't like, just like all the others! Priscilla will be more than thrilled to have her old job back, why don't you ask her?"

"I don't want anyone else. I want you," he almost groaned.

Her shoulders and chest heaved in fury as she pointed her finger at John. "You know what, Mr. Smith? You are no better than Daniel Higgins. At least he doesn't lie about what he wants! He just comes right out and says it!" Jane shouted and then stormed out of his office with finality.

"Jane! Jane! Don't leave like this!" he called from inside.

"We're going to lunch, Bess," Jane ordered.

As Jane and Bess stormed away, Priscilla smiled, the cat who got the cream. She had heard every single word, as had everyone at this end of the floor. "Mission accomplished," she cooed as she got up from her desk and headed to an empty office with a telephone. She pulled out the scrap of paper and dialled the phone number Daniel had provided her early this morning.

"It's just little old me. You should have heard her. Quite the tigress when she wants to be. The way she laid into him was glorious! And the ring is off." She paused. "Don't forget to bring me back something from Paris, and make sure it's mink."

oOo

Jack broke at least seven traffic laws between Torchwood and Prescott Publishing. He turned left through a red light in front of oncoming traffic, drove down the wrong side of the street, slammed on the brakes manoeuvring his vehicle into a 180 degree skid, coming to an abrupt halt parked perfectly parallel to the kerb.

Jack got out of his car and ran into the empty lobby. He put his hands on his hips and swore. He was too late. He ran back out onto the pavement, and then saw a familiar man sauntering in front of him, hands in his pockets, whistling. Jack ran up to him, put his hand on his shoulder and spun him around.

"Fancy seeing you here, Higgins. What are you up to?" Jack asked boldly.

"Last time I checked Mr. Harkness, London was still a free city. I was simply out for a walk, enjoying the fresh air."

"What did you do to Jane?" Jack asked, hazarding an educated guess as to his purpose for being so close to her workplace.

"I did nothing to Jane," he answered truthfully.

"Where is she?" Jack hissed.

"I would have to assume she is at work, but I wouldn't know. I have taken a leave of absence, and have not been in my office since yesterday morning." Again, this was the truth. He had not darkened the door of his office. He had been in John's office, planting the high-tech and ridiculously expensive listening device he'd purchased from a dodgy bloke in the back room of an adult bookstore. He had a feeling that Jack Harkness was someone who could read when someone was lying to him, and he couldn't risk him finding him out.

Jack nodded. "I've got my eye on you Higgins. If you do anything, and I mean anything to harm
either Jane or John, you will regret it. And that is a promise." Jack left, bumping his shoulder against the man, shoving him off balance.

Somehow, Daniel knew this man meant every word that he had said. His face twitched nervously.

High above, the pair were being observed by a silent stony sentinel perched on the ledge, one of the Family's secret army of gargoyles and statues scattered throughout London.

oOo

It happened when Jack was driving back to Torchwood, after the verbal altercation with Higgins. Jack remembered.

"Oh shit! My coat! The watches!" He yanked the steering wheel to the right as hard as he could and aimed straight for the Tiki Tiki Club, cursing the entire way in fifty different alien languages.

He swore again when he found that it was not at the restaurant, and that it had not been turned in to the lost and found, and no one remembered having see it.

"Well I've really cocked it up now."

One hour later he was sitting in the TARDIS on the beat-up white bench that served as the only seating in the console room. His held his head in his hands. He simply didn't know what to do. Without those watches, his friends would certainly live safe, human lives. At least they would never be consumed by those creatures.

He could immediately apologise to his friends for his foolish behavior, for doubting their fitness to marry. He could lie and say he had been jealous. He'd shake hands with his best buddy John, kiss Jane sweetly on the cheek, invite himself to the wedding, or even volunteer to be best man, and make sure that John and Jane ended up happily ever after, married and living in a sweet little cottage somewhere in rural Scotland.

He could easily take care of Higgins, just make him disappear, and Jane would never be the wiser.

He could keep an eye on John and make sure he was a good husband, and pummel him if he ever did Jane wrong.

And if they both remembered, he could also use that new experimental drug from work, Retcon, and take away the memories of their lives on the TARDIS, and they would immediately return to their mundane, human existence.

But he didn't want to do any of those things – well, except for the part about Daniel. He groaned, knowing that he had single-handedly written the Doctor and Rose's death sentences. If they never got sick, and avoided accidents, maybe they would survive for another fifty or sixty years, and die of old age.

These alternatives were simply not acceptable. He had to find the watches, and he had to start looking right now, so he jumped off of the bench, regained his inner fortitude, and secured the TARDIS.
Chapter 18 - John Without Jane

Jane stabbed the chip like it was the enemy and shoved it into her mouth. She barely chewed before swallowing the greasy bite.

"How long would he have led me on? Right up until the wedding?" She stabbed another poor, defenceless potato.

"Men! They're pigs!" Bess spat. "Well, with the exception of Niles," she frowned and jabbed her fork into her sausage and cut it angrily with her knife. "Better to find out now, Jane. Believe me! Just wait until I tell Niles! He is going to murder John!"

"No! Please! Don't tell him! I can't even think of anyone else knowing this yet!" Jane said in a panic. "Please Bess," she whispered with pleading eyes.

"Of course, darling." Bess reached across the table and patted Jane's arm.

Jane quietly laid her fork down, started to frown and then burst into tears. "B-- b-- but I th-- thought he-- he looooooved meeeeee!" she wailed. She didn't want those who knew her to know about her tragic circumstance but incongruently, didn't seem to care that strangers could hear her cries and see her tears. Truth was, hardly anyone noticed the women in the far, dark corner of the noisy pub.

Bess produced a tissue from her handbag and passed it to Jane, who loudly blew her nose.

"There, there, darling, it will be all right, you'll see. You have only lost two weeks of your life. At least you didn't lose your..." Bess whispered, "virginity." She nodded sagely.

Jane looked at her with doe eyes and then burst afresh into tears. "I've never met anyone who I wanted to lose it to before!" Jane blubbered and blew her nose again. "And I never will again. I'll die an old maid!"

Bess sighed sympathetically and looked at her watch. "Ready to face the dragon? You really do need to be back at work, darling. Only have to be there a few hours, closing up early for Easter weekend, remember?"

"No, I'm not ready," Jane said, dabbing her eyes, "but I know that I have to. Miss Woods is going to eat me alive," she said quietly. "Maybe she'll move me to the mail room, or down to typesetting. Last thing I want to do is have to face Priscilla Bootkins day after day."

"I wish I needed an assistant," Bess said, draping her arm around Jane's shoulder as they left the pub. "I would ask for you in a heartbeat, darling."

oOo
Jane respectfully asked to be assigned a new position. She had calmly explained that she had unfortunately had a falling out with Mr. Smith, and it was simply impossible for them to work together any longer.

"Absolutely not, Miss Smith. There have been enough games of musical chairs in that man's office. You will march yourself right back in, sit yourself down, and do your job. And you will do it well. If you don't, you won't have a job. Is that understood?"

"Yes ma'am," Jane replied contritely. She couldn't afford to lose this position. She had very little upon which to fall back other than her savings, and now that John was out of her life, she knew she would have to take care of herself indefinitely.

"And furthermore, you will leave your personal life at the door, for everybody's sake, especially your own. Most of the women in this office can't keep their gobs shut even when they don't have something to talk about, and you just gave them fodder for weeks. Not one of them is going to get any work done for the rest of the day. I'm glad it's an early closure for Easter weekend."

"I'm sorry Miss Woods, I am so sorry. I used very poor judgement," Jane said looking down at empty ring finger.

"Poor judgement? That is an understatement. Do you realise how loud you were speaking, Miss Smith?"

"I didn't know," she whispered. "I think that perhaps too much has happened to me lately. I'm out of sorts and-- and-- you wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"Try me." Miss Woods crossed her arms, challenging Jane.

"If someone here," she began slowly, "a man here at Prescott were to be threatening someone, to try and get that someone to do something they didn't want to do using certain information against said someone, what recourse would that someone have?"

"Are you that someone?" Miss Woods asked. Her voice was kind but still firm. Jane bit her lip. "Yes," she said quietly.

"Is Mr. Smith trying to coerce you, Miss-- Jane?"

"No! He's just a lying... liar. It's Daniel Higgins."

Miss Woods muttered under her breath and set her jaw angrily for a moment. "Tell me everything."

Jane told Miss Woods about the won't-take-no-for-an-answer lunch invitation, his roving hands in the back seat of the Bentley, the threats regarding the sale of the building where she lived, and to besmirch her character.

"I'm not going to lie to you Jane. Proving this sort of thing is never easy. Mr. Higgins has been a thorn in my side for years, and you aren't the first he has threatened, but never once has a woman been able to prove their allegations. And it doesn't help matters that he is majority owner of this company." She flexed her hand and released it. "Men like him always seem to get what they want, when they want it. Mr. Prescott is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He is a very good man Miss Smith, but he has a company to think of. Many people are relying upon him to keep this company financially sound, Miss Smith."

"So you're afraid that ruffling Mr. Higgins's feathers will upset him, and cause him to pull his money out?" Jane asked bluntly.
"That's a very real possibility."

"And because I am a lowly transcriptionist my happiness doesn't really matter," Jane frowned, and stood up to leave.

"Absolutely not! You sit right back down, young lady!" Miss Woods said sternly. Surprised at the force of her words, Jane complied.

"So, what does he want from you?"

Jane blushed and looked away. "Isn't it obvious?"

"Well yes, but I can't help you unless I know the specifics, dear." Miss Woods's voice gave away her sympathy for Jane's plight.

Jane reached down to the floor and placed the box on the table. "Look inside," Jane said quietly.

Miss Woods lifted the lid, and an eyebrow. "Jumping Jehoshaphat. Those are some..." she cleared her throat, "skimpy knickers, and I'm not quite sure what that other thing is."

Jane cringed and blushed even more. "I guess better learn to get past my embarrassment, considering what he's going to do when I don't show up at the train station next Sunday night."

"Train station?" Miss Woods raised a single eyebrow.

Jane held the Manila envelope against her chest and swallowed hard. "There's a letter in here and... other things."

Miss Woods crossed her arms and frowned. "So are you going to let me look or not?"

Jane hesitated. "He mentions some very private things, Miss Woods. And maybe now you'll understand why I was so angry at Mr. Smith. And before you read the letter," she closed her eyes, "please don't think poorly of me. I am not... well... I'm not... a wanton woman." Her voice faded away and then she handed the packet to Miss Woods.

Miss Woods slipped the cat-eyed half-glasses that were hanging on a chain around her neck onto her nose and opened the envelope. She cleared her throat and methodically pulled each item out, one by one. Her face remained blank as she studied each photo with a careful eye. She showed no emotion until she came to the marriage document. She frowned. Finally, she read the letter. She pulled the glasses off and let them hang around her neck.

"I am so sorry, Jane." Her voice was thick and kind.

"That was my first kiss," Jane said quietly. "The picture with the ice cream."

"How long has this love affair been going on with Mr. Smith?"

"I started seeing John less than two weeks ago. But Miss Woods, I didn't know he was married." She shook her head. "I never would have been involved with him had I know that. And we haven't done anything beyond what you see in these pictures!" Jane said a little bit too loudly.

"What is this reference to this Rose Tyler woman?" asked Miss Woods.

Jane sighed. "The first time we met outside of work, it was a Saturday. I had just been to the beauty salon and then Bess had just taken me shopping for new clothing. I had even thrown away one of my old frumpy suits," Jane laughed quietly. "I decided to go to the cinema alone, to take my new
look for a spin, as it were. I was feeling bold and confident. It was sort of surreal, actually. Never had I felt so pretty in all my life.

"I didn't need to wear glasses to watch the movie, I had a new dress on and a completely different hairstyle, and the salon had plastered on a ton of eye makeup. Looked a bit like Cleopatra." Jane laughed sadly in recollection. "John happened to be at the same cinema, completely by coincidence, and he sat by me. It was dark of course, and it became quickly apparent that he didn't recognise who I was, the way he was flirting. Miss Woods, I've never had a boyfriend, not a single one before John. I've lived a very sheltered, quiet, content life, you have to understand that. And here was this famous, devastatingly handsome man paying attention to me, and of course, I was completely and wholly terrified so I... I lied. I gave him a false name."

"Oh, Jane," she said in a disappointed tone with a click of the tongue.

"I know it was foolish and unkind and awful, but I really liked him, so I kept up the ruse. I didn't give him my telephone number, but he had told me where he worked so I had the excuse to call him. And I did. We made arrangements to go on a picnic. Was supposed to be on Saturday. But then on Tuesday, the day I started as his assistant, we worked so well together that he asked me – Jane – to accompany him to dinner after work. I was a so flattered. Here I was, plain Jane, not glamorous Rose, and he had asked me out. And you know what? We had a wonderful time, but apparently Daniel followed us. He filmed us, he photographed us. Miss Woods," she said in a bit of a panic, "Mr. Higgins knows where I live. I caught him watching me through my bedroom window."

Miss Woods pinched her lips. "Go on."

"Of course, John's smart, and on that date, he figured out that Rose and I were the same girl, but he didn't let on know that he knew. He treated me like a princess. He was kind and attentive and made me feel beautiful. He even gave me the chance to tell him myself."

"If he weren't a lying cheater, I'd make a play for him myself. He sounds wonderful," Miss Woods quipped with a grim smile.

Jane swallowed hard, nodded, and fought back more tears. "When I told him about Rose, he admitted that he had known, and said he didn't hold it against me, that he was relieved." Jane's voice pitched higher as her lip quivered. "He said he wouldn't have been able to make a choice between the two of us because-- because he loved us both, and that... now he knew why." She stopped and bowed her head.

"Because you were the same person." Miss Woods got up from her desk and came around next to Jane. She sat on the edge of her desk and patted Jane's arm.

"Mr. Higgins overheard that conversation," she sighed. "On Wednesday, after that horrible luncheon with Daniel, John asked me to marry him. He even gave me a ring. And it wasn't just some cheap thing either. He let me pick out from a proper jewellery store. A beautiful sapphire and diamond ring. It was Tiffany. Vintage." Jane angrily wiped a tear from her eye. "We decided to tell our friends at dinner, but it was a disaster. His mate Jack told us we were moving too fast. They've been friends for years. We both denied that we were being hasty, but now I know Jack was absolutely correct. They had a fight, and Jack left. John accused Jack of being jealous, but Jack denied that. Said he just wanted what was best for us. He lost his best friend because of me."

"So this morning, John and I were working, and I answered his phone when it rang. It was Mr. Higgins. He mentioned a bit of a conversation that John and I had just had while we were in his office. He has a recording device in there Miss Woods! I'm sure of it. There's no other way he
could've known what we were speaking about! And he knew about the engagement, so I can only
guess it was because he was continuing to follow us on Wednesday. And I know Priscilla is
involved somehow too, because Mr. Higgins mentioned her at the luncheon, that she felt she was a
scorned woman."

"Those two are as thick as thieves. I have no doubt that she's in on it. But pay her no mind. She's a
cow. And no, you may not repeat that."

Jane cracked a small smile. "So he told me I had to go downstairs alone, to the lobby, and this
horrible man delivered these things and... and... he's already married! John is already married!"
Jane was now nearly incoherent, her words running together, her thought patterns scattered and
broken.

"So you knew Smith for less than two weeks and you accepted a proposal?" Miss Woods frowned.
"Jane, sweetheart, I think you are very innocent girl, but surely even you must think it odd that a
man would propose after such a short time. After two dates? One of which actually happened when
you were lying about your identity? Honestly Jane, you really didn't think this through at all, did
you?"

"I know! I am stupid and young and I should have seen through him from the beginning, but... I
just..." Jane shrank in her chair, defeated. "All I could see was this wonderful man, a dream come
ture, and he was paying attention to me!" She pointed to herself. "To me. To dull, boring, shy,
ordinary Jane Smith. Now I see that I was just an easy target for both of them, both Higgins and
John." Jane looked away and sighed.

"I can't help you with John, but I hope I can help you deal with Daniel. I know he has pressured
other women here, though none have ever come forward officially. It has always been his word
against theirs. But you have provided hard evidence. I think I can finally do something about this
rake. And he has certainly never taken anything this far. He seems obsessed with you, Jane, and
that worries me."

"You're scaring me, Miss Woods," Jane replied quietly.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. Make sure you are never alone, all right? Is there anyone who can stay
with you and Bess?"

"Bess has a boyfriend, Niles."

"Ah, yes. Always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Sounds familiar," Miss Woods said a bit
regretfully. "Don't be shy. Ask Niles, Jane."

"Thank you, Miss Woods," Jane replied quietly.

"Now in the meantime, I do need you to continue to work for Mr. Smith. And believe me, I
understand how awkward it is going to be for a while, but you and he do make a very good team,
professionally speaking, and if this company is going to survive, we need Smith to crank out those
books, and perhaps then we won't be dependent upon Higgins's investment."

Jane nodded and walked away. Her shoulders were slumped and her stomach was churning as she
slowly made her way back to John's office.

As she neared the entrance, she breathed in deeply and released the air through her lips. She
straightened her back and held her head high. Her face was impassive, and her tears, dried. She
opened the door, but the office was empty. "So much for my grand entrance," she said to herself,
returning to her former deflated state. She saw a note on her small desk.

My Dearest Jane,

I don't know what in the world I could ever have done to cause you to be so enraged at me. Please won't you tell me how I have hurt you so that I can ask forgiveness and we can be reconciled? I have gone over it in my head a thousand times, but simply cannot fathom what I might have done that could ever have caused you to hate me so.

I promise you, I am nothing like Daniel, and I am not trying to seduce you. I absolutely respect your wish to remain non-intimate until we are finally married, and am willing to wait right along with you. Please, please, please take my ring back? Please don't break our engagement my sweet Jane, I am begging you.

Forever,

Your Loving John

PS Please take the rest of the day off. I have already left for the day as the last thing I could possibly do right now is write. Every word would remind me of you.

Jane slammed the letter down onto the desk. She stared at it for a moment, and then reverently picked it up, carefully folded it, and put it into her handbag along with the other notes from John. She never wanted to forget how she had been duped. She took Mr. Smith up on his offer, and left the office for the day.

OoO

John shoved his hands into his pockets and walked aimlessly through the park. He followed the path wherever it took him, ambling past a toy balloon vendor, a sketch artist, and several competing newspaper hawkers. He wandered by the playground where the laughter of young children playing on the swings mixed with the sounds of their chatting mothers. A baby wailed. A child cried over a skinned knee. A mother laughed.

A ball bounced across the path in front of him. He bent over, scooped it up and tossed it back to a pair of waiting hands. "Thanks mister," the little owner called. John waved back and continued his walk, passing an elderly couple sitting on a bench feeding crumbs of bread to greedy pigeons.

Approaching him on the path was a young mother walking with her son. The young boy's eyes were wide and blue, and he was happily holding a toy balloon that nearly matched the colour of his eyes. The brown-haired boy waved his arm, watching the blue balloon bob and bounce, but he lost his grip on the string when a strong gust of wind caught him off guard. The tot started to cry as the balloon drifted up and was caught in the branches of a tree. The mother reached, and then jumped in a vain attempt to retrieve the balloon, but it was just out of her reach, so she bent over and lovingly attempted to soothe his tears.

Taking advantage of the woman's diverted attention, a greasy man ran up from behind and boldly pulled her handbag right off of her shoulder.

Reflexively, John scanned the flower bed to his right and saw a roundish rock roughly the size of a cricket ball. He snatched it, threw it at a roasted nut vendor's cart just up the path, disengaging the wheel lock. The cart quickly picked up speed as it came careening down the sloped path.

"Oi, me cart!" the nut vendor cried.
The rolling cart knocked the thief off of his feet, hitting him from behind, catching him by surprise.

John ran up to the young man, collared him, retrieved the woman's handbag, whistled for a nearby policeman who had heard the commotion, and held the struggling man until the officer had him under control. A blue police box was nearby, and the man was pushed inside and locked up while the officer called for him to be carted off.

The woman trotted up to John, dragging her crying son along behind. "I don't know how you did that, but that was brilliant!" Her mouth was agape as she stared at John, who was himself, quite surprised at his own feat.

"Uh, here's your handbag ma'am." He jogged down the path to the tree, jumped up and nabbed the string of the blue balloon. The little boy ran up and hugged his legs. John ruffled the tike's hair and tied the balloon around the child's tiny wrist. "This way you won't lose it again, lad," he said with a small smile.

"Hey, mate," the officer called, "I need to take your statement. Let's start with name, address, phone."

"Smith. John David Smith." John provided his address and telephone number, gave his statement, and was dismissed.

"I want to give you some sort of a reward, sir, it won't be much but-" the woman stated.

"Naw, just doing what needed to be done," John replied, embarrassed.

The woman thrust out her hand. "Well thank you, Mr. Smith. I'm Mrs. Prentice, and I am sure my husband Mr. Prentice would want to thank you too," she said gratefully.

"You're welcome." John pushed his hands into his pockets and walked away.

What John didn't know was that his Jane had seen the entire incident. She, too, had gone for a long amble in the park to clear her head. She knew she shouldn't be alone, but she couldn't stay in that office one more minute.

She couldn't help but smile, feeling just a little bit safer. The thief who John had collared was the very same man whom Daniel had paid to deliver the blackmail packet earlier this morning.

But then her heart fell. John had not only been the man of her dreams, he just had proved himself a bonafide hero, too. Bess was wrong. She hadn't simply lost two weeks of her life to John, he'd completely stolen her heart and crushed it to bits.

Jane stood up from the bench where she'd been sitting and slowly walked to the bus stop.

oOo

Friday morning dawned with the threat of spring storms. In all of the excitement of her whirlwind engagement and the breaking of said event, Jane had completely forgotten it was Good Friday, and had set her alarm as she did every night, and had awoken to the sound of the bell at 6:30. Jane pulled herself out of bed and prepared for the day. She was completely dressed and ready to head out the door when Bess wandered into the lounge in her dressing gown.

"Where are you off to?" Bess asked, confused.
"To see the Queen," Jane replied, uncharacteristically rude.

"Sarcasm doesn't become you," Bess admonished. "Bank holiday, darling."

Jane groaned. "I completely forgot. Coulda had a nice lie-in. Sorry for snapping Bess. Was wrong of me to take my troubles out on you. Can I make you a proper fry up to make up for it?" she smiled wanly.

"Trying to ply me with food?" Bess raised a teasing eyebrow and then smiled. "It's a start."

The two women were quiet as they breakfasted. Bess was afraid to speak, for fear she might say the wrong thing. Jane was fearful that she might say something that would remind herself of John.

Jane broke the silence. "I need a new raincoat. Come with me tomorrow morning? Shops will be open 'til noon."

"Sure. What happened to your old one?"

"I forgot it at John's flat on Wednesday." She looked down at her empty ring finger and sighed. "I'm not about to ask for him to bring it to me. He can give it to Salvation Army for all I care."

"Well that's just silly, Jane. He's not a monster, just a liar." Bess's eyes flashed. "I'm sure he'll bring it to work."

Jane ignored Bess. "I made an appointment at the hair salon first thing tomorrow morning, too."

"You just had your hair done two weeks ago," Bess countered with a raised eyebrow.

"I want to make a change. I'm want to cut my hair and bleach it blonde."

"But Jane, your hair is lovely," Bess told her sincerely. "Why ever would you want to change it?"

Jane took a sip of tea. "I saw a movie poster when I was on the bus yesterday for That Touch of Mink, you know that comedy starring Doris Day and Cary Grant? How do you think I would look with that sort of a hairdo?"

Bess studied her for a moment while she bit her lip deep in concentration. "It would suit you very well." She sighed. "But darling, a new hairdo isn't going to solve anything," Bess warned kindly.

"I know, but it couldn't hurt," Jane said quietly into her teacup. "Might be a distraction."

"Yes, I'll come. Maybe I'll pick up a new pair of gloves for Easter Sunday. Forget the raincoat and buy a new dress instead." Bess snapped her fingers. "Speaking of coats, I still have Jack Harkness's coat. John never gave me his number."

Keep me safe, it's not my time...keep us safe...both of us, Bess heard the voices whispering.

"Of course I'll keep you safe, darling! You won't even have to talk to him."

"What?" Jane asked, confused.

"You won't even have to talk to John. I'll ring him and remind him that I need Jack's telephone number and then I'll ask him bring your coat over. But Jane, you're going to have to talk to him at some point, you're still his assistant after all."

"Don't remind me," Jane growled, and held her head in her hands. "I'm just so bloody FURIOUS!"
Why did he have to be so *perfect*? There won't ever be anyone like him again, Bess. Do you understand that? No one! I'm ruined for anyone else!" she cried, anger and hurt running together.

"I know it feels like that right now, and I am not going to try and convince you otherwise."

"I'm done with men. Forget 'em. Forget all of 'em. From now on, it's Jane Donna Smith, on her own!" Jane picked up her teacup and raised it in an angry toast.

"I hate to bring this up, but what about Daniel? What are you going to do about him?"

"I'm certainly not going to take him up on his offer of a dirty trip to Paris, if that's what you're asking. He can make a challenge to the banns for all I care. It's not like I'm going to show my face at that church ever again. Too humiliating. I'll go to a different one." She paused. "I told Miss Woods yesterday about all of it. She said I was the first woman to actually have proof. She seemed to think it might make a difference, but I doubt there's anything she can do," she said glumly.

Bess raised her eyebrows. "Niles and Jack could take care of the situation," she said quietly.

"What do you mean?" Jane was confused, but curious.

"Niles could convince Higgins to drop his threat Jane. He has certain *authority* and pull."

"Why didn't you say so before?" Jane asked, upset.

"Because while the situation with Daniel was always awful, it wasn't quite so serious until yesterday. I thought that John could protect you, but now that he's not part of your life... Anyway, I didn't ever think it would get this bad. Daniel is no longer simply the office lech. He has changed your life, Jane. And unfortunately you're right. There is nothing that Miss Woods can do, and the police won't do anything about this sort of thing but Niles and Jack can. And they would. I'm almost sure of it. Niles has never told me what he does Jane, but... I know what he does." She spoke that last words quietly.

"How do you know?" Jane asked, brows furrowed.

"I just do," she replied cryptically with a clipped voice.

"Call him? Call Niles for me?" Jane asked hesitantly.

"All right. I'll invite him for dinner."

The ladies spent their day off playing cards, reading, and spending a quiet day around the flat as the storm raged outside. Niles came over for dinner, and if he knew of Jane's situation, he didn't breathe a word of it to her.

"Niles?" Bess asked during dessert, a lighter-than-air chocolate mousse that Jane had made.

"Yes, Bootsie?"

"Daniel made good on his threat. He sent a message to Jane yesterday."

"And...?" he asked.

"He's threatening blackmail. Demands that I meet him next Sunday at Victoria Station and go away with him to Paris," Jane answered.

"Well you're obviously not going," Niles replied. "What does John think about all of this? Speaking
of John, why isn't he here? Aren't the two of you inseparable?" Niles asked with a grin.

"He's busy tonight," Bess answered quickly. "I think he might be working on his book. Deadline and all next week. I'm quite the task master," she said pretended to crack a whip. Bess wasn't sure why she was covering for John, but it was instinctual.

"What in the world could Higgins possibly have that could blackmail you, Jane," Niles asked, frowning.

"He has some photos and things of a very personal nature which he is threatening to distribute to everyone in my office," Jane added. "And, well, he's threatened to..." she closed her eyes tightly and opened them again, unable to admit to Niles that she had called off the engagement, "...to challenge the banns."

"Jack has placed a bug on Daniel's telephone and put radio tracking devices on his vehicles, but I haven't spoken to him since Wednesday. Been out of the office taking care of some things. Let me call him and see if there is any further information."

Niles called Jack, but he was neither at home nor work. "I'll try again later. I should probably be heading home. It's getting late."

"Niles, could you stay? Knowing that Daniel knows where I live makes me very nervous."

"Sure. I'll sleep on the sofa," he said kindly.

Jane smiled. "You don't have to do that. But if you would stay, I would feel better."

Niles left early Saturday morning, as he had to go into the office. Jane and Bess woke up not much later and prepared for Jane's early morning hair appointment.

Jane did not make an appointment at the salon where Bess had taken her as it was simply too expensive. Instead, she had found a beauty parlour a few blocks away. While still nice, it didn't cater to movie stars or nobility.

"Are you sure you want to do this Jane?" Bess asked nervously. She'd never been brave enough to change her hair colour, nor had she ever had the desire.

"I'm absolutely sure," Jane said, staring into the mirror. "I need this."

The beautician behind her smiled and proceeded to apply the solution to her long, brown locks. Ninety minutes later, Jane Smith was blonde. She couldn't bring herself to cut it as short as Doris Day's. But she had agreed to a trim, and was flipped up like Bess's.

"I love it!" she said gleefully as they walked out of the salon.

"I must say, you look smashing, darling. I think you need something pink! Let's go to Henrik's. I noticed the other day that have some nice new spring frocks in their display windows."

Bess and Jane walked the aisles. Bess quickly found a robin's egg blue dress that suited her nicely. Jane found a dress in a cheerful shade of pink, suitable for work and Easter Sunday. She tried it on and it fit like a dream, so she decided to splurge and purchased the frock. Their purchases were boxed up and they decided to spend a little more time browsing. They both found Easter hats and gloves, and their moods were elevated.
As they wound their way through the main aisle of the second floor, they passed the Bridal Salon. Jane looked straight ahead unwilling to even let her eyes drift in the direction of the clouds of white satin, silk, lace, and tulle, and walked deliberately past the department.

Bess, though, couldn't help but halt when she saw a gown that would have been perfect for Jane prominently displayed on a dummy. It was exquisite in its simplicity. It was demure, capturing Jane's shyness and innocence. The dress was of a simple two-layered design: an underdress that was strapless, fashioned from unadorned white full skirt that was tea-length, ending just above the ankle. The top layer was open-work lace. Tight sleeves came to the wrist and the bodice covered the shoulders, making it appropriate for a church wedding but still fresh and airy for spring.

Jane was now out of sight, somewhere in ladies casual wear. Bess heard that odd ringing in her ears, but this time, John wasn't wearing the odd brown suit. He was wearing a kilt and Bonnie Prince Charlie coat. His hair wasn't that disheveled, hedgehog mess, but carefully combed, as he usually wore it. And in this vision, John and Jane were standing at an altar facing each other, exchanging vows. Somehow, she knew without a doubt this was the future, and she felt a song that seemed to lead her, compelling her to buy this dress. She knew Jane's size, and any alterations could always be made later.

The sales lady was more than surprised when Bess purchased the gown without asking to try it on. She explained that it wasn't for herself, but for a friend, and that she had been giving the task of finding a gown for her, as she was unable to do so herself. The sales lady said something about having an awfully trusting friend, and they both laughed, and it was charged to her Henrik's account. The woman covered it with a garment bag and scheduled for it to be available at will call on Tuesday morning.

Bess left the bridal salon with an oddly calm feeling. Somehow she knew that everything was going to be all right between John and Jane. She caught up with Jane, but kept her secret purchase to herself. It was noon, and as Henrik's was closing at noon for the Easter holiday, they were forced to end their excursion.

As they walked down the pavement, the eyes of a statue of a war hero were focused on the blonde woman.

oOo

For the fifth time that day, John picked up the phone to call Jack, and for the fifth time that day, he withdrew his hand, unable to forgive Harkness for his behaviour on Wednesday. He'd tried tamp down his fury, but he simply couldn't.

Now there was a new layer of anger slathered on top, like mouldy icing on a putrid cake. Confusion had become anger. Jane had given no reason or explanation for breaking their engagement other than accusing him of being a liar. She had never even told him what he had allegedly lied to her about, let alone given him an opportunity to answer her charges.

He didn't have to be a genius to know that Daniel Higgins had something to do with it, just one more reason to despise the man. Because of Daniel Higgins, the love of his life, his Jane, now hated him. Higgins had driven a wedge right between his precious girl and himself, ruining their chance at happiness.

He sat down at his typewriter and decided to turn his anger into writing. He banged at the keys and the words quickly spilled onto the paper. He recited the words as he typed, and the words stung his ears as he poured himself onto the page.
"Iris slapped the Professor hard across his left cheek. The sound echoed and bounced off of the stone lining the corridor of the portico. 'You're just going to walk away? You kiss me like that and then you just... leave?' His faithful assistant screamed furiously at the Professor as he stared at her blankly. 'What do you want me to say Iris?' he asked calmly. 'Just tell me the truth!' she shouted back, her small fists clenched into tight balls. The Professor was terrified of the truth. The truth was he had fallen in love with his assistant, something he had promised himself he would never do."

John slammed his hand against the table. "The truth. What the hell did I lie about?" He stood up, grabbed his tan trench coat and left his flat. He needed to talk to Jane, and he needed to talk to her now. She owed him an explanation. He walked the five blocks to the flat that Jane and Bess shared, his mind churning, desperate for an answer. Their engagement ring was safe in his hand, plunged deep in his pocket. He felt the cold platinum against his palm, the sharp edge of the stones against his skin. He turned it around and around in his hand like some sort of good luck charm, wishing and hoping that everything would be all right.

Once he arrived, John stood in the hallway outside of Jane's flat. He knocked far more gently on the door than he had the urge to, and waited. No one answered. He knocked again, but after a full minute, still there was no answer, so he gave up and left. He returned home, his heart even heavier and more fiery than it was before.

oOo

Eve Woods was tired. She looked at the clock and saw that it was 5:15. She had worked at Prescott Publishing for more years than she cared to admit, and here she was, spending another Saturday alone in the office updating personnel files, on a holiday no less.

Jane Smith's file was next on the pile. "Poor girl," she mused sadly and shook her head. Her heart truly ached for Jane. It was no wonder Jane had been smitten. Eve hated to admit it, but the tall writer had even stirred the inner schoolgirl in her fifty-something year old heart. And now the sweet, innocent girl was being assaulted from all sides.

Miss Woods had told her that she could help her, but in reality, there was probably very little she could do, though she would certainly try. Daniel Higgins was both powerful and a man, two strikes against Jane. She felt the guilt of her lie weighing down on her aching shoulders.

Eve rubbed her tired eyes. There was something else that was bothering her. How in the world had that horrible man come up with that marriage document so quickly? From the timeline that Jane had narrated, she and Mr. Smith had become engaged on Wednesday afternoon, and it was Thursday morning at 10:00 am that Higgins had produced the supposedly official French document.

If there was anything that Miss Woods understood, it was process, research, paperwork, and bureaucracy. It simply would not have been possible for Mr. Higgins to have located that document, and in a foreign country no less. Had he hired a whole team of detectives to comb through every church and county record in free Europe? Not likely.

Eve was convinced it was a fake. There was no other explanation. When she got home, she would call Miss Smith and share her suspicions. An hour or two wouldn't make a difference, and if Higgins had bugged John's office, who's to say he hadn't bugged the entire building? She wouldn't put it past him. The snake. She re-opened Jane's file and jotted her telephone number on a slip of paper. She decided she would go out for dinner on the way home. A steak sounded rather good, and she certainly didn't feel like cooking tonight.

Miss Woods never made it to the restaurant. She never even made it out of the building, let alone
the stairwell. She never made the phone call to Jane.

While still in the lobby of Prescott Publishing, she was engulfed in a green haze, and her final scream went unheard in the vacant building. Once the human host had succumbed to the matriarch of the Family, she stiffly walked through the office, from desk to desk, room to room, sniffing, trying to catch the lingering scent of the Time Lord and his bride. She sent a telepathic message to her family: "I have found the bride. I have found Rose Tyler. Now we must find her Time."
Jane Without John

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

In the Victorian language of flowers, among other things, white roses signify purity and innocence, while an orange or coral rose represents passion or communicates, "Speak your secret desire", or "You are my secret love."

Chapter 19 - Jane Without John

Bess looked at herself in the mirror, particularly pleased with the way her hair, makeup, and clothing had come together that day. She saw Jack's long dark blue coat hanging on the coat tree and snapped her fingers, suddenly remembering that she had to get that coat back to him. She decided to take it to work with her as a reminder to get his telephone number from John.

"Keep us safe. Keep me safe. It isn't time..."

"Jane? Jane did you say something?" Bess called to her friend as she buttoned her coat.

"You talking to me, Bess?" Jane called back loudly from the bathroom, her voice muffled. The water was running and from the sound of her answer, it sounded like Jane was cleaning her teeth.

"Never mind. See you at the office," Bess called loudly. She grabbed Jack's long blue coat from the coat tree and draped it over her arm. She heard metal clinking as two items fell from an interior pocket and hit the hardwood floor. Bess looked down and saw two fob watches by her feet.

She draped the coat over the back of the nearest chair and picked up the watches, cradling them both in one hand. One watch was silver, and the other was gold. Both had similar, though distinctly different circular etchings. Bess flicked the watches open and golden light, like fairy dust, swirled and curled its way out like oil in water.

Suddenly, wave after wave of images formed, changed, and flew through her mind. A man in black pulling Jane along by the hand, running on the Embankment. A spaceship crashing into Big Ben. Jane dancing with Jack Harkness, and then with the man in black. The man in black cradling Jane's limp body, and then his body exploding in a burst of golden light. John lost and lonely, wandering around London, looking for Jane. Jane alone and lost, arguing with an older blonde woman whom she called Mum, crying, feeling abandoned. John and Jane kissing under mistletoe, and arguing in a castle, then kissing passionately, and finally consumed with desire for each other.

The pictures stopped. Keep us safe! It's not our time! She fumbled and quickly closed them shut.

"What in the world?" she said to herself. "Who are you?" she asked herself, and then stuffed the
watches into her purse.

Jane came out of the bathroom, hair still wet from her shower, in her dressing gown. "What was that? I heard the strangest music."

"That was just me. I was humming," Bess answered quickly. "Can't get that new Beatles song out of my head," she laughed nervously. "Are you saying my voice is strange?" she again laughed nervously. "I'll see you at work, darling. I need to go, I'm late."

Half an hour later, Jane was sitting on the bus and looking out the window. She knew there would be no more rides to work, no more kisses in the park, and no more ring on her finger. What had she gained? A broken heart, a new job that would be a daily reminder of the love she had lost, and a terrifying admirer. Jane closed her eyes and leaned on the window. The uncomfortable rattling against the side of her head was a jarring remember of her unhappiness.

She thought back and recalled Easter weekend. Growing up, Easter had been one of her favourite holidays. She loved going to church, coming home to a delicious Easter dinner that she would share with her mother and often an elderly neighbour or two. After eating, they would all go to the village egg roll. When she was seven, Jane had won first place.

But this year, she had found no joy in her pretty new dress and Easter hat, the beautiful singing of the choir, the chocolate egg from Bess, or the roast lamb dinner at Bess's parents's home. She had not attended her own church, knowing that the banns was to be read. It would have been too painful to hear.

Easter Monday had been quiet and uneventful. She had gone for a walk along the Embankment with Bess. They had bought takeaway lunch and had eaten it while sitting on a bench watching the boats going up and down the Thames. They had talked about pleasant, non-controversial things, which meant any and everything except John or Daniel. She had no appetite in the evening, and had retired early after reading a few chapters of *Jane Eyre*. She had fallen asleep around 9:45.

Jane was thrown from her sleep by a nightmare around 2:30 am. She had dreamed that she was sitting alone on the sofa in John's office waiting for him to arrive for work when a strange, heaving sound filled the room. A blue police box like the one in the park used for holding suspects and calling for help had shimmered into appearance. She had hesitantly approached the kiosk and the door opened. "Come with me," John had said, extending his hand out to her. As soon as she accepted his hand, John disappeared, and it was Daniel who had her in his clutches, and was pulling her roughly into a heavily decorated, dark and smoky bedroom where everything was covered in scarlet velvet. She tried to pull away, but Daniel was stronger, and dragged her onto the bed.

Jane woke up screaming, and Bess flew into her bedroom, quickly soothing her back into reality, but she had not been able to return to sleep.

Jane's stop was called, and she exited through the rear door of the bus. She straightened her pink dress and pillbox hat, smoothed her new blonde hair and held her tired head high as she entered the building.

John folded his lanky frame into his Aston Martin and sat for a moment to reflect on the horrible weekend behind him.
Saturday afternoon had been spent indoors. After his unsuccessful attempt to see Jane at her flat in the morning, the skies had opened, and he had been soaked to the skin as he ran home through the downpour. Not too much longer after that, the electrical and telephone services were knocked out in his block due to the severity of the storm, so he couldn't even try and telephone Jane.

On Sunday morning he had woken up in a somewhat happier mood thanks to a lovely dream he had the night before: he was sitting with Jane atop an enormous frozen wave watching a golden pink sunrise. They were holding hands and leaning on each other, huddled under a heavy woollen blanket, keeping each other warm against the frigid air hanging over the strange frozen sea. He woke up and found himself tangled in the bedding, hugging his pillow.

He had walked to the church where they were to be married and had waited outside near the front door for half an hour, hopeful that he would catch her coming to Easter services. She never arrived, so he returned home, unable to bring himself to go inside and hear the reading of the banns without his Jane. His hopeful mood had disintegrated, replaced once again with a slow anger, eating at him from the inside out.

He tried calling Jane four times on Sunday afternoon, unsuccessfully. On Monday he knocked on her door, but again, there was no answer. He sat on her steps, but she never came out nor went in. He retreated back to his empty flat, seething. He sat in the dark, drinking Scotch until he fell asleep on his sofa. He was startled awake by the sound of the telephone. He glanced at his watch and noted that it was 9:30 at night.

"John, it's Jack."

Silence.

"John?" he asked.

"What?" John snapped back.

"How are you doing buddy? I'm up in Ireland for work. Left last Thursday. So. John, uh, how's it hangin'?" he asked nervously.

"How's it hanging? You want to know how it's hanging, do you? Well I will tell you exactly how it is hanging, Jack Harkness. It isn't hanging well. Not at all. Jane gave me back the engagement ring. She won't answer my phone calls. She won't answer the door. I haven't seen her since Thursday when she ran out of my office after accusing me of lying, but she has never told me what it was that I supposedly lied about. That is how it is hanging," John said angrily.

"Oh." Jack was quiet for a moment. "Can I come around? Maybe bring a few bottles over?"

"No thank you, I am already sufficiently liquored up."

"I can hear that," Jack said with a nervous laugh. John's speech was slightly slurred. He had figured out early on in the Doctor's human adventure that John Smith was a lightweight when it came to holding his alcohol. "So, how much have you had?"

"Just two glasses of Scotch."

"Uh, but how big is the glass?" Jack asked.

"A stein I brought back from West Germany."

Jack pinched his the bridge of his nose. "I'm coming over. Need to make sure you aren't gonna die
on me, Doc." Jack ended the call and hastily made his way to John's flat. He kicked himself when he realised he had lied and told John he was up in Ireland, which was his cover story for his absence from Torchwood.

Of course, the chances were high that John wouldn't remember he had mentioned Ireland at all given his state of inebriation. The truth was, Jack had been looking for his coat and the fob watches since Thursday. He had gone to the TARDIS and retrieved the Doctor's sonic and some other thingamajig that he vaguely recognised from his Time Agency days to be a time signature detector. He hoped that between the two items he would be able to lock onto something, anything about the watches that would register as alien, and he would be led to them. The TARDIS had done a bang-up job putting a fantastic perception filter on those watches. Of course she had. If she hadn't have, the Family of Blood could have found the watches immediately.

Jack let himself into John's flat twenty minutes later, and found his friend sitting on his sofa, staring out the window. A half-eaten ham and cheese sandwich and an empty banana peel were on a plate on the coffee table. Jack smiled at that. Whether John or Doctor, the man still had to have his daily banana.

"Hiya buddy," said Jack, sitting down on a chair adjacent to John. "So tell me all about it. What's going on?"

Jack listened patiently to his friend recount the short and heated conversation with Jane.

"Have you thought that perhaps this has something to do with Daniel? He did promise to contact her on Thursday," Jack reminded John.

"I know it has something to do with that scunner. There was a phone call Jane answered. She wasn't herself after that. He called my office, I'm sure of it, and I was an idiot and let her go. She isn't a very good actress, Jack. I saw that she was upset and I did nothing about it. I let her go right into the lion's den."

"I saw Daniel outside of your building on Thursday morning you know. I had my colleagues put a wiretap on his phone. He did call Jane--"

"And you didn't fecking tell me?" John sprang to his feet. He grabbed Jack by the collar and hauled him off of the chair.

"I couldn't! I was detained! I just told you that!" Jack said, speaking in half truths.

John released him with a shake, and then began to pace, running his hands through his hair.

"John, Higgins warned her not to tell you. I think she was afraid for your safety, John."

"Well there you have it. She doesn't think I can take care of myself. Or her, now does she?" John said sourly.

"Women think differently then men do, buddy. I doubt she thinks that. She just wants you safe."

The conversation continued for a while longer, and the men came to a tacit understanding. John finally understood that Jack was not jealous, and did have his best interest as heart.

oOo

"Good morning Miss Smith, and how was your Easter? Well now! Look at ya! Did you get a new dress? New shoes? New glasses?" Jim the lift operator asked with a twinkle in his eye.
"Oh Jim, you flirt, I changed my hair." Jane smoothed her new blonde tresses.

"Well I like it very, very much. What does that fella of yours have to say about it?"

Jane tried to speak, but found no words.

"Hold the lift!" Jane heard John calling as he came barreling through the lobby and squeezed through the sliding lift doors.

"Speak of the devil 'imself," Jim said with a smile. "Good mornin' Mr. Smith. Just askin' your gal here—"

"Jane! What'd you do to your hair?" John wailed.

"I wanted a change," Jane replied, voice clipped, looking straight ahead.

"It's... you... you're... blonde!" John squinted at her, his nose wrinkled.

"Well it's none of your business what I do to my hair now, is it?" Jane replied angrily.

Jim frowned at their interchange. The rest of the ride to the seventh floor was silent.

"Good morning Jim, I hope your day is better than I expect mine will be," Jane said to the kindly older gentleman as she exited the lift, head held high, ignoring John.

Jane walked with purpose towards John's office. She ignored Priscilla's acerbic comment about her hair, and Betty's rambling compliments about her dress, but mainly, she ignored John as he followed her right at her heels, repeatedly trying to catch her attention. Almost simultaneously, they walked into his office and John closed the door firmly behind him.

"Jane Smith! You will explain to me why you are acting this way!" John seethed quietly.

"Oh will I, Mr. Smith? I'm not the one who needs to do the explaining, now am I? You're the one who lied to me for two whole weeks!" Jane shot back, equally hushed.

"But I don't know what I have lied about," he replied in frustration. "You haven't even accused me of anything specific! Exactly what am I supposed to explain?"

"Oh ho ho! You know exactly what you lied about you lying... liar!" retorted Jane, pointing at him.

"This is bloody ridiculous!" John flopped himself on the sofa, arms crossed.

"You have a chapter due in a few days Mr. Smith. I would respectfully suggested that you get going on it," Jane said, voice ice cold. She finished setting up the typewriter on the little transcriptionist desk, having moved it from John's large, executive station.

"Fine!" John shouted, pointing his finger at her. "Take this down." He began to dictate, words spilling.

"Hold on mister, gimme a chance to get paper into this thing before you start running that overactive gob of yours!" Jane complained.

"Well...hurry up woman!"

Jane gasped and opened her mouth wide in anger. "Woman? Did you just call me woman?" she screeched.
"You are most definitely a woman, the way you're acting, all-- all mysterious and... woman-ish!" he replied smugly.

"And what is that supposed to mean?" she replied angrily as she straightened the paper in her typewriter.

"Women are impossible," he muttered.

"I'm ready, Mr. Impatient," she said frostily choosing to ignore him.

John dictated, using distinct, exaggerated voices for each of his characters.

"'One minute you are asking me out on a date, and the next, you're flirting with some floozie! You are so confusing! You are wishy-washy!' Iris accused, crying."

"The Professor had been accused of many things in his almost millenia-long life, but wishy-washy was not one of them."

"'And what about last night, hmm? Coming on to me one minute and then jumping away the next, hiding yourself away in the loo? Not very steadfast of you, Miss Mason.'"

"'Don't you go turning this around against me, Professor! I'm not the one who was snogging the life out of me when you knew it really wasn't me, now was I?' challenged Iris."

"So it's Iris's fault that the Professor is impossibly, frustratingly hot and cold to Iris?" Jane interrupted.

"What?" John asked. "What do you mean?"

"Iris was under the influence of an alien aphrodisiac, and you are blaming her for coming to her senses, and running away. She wasn't in her right mind when she made the pass at the Professor, but you, as the author, are making it out to be her fault," Jane said, self-righteously.

"The aphrodisiac didn't work that way. It only brought out the true feelings that were already there," he replied in a scholarly voice, arms crossed proudly.

"But she obviously wasn't ready to act on said feelings, Mr. Smith—"

"Will you stop calling me Mr. Smith," John asked, as he ran his hand through his hair.

"You are a famous writer, and I am but your lowly transcriptionist. Hardly seems appropriate for me to call you by your given him, Mr. Smith," said Jane with a haughty sniff, as she pushed her slipping glasses up her nose.

"Eeeeenough-uuuuuh!" bellowed John. "This is ridiculous! Will you please just tell me what is going on?" He squeezed his eyes shut for a moment and then opened them again. "I mean really, really tell me? Not just accuse me of some unknown, secret offence?" John walked right up to her desk.

"You know exactly what I am talking about, Mr. Smith. And I can't believe you can just stand there and deny it!" Jane said, eyes now welling with tears, her voice fighting hard to give away her anger and sadness.

"Jane," he said in a quiet voice, seeing her earnest pain. "Jane," he repeated even softer. "I am not lying when I tell you that I have no idea what you are so upset about." He crouched down in front
of her little desk. "Please," he closed his eyes and balled his hands into fists. "Please tell me."

She breathed in and out hard three times. "Why didn't you tell me you were married?" she blurted angrily.


"What? Who says... I've never... Jeanne Antoinette Poisson? Isn't that... Madame du Pompadour?" he scrunched his face in distaste.

"I have a copy of the marriage certificate!" she hissed.

"Jane, I have never been married before. Ever. I've only been to Paris twice, and never in 1958." He stood up. "I don't know who told you that." He turned around and looked out the window and then spun back quickly. "Daniel. Daniel told you this, didn't he?"

"Yes! He did! I hate him, but at least he stopped me from marrying a-- a-- bigamist!" she replied, crying again.

"And you simply believed him." It wasn't a question. "Without a second thought, after what he has done to you, you just believed him. And you never even thought to ask me about it?" His face was the picture of disappointment and pain, his voice, angry and hurt.

"He gave me an official document to prove it, John!" Jane cried, finally standing up from her small stenographer's desk. She paced a few times.

"He called here on Thursday," he stated, matter of fact. "That was him on the phone when you told me you needed to do wedding things."

She nodded in affirmation, unable to meet his eyes as her chin quivered. "You knew?" she asked.

He crossed his arms and levelled a look. "I had my suspicions, but then you broke our engagement so I couldn't confirm it. Jack confirmed it last last night. He had Higgins's home telephone bugged."

"And Jack waited until last night to tell you?" Jane asked, hurt.

John nodded, closed his eyes, and sighed. "Yeah."

"Why wouldn't he tell you? I know your fight was bad, but he's your best friend. And why would he let Higgins do this to me?" Jane asked, voice quivering.

"I don't know, Jane." John pushed his hands into his pockets. "He told me that he's had Higgins's followed. Maybe he knows you're safe."

"He must really not want us to get married." Jane stated. "She pressed her lips together tightly, eyes closed.

"We need to talk about this Jane, but not here, and not now. It isn't professional, and I don't want you to get in trouble with Woods again."

"How do you know about me talking to Miss Woods?"
"She told me you had asked for a transfer out. Called me at home on Friday morning. Wanted to make sure I was aware of the situation. Suggested strongly that I keep my personal life out of the office, and that you had been given the same warning, though officially."

Jane crossed her arms and nodded.

"But she also said she'd kick my, and I quote, "skinny Scottish bum" if I ever hurt you again."

Jane half smiled, and picked her fingernails.

"I do like your hair by the way," he said kindly. "But I liked the brown. I miss the brown. It was beautiful," he added. "Why'd you change it?" he asked as he rubbed a lock of her hair in between his fingers, feeling the softness of the blonde strands.

"I needed a distraction," she replied, blinking hard. She tipped her nose up, pretending to be unimpressed by the roundabout compliment, but couldn't help but smile a tiny bit. "You really like it? You don't hate it?"

"How could I hate it? It's you. You could dye your hair blue and I'd like it, but please don't," he said with a little bit of lightness in his voice.

"I promise I won't dye my hair blue." Jane walked over to the couch and sat down. "You really aren't married?" she asked, relaxing a bit, and picking at her fingernails.

"Nope, especially not someone named after a French courtesan. Didn't that tip you off just a little bit?" he asked with a dry chuckle.

"Never heard of that poison woman before."

"Poisson," he corrected, enunciating the pronunciation. "In French, it means fish," he smirked.

"What am I supposed to think? I have no reason to believe it a fake. It looks real enough," she said defensively, furrowing her brow and crossing her arms.

John sat down next to her, but not so close that they were touching. "I promise Jane, it is not real. I am not married. I have never been married. And the only person I want to be married to is sitting to my left."

John moved closer to her and put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her into his side. She remained stiff for a moment, but then relaxed as he gently squeezed her shoulder. "So what else did Higgins do? You haven't actually told me what happened on Thursday," he asked her quietly, his voice low and comforting.

Jane melted at the sound of his voice. "Umm, well, he had someone give me an envelope with the marriage certificate in it." She remembered that the office was bugged, and didn't want to say too much.

"Can I take you to lunch so we can talk properly?" he asked into her hair, so that any listening device might not catch the question.

"Yes." Jane closed her eyes and leaned into his arms. She sighed heavily, feeling a little bit more trusting.

"I missed you," John whispered into her ear. "I came by your flat a few times over the weekend, but you were never home. Called several times, too, but you didn't answer."
Jane shivered as his breath puffed across her neck. "Bess got me out of the flat to take my mind off of things." She leaned her head on his shoulder. "I saw you catch that thief in the park on Thursday. How did you do that?" She asked with a quiet laugh. "That was amazing. Just like Superman," Jane lifted her head off of his shoulder and turned to look at him.

"James Bond, Superman... Jane Smith, I think you have a thing for heroes."

"Don't forget the Professor. He's my favourite hero." She bit her lower lip. "And that thief? The one you caught? That was the bloke that Daniel hired to deliver the envelope."

John half smiled and waggled his eyebrows. "Glad to be of service, ma'am." He swallowed hard as he looked down at her lips, and then back into her eyes. His voice was low and thick. "Do I get a reward?"

Jane felt herself pulled in two directions. She wanted so much to believe him, but was still very confused. She reminded herself that they still had not reconciled.

She bit her lip to keep herself from giving in and snogging him senseless. "We're at work, John. Not supposed to bring our personal life into the office, remember?" she replied, with a small smile. "The bad, or the good."

"I think I'm okay with breaking that rule, if you're game." His voice was even lower and heavier now, and his eyes were dark and full of want.

Jane closed her eyes and waited for his lips to touch hers, but the ringing of John's phone shook them both from the moment. Jane turned away from him, stood up and walked to his desk, clearing her throat before answering. "Mr. Smith's office, this is Miss Smith."

"Oh hi, Janie, flowers have just been delivered for you. They are here at the front desk," the receptionist said.

"Flowers? Who'd send me flowers?" she mused, mainly to herself.

"There's an envelope, too. Delivery boy said to make sure you got it. They're gorgeous, you lucky girl," the receptionist cooed.

"Uh, thanks." She ended the call and turned to John. "Someone sent me flowers."

"Wasn't me, I was too angry with you to send you flowers," he said, sheepishly. "Come on, let's go see who they're from."

They left John's office together, and made their way to the receptionist's desk. Jane looked over at Priscilla as they passed by. The woman smirked at Jane, but Jane held her head higher.

The receptionist handed Jane a large white floral box. Jane gasped when she saw the arrangement. One dozen white roses and one coral rose directly in the middle of the bouquet. She reached for the envelope and with shaking hands, opened it.

*Pet,*

*I understand that you and that half-witted writer have had a falling out. Was it something I said? Of course it was. I assume that you've finally come to your senses and realised that I will be a far superior lover than your former fiancé.*

*I was watching you as you opened my gift, Pet. How did the sight of the lingerie make you feel?*
Were you thinking about how it will feel against your skin? How it will hug your curves? How it will put you on display? I simply can not stop thinking about how you will look in that lingerie.

Just think, in less than a week I am going to have my wicked way with you. You will come go me willingly. You will scream my name. You will come undone for me. You do remember what will happen if you don't meet me on Sunday night, don't you? Think of your reputation Jane. It's all you have left, now that you and John are finished.

Your future lover,

Daniel

PS I love the blonde. It is very sexy.

Jane closed her eyes and felt bile rising in her throat. "Keep the flowers," she said before going straight to Bess's office, forgetting that John was right there with her.

"He sent me flowers," she blurted as she opened the door to Bess's office. "Call Miss Woods. She needs to know there's more evidence," Jane ordered.

"Jane, what do you mean, 'more'?" asked John, close on her heels. He closed the door to Bess's office.

Bess picked up the black handset and dialled. "Hello Eve, this is Bess. Would you come to my office please? Mr. Higgins has contacted Jane again. I believe there is now enough evidence to contact the authorities." Bess ended the telephone call and for the first time noticed John, anger radiating off of him.

"Eve Woods? You told Eve Woods but not me? Would you tell me what's going on?" He grabbed the note out of Jane's shaking hands and read it. "What in the bloody hell has Daniel done?" John was furious. He grabbed Jane's arm firmly and spun her around to face him.

She looked down at his hand and grimaced.

"Jane, I am asking you a question!"

"John, you're scaring me," she whispered.

John released her arm and cupped her face gently with both hands. "Please, tell me," he begged.

Jane looked at Bess and then back to John. "Not here."

oOo

John, Bess, and Jane sat on the same bench where Jane had observed John lob the rock at the cart.

"So why are we outside?" John asked impatiently.

"Because your office is bugged," Jane replied quietly. "Daniel can hear everything we say in there."

John swore, rendering Jane shocked by the profane word.

"On Thursday, when he called me. He told me to come down to the lobby alone, specifically told me to not tell you. I was afraid of what he would do to you John! I-- I love you and-- and I don't want anything to happen to you! When-- when you fought Jack, he was so much stronger than you, I was-- I was afraid because Daniel is bigger than--"
"You thought I couldn't handle him." John smirked. "Thanks."

"No John, that's not it! I was afraid he would have a weapon! Or-- or-- would hurt you later! I thought he might even have a gun!" she cried. "I want you safe!"

John's head swivelled at the familiar phrase triggering a memory of Jane ensconced in golden light. He shook off the odd feeling, stood up, and started pacing. "Tell me more."

"I waited downstairs for a while and-- and-- that horrible man that you collared handed me a gift box and an envelope. In the box was-- was..." Jane swallowed hard and shut her eyes, blushing. "In the box was the most revealing lingerie I have ever seen in my life."

John crouched down in front of Jane and put his hands on her knees, squeezing gently. "What was in the envelope?" he asked, looking into her tear-filled eyes.

"Um, photographs. Of us. Together. The night of our first date. He followed us, John. The entire night," she whispered. "He made a home movie of us in the park... when I..." Jane shook her head. She couldn't bring herself to speak further.

"Jane, I think the two of you need to be alone to discuss the rest. I am going to go back to the office, all right?" Bess patted Jane's knee and left. "And Jane, John, and Jack have made up. Trust John. He's doing his best to try and understand why you don't believe him, but he's telling the truth. And be gentle with him. His head hurts. He drank too much last night."

John looked at Bess for a moment astounded, and started to ask her how she knew about his bender the night before, let alone his visit from Jack, but she was already gone when he found his voice. He turned his attention back to Jane. "What else was in the envelope?"

"The marriage certificate and a letter. In his letter, he said he would use the marriage certificate to challenge the banns of marriage, and he'd publish the photos and play the audio recording of our encounter for the entire office to see and hear if I-- if I didn't go away with him to Paris on Sunday night. He-- he-- he wants me to give him my... virginity." Jane held her face in her hands for a moment and then sat up straight.

John sat next to her and stared out across the lawn in a daze. He took Jane's hand and pulled it into his lap.

"But Jane, love, you could have told me after. Why didn't you tell me? You honestly believed him? You believed that the marriage certificate was real?"

Jane nodded. "What else was I supposed to believe? It looks so real John, and I don't know that much about you really, do I? And at our engagement party, Jack was practically begging me to find out more about you. I started to think that maybe he was hinting that I needed to dig deeper, find this secret. I thought maybe he was trying to ease me into the fact that you were already married." Jane's voice trailed off.

"Do you believe me now? Do you believe me that I'm not married?" he asked both angry and hurt.

"I don't know! I want to believe you more than anything, John! But I just don't know!"

"I don't know what to say to that Jane." He turned and looked at her, eyes showing his sadness and anger.

"I guess I need proof," she said quietly.
John shook his head and muttered. "How in the world can anyone prove something is not true?"
His eyebrows were low and his brow furrowed as he thought. "You don't trust me, and there has to be trust in a marriage. It won't work otherwise." John stood up and turned to look at her. He put his hands in his pockets. "And Daniel has succeeded. He has already won. He planted doubt in your mind and turned you against me. Time to go back to work Jane," he said coolly. "I have a chapter to finish."

Jane closed her eyes and squeezed a few more tears through her lashes, and then wiped them away with the back of her hand and nodded, following John back to his office, knowing that now, she was just his transcriptionist, and he was just her boss.

oOo

It was about noon on Monday when Jack finally returned to the office, giving up on his fruitless search for his coat. It was the first time that he and Niles had been in the office at the same time since the prior Wednesday, the day of John and Jane's engagement dinner.

"I brought lunch," Jack said, setting a bag of Chinese food on Niles's desk. He pulled up a metal chair with green vinyl cushions.

"John and Jane are on the outs," Niles said casually as he opened a container. He grabbed a pair of chopsticks and began to slurp noodles.

"John and Jane are on the outs," Niles said casually as he opened a container. He grabbed a pair of chopsticks and began to slurp noodles.

"I know. Saw John last night," Jack said, setting down his white takeaway container on his desk.

"Daniel is a piece of work, isn't he? Blackmailing Jane into going away with him to Paris."

"What in the world could Daniel have to hold over Jane? She's as clean as a whistle," Jack countered, biting into an egg roll.

"He manufactured a very believable marriage certificate. It said that John had married some French woman in 1958 or 1959, can't remember which. Doesn't matter. I could tell immediately it is a fake, but, well, Jane believed it without question."

"How do you know it's a fake?" asked Jack.

"It was a marriage certificate verified by a priest. In France, a civil marriage is required before a religious ceremony can take place. A religious ceremony alone does not constitute a legal marriage, and the actual legal certificate is issued by the civil authority, not the church."

"Danny didn't do his homework," Jack chided.

"I'm sure he was counting on Jane's trusting and innocent nature. Anyway, the bastard told her he would use this certificate to challenge the legality of their fitness to marry. Jane and John needed to slow down, and, well, Daniel's little scheme did our work for us." Niles shoved a mass of noodles into his mouth.

"Wait a minute, Niles, are you telling me that you didn't set her straight? Jane actually is under the impression that John is married?"

"Mmmm hmm," Niles affirmed, his mouth full of food.

"I can't believe it. You just let her believe that? Now that's cold, buddy. Really cold," Jack accused angrily.
"Cold, yes, but it worked, now didn't it?" Niles stated, matter of fact.

"And you thought I was being cruel to Jane when I suggested that we host a wild party with booze, cards, cigars, and broads." Jack shook his head. "That sweet girl believes that the man of her dreams has lied to her. Nope. Not gonna let it happen this way." Jack stood up and pointed his finger right at Niles's face. "We are going over to their office right now, and you are going to tell them you did research over the weekend, and that you have found proof that it's a fake. Got it?" Jack ordered.

"Fine," Niles replied flatly. "This is your operation, and they're your friends, so we will play this your way. But may I remind you, you said that slowing down their romance was a matter of life and death."

"There has to be a different way," Jack said, scrubbing his face with his hands.

"So they have some bruised feelings for a while. In the long run, isn't that better than them remembering too soon? And being killed? And all of those other horrible possibilities should the Family get ahold of their life forces or whatever it is that they are trying to steal?"

Jack sighed and grunted. "I hate this. Okay. But I reserve the right to be very angry with you," he said with a scowl.

"I wouldn't expect any less, Harkness," said Niles.

oOo

Jane and John worked steadily until 5:00 exactly, at which time Jane stood up while John was right in the middle of dictating a sentence, and started to leave.

"Jane, wait!" John followed her to the lift. "Let me drive you home, please?"

"Why would I ride with you? I don't trust you, right?" Jane said sarcastically, hurt plain on her face.

"Well? Do you? Do you trust me?"

She paused for a moment. "I don't not trust you," she said looking down at her hands.

"I suppose that's a start. So, can I drive you home? I don't want you out there alone, Jane, not with Higgins on the loose. We could get some dinner someplace?"

Jane looked away while she thought.

"Please? I miss you so much, Jane," said John, nearly begging.

Jane sighed. "I have a chicken at home that I need to roast. I'll cook for us. Then I'll show you the things in the envelope, all right?"

John smiled, held out his hand, and Jane took it without thinking twice. John pressed the down button for the lift, and they walked in together.

"Good evenin' Smiths! Awww, the two o' ya kissed an' made up. Glad ta' see it. Won't do you two no good stayin' mad at each other. You know what me 'n the missus always say? Give 'em the benefit of the doubt. Yep, that's what we is always sayin'. Give 'em the benefit of the doubt. That little sayin' 'as ended many a foolish fight before it ever got a chance to start."

Jane looked over at John and smiled softly. "Good advice, Jim," said Jane, keeping her eyes on
He smiled back. Together they walked out of the lift.

Jim smiled and doffed his cap at the couple as they left. The lift was called back up to up to Prescott and Miss Woods was his next passenger, but she brought an unseen passenger along with her. Husband of Mine materialised and the Family claimed their second victim. Jim the lift operator never made it home that night.
Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

"These Boots Are Made For Walkin'" was recorded by Nancy Sinatra in 1966. This story is set in 1963. I simply had to use this song for the pub scene. I apologize for my creative license.

Chapter 20 - Jane Shows John

Jane tied an aqua blue apron tightly around her waist to protect her new pink dress. She gathered carrots, celery and onions and began chopping and dicing with skill.

"John, would you go above the refrigerator and pull down a dish for me? I need the white oval one with the picture of the chicken on the side." Jane finished the work prepping the vegetables.

John stood up from at the dining table and retrieved the pan while Jane began to prepare a whole chicken for roasting. She inspected it carefully for any stray quills or feathers, washed it thoroughly, and patted it dry. John moved closer to her and watched her slather softened butter over the skin, and then salt and pepper the inside and outside of the bird. Next she stuffed the cavity with a few lemon chunks, a head of garlic cut in half, and a few shakes of dried thyme. She lifted the chicken into the pan and randomly scattered the chunks of vegetables on the periphery.

"I've never seen lemons stuffed inside a chicken before."

"It's a Julia Child recipe that was printed in the newspaper a few weeks ago. Sorry this is going to take so long, but it will be worth it, I promise," Jane said a bit proudly. "We'll eat in about ninety minutes." She saw a bottle of wine on the counter and contemplated it for a moment, and then decided to be bold. "Would you like a glass of wine while the chicken is roasting? There's a bottle on the counter by the icebox. Starts with a 'p' I think. I don't know anything about wine. Bess is the clever one when it comes to that sort of thing. I tell her the menu for the week and she buys the wine. I had never even had an alcoholic beverage, well except for communion wine, until I met Bess, and you of course," she said in a somewhat rambling fashion. Jane slid the chicken into the hot oven.

John took his glasses out of his pocket and slipped them onto his nose, bending over to take a closer look. "Pinot Noir. Nice bottle." He opened the wine and Jane retrieved two crystal goblets from the china cabinet. He poured and carried the glasses over to the sofa. "Come and sit, would you?"

Jane nodded, untied her apron, and then draped it across the countertop before sitting in the chair adjacent to the sofa. John frowned at the distance between them, and patted the spot on the sofa
next to him.

"I won't bite. At least not too hard," he joked with a twinkle in his eye.

Jane couldn't help but smile a bit at his flirting. She stood up slowly and moved to sit next to him, holding her hands primly in her lap.

"So..." they said simultaneously, followed by awkward laughing.

"How was your Easter?" Jane asked, hoping to get rid of the weighty silence that had now enveloped the room.

"Well," John said tugging his ear, "other than the fact that I spent the entire Easter weekend trying to figure out why you threw your engagement ring into my face, it was brilliant." John turned his body towards her, and draped his arm over the back of the sofa. “Not really. It was awful.”

Jane cleared her throat and looked down at her lap. "Might as well get right to it then. I need to show you what Daniel gave me, and then maybe you will understand why I was so upset." Jane's voice was quiet, and she didn't look at John as she spoke. She stood up and went into her bedroom. She emerged shortly afterwards carrying the telltale box and envelope which she had kept hidden from her sight, under her bed.

"Before I take a look at these things, you need to know that I am still rather angry at you," John said plainly, but then he shook his head. "Maybe not so much angry as hurt and confused." He withdrew his arm which had been behind her shoulders.

"I know," she replied sadly. "You have every right to be angry and hurt and confused and frustrated. I was wrong not to come to you immediately. I should have told you right away." She handed both parcels to John and then looked away.

"Open the box first," she said quietly, almost under her breath, and then she looked out the window, dreading the inevitable re-revealing of what was inside of that box.

It didn't slip by his notice that she was fiddling with her fingernails and biting her lower lip in worry as she continued to look anywhere but in his direction.

Slowly, he lifted the lid of the box. At first sight of the sheer black lingerie, his warm brown eyes went wide and he swallowed hard. "Losh!" he exclaimed quietly as he shifted uncomfortably. He quickly put the lid back on the box and set it aside.

Jane cleared her throat and looked at the ceiling, heat prickling her neck. John glanced over at her, again swallowing hard as he was unable to help himself from imagining Jane in the extremely revealing garments. He mentally checked himself and felt sudden and intense anger towards Daniel as he remembered how the items had come into her possession. He knew she was overwhelmingly embarrassed and self-conscious. He was confident that she had nothing like that in her wardrobe, nor was it likely that she had ever even seen anything of the sort before last Thursday. He touched her cheek, encouraging her to look at him.

"Oh Jane, don't be embarrassed, you're with me." He wanted so much for her to trust him, and he read her self-consciousness as fear of him, though that was not the case.

"Don't wanna talk about that box," she said, shaking her head and closing her eyes.

He set his jaw and nodded. John picked up the envelope and steeled himself for what was next.
"Staring at it won't make it go away. Believe me, I tried that. Just open it," Jane said resignedly.

John lifted the flap. He reached inside and pulled out the photographs. One by one, he looked at them, taking his time to examine each detail, scrutinising for something, but for what, he really wasn't sure. His face became more stony and jaw more firmly set with each photograph he studied. When he saw the final photograph, the image of Jane on his lap, passion written on her face, he gritted his teeth and made a guttural angry sound. That had been one of the happiest moments of his life, and Daniel had stolen it from him. Stolen it from both he and Jane. He scrubbed his hand down his stubbly face and stared out the window.

After a minute or so, John tore his eyes away from the lavender twilight sky and focused them back down to the offensive items on his lap. He picked up the French document and read it over twice.

"Did you know I am fluent in French?" he said with a bitter laugh.

Jane shook her head.

"So this is the piece of paper that says I'm married." He pressed his mouth into a firm line. "Certainly does look very official and important. I can see why you were convinced of its authenticity." John ran his hands through his hair until it was ruffled into a hundred different directions. "1958. 1958. I was in the army in '58, posted in West Berlin. Jack had just left for his mysterious new job here in London." One corner of John's mouth moved into something of a smile. "I remember he was eager to get on his flight. He'd been caught snogging a Fräulein who turned out to be a Frau. Her husband was a wee bit angry. Jack never seems to be far from trouble."

John looked wistful for a moment. "I remember this week in November as clear as it was yesterday." He turned to Jane. "There was a massive snowstorm that had brought all of Northern Europe to its knees, and the Americans were in a foul mood because the turkeys didn't make it in on the supply flight, so they couldn't have a proper Thanksgiving dinner. It was a week of corned beef hash and scrambled eggs made from powdered eggs." He shuddered comically, and Jane laughed quietly at his animated antics. "Don't you remember it?" he asked Jane, looking at her for the first time in several minutes.

"Sorry, but I don't remember."

"You really don't remember? The airports closed? West Berlin cut off even more than usual? It would've been the lead story in every European newspaper. Library has microfiche records. You said you wanted proof," John added with the hint of an edge in his voice.

"John, I was barely sixteen in November of 1958. We didn't have a telly. Hardly anyone in my village did. The newspaper was published once-a-week. Mum worked day and night at the hospital to keep food on the table, and I was in school, studying my head off so that I might possibly — no maybe have a chance of going on with my education," she replied defensively.

John looked at her, and his face softened a bit. "I forgot how much younger you are than I. I'm an old man, Jane. I don't know what you saw in me." He ran his hand through his hair nervously.

Jane sighed. "You're wonderful, that's why."

John furrowed his eyebrows for a moment and then looked back at the document. "Now this is ironic." He tapped one of the signatures. "You'll never guess the name of the officiant."

Jane shrugged her shoulders.

worker, or blacksmith. Close enough. I'm not Catholic, so I don't recognize from which order he is. Hmm. T.A.R.D.I.S. Haven't the foggiest. Looks like he's quite the scholar. He's a doctor of both canon and civil law."

"John Smith? You're kidding!" she gasped. The revelation had quickly brought Jane out of her haze.

"Daniel is taunting us, Jane. He's rubbing our noses in it. Sending you and me on a wild good chase. It's easy to prove something, but very, very difficult to unprove it."

Jane closed her eyes and sighed heavily. "You still need to read the letter."

John nodded and unfolded the final item. He leaned forward holding the sheet of paper in both hands.

Jane's stomach lurched as she recalled the words that had been committed to her memory. By the time John had finished reading the letter, his hands were shaking with rage, and his face was red. He gathered the photos and documents into a neat stack. He held them in one hand, and stared at the photo. He'd had the honour and privilege to give Jane her first kiss, and Daniel had stained the memory.

The strength of his grip increased until the papers were bent and wrinkled. An angry growl emerged deep from John's throat and he uttered a word so foul that it burned Jane's ears. He looked at her with a fierceness in his eyes that terrified her before he flung the stack across the room. The papers fluttered and floated to the ground, and John left the flat, slamming the door behind him, leaving a dumbfounded Jane in his furious wake.

oOo

John clenched his fists until he could feel his fingernails digging painfully into the palms of his hands. His jaw was tired from clenching his teeth. His ears rang. His heart raced. He had failed to protect Jane. On Wednesday, Daniel had promised that he was going to threaten Jane the next day, and the man had made his intentions for his Thursday assault plain.

But Daniel had not only threatened his precious Jane, he had constructed a perfect trap which would guarantee her misery whether she was brave enough to resist him, or if God forbid, she complied.

But Daniel's plan had not only shattered Jane's future happiness, it had unraveled his chances as well. He and Jane were so different. Their paths were probably never meant to cross, yet somehow, miraculously, their lives had converged so brightly that together, the glow of their love rivaled any star in the sky. Against overwhelming odds, they had found a love with each other that was earth shatteringly beautiful. What John had found with Jane had taken his breath away.

John decided he was not ready to give up on their love. He had to find a way to free his dear girl from Daniel's clutches, and he had to guarantee that Daniel Higgins would never do this to another woman ever again.

He walked for nearly an hour beginning to formulate a plan, and then made his way back to her flat.

oOo

The lock rattled and the door opened. Bess and Niles spilled into the flat laughing and chattering.
"Mmm, something smells scrummy!" Bess said happily as she took off her coat. "Jane darling, are you making that same roast chicken you cooked for me last week?" Bess called out, not immediately noticing her friend curled up on one end of the sofa.

"Yeah," choked out Jane. "It'll be ready in about fifteen minutes. You stayin' Niles? Plenty for everyone."

Bess went over to Jane, knowing that something was definitely wrong. She picked up the second glass of wine sitting on the coffee table and then noticed the mess of photographs and papers littering the floor.

"What happened here?" she asked as she bent over and picked up the items.

"I invited John home for dinner, to talk properly, to clear the air. I decided he needed to know why I didn't tell him. Why I was so scared. I showed him everything." Jane motioned to the pictures.

"After he read the letter he was so angry. He looked at me like he wanted me to just disappear, Bess. The look in his eyes, it terrified me. And then he stormed off. Didn't even say goodbye."

Jane picked up the picture of her first kiss - the ice cream kiss - and looked at it and then took a gulp of wine, much larger than she should have. The red liquid burned her raw-from-crying throat. Bess sat down next to Jane, and Niles took a seat in a chair by the fireplace.

"He explained to me that he was in West Berlin on that day. He remembered specifically because there was some big snow storm all over Europe. And then he saw that the priest or rather the monsig-something's name translated from French into English as… The name was basically John Smith. Daniel is just torturing me, Bess," she whispered. "But even before that Bess, I believed him. I didn't need the proof, I didn't need the name. I believed John. And I didn't have a chance to tell him before he left. I believed him." Jane buried her face in her hands.

"I know you don't need proof, but here it is anyway: the certificate is a fake," Bess stated abruptly.

"How so?" Jane asked, turning to her friend, looking at her with tear-swollen eyes.

Bess looked at Niles. Her eyes were flashing in anger. "If you won't tell her Niles, I will."

"I don't know what you mean, Bootsie," he lied.

"Oh don't give me that Bootsie bollocks, mister. You know very well what I'm talking about. I can see it plain as plain. You're thinking about it right now in fact. You're also thinking about how good that chicken smells. How you hate red wine because you think it is pretentious. You also think Jane's new blonde hair is very becoming. And you are irritated because Clive hasn't given you the final results from the artron energy analysis, whatever the bloody hell that means. And you are also thinking about what you assume you and I are going to be doing in bed tonight, but you couldn't be more wrong. I've given it up to you for fifteen years Niles, and it's time for you to give it up for me. I don't want a boyfriend, I want a husband, but I don't want one who lies."

"How'd you… how'd you know all of that?" Niles’s face blanched.

"Doesn't matter how I know," snapped Bess.

"Husband?" he squeaked.

"Yes! I want you to make a commitment to me! I want to be married, Niles. And one more thing. John will be here in, oh..." she looked down at her watch, "seven minutes. You are going to tell him the truth!" Bess turned to Jane. "The marriage certificate is a fake, Jane. Daniel cocked it up."
It's a legal impossibility that this alleged marriage is real. Since the French Revolution, a religious officiant can't sign a marriage certificate. The document has to be signed by the authority who conducted the civil ceremony. The document that Daniel gave you has been signed by a Catholic cleric, a Monseigneur." Bess picked up the paper and showed it to Jane, pointing at the signature.

She opened her mouth to speak, but Bess spoke first. "Come on Jane, we're leaving. I don't feel like eating dinner with a liar who is terrified of commitment."

"Bootsie?" Niles protested.

"Make sure you take the chicken out of the oven when the timer goes off Niles, or else it will burn. And Jane makes a lovely roast chicken, and it would be a shame for it to go to waste. We'll be at the local should anyone ask."

Bess grabbed her coat, her handbag, and Jane's wrist, and yanked Jane out the door.

oOo

There was a quiet rapping on the door. "It's me. It's John."

Niles got up wearily and opened the door. He was holding a glass of amber liquid. "The women have left," he said quietly. "Come on in and have a real drink with me."

"Whaddya mean the women are gone?" John asked as he stepped in, confused. "The marriage certificate is a fake." Niles took a swig from his glass.

"You know about the blackmail packet?" John said, almost choking on the words.

Niles nodded. "I should have said something before. I... we... that is Jack and I thought you and Jane were taking things too fast, and I chose to simply not correct Jane. In his own twisted way, Daniel accomplished what Jack and I couldn't. He slowed things down between the two of you."

John leveled an angry look. "And the pictures and the lingerie, I suppose you saw those as well?"

"Absolutely not." Niles raised his hands defensively. "I haven't seen anything else. I have only seen the letter and the fake marriage document. Bess showed them to me after Jane went to bed the other night. Jane doesn't even know that I have seen them. She did, however, tell me about the threat in vague terms because she was afraid to be alone here with Bess. She asked if I would be willing to spend nights here."

"So she trusts you to take care of her, but not me." John swore.

"No, that's not it, not at all. Bess may have hinted to her about my profession."

John crossed his arms. "Which is what exactly? Hmm?"

"I can't give you exact details. All you need to know is that I am more than qualified to defend Jane — using force if required, and I am legally authorised to do so, given the right wording on the after action report." Niles winked at John and raised his glass in salute.

John smirked. His long-held suspicions about Jack and Niles's line of work had now been confirmed. "Thank you for your service to Queen and Country." John saluted sloppily. "And I suppose I should thank you for being here to protect my Jane when I couldn't." He flexed his jaw, feeling guilt in the pit of his stomach once again that he had not protected her.
"It's not that you couldn't, John, it's that you didn't know. I have no doubt that you, Mr. Smith, have more than what it takes to protect her. I wasn't taking your place, I was holding your place until you could resume your rightful position."

John extended his hand to Niles to shake. "Understood. You're a good man, Niles."

"You wouldn't say so if you knew me better, Smith. I've done some terrible things. Terrible. Just look at what I did to that sweet girl of yours. I let her believe that you were a liar. That you were married. That you were willing to bring her into an illegal marriage. And if I am being completely honest, that's not the worst thing that I've done."

"Yeah, well, she did accept it as truth quite easily. What does that say about her trust in my character?"

"Jane is a very simple girl. Not simple as in unintelligent, simple as in… uncomplicated. She's innocent. She has never faced anything like this before. Few people have. I knew about Rose Tyler from the first night, though I didn't know that her famous suitor was you," Niles smirked. "She didn't have the foggiest idea what it was like for a man to pay attention to her, and along you come and sweep her off of her feet. She invented Rose to help her deal with her inability to accept the attention I think. And of course she would believe that document. Do you think it is in her nature to question authority? I doubt it. In school, she was probably the good girl, the one who never was smart to the teacher. Her mum probably never had to spank her once."

John smiled. "I'd be guessing that she'd never been forced to stay after school to clean the chalkboards, or write 'I will not be smart to the teacher' one hundred times."

"So what did you think of that letter?" asked Niles as he flopped himself into a chair and swirled his glass. The ice clinked melodically against the sides of the Waterford crystal.

"I'll tell you what I think of it. It makes me so angry I thought I might throw something through yonder window," he said, motioning with his hand that held his drink. "The reason I left so quickly was because if I didn't get some air — clear my head — I would have punched a hole in the wall. How dare he do this to my Jane!" growled John.

"Jane thinks you are angry at her, mate," Niles said, a bit accusingly.

"Why?"

"From the way she describes it, you stormed out of here without saying a word."

"Yeah, well, I was a bit afraid I was gonna break something. I don't think Bess would have appreciated me tossing that 17th century Ming vase onto the pavement."

They sat quietly for a moment.

"Bess laid into me." Niles face was a bit flushed. His tongue had now been loosened by the alcohol.

"Two angry women. I feel a bit sorry for anyone who's in their path. Where'd they go anyway?" asked John.

"The Wolf and the Traveller, two blocks over. But don't go running after 'em. That's exactly what Bess wants." Niles chuckled. "She said the M word."

"What's that, eh?"
"Well it ain't Mickey Mouse." Niles paused, and lifted his glass. "Marriage."

"Why aren't you and Bess married?" John asked. "She's a good woman. One of the best. She's been a fantastic friend to Jane."

"I don't believe in marriage. Well, it's fine for other people I suppose, but not for me. We have made our way happily for fifteen years now. Why cock it up?"

"Because women want security. They want to know that you're committed to them both publicly and privately, legally and before God or the judge or the Face of Boe."

"Can I tell ya a secret?" Niles said conspiratorially. "I've been telling her for years it's because of my job. Told her I'm not allowed to be married, but that's a big, fat whopper. I am a commitment-phobic prevaricator."

John took a sip of his drink. "Well ain't we a pair? Jane doesn't trust me, and I'm angry at her because she doesn't trust me. Bess is mad at you because you are a lying liar and you are afraid of her."

"I'm not afraid of her," Niles replied defensively.

"Oh I think you are, laddie. She can be downright terrifying." John made a gruesome face and then laughed a bit.

The wind-up timer dinged, so Niles went into the kitchen to save the chicken. "Want some grub?" asked Niles. "Jane's a brilliant cook."

"Yeah, sure."

They each grabbed a fork and a knife and started eating the chicken right off of the bone. "Blimey, this is good." John carved off one of the drumsticks, bit into it, and then licked his fingers between bites.

"I'll marry her if you don't," Niles joked with his mouth full, "if she promises to cook like this every night."

John laughed. "Sorry, she's spoken for."

"So you two aren't finished then?" Niles asked with a surprised look, putting his fork down.

"No, why would we be finished? Just a fight. A serious one to be sure, but not insurmountable. But I am fighting for her Niles," John said seriously.

"Have you told her that?"

"No," John answered, frustrated. "I'm still mad. Besides, don't all couples have rows? Granted, this argument is a bit more unusual than most, but we'll work it out somehow. We have to. I can't even begin to contemplate what my life will be like without her as my wife. But that doesn't mean I'm not angry. I need Jane to trust me."

"My parents fought like cats. Hated each other in the end and divorced when I was seven. I was the only kid I knew whose parents were divorced." Niles explained.

"Ah," said John knowingly. "Haven't you and Bess ever argued?"

"Not once. Never gets that far. I let her have her way."
"Well that isn't right," John said.

"I won't risk losing her."

"Bloody hell man, just marry her already." John said with a chuckle. "Don't you think she's waited long enough?"

"Well of course says the man who asked his fiancée to marry him on their second date," Niles shot back humorously. "But seriously John, even I can see the two of you are good together. You just need to slow it down."

"Why? Why do you and Jack keep insisting that we slow down?"

Niles didn't answer. Instead, he shoved another bite of chicken into his mouth. "You know, I don't think that Jane doesn't trust you, John. I think it's something completely different."

"How's that, then?"

"I think she is afraid that you will be hurt."

"Well I don't understand that at all," John sighed. "But that's the very same thing she told me."

"And you didn't believe her, did you? You didn't trust her at her word?"

John furrowed his brow and shook his head. "Always give the benefit of the doubt," he said quietly. "I need to go." John wiped his hands on the apron that Jane had discarded on the counter. "I'm going to the pub to get Jane." He had a gleam in his eye and a look of purpose on his face.

"Hold up. I might as well come with you," Niles called.

oOo

"...and furthermore," Bess proclaimed holding her glass of ale high, "he has never, not once, never ever introduced me to his parents!"

"In fifteen years?" the ginger haired woman in aqua blue rhinestone-encrusted butterfly rimmed glasses gasped.

"I think he's ashamed of me," Bess whimpered. "I'm a... a...wanton woman!" She changed her tone of voice. "Well, he made me into that! Takes two to tango, baby!" she hollered.

"Shame on him!" A brunette with a short-cropped, stylish hairstyle chimed in from the end of the long table.

Seven women had joined the group now, each with their own sad and painful story of lost love.

Jane had sat quietly and listened quietly as each one, in turn, had told their tale of woe. A woman with a Jamaican accent and a floral scarf around her head spoke up. "What about you quiet, pretty girl, why are you here with us crying in your drink?"

"Oh, the best story has been saved for last," Bess chimed in. "Ladies, just you wait until you hear the hell and brimstone that Jane here has been through!"

Jane shook her head and cringed. "I can't tell them, Bess," she said quietly to her friend.

"It will be good for you! You'll feel better, I promise. Strength in numbers, darling! The more who
know, the less power that Horrible Higgins has over you! Stand up for yourself!" Bess encouraged with a rallying cry.

Jane set down her glass with a thunk, drew in a deep breath and began. "All right then, I will tell you. It all started two weeks ago..." Jane recounted the whole story. She told of her first date with John as Rose Tyler. She told of the new job. She recalled Priscilla and her insinuations, and then about John and their whirlwind romance, their declaration of love, and hasty engagement. Next came the part about Daniel. The women had stopped drinking, and were leaning in, listening intently, as she told of the threat at the restaurant, and the delivery in the lobby.

"Why didn't you tell John right away? I would have," a woman with sandy hair asked.

"I was scared to. I was afraid that he'd hurt John. Daniel had obviously bugged the office." She told of the broken engagement and their fight, and the long, lonely weekend.

When she reached the part about the roses, an older woman with tired eyes spoke up. "Describe the bouquet, luv."

"Well, there were one dozen white roses, and right in the centre of the bouquet was a single coral rose."

"Hmm..." she said with a frown. "I worked in a flower shop before I married my Sid, God rest his soul. Flowers have meaning, luv, and from how you have described this horrible Daniel bloke, I bet he doesn't make a single move without thinking it through very carefully. That bouquet was a message in itself. The white roses represent purity and innocence."

"Well our Jane here is definitely pure and innocent," Bess said with a wink causing Jane to blush fiercely.

The ladies around the table laughed, and winked, and then she continued. "A coral rose usually means secret passion. It can also be used to ask the recipient to voice their secret desire. If he sends you any more flowers, go get a book on the Victorian language of flowers. You don't seem the type of girl who would comply with his demands, but if you do, I doubt he will stop there. He'll keep going on and on and on, finding new ways to torture you, luv."

The other women nodded in agreement. "

You say no now, sweetheart, or it'll never end. That evil man will keep finding ways to scare you, things to hold over your head. Mark my words, dear, he'll end up using your man against you. He'll threaten him directly."

"I read a novel about this very thing. It's called obsession!" a middle-aged woman said, nodding her head, in dire pronouncement. "That Daniel bloke is obsessed with you! It's like one of those frightening Alfred Hitchcock movies!"

"I tried to tell John that I was scared for his safety, but he just got angry with me. Told me I didn't trust him to take care of himself, or me. But that's not it at all! I love him! I don't want to see him hurt. Or worse. Daniel Higgins terrifies me!"

The ladies cooed in sympathy as Bess rubbed Jane's back and the older woman patted her hand.

"Oh, here's my song!" Bess jumped up. "Come on ladies! Who's with me?" The table cleared and all but one woman began to dance and sing along. The rest of the patrons of the pub, all male, just stared and shook their heads.
Well, these boots are made for walking, and that's just what they'll do, One of these days these boots are gonna walk all over you.

John and Niles walked in just as Bess had climbed up onto the table and started doing the Frug, swinging her hips from side to side.

"All right, all... right! That's enough!" The barkeep barked. "Get down from there young lady, before I kick the lot of you out on your pretty little arses!"

"But I feel like dancing! And no one's gonna stop me now!" Bess proclaimed as she shimmied to the refrain.

"Bess, what are you doing up there?" Niles asked calmly.

"Proclaiming my freedom!" she cried, hands on hips as she continued to dance.

"Come on down, Bootsie."

"Like hell I will!" she said defiantly. "Come on boots!" she sang along and increased the intensity of her gyrations.

"You are making a spectacle of yourself, Elisabeth," he said in a controlled voice.

"Not gonna!" she said with a stomp of her foot.

"Yes you will!" he shouted at the top of his lungs.

Bess stopped dancing and stared at him, dumbstruck. She hopped off of the table and walked out of the pub. Niles didn't follow her. Instead, he walked up to the bar and ordered a pint.

oOo

John found Jane sitting quietly on a chair far away from the other women. She had not joined the others dancing. The catchy, but angry, Nancy Sinatra ballad ended and a quiet song was next in the jukebox queue. With Bess gone, and Jane off in a corner, they dispersed back into their original groups or solitary stations.

John held his hand out to her. "Come with me? Can we really talk? Properly talk this time? Please?"

It was only now that Jane noticed she had been crying. She wiped her eyes with the backs of her hands, and then took in a cleansing breath.

"You ran out. You looked at those things and you just left me," she said quietly.

"May I sit with you?"

Jane nodded, and made room for him on the wooden bench.

"I left because needed time to think, love. I was angry. I simply couldn't believe that he would dare to do this to you. I was afraid I was going to break something."

"You must despise me now," Jane whispered. "Daniel convinced me you are a liar, and he convinced you that I am a..." Jane paused. "a whore."

He placed his hands on her arms and shook his head. "Never, never, never ever believe that. None
of this is your fault. Daniel is the villain here, not you," he growled.

"Then why do I feel so... dirty?" she asked, voice thick.

"That is exactly how that... that... devil wants you to feel." John wanted to use a stronger word for Daniel, but didn't want to shock Jane any more than she'd already been. He reached for her hand and pulled her off of the bench, out of the pub, and into the darkness of night. He didn't walk her back to her home. He took her to his own flat.

"Jane, I'm not angry anymore. You tried to tell me why you didn't let me know about Daniel's ultimatum, and I didn't listen. I didn't believe you. I did the exact same thing to you that I accused you of doing. Not believing me." His eyes were glistening as he spoke. "I am so, so sorry."

John hugged her tightly and buried his nose in her hair. He closed his eyes and simply held her.

"John, I am sorry that I ever doubted you," she whispered. "I am so sorry I didn't come to you. I should have... I should have never believed him. I believe you. I don't need proof. I don't need to look at any old newspapers, I need you to forgive me. Please." Jane's voice hitched and she broke into heaving sobs.

John gathered her even more tightly into his arms and rocked her, stroked her hair, and rubbed her back until her crying stopped.

"Stay with me tonight," he whispered.

Jane pulled her head off of his chest and looked at him.

He shook his head and smiled softly as he stroked her face, and tuck a lock of her hair behind her ear. "Not for anything other than sleep, my love. I need you to know that I am trustworthy. Let me be the one to protect you."

John touched his lips to hers softly and gently, completely free of carnal want or need. He poured his unconditional love into the kiss, and she accepted every bit of it, and offered hers back. Even if they still had much to discuss and forgive, they both knew they were reconciled. John had his Jane, and Jane had her John, and together they walked into his building, up the stairs, and into his darkened flat.
John and Jane decide to spend the night together. But this time, there's a bed instead of a sofa.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 21 - John Keeps Jane Safe

Jane and John stood in the darkness of his flat. Moonlight streamed through the large sliding glass door that led to the spacious rooftop patio.

This had seemed like such a good idea when he was down at street level John thought to himself. But now that Jane was standing here, a few feet away and bathed in moonlight, her newly blonde hair glowing like she was some sort of goddess, he wasn't so sure. He wondered if her heart was thudding as hard as his. If the needy look in her eye was indication, she was probably having a similar conversation with herself about the wisdom of the decision to share this night, let alone daring to keep it chaste.

He cleared his throat and stepped away from Jane. Still keeping his eyes on her, he walked backwards and found the switch plate by touch. Once illuminated, the flat seemed a little bit safer.

"You hungry? The chicken was delicious by the way. Promise me you'll do that roast chicken with lemon thing at least once a week when we're... uh," he paused and tugged on his ear. "Well then, anyway, are you hungry? Would you like some refreshment?" John asked.

Jane grinned at the obvious meaning of his request for once-a-week chicken night and nodded. "Yes. I am hungry. All I've had since lunch is a goblet of red wine after you left, and a handful of pretzels at the pub. Didn't have more than a few sips of a pint that Bess ordered for me. Didn't like it really. I'm not used to drinking and I'm feelin' a bit lightheaded and hot. Is it hot in here? I'd better not have any more to drink, even though I only had one glass of wine and that icky ale. Is it hot in here? Did I ask you that already? I don't think I like ale very much." She fanned herself with her hand and turned away. She wasn't feeling hot from the temperature of the room. The source of the heat was most definitely with whom she was sharing the flat.

"I'll open the patio door." John was feeling rather warm himself, also from the presence of Jane Smith, and as soon as the perfumed nighttime breeze wafted in through the gap of the partially opened sliding glass door, both John and Jane started to feel more clear headed.

"Let's see what I have to eat." John went into his modern kitchen and inspected the covered dish that his housekeeper, Mrs. Huckleberry, had prepared for his dinner. John pulled a face. "Liver and onions. Who actually eats liver and onions?" he whinged.

Jane hopped up onto the barstool that was up against the centre island. "Mum forced me to eat liver once a week. Said it was the best way to get iron. Hazard of having a mum that's a nurse, I suppose. She made me eat stewed spinach at least once a week, too. I always had to wash it down
with a glass of water without chewing." Jane laughed at the memory.

"My mum made me eat that green slime too. And mushy peas. Haven't eaten them since I left home. And I never will."

Jane nodded in agreement.

"Be thankful you aren't Scottish. One word. Haggis." John said, sternly.

"I always thought that was sort of a myth, that no one actually ate haggis."

"Most definitely not a myth, though I know that those who like it really, really like it," John answered over his shoulder, his nose once again in the refrigerator.

"So people still eat it?" Jane asked with a laugh.

"Not in our home we didn't, thank heaven. Ma refused to serve it." John turned and leaned against the counter, across from her.

"When I was a little girl, I promised myself that when I grew up, I would never make liver, and I would not force my family to eat it either."

"Well I am very glad we are in agreement about liver. I'll have to ask Mrs. Huckleberry to not make that again. That is the absolute worst food in the universe, well, second to pears."

"Pears? Really? You don't like pears?" Jane giggled. "Who doesn't like pears?"

"Well I don't like pears, and I am most definitely a who," he replied a bit defensively.

"Not even the crisp, juicy, tart ones?" she asked, teasing him by pushing the issue further.

"No pear shall passeth o'er my lips," he stated elegantly, with his face slightly upturned.

"Ever had a slice of pear with little crumble of Stilton cheese? Bet you'd like pears that way. Or poached in a syrup? Drizzled with melty, gooey caramel? Mmmm," she taunted.

"Jane Smith! How can you say such evil things!" he said, genuinely upset. "You will never get a kiss from me within twenty four hours of having eaten Satan's own fruit!" he said squinting and wagging his finger at her, his accent heavy.

"Uh huh. Okay. I'll remember that," Jane giggled and then her tongue appeared between her teeth for a moment. "So other than haggis, pears, liver and onions, mushy peas, and stewed spinach, anything else I need to add to my Never Cook for John List?"


"Sounds perfect, and fast too. I'm starting to feel a bit out of sorts," Jane said as leaned heavily on her hand.

"You sure you're all right?" John looked at her, a bit worried. Jane nodded. "Just need to eat."

"Glad you like eggs, because omelette is about the only thing I know how to make that doesn't require two slices of bread," he said with a slight grin. "Here, have this while you're waiting." John peeled a banana and fed her the first bite. He was unable to tear his eyes away from her pink lips wrapped around the fruit.
She flushed at his attention and then took the banana from his hands. Their fingertips brushed and both smiled a bit shyly. "Thanks. This tastes great." She finished the sweet fruit and dropped the peel on the counter, looking around. "I've never been in such a posh kitchen before. It looks like something right out of *Homes & Gardens*. Your whole flat does, really." Jane studied the sleek kitchen. The cabinetry was dark, but the bright white Formica countertops bounced the light, brightening the area. There was a very large stainless steel sink that was divided into two sections, one for washing and one for rinsing. The faucet had a wand-like handle and only one spout, so that water ran in a single stream instead of the more common two separate faucets for hot and cold.

"So you like it then?" he asked hopefully.

"I do. I like it very much. It's so different. Really unique." She looked around some more. "But there aren't any pictures or knick-knacks or anything. Didn't you pick up any souvenirs during your travels in the army?"

John scratched his head. "Guess not. I suppose I always lived light on my feet. Had my rucksack and my foot locker and I was fine. Everything of sentimental value is up in the family home about half an hour outside of Inverness."

"What's it like up there? I've never been to the High Country," Jane asked, now leaning her chin on both of her hands.

"A wee bit of heaven on Earth. The stars are bright, the air is clean, sky is wide, water is blue." John smiled wistfully. "I really miss my old house. It was made out of the most unusual yellow stone. Was a bit of a local mystery. Folks said the house was ancient. Hundreds and hundreds of years old, but no one ever knew where the stone came from. Wasn't another house like it."

"Sounds lovely."

"Aye. My home wasn't too big and it wasn't too small. Seemed so much bigger on the inside when I was a wee bairn o' course." John gathered eggs, a chunk of ham and a wedge of cheese. "Finely dice a couple of slices of this ham would you, love?" John asked casually.

The word 'love' rolled off of John's tongue like it was the most natural word in his vocabulary, and Jane felt like a hundred butterflies had just migrated through her stomach.

"Uh, y-- yeah, of course. Knife?" Jane slid off of the barstool and walked around to the other side of island where John was busy breaking eggs into a bowl. He stopped to retrieve the knife for Jane and handed her a cutting board as well.

She hazarded a sideways glance and noticed he had rolled up the sleeves of his white shirt to just below his elbows, exposing his hairy forearms. She had never before seen so much of his skin exposed. Such an innocent thing it was for him to bare his forearms while cracking eggs, yet the act of preparing this meal together was starting to feel like one of the most intimate moments they had ever shared.

"So you don't like pears. What sort of things do you like? I'm going need to know this sort of thing when I'm your..." She stopped herself, and bit her lip, realising that she, too, had just surreptitiously referred to an assumed shared future.

If the smile cracking his lips was any indication, he had heard her slip as well, and was happy about it. "Bananas."

"Bananas?" she said, frowning slightly.
"Yes, bananas. Why does everyone make fun of my love of bananas?" he said with a defensive little laugh.

"Okay, so you hate pears and like bananas. But what about veg and meat and-

"I like ice cream," he said, waggling his eyebrows.

Jane rolled her eyes, but in reality, she was now fixating on her first kiss, and trying to tamp down the warmth that was growing low in her belly. She continued to dice the ham, but her attention was dangerously divided, considering she had a sharp chef's knife in her right hand, and a wandering mind. What about the rest of the skin that his shirt covered? What about his chest? Was the hair on his chest as thick as the hair on his arms? And what about his back? Muscled? Strong? What would the skin of his back feel like under her fingertips?

She was quickly coming to the conclusion that this was going to be a long, long night, night, and was going to test her own self control. Because already, the only thing she wanted to do right now, was put the knife back down on the counter, pull John over to the couch and rip off his shirt to find out what the rest of him looked like underneath that fabric.

Jane knew she needed to re-focus her attention elsewhere. Steering the conversation someplace safe would be a good idea. "Do you like sports? You know, cricket? football? Anything like that?"

"I'm not one to sit and watch a match. I'd rather be doing. I love to run. Ran steeplechase in school. Was good, too."

Jane's thoughts began to drift once again as she started thinking about his strong, toned, made-for-running legs, which were inevitably under the wool of his finely tailored grey trousers. She shook her head and wondered if it was normal for women to think about such things. She knew that men thought about women's physical attributes, but she had never sat around with her friends and discussed men in detail other than commenting on a particular bloke's general handsomeness. She came to the conclusion that it had nothing to do with 'normal' and everything to do with John being John. There was just something so magnetic between the two of them. There was really nothing that was going to pry them apart. Today had proven that. She knew that they still had plenty to work through, but she also felt safe in the belief that they were once again, John and Jane.

"You're muttering to yourself," John said with a small laugh, his warm breath puffing against her cheek. The hair on his arm barely brushed her skin. "Something bothering you love?"

Timidly at first, Jane let her tongue come out to play, gently licking his teeth. John opened his mouth and Jane accepted his invitation, quickly deepening their kiss. She moved her hands out of his hair, which she had now thoroughly mussed, down to his shoulders, pulling him close to her.
John, in turn, cupped the back of her head, and pressed his full hand into the curve of her back. He deftly turned her and walked her backwards the short distance to the refrigerator, so that he had her pressed up against it, his body pressed hard and flush against hers. They separated for a very short moment to draw in more air, and then came back together again, this time, their lips softer and more pliant, tongues slow in their caress, but deeper, more languid in their caressing.

Jane moved her hands around to his back, down to his waist and then finally, brought them to rest on his bottom. She kneaded the flexed muscles and he responded to her touch, slowly and rhythmically tilting his hips into hers, pulsing against her, seeking out her heat.

But then John pulled away, not because he wanted to cease their frankly brilliant kiss, but out of self preservation. This night was not supposed to be progressing like this. They hadn't even eaten yet and were already snogging up against a wall, or rather a refrigerator, but the point was still valid. He was supposed to be proving to her that she could trust him to withhold his passions, and here he was, mimicking the very act which he had promised to not engage in. But even though he had decided to turn around on this very sensual road and head in the opposite and innocent direction, he had a wicked grin on his face, showing her that he had definitely enjoyed their moment of passion.

"You are hungry aren't you?" he asked with a thick, raspy voice, caressing her swollen lips with the pad of his thumb.

"I may be a wee bit tipsy," she said, running a finger up his arm. "I've never seen your arms before. They're very hairy."

"Good hairy or bad hairy?" he asked, caressing her own upper arm.

"Most definitely good. Very manly." Jane bit her lip.

John raised a single eyebrow. "I think I had better get that omelette going. You could use a quick infusion of protein, love, before you do something you regret."

"Ya keep saying that," she traced her fingertip around the circumference of his lips. "Makes my tummy jump."

"What do I keep saying?" he asked, frowning slightly. He stepped away from her and lit the gas on the cooker, and set the skillet in place.

"Loooooove," she imitated his brogue and sighed. Her eyelids were heavy and face, soft. She leaned over the counter and propped her chin onto her elbow and stared at him.

"Well that's who you are to me," John replied softly. "You are my Love. You're The One."

"We're going to be okay, aren't we? The two of us? None of that other stuff even seems important anymore. I know it is, but I just want to put it behind us and move on."

"How about we put all of that ugliness out of our minds for now. We'll have to come back and talk about it at some point, but tonight isn't the best time. You aren't blitzed, but you aren't quite yourself," John laughed and shook his head.

"I'm gonna have ta really trust ya then ta not take 'vantage of me," she teased, tracing the swell of her breast with a fingertip.

"Jane, uh, ya cannae be doin' that sort o' thing an' expect me to not go outta my mind wantin' ya," he said with a nervous chuckle, but clearly serious in his intent.
"What about this? Is this okay?" Jane closed the gap which he had put between them and blew on his neck, following up with a few open mouthed, wet kisses at the base of his sideburn.

"Ahhahahahhh... Jane, uh, love, I might burn myself." He danced on his tiptoes. "Trying to cook eggs. Don't want them scrambled because I promised you a proper omelette, flipped and everything." He wasn't really worried about being burned by the cooker fire, but by the flames coming off of Jane.

"Sod the omelette, I wanna snog some more," she said plainly, running her hand up and down his forearm.

John gulped and ignored her. "Is that ham ready? I need to add it before I fold the eggs. You'll want to watch this. I think you may be impressed."

"Oh, I don't need to watch you flip an omelette to be impressed. How about flipping me instead? On the sofa?" she said low and lusty, as she looked out into the lounge, and then back at John.

"Alrighty then! Let's get some food into you. Get ready to shred the cheese," John commanded, more brusquely than intended, as he handed her a block of Cheddar and a four sided box grater. He scraped the diced ham from the cutting board into the very centre of the omelette. With skill that actually did impress Jane, he tilted the pan, nudged one side so that one third flipped, and then tipped it the opposite way and folded the second side, creating a perfectly folded omelette. He slid it onto a single plate.

"I am very impressed," she said genuinely.

John smiled and waggled his eyebrows as he slid the plate in front of Jane. She did her part, grating fine shreds onto the hot golden omelette, which melted almost instantly. She continued to move the hunk of cheese down the sharp plane of the grater until she yelped. "Ouch!"

"What's happened, love?" He was at her side in an instant.

"I cut myself," she said with a frown, suddenly sobered. Her knuckle was bleeding from the small, but painful looking wound. "Wasn't paying attention. I was staring at your... arse...err... arms." She cringed inwardly at her slip, and blinked hard. "I was staring at your... arms."

"I'll get you a plaster," he said kindly, through a grin. "Wash your hands with soap and water, please." John called as he left for the bathroom in the master suite and quickly returned with a box of Band-Aids. "Hand, please."

Jane extended her hand to him, and John tenderly blew across the red-tinged knuckle, drying it. He pulled a paper wrapped plaster from the box, pulled on the little red string and unwrapped it. "Make a gentle fist, please." Jane complied, and he applied the plaster to the knuckle, and then kissed it. "There. All better. Now for heaven's sake woman, let's get some food into ye'!"

They both grinned, and John brought the plate with two forks to the sofa instead of the dining table, and Jane followed him with two glasses of milk. "Thought we could both use a glass before bed." At the mention of the word 'bed,' both of them felt heat crawling up their backs.

John cleared his throat. "Uh, speaking of, uh, bed," he said, nervously tugging his ear, "you're going go sleep in mine and I'm going to sleep on the sofa. Spent many nights out here before. It's quite comfy actually." He bounced a bit.

"Why d'ya sleep on the sofa?" Jane asked, before taking a bite.
"I have been known to write all night before. Thing is, I'm a bit of a night owl, but when we're married, I will have a reason to not stay up all night writing." John looked over at Jane who was smiling down into her lap. He placed his pointer finger under her chin and turned her head so their eyes met. "Jane Donna Smith, will you consent to be my wife? Again?"

Jane nodded and hugged John. She rested her chin on his shoulder. "Thank you for not giving up on me. On us." She squeezed him again.

John reached into his pocket and pulled out the black velvet ring box. "I've been carrying this around since last Thursday. Glad I didn't have a hole in my pocket," he chuckled as he opened the box, exposing the beautiful sapphire ring to the light. John pried it from the slit. "May I?" he asked, taking Jane's hand into his. Jane nodded and her hand started shaking as he slipped the ring back onto her finger.

"I missed having this on my hand, my constant reminder of you." Jane looked at John with longing.

"Jane Smith, soon to be Jane Smith." They both laughed, and then Jane fell into John's side with a sigh. John draped his arm around her and pulled her closer. "A second proposal over a plate of ham and eggs. Very romantic, don't ya think?"

"Just about perfect," replied Jane, taking another bite.

They finished the omelette and sat contentedly for a few minutes chatting about nothing in particular until Jane yawned widely, covering her mouth with her hand. "Sorry. 'M tired."

"Well it is nigh eleven," John said looking at his wristwatch. "Let's get you into bed before you turn into a pumpkin."

Jane's cheeks flushed crimson, she looked down at her hands and picked her fingernails. "Do you have anything I can sleep in?" she asked quietly.

"Oh, right. It'll be big, but you could wear one of my jimjam tops. I have a new toothbrush, too, still in the box. You can use that. And there's toothpaste in the medicine chest above the sink in the loo, and uh, in the morning, you can take the first shower, and I'll take mine after you clear out. I'll lay some fresh towels."

"Do you have an alarm clock? I should probably set it early so you can take me round my flat to change my clothing on our way to work. I can't very well show up at work in this same pink dress, getting out of your car with my engagement ring back on my finger," she blushed.

"What time do you want me to set the alarm for? The clock is a bugger to set."

"Uh, six?"

John got up and went into the bedroom. He opened his chest of drawers and pulled out a pair of pyjamas. He looked at the set, and split it. He smiled at the thought that he would be wearing the bottom, and she, the top. He left the blue and white striped pyjama shirt on the freshly made bed, thankful that that his housekeeper had replaced his bed linens today. He looked at his bed, and sighed. Eleven days until their wedding night. He could hold out. He'd do his best, at least. Nope. He would.

He set the alarm and returned to the lounge with his own nightclothes and toothbrush, onto which he had already smeared toothpaste. He set the items down on the coffee table by the sofa where he would spend the night.
Jane was washing the dishes in the kitchen, her back to him. He put his hands in his pockets and simply watched her, marvelling at the picture of domesticity playing out in front of him. He walked up behind her, and wrapped his arms around her waist and nuzzled into her neck. "Hello."

Jane rinsed the final dish, added soap to the skillet and filled it with hot water to soak overnight. She turned off the water, dried her hands and turned in John's arms so she could face him properly. "Hello," she whispered, and then kissed him softly.

"Your boudoir awaits m'lady." His voice was low and thick and sent shivers down Jane's spine.

John took her hand and slowly led her toward his bedroom. He halted once they were outside the door, and hand in hand, they looked into the room that represented their united future as husband and wife.

For the first time, Jane saw John's private domain. His king sized bed was draped in a rich brown bedspread. Since his flat was on the top floor, there was a large skylight above the bed with a window covering that could be retracted to view the stars or drawn to block the late night and early morning light of summer. The room, like the rest of John's flat, wasn't elaborately decorated, but it was tasteful, masculine and the furniture was obviously high quality, Danish modern in style.

Jane's stomach clenched tightly, knowing that she was about to be in his bed. Her mind jumped ahead a week and a half to their wedding night.

Jane's mouth spoke before she had the self control to halt her words. "I want to come back here for our wedding night, for our first time. I don't want to go to a hotel." She shook her head, emphasising her desire to be united with her husband in their own bed.

John turned to look at her, and saw a faraway, dreamy look on her face. She tore her eyes away from the bed to look at John.

A slow, almost shy smile emerged on John's face. "All right," he said quietly. "I was going to book the Ritz, but I like your idea better." John tucked a lock of her hair behind her ear, grazing the shell of her ear with his fingers. "We haven't even talked about where we're going on our honeymoon, but that can keep for tomorrow."

"Yeah, I think we'd better, you know, go to bed. To sleep," she whispered, never taking her eyes off of him.

"Goodnight," he whispered. He placed a lingering kiss on her cheek, afraid if he dared to touch his lips to hers just one last time, his self control would collapse. He was resolved to prove himself her protector, to keep this night chaste.

Jane closed her eyes and placed her hands on his chest as his lips were on her burning cheek. "Goodnight," she whispered back as he pulled his lips from her cheek. She backed away from him into the bedroom, and closed the door slowly.

John heard the latch snick quietly. He smiled at the fact that she had not engaged the lock. She trusts me.

On the other side of the door, Jane leaned on the wood and sighed. She smiled as she brought her hand to the spot on her cheek that was still tingling from the memory of John's lips.

John turned off all of the lights in the main area of his flat save the lamp next to the sofa. In the
dimness of his kitchen, he brushed his teeth in the kitchen sink, unbuttoned his shirt, toed off his
shoes, stripped off his trousers and pants, and slid on his pyjamas bottoms. It occurred to him that
he had forgotten to gather blankets and a pillow for himself, which of course, were kept in his
bedroom. It was already chilly in the flat. He would definitely need covers.

He could hear the water in the bathroom sink running as Jane prepared herself for bed, and then the
water stopped. He needed to get in there, or else he would shiver all night long. He wondered if
perhaps she hadn't yet changed. Or maybe she had. He dwelled on that thought as he stared at the
door.

He knocks on the door, and Jane's shy voice bids him to enter. "Come in, John." He opens the
door, and is greeted by his Jane, reclining on the bed. She is clad only in his pyjama top, laying on
her side. Her gentle curves are on display just for him. The shirt, being too large, is parted just
enough to tantalise, exposing just a hint of her cleavage. She fingers the buttons, teasing him,
smiling that smile, the one with the tip of her pink tongue. It is more than enough to whet his
appetite to taste it. The shirt barely grazes the top of her thighs, and a hint of the satin and lace
knickers are visible. He stares at her, burning his eyes into her exposed skin, and then walks to her
slowly. He sits on the side of the bed, and the mattress dips beneath his weight. He nudges her onto
her back and moves to hover over her, balanced on his knees, one on each side of her hips. Slowly,
she unbuttons the top, but she does not part it. She pulls him down to her, plunging her hands into
his hair, massaging it, pulling it. He pulls away, slips his hands, one under each side of the shirt,
and slips it off of her, unwrapping his precious girl, parting the fabric to reveal his Jane to his eyes
for the first time. He leans down and brings his lips to her dusky pink-

"John," Jane called from the bedroom. Only her head was visible as she peeked around the corner
through the partially opened door.

"Hmm?" John shook himself. "Everything all right?" He cleared his throat and stood up, clasping
his hands in front of his body to hide the physical evidence of his fantasy.

"I thought you might need blankets. I noticed you didn't have any."

John grinned devilishly. "Were you spying on me Jane Smith?" He brought his body under control,
and walked to his bedroom door to accept the neatly folded blankets and pillow from Jane's
outstretched hands.

"Might have been." She looked at his exposed chest and memorised it in its natural state.
"Goodnight." She quickly closed the door.

"Well this is hardly fair," he called through the door. "You got to see me, but I didn't get to see
you," he protested.

"I have more to show than you do. This shirt is practically hanging off of me at the top, and short
on the bottom," she replied without guile, though the affect on John was instant.

"This is going to be a long night," he muttered to himself as he made up his makeshift bed and
crawled under the thermal blanket. He flopped onto his side, and then the other, and then onto his
back.

Sleep came sooner than he expected as he relaxed in the knowledge that his precious Jane was just
one room away, safe, protected and most important, they were an us again.

oOo
Jane crawled into the fabulously comfortable bed. She felt like she was having a fantastic dream. She pinched herself to prove the reality that here she was, in John's bed! Wearing his pyjama shirt! She pulled the blankets up to her nose, giggled and kicked her feet like a seven year old girl too excited to sleep the night before her eighth birthday. It was by far the most comfortable bed she had ever been in. Not too soft and not too hard. Just right. Maybe it was a fairy tale after all. Was she Goldilocks?

The white sheets were fresh from the wash, and she could still smell the faintly sharp scent of bleach. However, the bedspread carried the lingering scent of John, so she decided to keep it close instead of folding it down to the foot of the bed.

She rolled over and switched off the lamp. Which side John did John sleep on? Or did he stretch out in the middle? Sprawled spread eagle? Was he a light sleeper or a thrasher? Did he curl up in a ball? She laughed to herself wondering if he snored. Did he wear socks to bed? Which side would she take when they were married?

Did he wear anything to bed under normal, non-fiancée sleeping over circumstances? Did he cuddle? Steal the blankets? Would he wake her in the middle of the night with a kiss and a caress as a wordless request to make love? Would she wake him by whispering in his ear, or would she just boldly touch him?

Jane sighed, moved to the spot on the right, closest to the alarm clock, and decided this is where John had spent his sleeping hours. She melted her head into his pillow and closed her eyes, imagining that John was nestled into her from behind, wrapping his arms around her. Jane drifting off to sleep almost able to feel the thumping of his heart against her back, and his steady breathing on her neck.

She looks into the light, and feels the flame. She hears the song of time and eternity. She sees all that was, all that is, and all that could be. With the simple raise of her hand, she turns his foes to dust. With a single thought, she brings her friend back to life. But now she is burning from the inside out, the once comforting flame is now consuming her, changing her. She knows is she dead even before she is claimed by eternity.

She wakes up and finds herself in a humble room, covered by a bright pink duvet that hurts her eyes. Her head is aching, the worst pain she can ever remember, and her eyes are tired and swollen. She's been crying. And then she remembers the reason for her mental anguish: he has abandoned her. "He didn't love me! I thought he did, but he didn't! He didn't! He didn’t!"

Jane's eyes opened slowly, and in her half dream-state, she realised her chest was heaving, that she was sobbing in her sleep. She could feel the dampness on the pillowcase under her cheek from her tears. She was confused for a moment as to where so was, until she lifted her head and realised she was in John's bed. Jane took a few deep breaths, and her tears ceased as she came fully back into the present and shook off the nightmare. She turned onto her back and looked up at the inky blue sky through the glass of the skylight. The stars were twinkling and the moon was in the corner of the window, casting a silvery glow over the brown comforter so that it looked more purple and silver than rich brown.

Quietly, she got out of the spacious bed and padded over the thick ivory carpeting to the door. She opened it, needing reassurance that John was, indeed, still there. The door creaked, and she cringed, not wanting to wake him. She held her breath but he didn't stir, so she relaxed and leaned her head against the door frame. Jane watched his chest rising and falling as he slept on the other side of the room. She pushed herself off of the doorframe, and step by slow step, moved towards the sofa upon which John was laying, desperate to steal an even closer look.
When she was close enough to touch him, she knelt down, now inches from his face. A lock of his hair had fallen across his left eye, so Jane extended her pointer finger and as delicately as she could, pushed it aside so that she could see his full face. His eyebrows furrowed, but he didn't awaken. He muttered something unintelligible, his face contorting further. Jane froze, prepared to flee should he stir to consciousness.

"What have you done?" He muttered. "No! You can't die!" Now his words were desperate. "No! Please! No. No. Not you. Not you." A tear trickled from the corner of his eye. "I can't live without you. What am I going to do without you? I wasn't worth saving! Why'd you do it?"

Jane saw that his breathing had increased so that he was almost panting. He flexed his hands, and gathered the blanket into his fists. He screamed out, as if he were in the most excruciating pain imaginable.

She couldn't see him suffer like this! She shook him gently. "John! John! Wake up, please! Wake up!"

John's eyes opened and he gasped, sitting up, shedding the blanket to his waist. His brow was glistening with sweat, and his breathing was heavy. He fell back onto the sofa and at her. "Jane? Is that you? But you're dead!"

It was apparent to her that John was still in the middle of his nightmare. "John," she said gently.

"I saw you die, I cradled you in my arms and carried you home."

She shook her head. "I'm real, see? I'm here." She kissed his lips, offering proof.

"Jane..." He sighed her name, now fully awake.

"You were having a nightmare," she whispered as she moved to sit on the sofa so she could pull him into her arms. She stroked his hair, and he dropped his chin onto her shoulder.

"I dreamed you burned alive," he whispered. "But you didn't burn in an ordinary fire. You came out of the blue police box, glowing like a— a— supernova. You had ripped open the engine of the ship and looked inside, which no one is supposed to do, and you became one with the ship somehow. You told me you did it to save me.."

Jane gasped. "...And I saved you from the monsters. And I brought Jack Harkness back to life. And then— and then— I burned up."

John nodded his head. "How'd you know?" he whispered.

"I had the same dream John, but after I died, I came back to life. I woke up in a strange pink bedroom. I thought that you'd left me. That you'd abandoned me."


They held onto each other until they both had calmed and were breathing in synchronicity.

Jane gently extracted herself from his arms, and stood up. She extended her hand to him. "Be with me? Stay with me until morning? Just hold me? I need to know you are real, that you're right here with me."

John stood up and together, they walked into the bedroom, and John closed the door behind him.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry for being a tease.
Chapter Summary

John shares his big, big bed with Jane.

Chapter 22 - John & Jane & Temptation

Just a few hours before, John and Jane had been standing on the other side of this door, saying goodnight. Now they were on the other side. John's bed loomed massively before them, dominating both the room and their thoughts. John looked over at Jane and gulped hard, nervously squeezing her fingers just a little bit too hard.

"Let me get my blankets. I'll make up some sort of bed on the floor. Wouldn't be the most uncomfortable spot I've slept. Some of the army cots I've had to endure have been horrid. Simply terrible for the back. You know what's really uncomfortable? I'll tell you. A hammock. I would take the floor any day over a hammock. Now, the most comfortable place I have ever slept was in Beldrum. They have these anti-grav-"

Jane turned to him and placed her fingers on his lips and shook her head firmly. "No floor. I need you with me. I need to know you are real, that the dream was the lie, that you and I -- that we are real."

"All right," he said, his voice cracking.

Jane let go of his hand, leaving John frozen by the door. He fixed his eyes on the full length of her bare legs as she slowly walked to the bed, and flushed, knowing that there would be nothing between his hand and those legs in a very few seconds.

Then he saw a flash of her sensible pink knickers as she crawled over to the far side of the bed, and he was sure that he squeaked. John hoped she hadn't heard the evidence of his weakness, and he cringed at his lack of self control. He really didn't care if her knickers were sensible or not. She could have been wearing a potato sack right now, and he still would have squeaked.

Jane crawled under the covers and pulled them up under her chin. She looked so small alone in his huge bed. His bed. His bed... bed... bed... He couldn't stop dwelling on the word. Jane Smith, his beautiful Jane, soon to be his wife, was. in. his. bed.

She looked at him with longing, though not passionate longing. He could see in her eyes that she was looking to him to be her protector tonight. He needed to be strong for her. Rein it in, Smith. And he needed to do it right now, so he breathed in and out a few times and steeled himself... but then she moved, the blanket slipped and the neckline of the pyjama top slipped. He scrubbed his hand down his stubbly face and closed his eyes. "Jane, I really don't think this is the best idea-"

"I trust you, John. Please. Come to bed." She said it with such sincerity that he could not ignore her plea.
"But what if I don't trust me?" he muttered. John nodded and willed his legs to move until his knees bumped into the mattress. He pulled the covers back and sat on the edge of the bed for a moment longer. He switched off the lamp, rolled over onto his side, and faced away from Jane. His pillow still held a Jane-shaped indentation, and it registered with him that she had been sleeping on his side of the bed. Jane's head had been on his pillow... in his bed. Bed. Bed. Bed. He gulped again as he fixated on that word. He could smell her perfume and the scent of her shampoo and whatever else she wore that made her skin irresistible to his nose, and it was overwhelming him with Jane-ness.

"Face me?" she asked quietly.

John slowly turned from his side onto his back. He moved his hands outside of the covers and held them tightly to his sides, sealing himself off from the woman three feet to the right. He did what she requested, though, and turned his head to face her.

Jane looked at him hopefully, her hands up under her cheek, the picture of innocence, her shining light brown eyes betraying her unconditional trust as she watched him in the dark. "Thank you, John," she said with a small smile.

John nodded, and Jane moved closer and kissed him on the cheek. He closed his eyes and absorbed the feeling of her lips and then released his breath only when she released him from her touch.

She moved back to her pillow, settled into a comfortable position on her side facing him, and closed her heavy, tired eyes. Soon, she was asleep.

John relaxed a bit once she had drifted off. He finally trusted himself to not touch her. Indeed, it would be a fight, but he knew he could do it for her. He would not give in to his desires.

With that resolved in his mind, he moved on to his next source of worry: Daniel Higgins. He didn't know how he was going to protect her from the looming threat. He moved his hands behind his head and stared up at the stars above through the skylight. If only he were the Professor. He would know what to do.

He came to the conclusion that he needed help. Niles had confirmed tonight that he had both the resources and the willingness to address the Daniel Problem, so John decided he would swallow his pride and talk to Niles and Jack. He didn't have the right or privilege to be proud, because Jane's happiness and perhaps even her life depended upon decisive action. He knew Higgins's threats would only become increasingly more dangerous as time passed. He knew Jane would never agree to anything that Daniel demanded, but would he stop at simply making good on his blackmail? Or would he become enraged and do something worse? He knew he couldn't risk it. He had to talk to Jack and Niles tomorrow.

With that sorted in his mind, he turned onto his side and faced Jane. He moved closer to her, reached out, and cupped her cheek. She was sleeping so soundly, he knew she wouldn't awake. "I love you," he whispered. In her sleep, she smiled, and puckered her lips slightly and then again relaxed them. "Wear this pyjama top on our wedding night," he whispered. John closed his eyes with his arm draped over her waist, and fell into a deep sleep.

Jane opened her eyes, fingered the collar of her pyjama top and smiled at the man next to her. She draped her arm over John's waist, mirroring him, and moved closer still. "I love you, too," she said, and fell to sleep, but this time, she was not pretending.

She is wearing a yellow polka dot bikini straight out of a beach movie, and running down a stark hallway, pursued by her maniacally laughing husband.
"Bet you can't catch me!" she calls back to him over her shoulder in a teasing, singsong voice. Doors line each side of the corridor. There are signs above most doors, though some are unmarked. As she runs, she passes rooms labeled Aviary, Apiary, Time Stopping and Starting Lab, Boulangerie, Swimming Pool, Steam Room, Hydroponic Garden, and Short Track Speed Skating Rink. She finally skids to a halt and grabs the corner of the wall at the intersection of two intersecting corridors to stop herself from overshotting her destination: Grotto, Cliff Diving & Water Chutes.

She pushes the swinging door and stops at the top of the curlicue water chute, her favourite of the three in the newly grown room. She lunges onto it head first thinking that will be the fastest route to the water below. She is a third of the way down when she hears her husband inside of her head.

"You think you can get away from me, hmm? You didn't know I was a World Champion Cliff Diver."

"I'm already halfway there, mister. I'm so close I can taste victory! Ha!" she thinks confidently as she continues to careen towards the water below which is surrounded by exotic and lush flora.

She hears a splash, and sees a perfect circlet of white bubbles breaking the surface as she is in the final straightaway of the slide. A few seconds later, his head surfaces, and his grin is positively smug. "Hello," he waves his fingers cheekily right as she reaches the end of her ride, and splashes into the water.

She swims over to him. "How'd you beat me?" If she didn't have to tread water to stay afloat, she would have her hands on her hips.

"Easy peasy. I just calculated the proper trajectory, and adjusted the alignment of my legs, spine, and head. I used my fingers and toes as rudders in order to maximise my rate of velocity. Sorry love, but you never stood a chance," he says without a hint of humility.

"You are the worst winner ever," she says, rolling her eyes. "Go on then. You won the race, claim your prize already."

"Didn't know it was a proper contest. I thought we were simply racing for the sport of it. But since you're offering..." He waggles his eyebrows, turns and swims like a champion towards the twenty foot waterfall that creates a curtain partially obscuring a cave. The cave is lit from within by something phosphorescent in the walls and water. The room sparkles and glows, and has the magical appearance of a magical wonderland fit for merfolk nobility.

"This is new," she says as they pull themselves onto the smooth rock-like deck that is somehow soft and not slippery. "Looks like that cave by the grotto on our honeymoon island."

"Discovered it last night while you were sleeping. She grew it just for us."

"It's beautiful in here," She looks around and touches one of the rock walls. Her handprint remains, glowing yellow for a few seconds. "Just like I remember."

"We made some rather interesting glow-prints, didn't we?" he says with a rather dirty grin.

She blushes as her husband shows her a memory from their honeymoon involving much snogging and a few bruises on her back from being pressed up against the wall. The glow-print vaguely looks like her torso and head, but there is only one set of footprints, his, as she had ended up with her legs wrapped around his waist. She looks down and moves her feet. Perfect yellow imprints remain where she has just been standing.
He slips off his swimming things, and she follows suit. "I can see where this is going. You are very predictable, and your are insatiable, and I love it." She grins, and a hint of pink tongue comes through her teeth. "So how do you want me to do this? You wanna be standing? Sitting? Laying? You gonna engage the antigravity 'cos I don't see any handles or straps or anything to buckle into..."

"And that is one of the five trillion, four hundred fifty-three billion, nine million, two hundred thirty-one thousand and four reasons I married you: you always come up with a variety of very compelling scenarios." He grinned brightly. "But no, that's not what I have in mind. Later, if you're agreeable, I would be more than happy to accept your offer and engage in that particular activity, which you know is my third favourite thing in the universe. But right now, I want you to lay down on your tummy. Go on now."

Quiet ambient music begins to play. "Aww, you can do better than that. Gimme natural," he grumbles looking up at the ceiling, and the irritating supposedly sexy saxophone music is replaced by the natural sounds of the jungle as heard on the private, uninhabited tropical island where they had spent their honeymoon.

She complies, though she is confused. He straddles himself across her buttocks though doesn't rest his weight on her. He leans to his side and picks up a glass bottle filled with a thick, pearlescent fluid that smells of jasmine and rose water. He pours a thin stream over her back, and she is surprised to find that it is warm. He uses long, kneading strokes and massages her scalp, neck, shoulders, arms, back, buttocks, thighs, and calves. He doesn't touch her feet as she is very ticklish, and he doesn't want to ruin her perfect state of relaxation.

"Oh, this feels good, but I don't get it. Why you doin' this, not that I'm complainin', mind. I should be givin' you the massage. You were the winner."

"Shh. I'm not done. My reward is still to come." He smiles a bit smugly when he sees that the yellow glow under his wife is slowly becoming pink as he has now prompted her to turn onto her back and is massaging her shoulders and upper arms.

She closes her eyes and lets his cool hands work out knots in her muscles that she doesn't even know exist. She is drowsy and nearly asleep when he speaks again. His voice is low and husky.

"You know why I'm doing this? Last night you had a nightmare. You dreamed about Barcelona. That we didn't get married. Do you remember?"

She sighs. "Yeah. It was horrible. You were about to take that bit of Cassandra outta my head, and you decided it was too dangerous, so you just stopped and told me I was gonna have to live with that echo bouncin' around in there forever. And because you didn't go in my mind to heal me, we didn't say what needed to be said to each other, and we went back to being companions. Never tellin' each other anything, and lonely and frustrated and, well, you remember how it was."

He frowned when the pink glow faded into blue.

"I am doing this to prove to you that you are not simply my companion. I am proving to you that you are my wife. And that I am your husband." The ground is now again glowing pink, and it is intensifying into a flaming magenta. "And that we can do this anytime we want. Well, not anytime. For example it would be highly inappropriate to do what we are about to do on the conference table in Ten Downing, or in the middle of a cloud of migrating Boomblabing, but I think you understand the point I am trying to make."

"I think we both know that we both would have been more than happy to do what I think we are
about to do at Ten Downing." She smiles, though her eyes remain closed.

He growls lustily, slides off of her hips and nudges her to roll over onto her side, and lays next to her so they are face to face. He skims his hand slowly from her rib cage down into the well of her waist, and then up and over her hip. He rests it there for a moment, and then leans closer, and kisses her, making his intentions very clear. He moves his hand to her naval, dips a fingertip in until she giggles. Then he slowly crawls his fingers lower and then even lower.

He quickly trades touches for kisses and now she is leaving handprints that are pulsing magenta on the floor as she presses her palms onto the spongy, smooth rock. His lips and tongue and teeth do things that make her pant, writhe, and finally groan, and then she feels boneless, and she wishes she could've seen the moment that magenta changed to white.

When he finally shows her his face one again, he is smiling just a little bit smugly, but she doesn't mind, because he has every right to brag, considering the prowess he has just exhibited, proven by the glowing white rock.

She also knows, though, that she will soon be grinning just a bit smugly herself. Because whether he likes it or not, she is going to give him his prize right now. And she knows there is absolutely no chance that he won't like it.

"Make a wall print. I want to see what colour you are right now," she says, standing up.

He runs to the wall and stands spread eagle, pressing himself up against the stone until it is glowing. "Pink, of course," he says with an eyebrow waggle, knowing that means he is starting to become aroused.

Through much experimentation on the island, purely for scientific purposes of course, they had discovered that the creatures within the rocks which emitted the luminescence, reacted to both their physiological and emotional conditions. Purple was peaceful, yellow meant happy and content, green probably meant frustrated (that had never lasted long), pink was aroused, magenta was really, really aroused, and white was satisfied. They never tried to determine negative responses, but of course, he had sagely surmised that anger would be mauve. Blue, he had discovered today, meant sad. Their favourite colours of course, were pink, magenta, and white.

"I think I like you glowing in magenta better," she says with a wicked grin as she drops to her knees. It doesn't take long before he too, has created a perfect glowing white outline of his body, spread eagle against the wall. Even his fantastic hair his lit the stone wall ablaze.

They swim out of the cave and spend the afternoon playing like children. He shows off his diving moves, and even convinces her to jump once, though she decides unless her life depends upon it, she never wants to do that again. The winding water chutes are more her speed. Ready to be off their feet after hours of cliff diving, rock climbing, and careening down the chutes, they swim back into the cave.

On a hunch, he leads her far into the back where they find a rock formation that was not present on the island. It is a reasonable facsimile of a bed. She has even provided pillows made of some sort of moss. They collapse onto the bed and rest. But of course, they are them, and their hands can't be kept to themselves for long, and soon the rock is glowing pink, then magenta, and finally white.

He rolls onto his side, and she follows suit, so they are facing each other. He traces the curve of her hip with his hand, and she reaches both of hers to his chest feels the comforting beat of his hearts under her palms.
"I love you my wife," John whispered into her mouth, as he skimmed his hand over the swell of her hip. He had pushed her pyjama top up, and the waistband of her knickers down, just enough to expose the skin of her curvaceous hip.

"Thank you for showing me you're my husband," she said as she kneaded her hands on his chest feeling the soft hair under her fingertips.

John and Jane woke up simultaneously, gasped, untangled their limbs, and fled to the opposite sides of the bed. John's chest was heaving, and Jane's face was flushed.

"Uh... uh... s... sorry..." Jane squeaked, grabbing the blanket with both of her burning, guilty hands. She pulled it up around to neck.

"I'm so, so sorry Jane, I... I was sleeping and... and... and..." He stammered, unable to form a coherent thought.

John was very much in need of a cold shower, and Jane was very much in need of something, but she wasn't sure what or how.

"I was having a dream," Jane said.

"Right. A dream. Me too. It was vivid. Very." John sat up and pulled covers up to his chest and nodded.

Jane started to laugh. She dropped the blankets and covered her mouth with her hands and fell back down onto her pillow. "How in the world did I think that I could share a bed with you and think nothing would happen between us?" She laughed even harder and wiped tears from her eyes.

John cleared his throat. "S'not that funny, Jane," he said, slightly irritated. "I don't recover as easily as you."

Jane pointed at him. "The look on your face!" She mimicked the look of surprise and then fell into a fit afresh. "I think we may've broken some sort of speed record getting away from each other!"

John half smiled and shook his head. "Jane Smith, you are going to be the death of me for the next week and a half. I can hardly wait until you are mine. For a number of reasons," He folded his hands in his lap and flushed.

"I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to paw at you in my sleep. Wanna tell me what you dreamed?" she asked, composing herself, "I'll tell you mine. Well, parts of it." She blushed again.

"Uh, well, it was rather," John cleared his throat and really wished he had a drink of water, "vivid?"

"Yeah, you said that already."

"First of all, in this dream, we were married, all right? Married. Don't forget that. Married." He pointed at her to emphasise his point. "I was chasing you through the halls of my, well, the Professor's spaceship, and you were wearing a bikini--"

"A yellow polka dot bikini?" Jane's mouth went dry.

"Yeah..." he drawled, squinting. "And you found this room with a waterfall and chutes and..."

"And I went down this giant chute, like a playground toy, but it was enormous and windy and it ended up in water and you dove off of-"
"I dove off of a cliff and beat you into the water." He finished for her. "There was talk of a contest, the prize being, uh, well, you can guess. And we ended up in a cave..."

"Doing... things that..." she cleared her throat, "apparently married people do..." Jane offered. "But... things I have never..." She stopped, unable to bring herself to actually verbalise the acts that she had dreamed.

"Seems that we were very happily married," John said with a grin.

"John, this is the second dream that we have both had. What's going on?" Jane asked.

John's grin faded.

"I have no idea." John ran his hand through his hair.

"How many more days until we're married?" Jane asked with a slightly pained voice.

"Ten and change. Wanna know how many hours and minutes?" he asked, chuckling. "Cos I'm starting to keep track."

"No thanks. That'll just make me more impatient." Jane heaved a sigh. "Might as well get up. It's 5:30. Do you want to use the shower first?"

"Yes please!" John said desperately as he jumped out of the bed and nearly ran into the en suite, but then ran back out, quickly collected the all-important clothing that he had forgotten, and ran back in, slamming the door with a thud. "Sorry! Didn't mean to slam it. In a rush," he apologised.

Jane let her head drop into her hands. "Oh fudge," she said to herself, having a very hard time shaking the memory of his hand on her skin, the feel of his chest hair under her fingertips and the sight of his fantastically ruffled morning hair, and the very, very, very vivid dream where she and John had done things that she didn't even know people did to each other.

Jane pulled herself out of bed, found John's dressing gown hanging on a hook in his wardrobe, and slipped it on. She padded out into the kitchen and prepared a simple breakfast of tea, toast, and sliced fruit. Light began to creep through the windows in the lounge as the time edged closer to six o'clock. John emerged from the bedroom groomed impeccably as usual. He looked a bit haggard, though much less anxious.

"I made some breakfast. Don't know how you like your tea, but there is milk in the creamer and sugar here, too."

"I normally have coffee in the morning, but I think I would rather have tea today." He smiled and kissed Jane on the cheek. "And for future reference, I take my tea very sweet with a splash of milk."

"I take mine black," she smiled. "Look at us! We're finding out things about each other!" she gushed. "Cats or dogs?"

"Dogs," he replied. "Christmas Eve or Christmas morning for presents?"

"Oh, morning! How can the presents arrive before Father Christmas has delivered them?"

"Me too," she said, preparing John's tea and handing him the cup.

"And dogs. I'll just go and get changed. I think I had better shower at home, if you don't mind."
Your soap smells very manly, and well, I don't know that manly scented Jane is going to do anything good for my reputation," she said with a blush.

"Probably right," he agreed.

Jane changed back into her pink dress, tossed the pyjama top into the laundry hamper, and tried to get her wild hair under control as much as she could with John's small, black, fine toothed comb. She cleaned her teeth with the toothbrush John had provided, splashed water on her face and emerged, respectably put together.

"I forgot my handbag at home last night," she said to John as she emerged from his bedroom. She hoped that Bess hadn't left for work early that day, noting it was already 6:15. She ran to the phone and called home, but no one answered. "Oh, no! Bess already left! What am I gonna do?" Jane began to chew on her thumbnail nervously.

"Well, let's go over there right now. Maybe she was in the shower or something, couldn't get to the phone?"

John drove her quickly to her own flat, and she ran into the building. Several elderly ladies's faces were peaking through their lace curtains. It was quite exciting and scandalous, Jane Smith getting out of her boyfriend's car at 6:30 in the morning, wearing the same pink dress she wore to work yesterday, and once again, sporting that enormous sapphire engagement ring.

Jane knocked on her door a few times. It opened, and Niles was there, looking twice as tired as John.

"Bess isn't here, Jane. She didn't come home last night. Stayed up waiting for her, but she didn't even call," he said, downhearted.

Jane was very surprised. "Uh, John is in his car downstairs if you wanna talk to him," she said shyly. She then realised the implication of her revelation. "Nothing happened Niles. I just slept at his flat. We needed to talk and it was late and nothing happened," she reiterated.

"No need to explain to me, Jane," he said with a small smile. He looked down at Jane's hand. "I see you two have reconciled. I'm happy for you," he said genuinely, though it was plain he was sad.

"Yes, we did. I need to get ready for work. Um, if you wouldn't mind, I think maybe you should go," she said self-consciously.

"Oh, right, right, of course. And uh, when you see Bess at work, tell her I am waiting for her to call me." Niles hesitated, but then gave Jane a brotherly kiss on the cheek as he left.

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Niles loped down the stairs with his hands in his pockets of his trench coat, and his collar turned up ready to defend himself against the impending London drizzle. He didn't want to talk to John Smith, but he couldn't avoid it now, as the man was out of his car faster than Niles could pretend he hadn't seen him.

"Niles," John called, extending his hand in greeting.

"John," he answered, shaking firmly.

"I need to discuss something with both you and Jack of a professional nature." John tugged his ear.
Niles straightened up and put on his Torchwood eyes and ears. "I'm listening," he said, stone-faced.

"Last night, you mentioned that you might be able to help Jane with her problem. She needs to be safe, Niles. I need her to be safe. Other women need to be safe, because I'd be willing to bet she isn't the first one he has harassed. Tell me you can solve this problem legally, or at least ethically."

Niles tapped his fingers against his thigh, looked off into the distance, deep in thought. "The problem will be taken care of. One of us will be in touch." Niles shook John's hand, and whistled Mack the Knife as he sauntered away.

A few minutes later, Jane emerged from her building with a spring in her step, and sparkle in her eyes. "Fast enough? I think I may have just set a new record. Eleven minutes from shower to pavement."

"I'm impressed," John said with a smile. "Looks like rain. Don't you have a raincoat?"

"I left it at your flat last Wednesday. Forgot it again this morning. Distracted." Jane put her arms around John's neck and pulled him down into a blistering kiss, knowing that the little old ladies in flats 2B and 3C were peering out the windows again. She couldn't care less.

"What was that for?" he asked as she pulled away and bumped his nose.

"Because you kept your promise. You kept me safe. Because I trust you. Because I can't get that dream out of my head. And most of all, I love you."

"Come on then, let's get to work," he said giving her another kiss.

They quickly settled into his car and headed off to work.

"Bess never came home last night," Jane said, worried.

"Wow. She must be really angry!" he said, raising an eyebrow.

"Fifteen years, John," she said, pulling a face similar to John's. "She's waited fifteen years for Niles and they still aren't married."

"If we're rushing it, what do ya call fifteen years?" he snickered.

"That isn't funny, John," Jane replied, seriously. "But you know what I don't understand? Bess has never once complained. In fact she told me that she was content with her situation, and that they made it work."

"Niles told me last night that he's been lying to Bess. That there is no rule at his job that prevents him from marrying."

"Oh." Jane sat quietly for two blocks.

John spoke up. "Maybe she found that out somehow? It would certainly hurt to find out you have been lied to for fifteen years. Don't know that I blame her for running off. Where do you suppose she went?"

"I don't know," Jane replied, worried, as she looked out the window and then turned back to him. "I believe you, you know that, right? I know you aren't lying."
"I know." John turned and smiled at her sweetly. His hand was resting on the gear shift nob, and she rested hers on top of his, and squeezed. "I'm going to take Niles up on his offer."

"What's that?" she asked.

"Niles and Jack have offered to take care of your Daniel problem." He corrected himself. "Our Daniel problem."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "What can they do?"

"I have always had my suspicions about Jack's line of work, and Niles proved them true yesterday. They work for a clandestine section of the government, but he won't tell me what they do. All I know is that they have authority to make things happen."

"Niles is a spy? Like Bess always jokes?" she asked, her voice high.

"I don't think so. I think they are operatives or agents of a sort. Something to do with national defence."

"Oh." She withdrew her hand and wrapped her arms around herself.

"I would do anything to protect you. I don't really know Niles all that well, but I know that I trust Jack, even though he tried to slow down our romance."

"I trust Jack, too. Not sure why, to be honest, but he's just familiar somehow." Jane paused for a moment. "You don't suppose they are going to make Daniel disappear. Or worse, do you?" Jane's frowned.

"No. I won't let that happen. I told them they had to use legal and ethical means. Well, when I say legal and ethical, I actually told him legal or ethical."

"Oh we'll that makes me feel better," Jane said, rolling her eyes. "James Bond is licensed to kill, so his actions are legal, but I wouldn't say that was necessarily ethical."

"You and your James Bond." John chuckled and shook his head. "This is real life, love, not some spy movie."

John parked, and they walked hand in hand to their building. Before they went inside, John halted Jane. "I have an idea. Why don't we make a preemptive strike. Let's make a grand announcement about our engagement and tell everyone that we are sure there are to be rumours circulated, but we trust that they will be disregarded. What do you say?"

"But what if the photos get out? Or the," she gulped, "audio recording?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. But you know Jane, the fact that he was following us is a lot more problematic than the actual pictures themselves. Think about it. He took some pictures of us kissing. They aren't that risqué, really. You could have been sneezing in the last one for all they know," John said with a laugh. "Really! Think about it. It's a picture of your face. The rest is rather blurry. It doesn't show anything below your chest, and you can't see where my hands are."

Jane blushed at the memory of his hands on her chest.

"And the recording?"
"He memorialised the moment that I told you that I loved you, and that you told me you loved me. Pretty nice if you ask me, and as for the other part, well, I don't know, but we'll figure it out. You know, forget it. Who cares? Yes, you will be embarrassed, but you say are worried about your reputation being ruined, right? Ruined for whom? Certainly not ruined for me."

Jane breathed in and out deeply and steeled herself. "Okay. All right. I think your plan makes sense. The best defence against blackmail is to take away the need for secrecy, right? We already know that the marriage certificate is a fake, so that is no longer a threat. Sure, he followed us. That is creepy and scary, but now we know. We can keep out an eye for him."

John took both of his hands into hers and brought them to his mouth. "We are stronger together, Jane."

"Better with two."

"Oh, I like that! Maybe you should needlepoint that onto a cushion. Isn't that what all married women do? Needlepoint cushions?" John winked at her.

They both laughed and went inside, ready to tell any and everyone their wonderful news. John pressed the lift button, and the doors slid open almost immediately.

"Jim, my good fellow, I have fantastic news! Jane and I are going to be married one week from Sunday, and we would be honoured if you and your wife would attend!"

Jim turned and looked at them blankly. "Well, Mr. Smith and Miss Smith, what interesting news. I am very happy for the two of you." He turned back to the control panel and watched the lights flashing as the lift rose. He sniffed.

John and Jane looked at each other, confused. The doors slid open. "Uh, bye Jim," Jane called over her shoulder.

"Have a lovely day, Miss Smith," he replied cordially, though not with his usual dash of wit and sparkling smile, and certainly far better diction.

"What's with him?" John wondered.

"He did seem a bit off, didn't he? Maybe he's catching a cold. He was sniffing a bit. Hope we don't catch it." Jane followed John as he approached the receptionist.

"How do we go about making a company-wide announcement?" John asked the girl behind the circular desk.

"Probably would need to speak with Miss Woods, Mr. Smith," she replied.

"Thanks, Barbara," said Jane with a smile. Reflexively, she reached for John's hand. "Oh, Janie, did you find out who the flowers were from?" asked Barbara.

Jane looked at John. He nodded his encouragement.

"Yes. They came from Daniel Higgins," answered Jane plainly. "He's been giving me rather unwanted attention lately."

"Oh. I'm-- I'm so sorry." The receptionist looked away, clearly upset.

"Are you all right, Barbara?" asked Jane kindly.
"May I speak plainly, Jane?" she said, very serious. "Give you some advice?"

"Of course."

The woman looked at John, and then back at Jane.

"You can say anything in front of John, he knows everything that's happening with Daniel. And he's my fiancé."

"At least you have someone on your side," she muttered. "Jane, really be careful. That man is trouble. I learned the hard way. We dated a few times, and then he, well, let's just say I only have my job still because I cooperated. Gosh this is embarrassing. Anyway, someone else came along, poor girl, because he lost interest in me, and moved on."

John and Jane looked at each other. "Well, he is not going to hurt anyone else, Barbara. I promise," said John firmly. "Let's go see Miss Woods about that announcement, love."

Miss Woods was not at her desk. "You know the best way to spread the word?" asked Jane. "Tell the typing pool."

"All right future Mrs. Smith, let's start there."

All of the typists were present when John pulled up a chair and stood on it. He put his two fingers in his mouth and whistled loudly.

Doors opened and others spilled out, and soon the majority of the employees of Prescott Publishing were present.

"Oh, good, most of you are here. I have an announcement to make. Jane Smith has consented to become Jane Smith. In other words, we are to be married one week from Sunday. Yes, it is quick, but when you know, you know." He looked down at Jane and smiled. "I suspect that rumours will begin circulating. I would encourage you to not believe everything you hear. Rumour number one: no, I am not already married. Number two: no, Jane is not doing anything to curry my favour. Three: no, this is not a marriage of, necessity due to any, er, condition." He stopped and a wicked grin grew on his face. "But I can't promise there won't be a condition a year from now." Jane covered her red face with her hands, but she was grinning from ear to ear behind her fingers. "And finally four: no, she is not seeing Daniel Higgins on the side, in secret, or in any capacity whatsoever. In fact, Daniel Higgins has been seeking her attentions, and they are most unwanted. Any questions?" John clasped his hands behind his back and waited.

Everyone was too shocked to speak, but then Betty Anderson squealed and ran up to Jane and gave her a big hug and a kiss on the cheek, leaving smudges of bright red lipstick. The other typing pool girls began chattering happily, and then joined Betty and Jane.

Priscilla Bootkins's face turned beet red. She stood up, threw down her pencil, and walked up to Jane.

"Leave us alone," she hissed.

The women scattered.

Priscilla squinted furiously and crossed her arms. "You actually did it. I can not believe it. The mouse charmed the cat. How long have you been seeing him? Really? Tell me the truth, Jane! From day one? Hmm? John has been working here for what, five weeks now? When did you find out that the the poor fuzzy widdle wabbit died?"
"How dare you Priscilla! I have put up with your-- your-- insinuations and lies and Daniel's torment and..." Jane squeezed her eyes shut and balled her fists. "I am not pregnant, and I have only been seeing John for-" She stopped herself. "You know what? I don't owe you an explanation Prissy Bootkins!" she growled.

"You certainly had everyone fooled. The sweet little virgin turned out to be a common whore."

The ringing in Jane's ears became a roar. She was tired. She was frustrated. She was angry. But most of all, she was fed up. So sweet Jane Smith punched Priscilla Bootkins squarely in her perfect, little nose.

Priscilla took it admirably, only wincing. She brought her hand to her noise and wiped a small trickle of blood away. "You will suffer Jane, mark my words. Daniel is not used to getting no for an answer. He won't take no for an answer."

"Well he's getting a big N-O from me!" Jane shouted.

Priscilla gave Jane the coldest smile she had ever seen. The woman stepped closer. "You foolish little girl, you really don't know who you are dealing with, do you?"

"With whom. It's with whom I am dealing." Jane corrected her before walking away to find John.

Priscilla panted angrily, and walked to the telephone hanging on the wall. She dialed Daniel Higgins's phone number to report the news, but was interrupted by Miss Woods.

"A word, Miss Bootkins," the no-longer-humans woman commanded.

She followed Mother of Mine, and within two minutes, Priscilla Bootkins been inducted into the Family of Blood.

"Hello Mother of Mine. Did you miss me?" She smiled icily and sniffed.
Chapter Summary


Chapter 23 - John & Jane On The Mend

Niles sat at his desk and stared at his telephone. “And you are sure there aren't any messages for me?” he asked his friend across the aisle. It was the fifth time the heartbroken man had asked Jack the same question.

"Sorry, buddy, Bess didn't call."

"I need to talk to you at the bench," Niles said flatly, ignoring his friend's suggestion. "Meet me in fifteen minutes." He stood up, slipped his trench coat on, and shoved his hands into his pockets. With slumped shoulders, he made his way to the park.

Bess had taken the long way back to London from her parents' home where she had spent the night. It was nearly 10:30, and she would obviously be tardy to the office. She had already missed an editorial meeting with a junior editor, but James was a reasonable man, and she knew they would be able to shift the meeting to this afternoon. She had never been late to work, not once, and nine times out of ten she stayed well past seven o’clock. If anyone made a comment about her late arrival, she thought she just might punch them in the nose.

She found a parking space near her flat and made her way up the stone stairs to the front door of the building. Wearily, she opened the leaded glass door and sighed as she closed it behind her. An elderly woman with hair so white that it looked blue poked her head out of her still safety-chained door. "Miss Cooper, do you have a moment?"

She wasn't in the mood for a grilling from Mrs. Butterfield, or as she was known to everyone in the building, the Duchess, because she knew the business of every single tenant in the building, as if she were the lady of the manor.

"Good morning, Mrs. Butterfield. What can I do for you?" Bess pasted on a smile.

"I have misplaced my spectacles and I was wondering if you would open this letter and read it to me? I received it by courier this morning," Mrs. Butterfield handed her the envelope. "It appears to be quite important." The elderly woman wrung her aged, thin hands in worry.

Bess turned the envelope over, and upon seeing the return address, a legal office, hastily stuck her thumb under the flap and ripped it open, letting the envelope float to the floor.

Hearing the women's voices in the hallway, other people in the corridor opened their doors as well, and soon the duo were joined by two other elderly women and a gentleman in a dapper spring suit, who waved his letter angrily in Bess's face.

"We all received these letters this morning, Miss Cooper. You are a bright woman. Would you
please explain to us why we are being kicked to the kerb? None of us are behind on our rent, in fact, I have paid my rent through the end of the year. I like to make one lump sum so I don't have to think about it again for another twelve months." He jutted his chin out and angrily pounded his ivory-tipped walking stick into the floor.

Bess quickly read the letter. "That ba..." Bess closed her eyes and gritted her teeth to restrain herself from cursing in front of the delicate ears of the elderly folk surrounding her. "I will contact an attorney and have this sorted. Don't worry, darlings. No one is going to be evicted."

The group, which had grown to include several more tenants from the ground floor and the top floor where Bess and Jane lived, dispersed back into their flats, save the Duchess.

"Miss Cooper, I think you should know that your new flat mate, that pretty little Jane Smith, she didn't come home last night. She came home this morning at 6:45." Mrs. Butterfield nodded her head in judgement. "I saw her step out of that handsome man's car, the one who has been coming around for her every morning. And Miss Smith was wearing an engagement ring! Well, there is a ring on her ring finger at least, so I have to assume-"

"Thank you, Mrs. Butterfield. I'm sorry they offended you. I will have a talk with Miss Smith about propriety." Bess successfully stifled a giggle.

"Miss Cooper, they kissed, and it wasn't a friendly peck on the cheek!" Mrs. Butterfield's eyes were wide, showing her shock. "It was very..." she cleared her throat and laid her hand on her neck. "They were kissing like honeymooners! Right on the pavement for God and everyone to see! Youth these days!"

Bess couldn't help but smile a little bit, and flapped her hand casually. "Come now Mrs. Butterfield, certainly you remember how it is to be young and in love?" she asked, trying to deflect the gossip. "They are to be married next Sunday. I am sure they are both a bit anxious. But Miss Smith is a fine girl. Don't read too much into it. She has had a bit of difficulty in her life of late, and Mr. Smith, that's her fiancé's name— isn't that ironic? and Mr. Smith has been just wonderful. He is a perfect gentleman."

"Well I do feel better now knowing that she is not one of these wild girls."

"Jane is most definitely not wild. The circumstances behind her getting out of his vehicle so early in the morning, I am sure, are completely innocent. I trust both she and Mr. Smith implicitly. In fact, he was probably being gallant. A gentleman has been threatening Jane."

"Threatening that sweet girl? That's shocking! I should tel you this. Why, yes. I am an early riser. Every morning I get up around five and have a cup of tea whilst sitting next to the window. This morning, I saw a man watching the building. He was very handsome, but had a look about him that didn't settle well with me. He seemed to be watching your flat. I should have said something, but it was so early."

“And what did he look like?"

“He had very dark hair and was very tall. Smoked cigarette after cigarette. Watched the building for nigh two hours, but he left as soon as Miss Smith's beau arrived this morning."

"Thank you, Mrs. Butterfield. You just keep on looking out that window would you?" Bess said in her most authoritative voice. "You be our sentinel. If you see him again, I want you to call me any time, day or night." Bess wrote her both her home and work telephone numbers on the eviction letter envelope, then ran up the stairs two at a time. She changed into fresh clothing, and set off for
work.

Mother of Mine, wearing the skin of Miss Woods, called Jane. "Miss Smith, I need to speak to you." She sniffed a few times into the phone.

"I'll be right there, ma'am," Jane said and then sighed. "Be prepared to lose your assistant, John. I've been summoned by the Dragon Lady." Jane rubbed her still-sore knuckles. "I wonder if I broke my hand."

John examined her hand once again, rubbing her hand gently. "It's a bit swollen love, but I don't think it broken, though I believe you may develop a bruise here." He kissed her knuckles. "It'll probably hurt for a while." He smirked a bit. "I can't believe you actually punched her in the nose. Figured you to be more of the slapping sort."

Jane rolled her eyes and playfully slapped him on the arm.

"If you get sacked, I'll hire you myself, how does that sound?" He put his hands on her waist and pulled her into him firmly.

Jane wrapped her arms around his neck placed a soft, open-mouthed kiss on the side of his mouth. "I think I could live with that," she said quietly, her warm breath puffing onto his cheek.

Reluctantly, she pulled away and set off to see Miss Woods. She ran headlong into Bess right outside of John's office.

"Oops, sorry, darling. I was just coming to see you and John. Best wishes!" Bess threw her arms around Jane and hugged her. "I certainly wish I could have been here to witness John's oratorical skills."

"I didn’t see you here, how’d you know about it?" Jane asked.

"It’s the talk of the office, darling!"

"Furious," Jane replied with a somewhat wicked grin. "So where'd you go last night after you left the pub?" Jane looked down at her hands and picked her fingernails.

"I went to my parents’s home. Thankfully, Mummy and Father weren't there. They left last week on a cruise through the Greek Isles. I am sure Mummy would have been thrilled to tell me that she told me so, and then I would have to admit that they were right all along about Niles," she said a bit venomously.

Jane looked at her friend with sad eyes. "Oh, Bess, you didn't see him. Niles was so worried. He waited up in your flat all night. When I came home this... uh... came home, he asked me to tell you to call him."

"Well, he can call me if he wants to see me," she said, icy cold as she crossed her arms.

"Bess, please don't give up on Niles. The two of you love each other. You'll work it out, I just know you will," Jane said sincerely, placing her hand on Bess's arm and squeezing gently.

"No more talk of my tale of woe," she said, firmly. "Tell me all about John's announcement. That was a stroke of genius!"
Jane covered her mouth and looked away, hiding her beet red face and wide grin.

"What did he say?" Bess asked, voice hitching merrily.

"Well," Rose began, "he said he needed to address some rum ours that may or may not be going around. He told everyone he was not married, and that I wasn't, 'doing anything to curry his favour,' and then he told everyone about Daniel. That I was not seeing him on the side or in secret, and that, in fact, I had received his unwanted attentions."

"Anything else?" Bess asked, knowing her friend well enough now to know when she was holding back.

"He also assured everyone that I wasn’t,” she lowered her voice, "expecting, but then, to make it even more embarrassing he said...” she laughed and shook her head, "...he said that may not be the case this time next year."

"He didn't!" Bess said, wide eyed.

"I kid you not. He did." Jane nodded her head. "And you should have seen the men in the office glad-handing him and slapping him on the back. If they'd had a cigar, they would've stuffed it into his mouth."

"You upset?" Bess asked carefully.

Jane smiled softly. "No. I'm embarrassed to be sure, but Bess, I would be thrilled to have his baby." Jane looked away shyly.

"You are a very lucky girl, darling. I am so happy for you." Bess hugged her again. When she pulled away, she was teary-eyed.

"Oh, Bess, I'm so sorry. Here I am gushing about my marriage, and you are..." Jane stopped talking when Bess shook her head.

"Don't you dare stop being happy. Don't you dare."

They were both quiet for a moment.

"Did you hear about my boxing match with Priscilla, too?" Jane asked, trying not to smile.

“No,” Bess asked.

“I punched her in the nose. The straw finally broke the camel’s back, and Bess, I couldn’t help myself! I felt like I wasn’t even my own body! I could see myself watching it all happen!”

“Priscilla had it coming. If not from you, from me!” Bess proclaimed resolutely. "I understand that got home awfully late. Or early, depending upon one's point of view."

Jane pinched her lips.

“Mrs. Butterfield saw you come in this morning."

Jane let out a sigh. "I was at John's last night. I believed him Bess. I just knew that the certificate couldn't have been real, and then when you explained how it was impossible for it to be authentic."

Bess nodded.
“And he asked me to stay me to stay with him. And he was very clear that he didn’t expect anything to happen. He just wanted to make sure I was safe. And so I did.” Jane raised one shoulder, and didn’t blush. "And no, I didn't change my mind about things. Our night was completely innocent." This time she did blush.

"Innocent? If you say so," Bess gave her a wicked smile.

Jane furrowed her brows. “It was. I promise.” But then she bit her lip. “Even though I can't help what I dream about.” Jane admitted quietly.

"You dreamed?" Bess asked wickedly. "And what did you dream about?"

"I'm not telling you about it here!" Jane shook her head.

"That good, huh?"

"It was fantastic." Jane said, catching her eye, and smiling with a hint of her pink tongue peeking through her teeth. "Bess, um, when can you and I, uh, have a bit of a chat about, um, things?" Jane cleared her throat. "You know, man and woman, wedding night, um, intimacy things?"

"Any time you would like, darling."

"Tonight? Maybe?" Jane asked, playing with one of the large buttons on her sleeve.

"I'll make sure I have Champagne on ice." Bess winked.

Jane raised an eyebrow and smirked, then laughed. "I'd better go. I've been summoned to Miss Woods's office. I am sure it's about punching Priscilla in the nose. But you know what Bess? Even if I am sacked, it was completely worth it."

"Under the circumstances I highly doubt that Miss Woods would terminate you, Jane, not with all that Daniel has done to you. And she knows about Priscilla's antics. I have a feeling that Priscilla is still here only because of Daniel's protection."

"You're probably right about that. John did say he would personally hire me to be his assistant if I am let go."

"I wouldn't worry then, darling." Bess gave her a friendly kiss on the cheek and then a gentle push on the back in the direction of Eve Woods's desk before she went into John's office.


"Well thank you, Bess. You need to call Niles. He really is quite upset," John said, reiterating what Jane had shared.

"I have finished my edit of chapter one," Bess said, ignoring John's comment. "When do you think you can give me a revision? Not much need to be re-worked really. I think you could add a bit more detail about the people in the town perhaps. What sort of clothing they are wearing, what their shoes look like, that sort of thing. But all in all, it is a wonderful beginning to your tale."

"Bess," John drew out her name, and clasped his hands behind his back. "What about Niles?"

"I've waited long enough for him. It's high time that he had to wait a while for me. Let him stew in his own juices for a week or two," she replied angrily.
John cleared his throat. "I should have a rough draft of chapter two for you early next week, and I'll get cracking on the re-write of chapter one."

"Sounds good. Congratulations again."

As Bess was leaving his office, the odd ringing in her ears returned. She saw a man in black leather is kissing Jane, but she’s on fire. Glowing from the inside out like a heavenly being or an ancient goddess. He kisses her, drawing the inferno into himself. She’s limp in his arms. She’s sleeping on a sofa. An older woman with blonde hair is weeping over her body. No. She’s not sleeping. Jane is dead.

"You all right Bess? You've been standing there for a whole minute, just staring at the wall!" he stated, concerned.

"Uh..." she looked at John. "Uh... just thinking about... about... you and Jane. I need to go.” Bess left quickly. Her face was blanched.

oOo

"Best wishes, Miss Smith," Mother of Mine said. The voice carried over from Miss Woods's throat was a bit raspy. She sniffed. "Tell me about Mr. Smith. What is he like? Does he have secrets? Does he keep things from you? Does he disappear from time to time?"

"Uh, no, uh, Miss Woods. You wanted to see me, right? About Priscilla I am assuming," she looked down at her aching hand and rubbed it.

"Never mind that. She had it coming."

Jane made a confused face and opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off.

"Where is Mr. Smith taking you on your honeymoon? Do you have a gift for him? A family heirloom, a piece of jewellery perhaps?" Mother of Mine leaned forward with a predatory gleam in her eye.

"Um, he won't tell me where he's taking me. It's a big surprise," she answered, confused. "Priscilla hasn't filed an official complaint yet? I did punch her in the nose."

"She can be such a petulant child, and I knew that her mouth would get her in trouble sooner or later. Have you been to Mr. Smith's home? Does he have any interesting artifacts or statues laying about? A clock perhaps? Anything that you are drawn to?"

"Miss Woods, I don't understand why you are asking me all of these questions about John," Jane asked.

"I am interested in all of my underlings, Miss Smith," she replied emotionless.

Jane changed the subject. "Miss Woods, do you think that the letter that arrived with the flowers last week will help my case against Daniel Higgins?"

"Yes. Very threatening letter. Go back to work Miss Smith. Keep your eyes open for anything unusual." Miss Woods sniffed again.

"Have you caught a cold Miss Woods? I think there is one going around. Jim the lift man was sniffing too," Jane said offhandedly, mainly to hear herself talk, confused by the odd conversation which had just taken place.
"I am not getting a cold. Go back to work please. And congratulations. Oh yes, if your friends are throwing you a hen night it is my wish to be invited." She sniffed a few more times.

"Sure. I will tell Bess." Jane furrowed her brows and shook her head in confusion as she returned to John's office.

oOo

Jack joined Niles on the bench exactly fifteen minutes later, as his colleague had requested.

"What's up?" Jack asked, staring straight ahead as the raindrops pitter-pattered on the winding pavement path through the park.

"John has asked for our help. He wants us to address the Higgins Problem."

"Has he now? The Doctor asking for help. That's new."

"He's not the Doctor, remember?" Niles reminded him.

"How can I forget? Do you have any ideas?"

"As a matter of fact, I do." Niles turned to face Jack.

"Retcon."

"Seriously?" Jack said, genuinely surprised. "That's it? Retcon?"

"I have come up with a sanctioned justification to administer the treatment."

"But Retcon hasn't been proven effective or safe in the long term, Niles. What if it doesn't work? What if it backfires? What if he remembers everything a month from now? Or a year or five or ten? And some of the test subjects have gone insane," Jack replied.

"Insanity isn't such a bad outcome for him," Niles said, a bit wickedly.

"So what is your plan?"

"We make arrangements for him to see something alien, something terrifying, of course. We bring him in for questioning, and then we Retcon him using the perfect valid justification that he has witnessed an alien incident and that it is our opinion, given his current mental state that his 20th century mind isn’t able to process the memory and it will drive him insane, hence the necessity of the immediate administration of the drug. I suggest we erase his memory back to oh, nursery school perhaps. If he ends up insane from the Retcon, we hand him off to an asylum for psychiatric care."

"You think they could give him a conscience, instead?" Jack asked. "I don't know Niles. It doesn't seem quite painful enough. I thought you were going to suggest something truly horrible like give him over to one of those ugly mole-men that have been showing up in Cardiff the past few months." Jack looked out over the pond. "But it is a decent plan. When do you want to do this?" he asked, shoving his hands into his trouser pockets.

"As soon as possible. Any aliens we can sic on him?" Niles asked.

"I think those two stranded female scorpoliths are still in protective custody. Their transport is coming next week. I might be able to convince them to help us," he said with a wink.
"Do I want to know?" Niles asked with a smirk.

"No, probably not. But you don't know what you are missing. Those pincers of theirs are fantastically tactile. Their species is known for their skill as microsurgeons. Oh, the things they can do, Niles." Jack looked off in the distance and shuddered happily. "Lovely ladies, once you look past the fact that they are walking scorpions."

They sat quietly for a few minutes. Niles pulled a bag of candy out of his pocket and offered a sweet to Jack, who declined.

"Have you seen my coat?" asked Jack, leaning forwarding.

"As a matter of fact, I have. Bess took it home from the Tiki Tiki the night of the engagement party. You left it there when you took off after your fight with John."

"Oh thank the heavens and stars and all of the deities in the Milky Way. I've been going insane trying to find it. The watches are in the pocket." Jack heaved a sigh of relief.

"The Doctor and Rose's watches? Why didn't you say something before?" Niles asked, somewhat angry.

"Been too busy looking for it!" he screeched.

"I think Bess took it to her office. It wasn't hanging up on the coat tree last night," said Niles, sadly.

"What's going on with you and dBess?" Jack asked, noticing his mood. "Why are you asking every ten minutes if Bess has called?"

Niles didn't answer.

"Did you do something stupid? Like forget her birthday?" asked Jack with a snarky grin.

"We had a fight."

"Oooo, I love a good fight!" Jack said a bit giddily. "Makeup sex is always fantastic." He had with a glimmer in his eye as he ribbed Niles with his elbow.

"It wasn't a fight over something that can be resolved that simply."

"How bad can it be, I mean really? I know you aren't cheating on her. Wait! She isn't cheating on you is she?" asked Jack carefully.

"No Jack!" hissed Niles. "There has been no cheating by either of us."

"Why don't you send her some flowers at work? A big bouquet of I am so sorry I am a complete ass roses. You know the ones, red, and damn expensive. Usually accompanied by a velvet box containing a bauble that is sparkly and even more expensive."

"You know, Jack, not everything is your business. I really don't want to talk about it. Will you just leave! Go get that coat!" Niles pointed his finger at Jack angrily. "Right now that is your number one priority. Keeping John and Jane safe, and that means getting those watches back and tucked away somewhere, preferably not in your coat pocket!"

"Yes, sir!" Jack saluted sloppily and they parted ways, Jack towards Prescott Publishing, and Niles back to Torchwood.
The telephone on John's desk rang, and Jane picked it up, sitting on the edge of the desk. Her legs were crossed, and she swung her top leg by the foot.

"John Smith's office, this is Miss Smith," she answered happily.

"Hello Pet, guess who? I understand that you have given me an answer. I am not pleased."

Daniel's voice was as cold as a frozen blade.

Jane's face went ashen, and John immediately saw her change in demeanour when she slid off of his desktop. She pointed at the phone and mouthed, 'Daniel'.

John jumped out of his desk chair, ran around the desk and grabbed the phone from Jane.

"Listen here, Higgins. I know you bugged my office. I know about the fake marriage certificate. You really cocked that one up. It is impossible for that to be a legal marriage document, and any authority will immediately recognise it is invalid. You didn't do your homework, Danny. And did you know that I am fluent in French? Genius, me. I do have to hand it to you though, you have quite the wicked sense of humour, naming the Monseigneur the French equivalent of John Smith. Cheeky."

Daniel quietly swore.

"And the photographs? Lovely actually. You have a talent. Too bad that you have put it to such poor use. Lingerie is far too personal a gift. You hardly know Miss Smith for heaven's sake! Now I on the other hand, will have every right to buy her that sort of thing. She is going to be my wife after all."

John looked over at Jane who was watching him proudly, and her hands had now stopped shaking. He extended his arm to her and she pressed herself into his side, taking his hand and wrapping it around her shoulders.

"You see, Danny Boy, one very important thing that your puny little mind didn't take into consideration. When people love each other, when they are really and truly committed, there is trust. And Jane trusts me. You can keep trying to split us apart, but you never will."

"Well isn't that lovely. My heart is warmed. True love. Nothing like it." Daniel was obviously grasping at straws.

"No more threats. No more flowers. No more watching. No more photographs. No more contact. Period. In fact, I don't want you to even think about my Jane. Am I making myself clear?" John commanded calmly.

"Perfectly clear. I concede to the better man. It is obvious that I have been bested," Daniel said.

"One false step Mr. Higgins, and you won't know what hit you." John slammed the phone. The moment he placed the handset in the cradle, the phone rang again. He picked it up immediately.

"I said no more contact!" he hissed into the phone.

"What? So sorry, Mr. Smith, but you have a guest. A Mr. Jack Harkness is here to see you." The receptionist was on the other end of the phone.
"Oh no no no! I'm so sorry! Jane just received an unpleasant call from Daniel Higgins. Do us a favour, would you? Don't put anymore calls through from that man," John said, apologetically.

"Certainly, Mr. Smith. But... he will... he won't... he will be angry with me," the receptionist's voice quavered a bit.

"You just leave him to me, all right?" John replied kindly. "I'll be right up to fetch Mr. Harkness."

John and Jane walked to the reception area together. Jack was leaning casually against the large desk, and the attractive receptionist was handing him a slip of paper.

"Thanks doll. I'll give you a ring soon. Very soon." Jack winked at her and she coyly smiled right back at him.

"Jack..." John drew out his name, throwing him a warning look.

"What? I was just saying hello," Jack replied with a brilliant smile and his arms wide open. "Hiya, Janie! Heard you two made it officially official! Congrats sweetheart!" Jack pulled Jane into a friendly hug and quickly kissed her forehead.

"Thanks, Jack," she replied fondly, squeezing him back. "Did you get your coat? It's in Bess's office. Kept forgetting to get it to you. Hope you didn't miss it. It's been so rainy and dismal the past few days. You've probably needed it. Sorry!"

"No problem, sweetheart. Was one of the reasons I swung by. Plus your husband-to-be here has been promising to show me around for almost a month now," Jack said, giving John a humorously angry look. "I think he's been a bit distracted by some woman. Can't for the life of me remember her name, though," he said, winking, and then putting his arm around her again, fondly.

"Well here it is," John said with a smile on his face and his hands deep in his pockets. "Come on, I'll show you my office."

"I'll be back in a tic, John. I'll run down to Bess's and get you your coat," Jane said.

She began to walk away when John reached for her hand, and pulled her to him. He kissed her cheek. "I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too," she replied, "every single second of those two minutes that we are apart."

"You two are so cute!" The words popped out of Jack's mouth reflexively.

Simultaneously, John and Jane turned and looked at Jack with odd looks on their faces, and then looked at each other, with a completely different look, like they were regarding each other afresh.

"What's up with you two?" Jack asked nervously, suddenly remembering the Doctor in leather and Rose sporting the Union Jack, dancing to music of their own making on a Chula warship.

"Ahh, nothing, nothing. Just had a strange sense of deja vu there for a minute," John said, scratching his head.


"That's brilliant Jane! A little bit nostalgic, and oh so romantic," he said as he waggled his
eyebrows. "Reminiscent of a certain park bench at midnight perhaps?"

Jane blushed, but nodded nonetheless.

Jack grinned, but his face looked like it was going to break as he strained to keep the panic from showing up in his smile as Jane retreated to Bess's office.

"So Jack, what are you doing next Sunday afternoon?" John asked as they walked down the corridor toward's John's office.

"Pushing you through the door into the church, of course!" Jack replied, slapping him hard on the back.

"Brilliant. Can't think of anyone I would rather have holding my feet to the fire." John grinned madly.

"Bess is Jane's maid of honour, I'm guessing," surmised Jack.

“Aye.”

As they passed the typing pool, Jack's eyes surveyed the view. He pivoted back around on his heel, and gave them each a dazzling smile. "Well hello ladies! I'll make sure swing by and get to know you better on my way out." They all giggled and stared at his back as he followed an irritated John into his office.

John ran to his desk and scribbled a note, and thrust it into Jack's hands. Daniel bugged office.

Jack nodded his understanding and scribbled while he spoke.

"So John, as your best man, the duty falls upon me to throw you a stag party. Now I really don't think it would be prudent for me to order any girls popping out of cakes or the like. I was thinking poker, booze, cigars, and grub at your place." He handed his note to John. Niles briefed me. Plan in works. Neutralisation ASAP.

"Right you are about that, Jack. Only one girl for me." John gulped as he read the note. “Neutralized?” he mouthed to Jack and then pantomimed death by closing his eyes, flopping his head to the side while sticking out his tongue.

Jack rolled his eyes and shook his head wildly while waving his arms. "So what night do you want to do this?" he asked John while writing. Not a hit you idiot! Jack scrawled.

John read it and gave him an irritated look. "How about, oh, this Saturday?"

"It's a date. I'll bring a few guys from work so the game is full." Jack wrote again. I’ll come back later and sweep the room for the bug.

"Thanks Jack, I appreciate it." John waved the note at him, his lips pressed together seriously.

Jack gave him a sloppy salute. Jane returned just as he was leaving. His coat was draped over her arm.

"My coat! Thanks, Janie!" Jack leaned down and gave her a kiss on the cheek. He closed his eyes and held it to his chest, sighing in relief before slipping it on. He put his hand in the pocket where the watches should be, and panic was suddenly written on his face.

"What's wrong Jack?" asked Jane, seeing his worry.
"I had some things in my pocket and they're not there." Jack patted down the other pockets, both inside and out, madly searching for the fob watches.

"Maybe whatever you are looking for fell out? What were they so we can keep an eye out. Maybe they're at my flat?" she asked.

"Uh I had two..." Jack hesitated. Should he tell them what was lost? Would their memories be triggered? The Doctor hadn't said anything about telling or not telling about the watches. The TARDIS was safely tucked away with a perception filter. Maybe the watches were, too. He had to risk it. "I had two fob watches. One silver, and one gold. I was keeping them safe for a friend." He held his breath.

"Oh, all right. I will make sure to take a look at home, and I'll tell Bess, too," Jane replied. "Were they very valuable?"

"Priceless." Jack nodded and released the breath. Neither of them had shown any sign of recognition.

"I'll look really hard. They could even be in your car, John. Bess rode in your car the day she brought Jack's coat into work," Jane suggested.

"I'll make a sweep of it tonight," offered John. "Would you mind if I went down and took a look right now?" Jack asked. "I'll bring your keys right back up."

"Sure. Give it a go." John tossed his keys to Jack. "No taking her for a spin, Harkness!"

Jack ignored him, and ran out of John's office, even bypassing the girls in the typing pool. They collectively sighed in disappointment as he fled by.

Half an hour later, Jack returned empty handed, and gave John his keys. "I'll be in touch soon about our plans," Jack winked and tapped the note they had passed back and forth.

John and Jane were productive the rest of the day, and made a major dent in chapter two. They also worked on the chapter one revisions as suggested by Bess.

"I don't think that I have described their kiss adequately," John announced with an eyebrow waggle.

"What do you suggest we do about it, Mr. Smith?" replied Jane, with a sultry smile.

"Practice. Definitely practice. Only for literary research purposes of course," he said seriously, his hands behind his back as he stood by his desk. "Shall we begin?"

Jane pushed herself away from his desk, where he had permanently placed her typewriter as it was far more comfortable for her than the small stenographer's desk. She walked slowly, crossing each leg seductively as she approached him.

"Professor, don't you find me just the least bit attractive?" she asked in a breathy voice, quoting one of Iris's lines.

"Iris Mason, you are very attractive, but I never engage in such activities with companions," John replied.

"Is that all I am to you? Just your companion?" asked Jane, pouting a bit.
"I would not wish any companion in the world but you," John said, quoting *The Tempest*.

"That's not in the story," Jane said, her mouth now inches away from his, though they still had not touched each other.

"I think it fits. What do you think?" John asked into her mouth as he put his arms around her back and pulled Jane close.

"Iris will melt," she replied, bridging the final little gap between their lips.

Jane's toes curled in her tan and white spectator pumps as John kneaded her back while he tantalised her lips with soft pliant kisses. With one final firm and fiery open-mouthed, tongue tangling, moan-inducing kiss, they pulled apart, and leaned their foreheads against each other until they caught their breath.

"How many days?" asked John, pulling Jane close to him.

"Too many."

They reluctantly parted and gathered their things as it was the end of the day.

"Dinner on the way home?" asked John.

"Sure. We could bring it back to my flat. But you will have to leave, all right? I need to talk with Bess about wedding things."

John pushed out his lower lip, pouting and Jane kissed it, unable to resist. John locked up his office, and they left. As they passed Priscilla's desk, the woman neither made a rude comment, nor a face. In fact, cordially, she wished them both goodnight. The clock indicated it was 5:45, and Priscilla had never once worked late, yet she was typing away like the most conscientious of workers. The blonde woman sniffed as they passed.

Daniel Higgins sat in his favourite leather chair. He took in a long drag on his cigarette and then released the smoke into the air, watching the white haze curl, twist, and dissipate into the air. Priscilla had not reported the news to him. A lackey down in type setting had offered him the juicy tidbit. He had called the greedy man when Priscilla had failed to call him with her morning report. He would have to make sure that Priscilla knew he wasn't pleased with her negligence.

After the word came that Jane had given her refusal by way of John Smith's announcement, Daniel immediately had made good on one of his threats: eviction notices were delivered within the hour to the tenants of the building in which Jane and Bess lived. They had been typed up, signed and ready for a week now, with everything in place but the date.

Daniel drew in another long drag from his cigarette as he thought about Jane's sudden infusion of courage. Jane Smith had not only declined his very generous offer, she had spit it right back into his face. He had been humiliated in front of the entire office by that ridiculous science fiction writer's show-off announcement. He had even stood on a chair like one of those nutters down at Speaker's Corner.

Last week's lunchtime seduction attempt had failed. Coercion and threats had not scared Jane into compliance. John Smith had trumped his trump card: the wedding certificate.

He had one final option, one possible move left. It was risky, and if he weren't very, very careful,
he could find himself in prison. But he didn't care. If he couldn't have Jane Smith, no one would. While he certainly still lusted after the woman, his hatred of John Smith now consumed him. He wanted to hurt John. And taking Jane would destroy him.

Foolishly, John and his supposedly threatening friend, Jack Harkness, had all but served up Jane on a silver platter. On Saturday night, every male who had vowed to protect Jane would be otherwise occupied, and probably pissed out of their skulls. He circled the date on his calendar as the day that Jane would be ruined for John.
Chapter Summary

John is frustrated. Jane is educated. Bess instructs. Jack is relieved.

Chapter Notes

Jan 23 2017

When I first posted this, a reader requested a complete version Bess giving Jane "the talk," so I wrote a one-shot entitled "Bess & Jane Talk Dirty" which gives the full conversation between the girls. It is most definitely more mature. It will been posted as a separate fic, but as a part of the FoundVerse series.

Chapter 24 - John & Jane & Birds & Bees

Jane and John enjoyed a delicious meal of Indian food, eating out of paper cartons while sitting in front of the fire. It had begun raining very hard around 6:30, and John decided a fire in would be just what they needed to warm up the draughty room. They had moved the coffee table out of the way and were leaning up against the sofa. Jane had changed into comfortable trousers and an old, but much loved fair isle jumper, complete with moth holes and fraying cuffs.

John had taken off his suit coat, removed his silver and black striped tie and rolled up the cuffs of his sleeves. Jane, of course, had made a comment, and he just waggled his eyebrows, completely aware of the affect his manly, hairy arms had on his fiancée.

"So what are you and Bess going to talk about tonight?" he asked between bites of his curry.

"Oh, wedding stuff. You know, flowers, the colour of Bess's dress, that sort of thing."

"Don't I get to help pick the flowers?" he asked, with a sad puppy dog expression in his eyes.

Jane drew in a breath. "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know you would want to help, what sort of flowers would you-"

John interrupted by elbowing her in the side. "I'm just joshing you. That's clearly the bride’s domain. But, I would like to propose something to you about the reception. We really don't have enough the time to plan a proper event, and I was thinking that we could have a nice party at my— wait by then it will be our flat, won't it?" John grinned. "Anyway what if we had a party at our flat after the wedding, and then worry about a reception when we get back from our honeymoon? What do you think?"

"Sounds delightful. But do you think we really even need a big reception? As long as our friends are there, and we can give them a proper party with cake, good food, and drink, and music on that fancy hi-fi of yours." Jane took a bite of cucumber raita to cool her burning mouth.
"You are wonderful. I don't think any other woman would be as content as you. They would want some big show." John put his food down on the floor and turned towards Jane and smiled. "Of course, we'll pick the cake and food together, but can I take care of the details?"

"Okay," she smiled.

"But Jane, I really do want to have a real reception sometime in the future. I want to show you off! Want to invite some other authors whom I respect and I know enjoy my books, well have heard through the grapevine at least. I was thinking the Tiki Tiki? Maybe I could even finagle Bobby Darin to come and perform?"

Of course Jane blushed at his desire to 'show her off,' but agreed. "Okay," she said, dipping her head and then kissing him sweetly.

"Anything else you girls are going to talk about?"

Jane pressed her lips together and looked down, blushing.

"And what are you blushing about my blushing bride-to-be?" he asked, with a sly grin, tracing his finger down her nose.

"Uh, well, um, what— what— I will need to know about, well, our wedding night," she said, looking into the flames and then back at him.

"Oh. Right." John said, and laughed a bit nervously.

"You're embarrassed too?" she asked quietly, surprised that he didn't have a witty and flirtatious remark prepared.

"Yeah, well it's one thing to joke and flirt about it, but now that it is real, that you and I will be finally… and properly, um, lovers. And that I will be your first and only one, and I am..." He tugged his ear. "I am bit nervous, too. Not embarrassed mind, just nervous. Well not nervous, more like anxious. Anticipatory. Very, very impatient."

"Me too. All of those things," she said quietly, turning to look at him. "Very impatient, to be honest," she said with a giggle and a blush.

"You have no idea how happy I am to hear that," he said, losing some of his nervousness.

"How much do I need to know?" The question tumbled from her lips, and she sucked in a breath the moment the thought was out of her mind and in his ears. "I just said that out loud, didn't I?"

"That ya' did, love," he said, half smiling. "We humans have been doing this for a very, very long time. Don't ya' worry yourself too much about it." His accent was thick.

Jane had discovered that he slipped into the lovely burr when he was feeling particularly amorous.

"You're right about that. Don't see a shortage of babies around. I just said that out loud, too, didn't I?" She closed her eyes and covered her face with her hands.

"That is something we haven't talked about now, isn't it?" he said, frowning.

Jane looked at him and upon seeing the frown on his face wondered if perhaps he didn't want children, even though he’d hinted at the fact that he did, just this morning.

“I would love to keep going until we have at least one of each, a boy and a girl, no matter how long
that takes. Always wanted a big family,” he said, with a glint in his eyes.

She smiled. "From the look on your face, for a moment there I thought you might not want children. I would love children, lots of them, if... if that's what you want," she said as she looked down shyly.

"Why are you so nervous about this Jane? You kiss me with such passion and confidence, but when we talk about sex, you are shy and embarrassed." John wasn't unkind, simply curious.

"I don't know.” Jane couldn't bring herself to say the word. “Mum never was involved with another man after Dad. Said that there was only one man for her, that she was lucky that she was given the bit of happiness that she had, and was content with that. She told me some of it…”

“The birds and bees?” asked John.

Jane laughed and rolled her eyes. "When I," she cleared her throat, "encountered puberty, Mum gave me a very dry, very clinical lecture on what was happening. Being a nurse, she wanted me to make sure I knew the science and biology behind cycles and reproduction, at least on the female end of things. But she didn't tell me anything about men beyond the most basic and fundamental facts, and certainly nothing about the..." she blew air through her lips, "passionate or emotional and romantic part of... it.” Jane shook her head.

"You're gonna have to say the word sometime, Jane," John said with a laugh. "Say it after me. Sex."

"S... se... sechkkssss..."

"That wasn't so hard now, was it? Even though you sounded like you were choking on the word."

Jane started giggling which turned into a laughter. "Sex. Sex. Sex!" she said proudly and then cheered, flinging her arms around John in celebration.

"That's the spirit!" he said fondly. "So how do you feel about this talk with Bess tonight?"

"Mortified. You know, after I came home from our first real date... she told me that I could come to her and ask her anything I wanted to about... sex. I think she thought I was going to lose my resolve."

"I thought you might to," he admitted. "But I'm glad you haven't."

"Really?" she asked, still holding onto him.

"Really. We've made it this far, we can hold out a few more." He stroked the back of her head and held his lips to her cheek. "I am glad you have such a good friend, Jane," he whispered into her ear.

They held onto each other for a few moments, feeling the warmth of their arms around them, and the listening to the popping and crackling of the fire, and the rain beating on the windowpane.

"Kiss me," Jane whispered into John's ear, nuzzling into the feeling of his end-of-the-day stubble rubbing on her cheek. "Kiss me. Right now. I need you to give me the most toe-curling kiss of my life right this very instant or else I won't have the courage to talk to Bess about what I need to know, and when I'm about to die of embarrassment I want to have the memory of your lips on mine, I want to remember the feeling of... almost burning up, wishing I had all of you right now."

John pulled away and looked at Jane. In the firelight, she could see that his eyes were so dark they
were almost black. He was breathing hard through his nose, studying her face, adoring her and wanting her simultaneously. He cupped her chin with one hand, and then brought his mouth to hers.

First he kissed her top lip, slowly, his movements measured and deliberate. He moved to her lower lip, and she responded, wrapping her arms around him and pulling him close. He eased them away from the sofa so that they were laying on their sides on the floor, in front of the fireplace. Jane kicked off her shoes so that she could run her bare foot up John's leg. Soon, John was on top of her, one of his legs between hers, and she had wrapped her legs around his thigh rocking against him, seeking more pleasure, wanting to feel that exquisite explosion once again.

"Tell me when to stop..." he whispered into her mouth as he took a moment to breathe, and then attacked her mouth with double the fervency as before.

"Not yet. Need more. Need you. Oh want you so bad. John, want you..." Jane was moaning now, and John quickly discarded the wide white plastic headband that held her hair off of her face. He tugged at her hair a bit roughly, and moved his mouth to her neck and into the well of her throat, dipping his tongue in and out and then up and behind her ear.

Jane had long before wrapped her arms around him, but now her hands were drifting down to his waist, and inside of his waistband. Last time they did this, she hadn’t even touched his bare bum. This time, she wanted to do more. She wanted to know just how prepared she would need to be for her wedding night. She argued with herself for a moment, and aroused Jane won, so she moved her hands, still inside of his trousers to his hips, and then encouraged him to arch up off of her. She knew he was aroused, the evidence was hard against her thigh. Dare she?

"John... I... I... want to... touch you. Can I?" she asked nervously.

He stopped kissing her, pulled away from her face and balanced on his hands, one on each side of her shoulders. "I don't think that's the best idea love. Gettin' a wee bit difficult to stop myself as it is," he panted. "Was going to have to end this delightful snog about, oh, right now," he smirked.

Jane held her breath, ripped her hands from his trousers and held them out in the air, as far from him as possible. "I'm so. I'm so so so so sorry!" she said, seeing the frustration on his face.

"If I might suggest a topic for you to discuss with your friend, ask her to tell you how men's arousal works would you? I get to a point where I can't stop, love, well I can, but it is very, very... ah... unpleasant or... well... there is another way that isn’t so bad."

Jane pressed her lips together and nodded, afraid to speak.

John moved off of her gingerly and sat up. He touched her cheek and then smoothed her hair out of her face. "My sweet Jane. You have much to learn, and I am so glad that I get to be the one to give ya lessons. I've said it before and I'll tell ya again. You don't know your own power woman, and that's what makes ya so bloody irresistible!" John sprang up, offered her his hand, pulled her to her feet and into an immediate embrace. "Think I'm going to say goodnight, all right? Gonna go home and take a cold shower or... well take care of things." He looked at her hungrily. "Ask her about that too."

"I'm so sorry, I just love you so much, and can't seem to keep my hands off of you," she admitted shaking her head in frustration, wrapping her arms around herself. "It's like we're magnets. Or a planet and a black hole. I feel like I'm going to crash into you any second now and there's nothing that could ever stop us. Not Jack and Niles being awful to us, or even Daniel. Nothing."
"I feel the same way." He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. "I've never told you this before, but the minute I saw you, Jane Smith — my first day at Prescott — I wanted to go up to your desk, but then Priscilla happened, and I was an idiot, and... I'm not sure why I didn't. It was as if something was holding me back, but at the same time, pushing me forward. Like the magnet was being flipped and flipped and flipped. And finally, it flipped into place, and we crashed into each other."

Jane fell into his arms and buried her nose into his shoulder. "I love you."

"And I love you."

"See you tomorrow."

"Sweet dreams," he whispered, kissing her cheek, deliciously close to her mouth.

John left the flat quietly, and Jane ran to her bedroom so that she could watch him emerge from the building. She smiled when he looked up at her, and they both waved goodbye, followed by blowing kisses to each other.

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Jane cleaned up the food containers, returned the coffee table to its rightful place, turned on a few lamps, and made herself a cup of tea. She sat down with pencil and paper, and wrote furiously.

Soon, Bess arrived home from the office. "Hello darling, ready for some girl talk?" Bess said cheerily as she hung up her coat and set down her handbag.

"More ready than you know," replied Jane with a frustrated laugh, as she smoothed her hair away from her face.

Bess quickly changed into comfortable clothing, ate a few leftovers, and pulled that promised bottle of Champagne out of the refrigerator.

"So. Sex. Where to start." Bess poured two glasses of bubbly.

"I have a list," said Jane, waving her piece of paper.

"You made a list?" Bess laughed.

"Sure, why not?" Jane replied, mildly affronted.

"Oh nothing darling, it's just very Jane-like. What's first on that list of yours?"

"Number one: How does arousal work for men? Why did John say he needed a cold shower when he left tonight? Is there another way for John to take care of things?" Jane read the question verbatim, as if she were reading a report to her class that she had written when she was nine. "John asked me to ask you those questions."

"Jane?" Bess drew out her name. "What happened?"

"We were kissing, and we had to stop. He said he needed to stop and he looked very uncomfortable," she answered plainly.

"Tell me everything, and I mean everything. This won't work if you aren't completely candid."

"Uh, well, we were talking about the wedding, and then we both shared that we want a big family, lots of kids, and uh, I told him that you and I were going to discuss s... s... sexchks..." She
squeezed her eyes shut tightly and balled her fists. "No! I am going to say the real word! Sex! Sex!
Sex!" She opened her eyes.

Bess burst into a fit of laughter. "Heaven’s to Betsy, what was that about?"

"Never mind," Jane furrowed her brow. "Anyway, we were hugging, and it was nice. Well, really
nice actually," Jane swallowed hard. "And then I asked him to kiss me really, really thoroughly
because I... I... needed to feel... aroused, but I didn't use that word but I don't remember what I said
exactly, but I asked him to give me the best kiss of my life because I wanted to remember what it
felt like 'cos I was afraid to talk to you and if I could remember how it felt so good I wouldn't lose
my nerve and so I could have the conversation with you and so he, well, he kissed me and it was
absolutely..." she sighed, "gorgeous and perfect."

"He kissed you, well and good. Toe curling good. Tingling good. "

"Better than that."

"Oh I know the kind. It's the kind of a kiss that makes your hands go places all over his body, and
he's caressing and grabbing, and it that makes you want to tear off your clothes, and then tear his
off too, sends lightning bolts to places, well, I won’t embarrass you any further. Yet." Bess said
with a straight face.

"Yes," squeaked Jane. "And then I — well we, really, ended up on the floor, and he was," she
squeezed her eyes shut again, and opened them, "uh, he was on top of me, and I could tell he was...
uh... aroused, and I... put my hands into his trousers, just on his uh, backside, but then... I... I... sort
of... well... moved my hands around to his hips and when I asked him... if I could... uh... um... t...
touch his... uh... he said no..."

Bess said the word that Jane couldn't bring herself to say. For Bess, saying it was as easy as saying
'nose' or 'hand' or 'foot.'

"I didn't say that word!" she hissed, brows furrowed.

"Why not?"

"Because... it's... it's..."

"It's what? A part of your soon-to-be husband's male anatomy that you will see every single day?
Something that approximately half of the world population possesses? What about breast? Can you
say that?"

"Course I can! Breast!" Jane said vehemently as she frowned, and took a sip of her wine. "What
does any of this have to do with a cold shower?" Jane said in a rush.

"Because, Jane sweetheart, you apparently made quite an impact on that particular part of his
anatomy, and poor John had to go home and calm himself down!" Bess replied, trying to make Jane
sympathetic to John's plight.

"But wouldn't a cold shower be uncomfortable?" Jane asked innocently.

"That's pretty much the point, dear." Bess smirked. "Once you get his... final countdown started, he
can't stop. You can turn yourself off, but he can't. For him, once he gets to a certain point, it's just a
matter of time and apparently, you did enough to initiate his launch sequence," said Bess with a
grim.
"Launch sequence..." Jane interrupted as she frowned at a vague memory of herself and John in bed together. He had used that exact same phrase, but the memory really made no sense, as they had never been in bed naked, let alone talking about sex.

"But he was probably just being polite. More likely, he took care of his uncomfortable problem the other way," said Bess, sipping her Champagne.

"Yeah, what did he mean by that?" Jane was confused.

"By giving himself pleasure," Bess answered.

"I don't understand." Jane looked at her blankly.

"Well, he would think about something erotic, about that toe-curling kiss for example, while he touched himself in such a way as to bring about... sexual fulfillment. Until he, you know, ejaculated," Bess explained kindly.

“Oh.” Jane knocked back another drink. “But how?”

“He masturbated, darling.”

Jane stared at her dumbfounded and then gasped. Her mouth fell open and she gasped again. "Bess! What if he goes blind?"

Bess stifled a laugh clamping her hand over her mouth. "Oh Jane, one can't go blind doing that. If that were the case, nearly every man on Earth would have a white cane, and most women, too."

Jane crossed her arms and frowned. "Well I haven't."

"Might be a good idea if you did, just to learn how your own body responds to touch." Bess smiled softly at her innocent friend. "What's next on your list?"

"Number two," she muttered, "I've noticed that his... his... uh... manly bits," she sighed, "change, the more that we kiss. And I know that’s supposed to happen, but how’s it gonna fit?" Jane asked timidly.

"Do you have a clear understanding of female anatomy, darling?" asked Bess, without judgment.

“Yes. Well enough.”

Bess reached down into a book bag that she had brought with her from her bedroom, and pulled out a book of anatomy. She turned to a page that had been marked with a slip of paper.

"Look. See this right here?" Bess pointed at a cutaway diagram of the female reproductive system. "These muscles are meant to relax and accommodate. A baby is much, much bigger than any man out there, no matter how much they brag!" Bess laughed.

Jane blushed and smiled, but then looked down, worried. "Is it gonna hurt? Especially the first time?" she asked quietly.

Bess kindly explained the process as Jane fiddled nervously. "It gets much, much better right away, I promise."

Jane took a large gulp of Champagne and looked back at her list. She looked at Bess, and then back at her list. Bess snatched the list out of her hand.
"Do you mind if I read through these?" Bess rolled her eyes a few times.

"Jane, who told you think that jumping jacks can prevent pregnancy?"

"A friend from school, Shireen. Mum didn’t like me spending time with her. When she was fifteen, she moved away to live with her aunt."

"Maybe the jumping jacks didn’t work," Bess said under her breath. "No darling, doing jumping jacks after sex will not prevent pregnancy. Neither will standing on your head. In fact, that might speed it along. Being on top, same thing. Position doesn't matter. That sperm is going to swim as fast as it can to find that egg if it's the right time. Speaking of that, do the two of you plan on implementing any sort of birth control?" asked Bess.

"I know it's too late to go on The Pill, because the wedding is next week," said Jane.

"You know about the Pill?" Bess asked, somewhat surprised.

"No... I... I... I don't know what that is," Jane said, confused at her knowledge.

Bess frowned. "Well, you're absolutely right. It's too late for it to work for your wedding night. There are other ways, of course. Some more reliable than others. There's the rhythm method, but for it to work properly, your cycle must be very, very regular. You take your temperature every day, and even then, it is not that effective as a pregnancy preventative. It is, however, wonderful when you are trying to get pregnant. In fact, there's an old joke. What do you call couples who use the rhythm method?"

"What?" asked Jane with a small grin.

"Parents." Bess smiled and shook her head. "Be a dear and get me a banana?"

"Sure." Jane returned with a couple of bananas. "Got one for me too. Sounded kind of good."

"Oh, not to eat, darling. I'm going to teach you how to put on a condom."

"Wuhuhaaat?" Jane replied, slack-jawed.

"You heard me." Bess dug through her tote. She handed one to Jane, who stared at Bess's outstretched hand without touching the offending item for at least fifteen seconds. "Oh come on, it's not going to burn you," Bess said, rolling her eyes.

"Where'd you get that? Who'd you get that from?" Jane hissed, like it was something illicit.

"Well who do you think?" Bess replied, a little bit irritated.

"Don't want to know. Don't want to know about you and Niles." Jane squeezed her eyes shut again.

"You need some more Champagne, darling." Bess topped off Jane's glass.

Jane gulped it down, and wiped off her mouth with the back of her hand. She breathed in and out a few times. "All right. I can do this. I can do this. I'm a grown woman about to be married, and I can do this."

"Of course you can. Open it like this." Bess demonstrated, and Jane followed suit. "Take it out, and place it on the top of the fruit, like this, and then carefully unroll it. There you go. Now that wasn't so hard, was it?"
Jane held the latex encased fruit out in front of her, examined it carefully and then started giggling. "Looks funny!" Jane giggled harder. "You know what? Bananas are his favourite fruit!" she covered her mouth and tittered. "Hope that's not some Frundilan slip or somethin' that he likes blokes better."

"That's Freudian slip, darling. And again, you say you're so innocent, but you know about a Freudian slip?"

Jane giggled. "Dunno how. Jussofunny!"

Bess smiled at her suddenly alcohol-relaxed friend.

"Guess what?" Jane tittered. "Woke up this mornin' and guess where his hand was?" Jane waited. "On my bare hip! He 'ad pushed me knickers down. Wonder what else he felt up while I was sleepin'?" she asked with a frown.

"Jane Smith, I thought you said last night was innocent!" Bess said, a bit angrily.

"It was! I slept in his big, beautiful bed, an' he slept on his cold, lonely couch. And then we both had a nightmare an' ended up both in his bed. I begged 'im, I did. I begged 'im ta not make me be alone in that big, lonely, beautiful bed. Lots of room for havin' sex-u-al in-ter-course in that big bed of his." Jane sighed, and had a dreamy look in her eyes. "But he was all nervous when he got in an' he was practically fallin' offa the edge until we fell asleep, an' then we musta drifted together in the night. It's like we're magnetic, Bess. Can't keep our 'ands ta ourselves." Jane nodded her head, and Bess rolled her eyes.

"I had the most amazing dream after he was in that bed wi' me." The Champagne had worked its full magic, and Jane had now completely relaxed. She held onto the banana, and pointed it at Bess.

"And here comes tipsy Jane," Bess mused with a grin. "I should have plied you with the wine half an hour before we started this discussion. So tell me about the dream," Bess said with a gleam in her eye.

"I dreamed that John and I were living on the Professor's spaceship, and there were all of these rooms. One of 'em had this swimmin' pond carved outa rock with a waterfall and a cave. When ya touched the rocks in the cave, they changed colour according to your mood or how much you wanted to have sex." Jane giggled again. "Anyway," she waved the banana again, "John gave me a back rub, and it was glorious. That man has beautiful hands doesn't he? Doesn't John just have the most beautiful fingers you have ever seen?" Jane sighed. "And he was using those fingers like magic all over me. We were naked. Did I tell ya that? We were naked in the magic cave. But then he did the strangest thing." Jane leaned forward and whispered, explaining the details of her very erotic dream. "Isn't that just the most bizarre dream?" Jane crinkled her nose.

"Bizarre? Sounds like a brilliant dream!" Bess shook her head. She leaned down and pulled a beautiful gold-leafed book from the bag and handed it to Jane. "I have homework for you. Read the pages I have marked in the anatomy textbook, and then I want you to read the *Song of Solomon* through different eyes, and then I want you to thumb through this book over the next few days."

"The *Kama Sutra*. What's this about?" Jane asked, as she brushed her hand over the red leather cover, embossed with an exotic design in gold leaf. She opened the book somewhere in the middle. "Oh my stars..." Jane's eyes went wide as she stared, mouth open at an illustration.

"What page did you open to?" Bess asked, curious.
Jane held the book up and turned it to show Bess.

"Oh, that's a fun one!" Bess said, delighted.

"You gave me a pornographic book to read. You read pornography!" Jane screeched.

Bess laughed. "The Kama Sutra was written hundreds of years ago, and was translated from Sanskrit into English in the late 1800s by Sir Richard Burton. It's not pornography, Jane. Historically, is a very important document that happens to be about sex." Bess took the condom off of the banana that she was holding, peeled the fruit, and took a bite.

Jane fell back against the sofa and stared down, the book open in her lap. "I am in way over my head." She held her Champagne glass up to Bess, silently requesting another refill.

"Jane dear, you aren't in over your head, you're just naive and innocent and it's perfectly lovely. I'm sure it's one of the reasons that John adores you."

"Ya must think I'm really stupid," muttered Jane, "not knowing about any of this." Jane stood up to retire for the night. "I guess I had better go to bed and study up," she said, mildly frustrated.

"Now hold it right there, Jane Smith. You are absolutely not stupid. You are a little bit naive, and very innocent, and those are some of the very reasons that John knew you were different. He is a very bright man, and he would never settle for a stupid wife. You are fantastic and brilliant and I am honoured to be your friend."

Jane didn't know what to say at first. Bess's words had touched her heart in a way not much else had. She settled for a simple, "Thank you."

"A couple more pieces of advice for your wedding night. Make sure you have a bottle of champagne on ice. Wear something that makes you feel sexy. And remember people have been doing this for a long, long time, Jane. It will come naturally."

"That's what John said," Jane said with a smile and as she tucked her hair behind an ear.

"I know," Bess replied cryptically. "Just reinforcing his wisdom. Now Jane darling, we really do need to get down to business on this wedding. You can't go to bed yet. Your wedding is only ten days away, and only eight of those days will be days we can actually do anything. Have you thought about flowers? Or music? Colours?"

"I have thought about colours, and a bit about music. John has decided he is going to take care of the reception by himself. For now, we are just going to have a party at his flat right after the ceremony, and then when we get back from our honeymoon, we will host a proper reception at the Tiki Tiki."

"What about a dress?" Bess asked coyly.

"I'll go looking on Saturday," replied Jane. "Would you come with me?"

"Oh dear, you can't go on Saturday, that's your hen do! Forgot to tell you. That all right? Thought I would invite Betty and Barbara the receptionist, and oh, Kitty of course. Anyone else?"

Jane made a face, "Eve Woods sort of invited herself. She was awfully nice about the whole Daniel thing, and she made me go back and work for John. I just don't know her very well is the thing. Not that I have anything against her, mind."
"Oh get her out of the office and she can be perfectly wicked!" Bess said with a grin. "She would be a hoot to have along! She may be a few decades further along than us, but she has a wild streak a mile long."

"Oh. Okay," Jane said with a smile. "So when am I gonna get my wedding dress?"

"Jane, I have something for you. Come with me, please," said Bess over her shoulder.


"No, darling." Bess headed for her bedroom. She opened her wardrobe door, and pulled out a garment bag with the Henrik's logo emblazoned on the front. She laid it on the bed. "Unzip it carefully."

Jane furrowed her brows and did as she was told. She gasped when inside was revealed a white wedding gown of exquisite lace and white satin. "Bess? What... how... when... what... it's... it's beautiful." Jane carefully grasped the wooden hanger and pulled it out to look at it fully. She held it up to herself and looked in Bess's full-length floor mirror. "Oh Bess, I couldn't imagine a more beautiful wedding gown. In my dreams, I couldn't picture myself any other way."

"Want to try it on?" Bess asked, quite eager to see her friend in the dress.

Jane hastily pulled off her jumper and dropped her trousers, much to Bess's surprise, given Jane's propensity for modesty. Bess took the dress off of the hanger, unfastened the many buttons down the back, and helped Jane step into it. Jane pulled it up and Bess quickly buttoned a few buttons in the back, just enough to hold the dress in place.

As Jane looked at herself in the mirror, Jane didn't know whether to laugh or cry, squeal or jump up and down. She settled on crying and laughing simultaneously. "I look beautiful. I never thought I'd look so beautiful."

Bess grasped Jane's hands and held her at arm's length. "I bought it the day before Easter. You were in another department, and I saw it, and I simply couldn't pass it by. I knew you and John were going to be married Jane. I just knew it. I saw it."

"Saw it?" Jane asked, sensing a difference in Bess's voice as she said the words.

Bess nodded. "I saw the future Jane. Just like I read Niles's mind last night. And I have been seeing other things too. I don't know what they mean, but there's something about you and John that is very, very special. Hold onto him. Keep him safe, and he'll keep you safe."

Jane threw her arms around her friend and hugged her tightly. They released the hug and Jane looked at herself again, swishing the dress to and fro, turning to look at the back of the gown.

"You know, the only reason that Daniel Higgins is so obsessed wi' me is 'cos I'm a virgin," she said, looking at herself in the bridal gown.

"Do not worry about Higgins. That's sorted."

"What do you mean, sorted?" Jane asked.

"Jack called me this afternoon. John has asked Jack and Niles to take care of Higgins in an official capacity. Don't ask me what they are going to do, because I don't know, and I don't know if I want to know."
"Bess, they're not going to," she gulped hard and continued, "they're not going to murder him are they?" Jane asked, her lower lip quivering.

"No. I know my— I know Niles enough to know that he would not do that. However, I think you need to stay out of it. Don't ask. Just let them do their jobs."

"Bess, you know what they do, don't you? You pretend that you don't, but you do," said Jane.

"Yes. I do. Niles doesn't even know that I know. And now he will never know that I know, either. If he'd just been honest with me, I could have been a wonderful partner. I would have kept his secret." Bess crossed her arms angrily, but hurt was written all over her face.

Jane reached out and touched Bess's arm kindly. "Bess, it'll get better, I promise." Jane added a squeeze before pulling away.

Bess heard ringing in her ears, and was overwhelmed with a vision of Jane comforting a man in the middle of the street. He is critically injured, and dies in Jane's arms. The man in black watches on, his eyes drilled into Jane.

"Who are you?" Bess asked, pulling away suddenly.

"What do you mean?" Jane asked, a bit frightened by Bess's sudden change in demeanor.

Bess shook her head and forced herself to smile. "Sorry. I think I've had too much bubbly. It's going to my head." Bess backed away from Jane and sat on her bed.

"Bess, are you sure you are all right? You look like you've seen a ghost," Jane said.

"I need to go to bed. I'm not feeling too well," said Bess. "Goodnight, Jane."

"Thank you again, Bess, for the dress. It is truly, truly perfect," said Jane, quietly. She picked up the garment bag and her shed clothing and left Bess to herself.

Jane retired to her room and settled down into her bed to do a little bit of reading. She had one of John's older books in her hand, not one of the items on Bess's required reading list.

Bess confirmed that Jane was asleep by peeking into her room around 11:45. She crept out into the lounge and dialed the phone number that Niles had provided should she ever need to contact him at work. She had tried to sleep, but she was kept awake by thoughts swirling through her mind. Images of John and Jane, monsters, golden light and a man who could change his face.

"Jack Harkness, please," she asked the gruff man who answered. "Tell him it's Bess."

"Hey Infinity, some woman called Bess is on the horn!" Bess heard the man hollering.

"Is everything all right Bess?" Jack asked frantically without even saying hello.

"Yes, fine. Fine. Is there someplace we can speak privately?" she asked.

"Uh, yeah, sure. I'll swing by. Be downstairs in oh, ten minutes. All right?"

"Welcome to my second office," Jack said, as he offered Bess a seat on The Bench.
She sat down gingerly, smoothing her raincoat out underneath her seat as she lowered herself onto the cold metal. "I remembered something tonight. At the Tiki Tiki, you told me something about John and Jane. I need to know if my recollection of that conversation is correct. Did you tell me that John is an alien, and Jane really is Rose Tyler?"

Jack raised his eyebrows.

"And did you tell me that John and Jane are really already married, but they don't know it because they're suffering from some sort of amnesia?"

Jack grinned nervously, and stared straight ahead.

"Are you going to answer me, Jack?" Bess asked, irritated.

"Yes, yes and yes."

"I've been having visions of Jane and John, but they are different people. You are in some of my visions as well, dressed in an American military uniform." Bess stared into the side of Jack's head.

"Yes, again, that sounds like me." Jack continued to stare straight ahead, left leg casually crossed over his right, one arm stretched out over the back of the bench.

"And there is another man, a man in black leather with short hair. He and John seem to be connected somehow."

"They are. They're the same man. The Doctor used to look like that when Jane, er, Rose and I first met him."

"And Jane, or Rose, is married to this Doctor man? Doctor who?" Bess furrowed her eyebrows.

"Just the Doctor. That's his name." Jack turned and looked at her. "They're my very best friends in the universe, Bess. And me? I'm not from around here. I'm human, well, at least I think I'm still human, but I'm originally from the future."

"So I'm not going barmy. So, you and Niles, the two of you work with aliens, then?"

"Yep. You're taking this awfully well," he said with a smirk.

Bess ignored his comment. "So why are we keeping John and Jane in the dark about their real selves again?"

"Because if we don't, they are as good as dead. They are being hunted. Literally hunted," Jack said earnestly. "You're a little bit psychic aren't you?"

"I suppose I am," she replied. "Tell me what I need to do to keep John and Jane safe."

"First thing is to keep an eye out for two fob watches."

Bess's breath hitched. She looked down into her handbag, opened it, and pulled them out. "Do you mean these?"

Jack grabbed her head, and kissed her hard on the lips.

"Jack Harkness!" she hollered.

"Bess Cooper, you just saved the universe!"
“What do you mean?” She handed the watches to Jack.

“You don’t know how relieved I am. These watches,” he held them up, one in each hand. “These are the real John and Jane. The Doctor and Rose. Contained inside these two fob watches are everything that they are.”

“Well that explains a lot,” she said, screwing up her face, “I opened one of them, and saw the strangest visions of Jane and John.”

“Bess, do not ever open these watches. Either of them! These watches are what the Family needs.”

“All right.” She shrank back a little. “Jack,” she paused, “I think I should keep them safe. It seems like I’m supposed to. I think they’re speaking to me. Over and over and over, I hear keep me safe, keep me safe, it’s not our time.

“Probably better than my coat pocket,” he joked.

Bess didn’t laugh.
Girls play with girls, Boys play with boys, Daniel plays an evil game.

Chapter 25 - And They All Played Games

Jane woke up slowly from a deep sleep that had been filled with delicious dreams. She was relieved to realise that this time she did not wake up with a headache. She hadn’t had nearly as much Champagne as that first time almost a month ago. A smile appeared as she recalled what she had seen behind her eyelids overnight, and she promised she would thank Bess for her frank talk the night before. She sat up and stretched her arms over her head before she swung her legs out of bed and onto the floor. She hummed a nameless, happy tune as she padded into the bathroom to shower, both giggling and blushing as she thought of Bess's admission the night before about her morning shower ritual.

Thirty minutes later, Jane emerged from the bathroom coiffed and dressed for work in her blush pink suit and white blouse. She had put her hair in the "Rose Tyler" ponytail feeling in particularly high spirits. She continued to hum a happy melody as she made her way into the kitchen to make herself tea and toast. She saw that Bess had left for work already as her handbag and coat were not on the coat rack. After eating and washing her teeth, Jane looked at the clock and saw that it was time to head downstairs. She wondered how much she should share with John about last night, and decided that she should hold back some of the information, if only to spare him any further discomfort.

Jane tripped down the stairwell and Mrs. Butterfield peeked her head out into the corridor. "Good morning Miss Smith, and best wishes on your engagement."

"Good morning to you, Mrs. Butterfield, and thanks!" she replied cheerfully. "Sorry to rush off, but my ride is here, and I don't want to make him wait. Bye!" Jane wiggled her fingers at the elderly woman, who frowned at bit at the girl's refusal to stop and chat.

"Young people! No time for anyone but themselves. Only wanted her to know I saw that shifty fellow watching the building again last night," she complained to herself and shut her door.

oOo

John jumped out of the car and flew to Jane the moment he saw her emerge through the front door of her building.

"Good morning my lovely wife-to-be." He squeezed her upper arms and kissed her sweetly. "Hi John, good morning to you too," she said smiling.

A slow grin grew on his face. "I like your hair."

Jane blushed and dipped her head, sending the ponytail bobbing. "You remembered."

"I remember everything about you," he said, his voice low and thick. He helped her into his car
and they set off for work.

"I'm hoping to polish up chapter one today, and get the first draft of chapter two to Bess by tomorrow. Do you think we could begin to tackle chapter three before the weekend?" asked John, conveniently avoiding the topic of Jane and Bess's discussion the night before.

"Don't see why not. Do you have an outline for three?"

"Aye. Couldn't sleep last night," John said quietly, swallowing hard.

"I owe you an apology, John. In my, um, ignorance about sex, I have made things very hard on you."

John stifled a laugh at Jane's inadvertent double entendre, knowing she was still naive.

"I am so, so sorry. I have pushed you to the brink and it hasn't been fair. And I won't do that anymore. And I also understand now that you may need to do things to relieve the tension and you need to know that I am all right with that. Pretty soon you won't have to do that anymore." Jane shyly looked down at her lap and nervously played with her fingernails.

They were stopped in traffic, and John looked over at her. "You really did get an education last night, didn't you?" he said kindly, without a hint of teasing or flirtation.

"You don't know the half of it," she said as she looked out the window, fiddling with her hair. Her cheeks were bright pink.

They sat in silence until the traffic broke.

"Oh! Forgot to tell you. Jack is throwing me a stag party on Saturday night."

"Would you like to do something together on Sunday then?" asked Jane.

"I would guess that I will probably be a wee bit hung over come Sunday morn, but Sunday afternoon I would love to. Perhaps we could take a walk through a park? Or rent a boat and explore some channels?"

"The boat sounds lovely. I've never been on a narrowboat before."

"It's a date."

"So. Stag night." She fiddled with a lock of hair. "What's that going to be like?"

"Booze. Lots of booze. And even though I don't drink that much, whenever Jack throws a party shenanigans ensue involving my resolve being broken, and wagers and--."

"What else?" she asked a bit shyly.

John felt as if he could read Jane's mind. "He promised no women, Jane. Don't worry. I won't stand for any such foolishness. Jack said there would be poker, booze, food, and cigars. That's all."

Jane's voice lightened knowing this bit of information. "Bess told me last night that she is giving me a hen party on Saturday, beginning around noon."

"Noon? But I thought we would be able to at least spend the afternoon together," he whinged.

"Not sure why she wants to do it during the day. John, before I forget, is there any way that you
could get Jack or Niles to get that recording device out of your office? It makes me nervous knowing that Daniel is listening in, hearing our conversations."

"Jack said he'd take care of—" John's face went ashen. "Bloody hell. Daniel knows about my stag party. He'll know you won't be with me on Saturday night and that I will most likely be indisposed."

"He wouldn't— you don't think he'd— do you? You think he might try and confront me or something?" Jane asked, suddenly fearful.

"Not going to leave it to chance. I'm going to cancel the party. I don't particularly like losing money to Jack. I think he cheats. And I loathe cigars."

"No, John, don't do that! You only get one stag party, at least I hope you only need one!" she said, laughing. "If you're worried for my safety, maybe I could just hide out in your bedroom or something."

He shot her a look of disapproval.

"Or not," she frowned. "I'll be with Bess. What could happen? Nothing is going to happen. I'm alone every night and nothing has ever happened, right? He's a windbag. I bet he is all threat and bluster, and nothing is going to come of it. He'll lose interest the minute I get married. The only reason he wants me is because I'm a vir—" Jane stopped herself, clamping her mouth shut.

"I understand what you are saying, Jane, and you are probably right. But I don't want to leave anything to chance. I've changed my mind. I want you to come to my flat after your party. It will be smelly and stinky and the men will probably be rude and foul-mouthed, but you'll be safe."

"I'll stuff cotton wool in my ears, and bury my nose in a bunch of lavender. I'll bring a book or two and hole myself up your room. No one will even know I'm there, and when the party is done, you can walk me home, because you most certainly won't be in a condition to drive," laughed Jane.

They agreed on the plan, and soon they had arrived at work. Jim ignored them as they ascended to the fifth floor in the lift, and he sniffed continuously.

"Hope you feel better, Jim," Jane said as they exited the lift, but Jim didn't reply.

Wednesday passed by quickly, with much progress made on writing. Bess practically locked herself in her office, and asked her secretary to take all her calls, claiming that she had too much work to do and couldn't be disturbed. The real reason was that she didn't want to see Jane or John. Truth be told, she was afraid she would say something to trigger a memory, or worse, come right out and tell one of them the truth. Jack had told her everything that he knew about the Doctor and Rose's deadly dilemma, and Bess was given express instructions to not mention their names and to treat them as normally as possible, and to play along with their fictitious memories, even if they didn't make sense.

John and Jane ate supper at a pub on the way home, and Jane retired early. Bess came home late and simply bid Jane goodnight through her closed door around 9:45.

On Thursday morning, Bess left for work while Jane was in the shower, and Jane began to wonder if Bess was avoiding her. They had never gone so long without so much as a single conversation. The day progressed in the same manner as Wednesday, as again, John and Jane made great strides writing chapter three.

After work, they went to Jane's flat, and she cooked them a simple supper of broiled lamb chops,
steamed asparagus, and baked potato wedges. She sighed as she left a foil-covered plate for Bess in
the refrigerator, wondering when she would get to see her friend again. John made a fire, and they
sat on the sofa and drank tea, ate a few biscuits, and discussed their future as man and wife.

John and Jane mutually decided that after this book was published, they would move to his home
outside of Inverness and write from there. Instead of providing single chapters, they would
complete an entire book before submitting for editing. They would keep his flat, and stay in
London during the editing process.

When their discussion again delved into the possibly dangerous territory of children, they kept it
safe and avoided discussing intimate matters. They agreed that their first child would be named Ian
James if he were a boy, and Sarah Jane if a girl. They also decided that they didn't want to wait to
have children, and would not employ any sort of preventative measures. As they were both only
children, they felt itchy to have a large family, and would stop having bairns when their home felt
full.

At nine, they shared one single lovely and passionate goodnight kiss standing by the door. They
had not dared to touch each other beyond holding hands while they were on the sofa. They sighed
into each other's mouths, and then John left.

Late Friday morning, John was able to provide Bess with a complete and very good first draft of
chapter three. He walked it down to Bess's office only to find that again, she was unavailable.

"Is Bess all right?" John asked the secretary, now beginning to worry.

"Poor woman, she is just up to her elbows in alligators I think. So busy, and with still being on the
outs with Niles-" The secretary drew in a quick breath and looked chagrined. "Oops. Was I
supposed to say that?"

"Oh, don't worry. I am a friend to both of them. I know the situation." John sighed as he walked
away, pushing his hands into this pockets and slumping a bit as he returned to his office.

"Mr. Smith, how is the book coming along?" a familiar female voice called after him as he passed
the typing pool.

John spun around and a very straight-laced Priscilla Bootkins was staring at him.

"Ah, well, um, it's coming along well Miss Bootkins. Really I need to be heading back to my
office. Cheers." John attempted to escape any further conversation but he was called back.

"Where are you taking Jane Smith on your honeymoon?" she asked, before sniffing several times.
"That's— it's a secret." He held up a finger and pointed at his door. "And really, I do need-"

"Have you bought her a wedding present? Perhaps a shiny bauble or trinket? A mechanical device
of some sort?" Priscilla leaned forward, one perfectly groomed eyebrow raised in anticipation.

"Miss Bootkins, you are prying." John shook his head and walked away, shaking his head.
"Mechanical device? What the bloody… is she trying to insinuate something about me or has she
gone off her nut?" he thought to himself.

Priscilla watched him retreat into his office with slitty, suspicious eyes.

As John entered his office, Jane looked up, pushed her glasses up her nose, and studied the odd
look on his face.
"I think Priscilla has gone round the bend," he said quietly after he closed his door. Jane put her finger to her lips, and then mouthed, 'Daniel'.

"I don't care if he hears it or not," said John a bit forcefully. "Hello Daniel, your nippy sweetie isn't right in her heid!" he said in an exaggerated tone, staring at the telephone while twirling his finger against his temple to indicate a possible state of mental confusion.

Jane laughed, and John joined her, sitting on the edge of his desk. Jane continued to smile as she once again focused her attention on her typewriter.

John crossed his arms and looked out the window. "Bess is avoiding us."

"What makes you think that?" Jane asked, though silently agreeing with him without removing her eyes from her work.

"Just a feeling really," he said, shaking his head. "Ready to work on the outline for chapter four?"

"Just give me five more minutes and I'll have this scrawl of yours typed up," she said, with a cheeky grin. She held up a page that was covered with geometric designs mingled within his writing. "John, I have no idea what this means..."

John frowned and took the sheet of paper from her, and stared at it for a moment. He scratched his head and then frowned. "I'm sure I thought I was being quite brilliant at the time," he said with an eyebrow waggle.

Jane smiled right back and paused typing. "Looks sort of familiar, but I can't place it. It's like it's code or something."

"That's what I get for staying up until four in the morning writing instead of being in bed, where I should have been," he said, with a frown. "Nightmares," he admitted quietly. "I'm looking forward to ya bein' with me, love. I kenn I'll not be havin' nightmares with ya by my side," he said, softly.

"Oh John, I'm sorry. You must be exhausted," Jane said, standing up. She took his hand and led him to the sofa. "Rest." She pointed at the sofa. "That's an order. It's almost lunchtime anyway. I'll go get us something to eat."

"Yes ma'am," he said with a sloppy salute before stretching out his long form on the orange sofa.

Jane fluffed one of the decorative cushions and put it under his head. She kissed him sweetly and smoothed his hair out of his face. "I'll be back as quickly as I can."

John smiled contentedly, and closed his eyes, crossed his arms across his chest, and quickly drifted off to sleep. Jane gathered her raincoat, which John had finally remembered that morning, her handbag, and John's umbrella. She turned out the light and quietly left his office. She quickly walked passed the writing pool, ignoring Priscilla's persistent calls of her name, and headed to Bess's to see if she would like to join her.

"I'm sorry Jane. I really can't disturb her, she's so very busy. She's shut herself up in that office for a day and a half now," Bess's secretary explained apologetically.

"Thanks. Tell her I stopped by?" Jane asked, and then left with a sigh. Maybe John's right. I wonder if she's embarrassed after our talk? She did tell me some extremely personal things Jane thought to herself sadly. Or maybe she's blue about Niles?

Jane brought back a simple lunch of bread, cheese, ham, and fruit. Again, Jim ignored her, and
Jane thought that perhaps he had lost his voice due to his cold, as he sniffed the entire ride. "Feel better Jim," she said with a kind smile as she exited the lift. Bess was in the reception area, but stopped, turned and started to walk away when she saw Jane.

"Bess, hold on," Jane called, following her.


Bess halted and turned around, unable to look Jane in the eye, darting her gaze from side to side, up and down.

"Bess, have I done something to offend you? Or hurt you? Why aren't you talking to me? Avoiding me?" Jane asked, sadly.

Bess stopped her nervous looking about, and sighed, trying come up with a plausible excuse. "It’s… I’m…" She struggled to produce a reason.

"Is it because of your fight with Niles? Does it hurt too much when you see John and me happy? Or are you embarrassed because of what you shared with me the other night?" Jane asked, needing an answer.

Bess nodded, quickly deciding that either one of those reasons were adequate. "I am still very angry at Niles, but I miss him so much. I'm not jealous of you and John, darling."

This was true. Bess felt a sense of relief, understanding how Jack must feel after lying to his friends and being forced to improvise moment by moment. Perhaps she could do this after all. Regardless that this woman standing in front of her didn't know who she really was, to Bess she was Jane Smith, her best friend, and she missed her. Bess hugged her tightly. "I'm sorry I was avoiding you and John, darling. Let's just forget about it, all right? We have a wedding to plan! I want you to ask John for the rest of the day off. We're going shopping for shoes and bridal accessories, and then to the florist. Don't worry about photography. I'm sure Niles can round someone up from work."

Jane was happy to have her friend back. They hooked arms and walked to John's office smiling happily and chatting all the way. John was already awake and the light were back on when the ladies entered his office.

"The nap was a brilliant idea, love. I feel a thousand percent better. And it is so good to see you, Bess. Thought perhaps you had bivouacked in your office."

"Well your brilliant Jane has rescued me from becoming a hermit, and as a reward, I am stealing her away for the rest of the day. She is getting married next Sunday after all, and needs a few more things," Bess proclaimed, gathering Jane's things for her.

John happily agreed to the plan, and Bess and Jane set off for an afternoon of whirlwind shopping. Bess took her back to the bridal salon at Henrik's and she found a lovely veil. They also purchased white shoes, white gloves, tights and garters and undergarments that were appropriate for the wedding dress. Jane also picked some additional, and far from practical lingerie, and she didn't even blush.

"Bess, you do know you are my maid of honour, right?" Jane asked with a grin.

"It goes without saying," she said, winking.

"I want you to pick your dress. John has given me money to pay for the wedding, so please don't
worry about the cost. He's loaded," she whispered and giggled. "I hope you like pink and yellow, because those are the colours I have chosen."

"I love pink and yellow, but I think I look better in pink."

Without much effort, Bess found a lovely pink tea length dress that complemented Jane's bridal gown.

Next stop was the florist. "What colours do you like Miss Smith?" asked the florist.

"What do you think of soft pink and butter yellow?" asked Jane. "An unusual combination, I know, but-"

"Oh that is a lovely combination! Yes unusual, but very lovely against your skin. Roses, of course, are the obvious choice..."

"No! No roses," interjected Bess rather forcefully, looking at Jane.

"But I love roses, Bess," Jane replied. "I know you are worried that they will remind me of that man, but I am not going to let him ruin my wedding day, Bess!" said Jane, strongly.

Bess placed a gentle hand on hand's arm. "Are you sure Jane?"

"Positive. He only ever sent me red and orange roses, and I certainly won't look at those the same way ever again, but pink and yellow? They are soft and pretty and absolutely in no way remind me of Daniel Higgins!" Jane pronounced decisively. "Besides, John calls me his pink and yellow rose."

"He does?" Bess asked with a nervous smile.

Jane shook her head and closed her eyes. "Um, I—I don't know where that came from. He's never called me that. Maybe I dreamt that.” She turned to the woman who ran the shop. “I would like to order two bouquets of pink and yellow roses please, simple round nosegays. One for me and one for Bess, my maid of honour.” Jane looped her arm through Bess's and smiled at her.

"And for gentlemen of the party?" asked the sales lady.

"Three please. One for my fiancé, one for his best man, and one for Niles." Jane turned to her friend. "Do you mind awfully if I ask Niles to walk me down the aisle? I have no one else, and he is the closest thing I have to a brother."

"Of course, darling. I know he would be honoured, and he is so very fond of you."

The final stop of the afternoon was the stationery store. Everyone who was invited had already been given a verbal invitation, but Jane wanted to hand write invitations, even though it would be a formality. She picked fine white linen cards and envelopes, purchased a fountain pen with an appropriate nib, and black ink.

"You have more patience than I do, darling, although you do have lovely handwriting,” Bess complimented her friend as they walked out of the store to Bess's little car.

That night, Jane carefully wrote invitations night while Bess addressed the envelopes. It didn't take them long to complete the task, and once they were finished, they enjoyed tea in front of the fireplace.

"You and John have decided to move to Scotland when his book is complete, haven't you?"
Jane looked at her friend, surprised. "How'd you know?" she asked.

"Sometimes I can see things, Jane. Remember? I saw you and John getting married, so I bought your dress. I saw that Niles had been lying to me, so I left him." Her eyes glazed. "I see that you and John are going to be parents not too long into the future. I hope you don't mind me telling you."

“A baby,” she said quietly. Jane’s face glowed.

Bess nodded. “A baby.”

“We talked about children a few nights ago in fact. We aren't going to put off parenthood. We want loads of children."

"I'll never be a mother," said Bess sadly.

"Why do you say that?" asked Jane.

"I don't see Niles in my future, Jane." Tears formed in Bess's eyes, and she fell onto her friend, who gathered her into her arms and rocked her. "He isn't there at all! I'm afraid. I am so afraid he is going to die!"

"Oh Bess! You've just been lucky with these visions of yours! It's like when you open up a fortune cookie and it says you're going to meet a mysterious stranger, or get bad news soon. You're still upset about your fight with Niles, right? You can't know the future! No one can. Please don't take it so much to heart!" Jane held Bess and comforted her heartbroken friend until she had stopped crying.

"I'm going to call Niles tomorrow and patch things up with him. I don't know how much time we have left, and I don't want to waste another single minute." Bess wiped her eyes with a handkerchief.

Jane nodded and squeezed her tightly one final time. "I think we should call it a night Bess. See you tomorrow," said Jane softly.

oOo

Saturday morning was spent tidying the flat and primping for Jane's hen party. Bess elaborately styled Jane's hair into a chignon and affixed a tiny mock veil to the top of her head, a sign to all that she was the bride-to-be.

"Ready darling?" Bess asked her with a giggle.

"I guess so. Should I be worried?" she asked.

"Oh yes. Very worried! We are going to have a very, very naughty afternoon, darling!"

Jane covered her face and blushed fiercely. "I don't want to know, do I?"

"Absolutely not! First stop is luncheon at the Ritz. The girls are meeting us there in fifteen minutes, so we need to scoot!"

Bess opened the door for them. In the corridor was a white florist box, the type in which roses were delivered. The notecard had only word written it, 'Pet', and the handwriting was unmistakeable.

"Oh no," said Jane, leaning down to pick up the box with shaking hands. "It's from Daniel. Look at it for me. I can't do it."
"No! I am not going open that box." Bess shoved it into the flat with her foot. "We will deal with it later. Now come on, let's go have fun." Bess forced herself to be cheerful for Jane.

But the sense of foreboding was impossible to ignore.

oOo

After a very feminine luncheon including cucumber and watercress sandwiches, fruit, and petit fours, the five ladies squished themselves into the hired car that was meant to seat four passengers. They were giggling and laughing like teenagers, much to the amusement of the hired driver.

"All right ladies, time for a little game of truth or... truth!" Bess announced. "I'll start. Jane Smith, what is your favourite part of John's anatomy."

"Bess!" Jane screeched, open mouthed, and red-faced. All of the women squealed except for Eve, as Bess had insisted that Miss Woods allow them to call her today.

"Oh come now, Jane. It can't be that hard," said Betty with a teasing wink. "Or maybe it is. So many beautiful parts to choose from on that man of yours." Betty fanned herself.

Jane pressed her lips together and nodded, and then covered her face, embarrassed. "His hands," replied Jane, peeking between her fingers. "But his arms are nice, too. And... his lips and his hair..." she started to ramble.

"Oh, I have noticed those fingers of his. Very nimble I'm sure," said Barbara, the receptionist, with a wink.

"Jane, it's your turn now," said Bess. "Ask anyone a question, and they have to tell the truth."

"Umm, Betty, who is the handsomest man at the office?" asked Jane.

"That question is too easy, Jane," replied Betty, rolling her eyes. "Your fiancé of course! My turn. Jane, who was the first boy to kiss you, and how old were you?"

"Hey, that's not fair, I just went!" protested Jane.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't make the rules clear, did I? We ask you questions, and you answer them!" Bess said, straight-faced.

Jane hit her softly on the arm.

"You won't believe me, anyway. It was John, and it happened two weeks ago." Betty and Barbara both gasped.

"Really?" asked Betty.

Jane nodded shyly. "Yes, it's true. Marrying my first love."

"That's so romantic," drawled Betty.

"Go ahead, Jane, why don't you ask a question," prompted Bess.

"About time. Miss Woods, you've been awfully quiet today. I want to know... have you ever been in love?" Jane asked shyly.

"Yes," she answered simply. "My turn. Jane, do you believe that John is hiding any secrets? Does
he seem worried, or frightened? Has he had bad dreams? Does he have the feeling that he is living a life that is not his own?" and then Miss Woods sniffed.

The women went silent.

"Ah, no, I... No. He's very truthful. I..." she cleared her throat, "uh, he has told me has bad dreams, but doesn't everyone?" she laughed nervously, rather unsettled by the line of questioning.

"Oh good! We're here!" Bess announced, happy to end the game as it had taken an odd turn. "Where are we?" asked Jane.

"We are at the lingerie store!"

Jane groaned.

An hour later, Jane was laden with bags filled with a variety of frilly, demure, sexy, and downright scandalous lingerie. Each woman had purchased an item as a gift. The most revealing item had been purchased by Betty, while Bess's choice was exquisite while still sexy. Jane was very grateful, but also thankful that the trip to the shop was done.

The final stop was to the West End for a matinee of *Oliver!* Miss Woods's constant sniffing was irritating, but the others enjoyed the production. They left the theatre around five thirty, and Jane and Bess bid the other ladies goodbye, who each hailed taxicabs to their respective destinations.

"Did you ever talk to Niles this morning? Did you have a chance to call him?" Jane asked Bess once they were alone in the hired car.

"No. I didn't. I got cold feet. I will, I promise," she said as the hired car made its way through the streets of London.

"He'll be at John's stag tonight. Maybe you could call him there?" offered Jane, timidly.

"Oh, I couldn't possibly disturb him there," said Bess, waving her hand.

"I'm going over there," said Jane, nonchalant.

"You're going to John's stag night." It wasn't quite a question.

"John wanted to keep an eye on me because Daniel bugged the office, and he and Jack talked about the party. He completely forgot about the microphone and-"

"Jane, the last place you want to be is at your fiancé's stag night. Stay home with me. Nothing will happen. Better yet, let's you and me go out to dinner or a maybe a film? What do you say?" Bess asked.

"Well, I don't know. I'm very tired and I would love to just go and rest."

"Oh come on. I don't want to be home alone, and I certainly don't want to go to that stag night. If you are worried about what John will think, just call him. I will talk to him, and reassure him that you are safe, all right?" Bess suggested.

"Okay. But if he says no, I'm not going to do it."

"Love, honour, and obey?" Bess asked, raising an eyebrow. "You aren't even married yet, and already giving up your independence?"
Jane rolled her eyes. "No Bess, it's not like that. I value John's opinion, and I don't want him to worry about me," explained Jane.

"Mr. Williams, please pull over at the next phone box, would you?" Bess asked through the sliding privacy glass.

"Yes ma'am, there's one up ahead." The driver pulled up to the kerb and let Bess and Jane out.

Jane frowned at the idea, but dug through her coin purse and pulled out the necessary change, inserted the coins, and dialled John's home.

"Hello?" He answered "You're gonna have to speak up! The hi-fi is a bit loud.

"Hi!" greeted Jane. "Having a good time?"

"Loads of fun. Jack arranged for Robert to have roast pig delivered! Delicious! I want this for our reception. A proper luau! Doesn't that sound like a fantastic idea?" he said, chewing on something.

"Sounds great!" Jane yelled into the phone. "John, would you mind awfully if Bess and I went to a movie together instead of me coming over to your place? She doesn't want to be alone, and she doesn't think it's fair that we crash your night. We'll be in a public place, nothing is going happen," Jane explained.

John was quiet for a few seconds. "Put Bess on the telephone."

Jane stepped out of the phone box and handed Bess the handset. "He wants to speak with you."

Bess stepped inside of the box, and closed the door as the rain and wind had picked up and was blowing into the phone box. Jane scurried across the pavement and leaned up against the building under an awning to protect herself from the rain, as she had neither her raincoat nor an umbrella. The pavement was deserted, as the shops had closed for the night. The street was quiet, and the only vehicles in sight were the hired car, and a Jaguar sedan that had just pulled into the alley to Jane's left.

She hugged herself, and shivered as a gust of wind blew hard, blowing up her skirt, chilling her further. Bess's back was to her, and it looked as if she was arguing with John, given her animated hand gestures. She heard a shuffling noise to her left, and she looked to see what had made the sound.

A hand reached around from behind, and a cloth covered her nose, filling her nostrils with an acrid scent. She dropped her handbag as dizziness overwhelmed her, and her body went limp. She could feel herself being led, and then ultimately dragged away. She tried to scream, but her voice didn't work. She tried to struggle, but her body was like lead.

oOo

Bess stepped out of the phone box and scurried through the heavy rain to the car. "Mr. Williams? Are you all right?" His door was open, and the hired driver was slumped over the steering wheel. Hastily, she looked into the backseat and saw that Jane was not inside either. Bess spun around and looked towards the awning-protected shop front, but Jane was nowhere to be seen. She looked up and down the pavement, across the street. Jane was gone, but her white leather handbag on the pavement gave evidence that she had been standing in front of the bakery.

Bess scrambled to retrieve her coat and handbag from inside of the car. She knew something was very, very wrong. She ran back to the phone booth and slunk down, hidden below the panels. She
could feel four distinct presences, which chilled her to the core.

She peeked up through the window of the red booth. Three figures stepped out of the shadows. Jane gasped. Eve Woods, Jim the lift operator, and Priscilla Bootkins walked unnaturally slow and deliberate. A ghostly green glow trailed behind.

“What the bloody—“

Bess clamped her hand over her mouth to muffle the scream building in her throat at the sound of crunching bones as the innocent driver’s neck was snapped. Jim threw him to the street as if he were a rag doll. The man took his place in the driver's seat, Miss Woods in the passenger’s spot, and Priscilla in back.

Bess waited until the vehicle had pulled away before she hesitantly stood up from her hiding place. She memorised the license plate on the back of the hired Bentley and dialled John's flat. She breathed in and out a few times to calm herself waiting for what seemed like an eternity before someone answered.

"John's stag party, how can I be of service?" It was Jack. Bess could hear loud rock and roll music playing, friendly shouting, and masculine laughter in the background.

She steeled herself and then spoke. "Jack, this is Bess. Jane has been taken."

Bess heard him shout to turn off the bloody music and tell everybody to shut up.

“I didn't see if it was Daniel but who else would it be? A package was delivered to her flat this morning, but she refused to open it and I wouldn't open it for her. It was from Daniel, and I didn't it want to ruin her special day.” Bess’s voice hitched.

"Niles! Call Kransky. I need to know if Daniel's Jag is on the move! Get a tail on it!" Jack hollered.
"John, get over to Jane's place. Niles, give him your key. There's a package there from Higgins!"

"What's going on Jack?" Bess heard John ask.

Jack was quiet for a beat.

“I think Daniel has Jane.”

Bess could sense the tension in his voice, but his tone was steady.

Bess heard John growl, almost like an animal, and then the slamming of a door.

“Where are you? Tell me exactly what you saw."

"But Jack, it's worse! I think those aliens have found her! I think they've possessed two people from the office! But there was a fourth one. It looked like a green ghost."

“Damn it all to hell it sounds like the Family. Do you have the watches?"

“Yes. In my handbag.”

“Do not lose them. Do whatever you have to keep those watches out of their hands, Bess. This is not just life or death for Jane and John. This is about the Doctor and Rose. This is the fate of the universe.”

Bess choked a sob, but managed to recover.
“Whose bodies have they stolen?” asked Jack.

“They’re all people from the office. Jim the lift operator, Miss Woods, and Priscilla.”

“Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit! They figured out who Jane is. The Family knows. John thought he was acting weird tonight. The guy took off about half an hour ago.” He stopped himself.

"John is on his way to your place right now, Bess. Stay put Bess. Do not move and keep out of sight. I am sending a team to get you. I trust them. You can tell them anything. Just don't hang up the phone, I'm gonna have someone stay on the line with you. Do not show yourself to anyone, understand?"

It was only when Jack handed the phone over to a Torchwood agent named Ben that she broke down.

oOo

Jane's eyelids were heavy but she forced them open. She was laying across the backseat of a luxurious vehicle. The smell of freshly conditioned leather and cigarette smoke mingled to assault her nose in a heady and unpleasant stench. Dim light from the passing street lamps came through the windows, and from her prone position, she could see the face of Daniel Higgins staring back at her in the rear-view mirror.

"Hello Pet. I warned you that I wouldn't be pleased if you turned down my offer."
Chapter Summary

Jane is brave. John is enraged. Jack is a hero. Bess is foolish. Daniel encounters.

Chapter Notes

Although non-explicit, I believe I need to give content warnings for this chapter. Please see the end notes if you want more specifics.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 26 - Jane & Daniel

John ran down the stairwell, two steps at a time.

"I'm comin' with ya!'" Robbie O'Malley called after him. He was one of Jack's trusted colleagues who had been invited to the party to fill up the poker game.

"Well you'd better run faster 'cos I'm not waiting for you!" shouted John as he continued his near free-fall down the stairs.

Robbie caught up to John by hauling himself over the railings, bypassing the turns. They both burst out the front door and John quickly unlocked his Aston Martin and opened the passenger side for Robbie. He drove like a madman pushing the brink of safety, not stopping once between his flat and Jane's. He parked illegally half on, half off of the pavement. Mrs. Butterfield glared at him through her lacy curtains.

"You can't park there, young man! I don't care if you are some big fancy author and Miss Smith's fiancé! It's illegal! It's dangerous! Move that vehicle or I'm going to call the police!" Mrs. Butterfield shook her aged fist at John through her lacy curtains.

John ignored Mrs. Butterfield's threats as he ran up the stairs and then unlocked Jane's flat. A white florist's box was in the middle of the entryway. With a tug, he broke the wide black satin ribbon. He lifted the lid, and dropped it to the floor. There was a small, wrapped gift laying on top of the green florist's tissue paper. Hastily, he shredded the wrapping paper, revealing a small and tattered book, The Victorian Language of Flowers. A slip of folded paper served as a bookmark. He opened the fragile book without regard to its age, splitting the weak binding and withdrew the note from between the pages.

Hello Pet,

I have decided to give you a second chance. Consent to accompany me to Paris tomorrow. When you go out with your friends this afternoon, wear the red rose in your hair as a sign of your surrender. I will be watching you.
If you persist in your stubbornness, I will be forced to make other arrangements. Whether you like it or not Jane, you are going to be mine. I always get what I want. The choice is up to you: pleasure or pain.

- Daniel

PS I found this lovely little tome in an antique book shop and thought of you. I have taken the liberty of highlighting a passage. I think you will find it most educational.

John shoved the note at Robbie, and read the passage from the book out loud.

"The presentation of dried white roses from a lady to her would-be suitor is a dire message indeed. Should the suitor be presented with dried white roses from his lady, he should immediately cease his attempts to woo the lady, as she is telling him in no uncertain terms that he will never claim her heart.

"A warning to a lady who is considering this presentation: she must consider her decision most gravely and with the utmost sobriety. In doing so, she is telling the poor soul that death is preferable to surrendering her chastity. This declaration could irreparably damage his fragile heart and soul, ruin him for any chance of romantic love or happiness in the future, disgrace him and heap shame upon his reputation. A true gentlelady would not trifle so with a man's heart, and these flowers are not appropriate for a lovers's game."

John unfolded the tissue and, as expected, found a bouquet of dried white roses. A single red rose blossom fashioned into a hair adornment lay nestled within the withered blooms.

Robbie O'Malley was a seasoned and senior Torchwood operative who had stormed the beaches of Normandy, faced creatures from other worlds, and witnessed frightening natural phenomenon. John Smith, standing silently before him holding the box of ugly white flowers, was the single most frightening thing he had ever witnessed. Power radiated off the man. Robby felt dizzy, as if the world had suddenly started to spin faster under his feet.

With icy calmness, John carefully re-folded the tissue within which the flowers were wrapped. He replaced the lid and set the box on the entry table. He put the book on top of the box, took the note from Robbie, folded it, and pushed it into his trouser pocket.

John stared out the window and silent rage brewed in his mind. His Jane - his future wife, the mother of his future children - was in jeopardy. Daniel had been warned to stay away. He hadn't, and there would be no second chances.

"I... I have my two-way on me. Shall I radio Jack and-" stuttered Robbie.

"Yeah. Get Jack on that thing. John’s voice was low and steady. “Torchwood agents are tracking Higgins, right? Find out where Higgins is. We're leaving."

oOo

Jane drifted in and out of consciousness, vaguely noting the movement of the vehicle, rain against the windshield, and the rhythmic sound of the wipers alternately groaning and swishing back and forth. Every once in a while, Daniel would peer back at her, lasciviously leer or lick his lips.

Jane found her voice. "Where... where're ya takin' me?" she asked weakly. Her upper arm was sore, like a shot had been administered.

He grinned at her wickedly, looking back in the rear view mirror. "I have made arrangements for
our encounter to be memorialised. I want to relish the moment over and over again sweet, innocent Jane. It would be a waste to lose this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I will make sure your John receives a copy. Tell me, does he have a home movie projector?"

Jane grimaced and grunted, realising that at some point, Daniel had put handcuffs on her wrists and bound her ankles. Feeling had finally returned to her extremities. She adjusted her position so that the metal was no longer digging into her wrists.

"Of course, if you make this difficult, well, I would hate to see this film fall into the wrong hands."

"I won't— I won't let you do this to me!" Jane said as defiantly as she could, though her voice was barely audible.

"I don't think you are in any position to protest," he replied in a mocking, sing-song voice. "This can be easy for you and pleasurable for both of us, or hard for you and pleasurable for only me. The choice is up to you."

Jane felt a feeling welling up within her. Rage. "You… proud of… the fact that you're… gonna have to… force me?" Her voice was a bit stronger than it had been just moment before, and she felt braver as well, though she didn't know where the quickly building rage was coming from. It had replaced her fear. She could almost hear John telling her to stay strong, to fight Daniel, to resist him, to challenge him.

Daniel shot an angry look at her, but said nothing. His jaw flexed ever so slightly. The car slowed to a stop, and Daniel got out. He pulled her out of the back seat under her arms. She was too weak to fight him aggressively, but she made her body as limp as possible.

He hoisted her over his shoulder with a grunt and carried her outside a plain, grey building, a warehouse perhaps. He pressed a doorbell in an obvious pattern. The door unlatched and in they went. Once inside she saw the basics of an office, but it looked like a temporary situation, with metal folding chairs and a folding table piled high with reels of film. There were a few cardboard boxes up against a wall labeled with vaguely erotic titles, Lusty Ladies of London, The Un-Virgin Queen, The Sheriff of Naughtyham.

"Renaldo, we have arrived!" Daniel called out with bravado.

"You lost them, you flumorro p'too!" Wife of Mine scolded Husband of Mine.

"It's not my fault that this weak human body doesn't know how to drive!" Father whinged. "I have never laid hands on a crude four-wheeled human transport machine before!"

"Will you stop bickering, Parents of Mine! So Father of Mine lost track of the Time Lord's wife. So what? It's not like the foolish human Higgins is going to kill her. He is too much of a slave to his human lust. I read the mind of my host before I drank her life force. Priscilla Bootkins knew him intimately and understood how he thinks. He will perform his barbaric sexual ritual, lose interest in the woman, and discard her. He's too much of a coward to risk imprisonment to commit murder. He told Priscilla Bootkins that he is planning on leaving the country presently, and we won't have to worry about him any more. Although, he has been a nuisance, hasn't he?" Daughter of Mine added with a bored voice, crossing her arms and smirking. "So stop acting like humans and focus on finding the Time Lord and a proper host for Brother of Mine."

"Daughter of Mine speaks the truth, Husband of Mine," added Wife of Mine. "The Time Lord has hidden himself well. He was crafty when he separated himself from his wife. It was a wise
strategy. However, I am surprised that the wife has strayed from her mate. And even more
surprised that he would allow her be wooed by that human, John Smith, let alone treated so poorly
by that vile Higgins. He left her unprotected. It was a foolish mistake. But then again, perhaps
Time Lords aren't as loyal to their mates as other species. Not like us," Wife of Mine said smugly.

"The Time Lord's life force will give us the time we need. But the power held within the wife of
the Time Lord is what will give us strength, and then we will be eternally unstoppable," Brother of
Mine hissed into the minds of his family. "Both are essential. He must be found."

oOo

Bess heard a vehicle approaching, but she stayed hidden. Two sets of scuffling shoes approached
and stopped outside of the phone box. She looked up and saw Niles and a second younger man
peering in through one of the panes of glass. She stood up quickly, opened the door and threw
herself into Niles's arms.

"Bootsie, are you all right?" Niles asked softly.

Bess nodded. "I'm freezing." Bess hugged Niles back and then whimpered. "He took Jane. And it's
my fault. He took her."

Niles put his arm around her and led her to his vehicle. oOo

Daniel dropped Jane on a bed, and she landed with a bounce. She looked with disgust to see it was
covered in black satin and red velvet. Slowly, she sat up and looked around. She was in a
windowless room that had been turned into a film studio.

"What a lovely subject you have brought to Renaldo." The man had a hint of an Italian accent. "So
fresh and young. Pretty too. She most definitely has the look of a blushing bride, but is she?" He
put his finger under her chin and tilted her head upwards, examining her profile. He stood back, put
his hand under his chin and studied her. "Stand up. I need to see you properly."

"I'm not going to do anything you tell me to! He has brought me here by force," Jane said defiantly.

"That's what they all say in the beginning," the man said, wagging his finger.

"Why else would I have to be carried in over his shoulder like a sack of flour wearing handcuffs?"
Jane spat the words.

He ignored her protests. "This project excites me! We are going to be making something beautiful!
It will be a work of art! You should count yourself very lucky, young lady, to have a man who
cares about you so much that he wants to memorialise this momentous occasion in your life. You'll
find that once you start getting into the spirit of it, you'll enjoy it. I'm Renaldo by the way, and you
are?" He took her shackled hands intending to kiss her knuckles, but Jane pulled them away and
stared at him defiantly.

"He is nothing to me! I am engaged to be married a week from tomorrow to a man who is one
thousand times the man that he is!" Jane shouted, staring at Daniel.

"She has spirit. I like that! But shame on you, Mr. H. I was under the impression that she was a
shy, willing participant," he said with a dirty grin. "So, tell me if you agree with my artistic vision.
Imagine this lovely girl dressed in a beautiful white wedding gown. She is reclining on the bed,
waiting with great anticipation for her new husband to join her. He, of course, is your sworn
enemy. You have been rivals for her heart since childhood, and she chose him instead of you."
"Go on," prompted Daniel, listening attentively.

"Tonight is her wedding night. She has chosen to blindfold herself. She wants to show her new husband that she trusts him completely!" he said grandly. "But what she doesn't know, is that the man who has just entered her boudoir is not her groom, and because she has never been intimate with a man, even him, she does not know his touches, his body, his scent. You keep silent, listening to her small nervous gasps as you begin your seduction by giving her the gentlest of kisses. But without warning, you lose control, you tear the gown off of her perfect, pure body, only to find that she is wearing the most seductive lingerie imaginable. It is tawdry and cheap and you think perhaps she is not so innocent after all. So you subdue her. You restrain her, silently punishing her for her lies. You tear off her mask and reveal yourself to her. But even though she does not see her new husband before her, she is overcome with delight when she sees it is you. You tease her, toy with her, and only when she is dripping with desire, begging you on bended knee to take her, to make her yours do you give into her pleas. And then sexsexsexsexsex . . . Finito!"

"True to life. I like it. I like it very much," Daniel said, looking towards Jane. "When can we start?" he asked, lust thick in his voice.

"As soon as I see the cash in my hand," replied Renaldo with a glint in his eyes.

Daniel reached into the breast pocket of his suit coat and pulled out a thick envelope. Renaldo immediately thumbed through the thick stack.

"Of course, there will be a surcharge."

"Surcharge?" asked Daniel.

"Clearly, the girl is clearly not cooperative, and will need encouragement," he waved his hand blithely. "An additional five hundred."

"I'm good for it," Daniel said proudly.

"Oh, of course you are! Of course!" Renaldo slapped Daniel on the back like an old friend.

Daniel pulled out his wallet and produced the funds.

"So how much am I worth, huh?" Jane asked boldly. "How much are you taking to allow this monster to rape me?" Jane's eyes flashed angrily.

"And she surprises me yet again. Pleasantly. You certainly are facing a challenge," Renaldo chuckled, and then his face became dark as he fixed his eyes on Jane. "Time to change."

"I want to watch," Daniel said.

Jane's brain went into gear. What would Iris Mason do? she thought to herself. "No!" Jane said forcefully. "I— I mean no," she repeated more softly. "The bride is never seen while she is preparing, right? And— and you want this to be as realistic as possible, right?" Her boldness surprised her.

"I do believe you understand my artistic vision," Renaldo said.

"Right. That's it. You understand that don't you Daniel? Being a successful editor and all? You understand the artistic mind. Artists know what they want, right?" Jane added a bit desperately. But then she swallowed, calmed herself, and changed her tone of voice. "And like you said before, this could be," she swallowed thickly, "easy, or it could be," she blinked, "hard, and seeing that I don't
have much choice in the matter, well…” her voice trailed off.

Daniel looked at her hungrily, grabbed her upper arms and yanked her hard against his body, crashing his lips to hers. Jane stiffened, unresponsive to his aggression. After he had stolen his kiss, he pulled away, uncaring at her lack of enthusiasm.

"Go make yourself beautiful for me," Daniel ordered smugly, unlocking the handcuffs and untying the knots around her ankles.

"Fantastics!" Renaldo exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. He retrieved a white gown and a shopping bag and handed it to Jane.

"Is there someplace private?" Jane asked, chewing her lip nervously.

"The loo is over there." Renaldo pointed to a door on the other side of the room.

Jane entered the small, filthy room that housed the toilet, and quickly surveyed the area. No window. No exit. She changed as slowly she dared, cringing as she pulled on the scanty and scratchy black lingerie.

The wedding gown was, of course, scandalously revealing, prominently displaying her almost painfully pushed-up cleavage. She tamped down tears as she looked at her reflection in the small wall mirror above the sink. She knew that now was not the time to be worried about modesty. She needed to keep a clear head. She had to be sharp and brave. The voice speaking to her mind, John's voice, repeated words of encouragement- at least she imagined it was John who was speaking.

Jane grasped the doorknob and held it for a moment before turning. She emerged and slowly approached the two men who were staring at her.

"You have brought me a goddess! She is Venus herself!" exclaimed Renaldo dramatically. "Not every country is as ashamed of the human form, as fearful of sex, as your prudish England. In Italy or France, I could proudly sell my art, not hide it, trading in secret like I must on this mouldy island! This woman before you would be revered! She would make me fortune!" Renaldo looked at Jane greedily, and then back at Daniel without any change of expression. "I have changed my mind. If you want my masterpiece to be only for your eyes, I will need additional compensation. Production costs have suddenly doubled. And further, if you want the original film reels, it will be triple. No negotiation."

Daniel ran his hand through his hair and looked at Jane, nervous and cornered. "I want the reels. But I don't have the cash on my person or at home. I will have to go to my bank and make a withdrawal on Monday."

"Fantastico. We will begin shooting on Monday then." Renaldo started to shut down the lights.

"I want to shoot this now!" Daniel growled.

Jane kept quiet. The voice in her head told her to hold her tongue and observe.

"Filming begins when cash is in hand. First and foremost, I am an artist. However, I am also a businessman. I am sure you can understand. We'll keep her here until Monday. She will be safe, I assure you." Renaldo said as he cast a wan smile in Jane's direction.

"Will you take gold? Jewelry? What about works of art? I have a Picasso. I have certificates for stocks and bonds at my flat," Daniel offered, sounding slightly desperate.
Jane remained silent as John's voice reverberated in her mind. *Cooperate. Be passive. Daniel is desperate. Fighting him might tip him over the edge. It might push him over the edge, decide that the film isn’t worth the money. He can’t hurt you Jane.*

"You take me to your home tonight, show me what you have, and perhaps we can make a deal after all. If I see something that I like, we can begin filming tomorrow." Renaldo extended his hand to Daniel and they shook, and Daniel's smile returned.

She had just been given the gift of time. Jane inwardly sighed in relief, even though it would be a long and painful night. Renaldo handcuffed her to the bed, bound her feet with a thick silk cord, blindfolded her, and haphazardly draped a blanket across her body. Daniel pulled out a syringe and without a second though, plunged it into Jane's upper arm. Her eyes and limbs felt heavy once again, and she drifted off to sleep.

oOo

Jack heard the squawk of his two way radio. "Infinity Man here."

"This is Leprechaun."

Jack could hear John pestering Robbie to find out if Jane or Daniel had been found.

"Has subject been acquired?" asked Robbie.

"Negative Leppy. What's your disposition?"

"Outside of the victim's flat," said Robbie, keeping everything general.

"Don't call her that!" shouted John, enraged.

"We'll swing by and pick you up. Boyscout is en route to recover Miss Boyscout," Jack explained. "Merry and Pippin are headed back to TW to retrieve the ladies."

"Gimme that thing!"

Jack heard the muffled sound of John's voice.

"I need good news, Infinity Man," John demanded.

"The subject of our hunt is on the move, headed back this way," Jack answered calmly. "Keep your pants on Professor, I'll be there in four minutes at the most."

Jack arrived in three minutes. "Get in!" hollered Jack out the window. "No way Captain! I've seen how you drive!" John argued.

"I said get in, John!" Jack growled.

John gritted his teeth, quickly locked his car, and then climbed into the front passenger seat of Jack's Torchwood vehicle.

"Where'd Higgins go before he turned around and came back?" Robbie asked Jack as he scrambled into the backseat.

"East end industrial area. Warehouse district. We lost his signal for a while, and by the time it was recovered, he was headed back this way," explained Jack.
"You lost him?" John screeched.

"But we have him now, John, and that's what's important. All right? You need to calm down, buddy."

"You are telling me to calm down?" John replied angrily, hitting the dashboard before forcing himself to do just as Jack said.

Jack's radio squawked. "Infinity, we have visual. He is alone, and it appears he has someone in tow in a second vehicle behind him."

"Description of tail?" Jack asked nervously, hoping that the Family was not following Higgins.

"Male in his mid-forties, black hair, mustache, alone. Driving a late model dark blue or black Fiat 600. Italian plates. Registered to a Renaldo Bernetti. He is here on a two year work visa. Lists his profession as film maker."

"Film maker?" Jack said, incredulous. "Are you sure he's tailing Higgins?"

"Affirmative. Higgins motioned to him a couple of times, giving him directions. They're definitely together. Supposedly the bloke makes documentaries but, well, his name also came up on an Interpol watch list as a producer and trafficker of porn."

John shook his head angrily. "That devil is going to film my Jane. He is going to violate her and make a bloody movie of it!"

"We are not going to let that happen, John," Jack replied firmly.

"Infinity, Merry and Pippin are ready to proceed, and the Sisters are ready. Subject is currently heading west on Oxford Street near Marble Arch."

"Hold on boys, it's gonna be a bumpy ride." Jack careened through the crowded Saturday night streets of London, going the wrong way down one way streets, through alleyways, and even down the pavement, skirting traffic, until he had caught up with the rest of his team and Higgins's Jaguar. Jack pulled up alongside Daniel.

A medium-sized white lorry jackknifed across all lanes of traffic. "Brace for impact!" With a whoop and a grin, Jack pulled up to the right of Daniel's Jaguar and slammed on the brakes to avoid crashing into the lorry. Metal on metal crunched as Daniel's car was broadsided from the left, and then their own car lurched to the right as Daniel's Jaguar was pushed flush against the passenger side, throwing John against Jack.

"Hello, gorgeous," Jack said to John with a flirty grin and a wink.

"Not now, Jack," he growled, sliding away from Jack back to his side of the bench seat and looking to the left at Daniel's smashed vehicle.

Jack and Robbie got out of their vehicle, which had plowed into Daniel’s Jaguar from the left.

"John, I want you to stay in this car. Under no circumstances are you to get out until I come and get you, do you understand?" Jack ordered with authority. "If I have to order Leprechaun to restrain you I will."

“No way. I’m coming. I want to see Daniel suffer," he gritted out, looking at the limp man who was almost close enough to strangle.
"And I promise, you will. But you can't see this. Am I gonna have to order Leprechaun to cuff you and throw you in the back of this car?"

"No," he growled, but then lunged for the driver's side door in one last effort to get out. John heard a strange whirring sound outside of the car. He jiggled the handle, and even though the car was unlocked, he was unable open the door. None of the window cranks worked either. He slammed his fist into the seat and crossed his arms angrily.

"I'm sorry John, it's for your own safety!" Jack shouted over his shoulder as he sprinted towards the disabled lorry. Robbie quickly made his way to Renaldo's car and arrested him on behalf of Interpol. He handed him off to the policeman who had just arrived on the scene.

John looked to his left. The driver’s window was cracked — there was no way he could see into the Higgin’s car and stare down the devil.

oOo

Daniel slammed his foot on the brake pedal to avoid the large white delivery lorry that had moments ago spun out in the rain, blocking all lanes of traffic. A black vehicle came barreling out of an alley and smashed into the left side of Daniel's Jaguar. The engine of his automobile died abruptly, and steam billowed from under the hood. He turned his head right, but the shattered glass of his window made viewing impossible.

A traffic jam quickly developed, complete with horns blaring and angry drivers yelling. Daniel slammed his hands on the steering wheel, and looked in his rear view mirror. Renaldo had his hands thrown up in disgust and frustration.

The metallic tang of blood touched his tongue, and a stream trickled down his cheek, and dropped onto his trouser leg. He gingerly fingered his right temple, and winced as he felt tiny shards of glass embedded in his scalp and temple. The window in the door was shattered, hanging precariously like a head-shaped spider web. Suddenly lightheaded and claustrophobic, desperate to escape his vehicle, he pushed hard on his door, but it was jammed. It was only then that he realised that his car had been pushed flush against the vehicle to his right, trapping him inside. He heard the far off sirens of emergency vehicles, and the whistle of a policeman.

Two men approached his vehicle from the front, but in the dark and rain, he could not see their faces. One of them hefted a sledgehammer and smashed the windshield. They made no effort to avoid dragging him over the jagged glass as they hauled through the hole.

"Hey, careful, I'm hurt!" Daniel protested weakly as he was deposited onto the rough street.

"Hello, Daniel Higgins," growled a rough looking man in coveralls.

"How… how do you know my name?" he stuttered, starting to be fearful of the situation developing around him. "Where are you taking me?" Daniel asked nervously. "You're not ambulance men are you?"

The men each grabbed an arm and manhandled him towards the lorry. "Right in one," said the second man. "Uppsy daisy."

“Why are you taking me to that lorry? But—but—I'm hurt! I need medical attention!"

"You'll get all the medical attention that you deserve inside of this truck, now get in or we will toss you in!"
Daniel scrambled up and into the back of the lorry, ending up on hands and knees. The rolling door crashed closed, and Daniel was plunged into darkness. He heard a hinge squeaking, followed by hissing and clicking.

"You have been a bad, bad boy, Danny," said a man's voice through the darkness.

"Who's there? What's that sound? Who are you?" Daniel asked frantically.

"I'm hurt that you don't recognise me. You really should remember me, Higgins old boy!"

"You're that… friend of Smith’s who threatened me," he said, nervously.

"Remember when you asked me what I did for a living? The day that you forced sweet Jane Smith to go to lunch? I told you that I work to protect people in an official governmental capacity. Well here I am, protecting people in an official governmental capacity, and in this case, I am officially protecting Jane Smith."

"Jane?" he asked weakly.

Jack interrupted. "You may be rich, but do you know what I have that you don't? I have scary space monsters. Welcome to my world, Danny Boy." Jack flipped a switch and the cargo area was fully illuminated, revealing two terrifying creatures.

"Kle'frjsk and Kv'jrsk, meet Daniel Higgins. Danny, meet the Pincher Sisters from the lovely planet, Vosk. You said you needed medical attention? They're physicians on their planet, well, research physicians more accurately. They specialise in alien anatomy, and to them, you are alien. Why don't the three of you get better acquainted?"

"What the bloody— " Daniel abruptly stopped talking and started screaming when the two extremely touchy females approached him, and began to map his body with their multiple, needle-sharp appendages.

"I'll give you privacy." Jack jumped out of the lorry and closed the rear door. He pounded on the cab as a signal to leave, and the lorry left the scene of the accident. Jack returned to his vehicle to find a nervous John eagerly awaiting his return.

Jack unlocked his door, and climbed in. "I think you will find that Daniel will be amenable to answering your questions, my friend," Jack stated.

"Why'd you put him in the back of that lorry?" asked John, intuitively knowing that there was something inside of that truck that Jack didn't want him to see.

"He is being prepared for interrogation. I'm telling you John, you really don't want to know," Jack offered with a shake of the head.

"I don't know you at all, do I, Harkness?" John noted quietly.

The lorry moved, and Jack followed it until it had reached a sparsely populated location just outside of the city. For the next hour, Jack and John sat in the vehicle without a word. John thought about his Jane, and prayed that she was safe. He closed his eyes and leaned his head back against the headrest and imagined them happily running through a field of sweet smelling grass.

oOo

An hour later, a very traumatised Daniel Higgins was released from the scientific scrutiny of the
female Scorpoliths. The ladies were ushered back into their travelling pod where they settled down to catalogue their findings.

When Jack opened the back of the lorry, Daniel was curled up in a ball in the far back corner of the cargo area, shaking.

"So, how was your date, Danny? Aren't those girls charming? They have very skilled appendages. Very tactile race, the Scorpoliths," Jack mused. "I trust they were gentle. You should watch for any strange symptoms, though. They may or may not have impregnated you. They didn't sting you in the stomach did they?" he asked wickedly.

Daniel whimpered, and hugged himself.

"I'm just kidding, Danny. They can't knock you up. Too much genetic disparity. They were simply giving you a very thorough medical examination. They know very little about humans, and I thought, well, in the spirit of Human-Scorpolith interplanetary relations…” Jack grabbed Daniel's arm and pulled him to his feet. "Time to go Danny. Someone wants to talk to you."

Jack dragged Daniel out of the lorry and into a grassy field. Oddly, Daniel straightened and seemed stronger when he saw who was there to meet him.

"Where is she Daniel? What have you done with my Jane?" John's hands were balled into tight fists, the veins in his neck were bulging in rage.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" he answered with a wicked smirk, though his voice was weak.

Daniel shrieked as Jack roughly jerked his handcuffed arms upward, and then he pulled out a firearm and pushed it hard against Daniel's temple.

"The man asked you a question, Danny. This weapon is like nothing you have ever seen before. Silent. Doesn't leave a single mark on the outside. Someone will find your body and think you'd died of a heart attack, but in reality, your body will have solidified from the inside out. And yeah, it'll hurt. A lot. And it will happen very, very slowly. Now, answer Mr. Smith's questions."

Jack cocked the weapon, and Daniel began to shudder, squeezing his eyes shut.

"In warehouse. On the east end."

"Gonna have to do better than that!" Jack moved the weapon from his temple to his throat. "Ready to spend eternity as a statue, Higgins?"

"The address is in the pocket inside of my coat!" he grunted.

John pulled Daniel's coat open and dug around until he found the scrap of paper. "This it? What kind of a place is this, huh?"

Daniel grinned for a moment and then John pulled him to his feet by the lapels.

"Did you harm her?" John asked. His voice was dead calm.

Daniel smirked. "Depends on what you mean by harm."

John released his lapels, looked at Jack, gritted his teeth and growled. "Do whatever you want to him, Jack. The more painful, the better."

Jack tossed John the keys to his vehicle. "Leppy, go with John."
John sprinted faster than he had ever run in his entire life to the car. The two men jumped in and sped off into the darkness.

oOo

"What did you do to Jane? Tell me, Higgins." Jack pulled his arms up behind him painfully.

"Was going to... to make a movie," he admitted when the pain became too sharp.

"What kind of movie?" Jack asked through gritted teeth.

"What do you think, you imbecile? Or don't you fancy pretty girls?" Daniel replied foolishly. He screamed when Jack once again jerked his arms upward.

"Has it been filmed yet? Tell me!" Jack asked.

"There was a bit of a question over... over compensation. The director... rather liked Jane, and... I wouldn't be surprised if he went back after... after the crash. He wanted more money. It was supposed to be me 'n her! It was supposed to be me and her!"

"Tell me the truth right now. Did you touch her Daniel? I will know if you are lying, and if you are, I will put you back in that truck, and those ladies will be thrilled to have the opportunity to study human anatomy in a more comprehensive way."

"No! Nothing happened! Just a kiss! Just one kiss!"

"You are a lucky man, Higgins. You gave me the right answer."

"Now that's settled, I want you to tell me where you got the wedding certificate." Jack demanded oddly calm, as he pushed Daniel into a kneeling position.

"I found— I found a man through an acquaintance of an acquaintance who made— made— it for me!" he said, struggling to breathe as Jack pushed the weapon hard into his windpipe.

"Name?"

"I didn't ask, and he— he didn't tell. He— he looked like John Smith." Daniel whimpered as Jack, again, pushed the weapon into his windpipe. "He looked like John, but his hair— his hair was different and he didn't wear glasses and— he had on a pinstriped suit and there was a woman with him. She was up the duff— about to deliver very soon from the looks of her— and she looked just like Jane." Daniel coughed a few times as Jack lightened up slightly on the weapon jammed into his neck.

"That son of a gun," Jack mused to himself. Jack pulled Daniel off of his knees by his collar, then threw him back down again so that he was prone on the grass, face down. He ground his boot between the cowering man's shoulder blades. "If you remember just one thing, only one, remember this: you never threaten the wife of a Time Lord. And now it's time to forget your life Daniel Higgins."

"What... What's a Time Lord?" he asked into the dirt and stubbly grass.

"This! This is a Time Lord you bastard!"

Bess emerged from the shadows, Niles trailing behind. She pulled the silver fob watch out of her handbag, flipped it open, and the full glory and terror of the Oncoming Storm flashed before
Daniel Higgins's eyes.

“No!” Jack screamed.

But it was too late. Golden tendrils of time swirled from the watch, seeking out the mind of the one who would dare to harm the Time Lord’s mate. Images were seared into his brain. The destruction of a thousand worlds. The end of the Earth. The golden goddess, Jane Smith herself, waving her hand and turning an entire race to dust.

Daniel Higgins saw rage and fire and death.

oOo

"The Time Lord! I smell him!" Father sniffed the air.

“Get out of my way, Father of Mine. I know how to drive.” Daughter took over the spot behind the steering wheel and aimed in the direction of the scent.

Chapter End Notes

Daniel kidnaps Jane.
Daniel drugs Jane with a sleeping drug. Needle warning (I know *I* am terrified of shots and IVs and blood draws, so I'm sure others are as well).
Daniel threatens to rape Jane. **IT DOES NOT HAPPEN. IT DOES NOT COME CLOSE TO HAPPENING.**
Jane is on the wrong end of a non-consensual kiss from Daniel.
Jane is restrained against her will.
Daniel threatens to have the rape filmed.
The event is to be filmed by a pornographer. **IT DOES NOT HAPPEN. IT DOES NOT COME CLOSE TO HAPPENING**

If you read anything else that you believe I should add to these warnings, please let me know via Tumblr message or even in a comment. I won't mind. I want to be good to my readers {{hugs}}}
John Rescues Jane

Chapter Summary

Jane is Safe. John is Gentle.

Chapter 27 - John Rescues Jane

"Bess! Close it! Shut the watch!" Jack commanded.

But Bess continued to stare into the ephemeral essence of the Time Lord. She held out the watch, aiming it at Daniel's eyes as if it were some sort of miniature television screen. She seemed to be frozen, unable to close the watch, hypnotised by the mystical, musical sounds and terrifying sights emanating from the timepiece.

"The Destroyer of Worlds. The Oncoming Storm. Fire and ice and rage. The last Time Lords. I'm the Doctor!"

Jack nabbed the watch from Bess's hands, snapped it shut and pushed it deep into his pocket.

Bess came out of her near trancelike state. "That is who you crossed, Daniel Higgins."

The man at their feet was trembling, drooling in terror, unable to process the images of power and destruction he had just seen flash before his eyes.

"That was John Smith and he did those terrible..." Daniel couldn't finish his sentence, now completely incoherent.

Bess watched with wide eyes as Jack produced a syringe from his pocket. He plunged it into Daniel's neck, emptying the entire reservoir of clear liquid into the stupefied man's bulging artery. Higgins hissed as the fluid burned, but then he drifted off into unconsciousness, blissfully ignorant.

"Well done, Harkness," Niles said, his arms crossed.

"Any complications I need to know about?" Jack asked as he holstered the weapon, capped the spent syringe, and stowed it safely in his pocket.

"It appears that the Family stopped following Higgins somewhere between the kidnapping and his destination," explained Niles.

"Hmm. Interesting. Alrighty boys. And Bess," said Jack, winking at her. "Merry, take the Sisters back to HQ. Pippin and Niles, stay here with Danny Boy and make sure the," he smirked, "treatment took. I'm going to take Bess with me, and meet up with John and Robbie. You heard what Daniel said. If he lied, and Jane has been hurt, Jane will need her friend," he looked at Bess, "and so will John."

"But wait a minute!" Bess exclaimed. "What's going to happen to him? To Daniel?" She frowned, giving in to the overwhelming urge to poke his motionless body with her turquoise blue kid, pointy-toed, Bruno Magli sling back shoe.
"I will stay with him until it has been determined that the memory erasure was successful," answered Niles, "and I'll administer a second dose if the first failed. Once it is determined that the Retcon administration has been successful, he'll be taken back to Torchwood and observed by psychiatric section, as is procedure after direct contact with non-Earthbound life forms and subsequent Retconning."

Bess closed her eyes and opened them again. "You know, I get that the Doctor isn't human, but he looks human, right? So who or what was in that lorry with Daniel? He was not a happy man when he came out of there."

"Nothing you need to worry about Bootsie," replied Niles, patting her on the arm.

"Don't you dare Bootsie me! I am in far too deep, Niles, and I deserve to know!" She turned to Jack. "If he won't tell me, maybe Jack will!"

"Two female Scorpoliths," Jack answered, his arms crossed.

"Which are what, exactly?" she asked, crossing her own arms, staring him down, a direct challenge for more information.

"I enlisted the help of two stranded aliens. They're research physicians from, well, very far away. They're rather intimidating looking, but actually quite harmless. I let them examine Danny here. Nothing invasive. They didn't even do anything that could be judged even mildly abusive. But, as you can imagine, having a pair of bipedal giant scorpions pinching your skin here and there was more than enough to make the man lose his bladder control. He needed to know that we were the ones in charge, and I also needed an excuse to Retcon him. Exposure to an alien being is an adequate reason per our rules and regs."

"So this memory erasure medication is given when we civilians meet up with an alien?" Bess asked in a strangled voice.

"Yes, S.O.P., standard operating procedure," Niles replied, perfectly calm.

"I know what S.O.P. means, Jack," she smirked.

"Of course you do. Sorry. So we reset his memories to, oh, approximately age seven, give or take a year."

"And that's it? He won't remember any of this? He won't suffer the humiliation of knowing what his actions reaped? How is that any sort of justice for Jane and John?" Bess yelled and pointed at the man on the ground.

"Oh don't worry, Bess. There is still one more person who will insist on dealing with Daniel here, and believe me, Daniel will get his due," Jack said with a glint in his eyes.

"Who?" Bess asked.

"The Doctor. And I am sure that he will have a trick up his sleeve that will make Daniel remember exactly what he wants him to remember. We need to get going, Bess," said Jack.

Together they hurried to his vehicle. Jack sped to intercept John, barking into his radio, to find out which way he should point his wheels.

oOo
Niles leaned against a massive, ancient oak tree and checked his watch. It had been nearly an hour and Daniel had still not stirred. Normally Retcon recipients regained consciousness after fifteen minutes, thirty at most.

"I think the Retcon failed," Niles said to Pippin as he pushed himself off of the tree with his back. "He should have come to by now." With his hands still in his pockets, Niles approached Daniel, but then he saw faint movement in the man's fingers. "Oh hello, looks like we have movement after all."

Daniel groaned, rolled over onto his back and then sat up. He rubbed his eyes, and then touched the side of his head, wincing. "Where am I?" Daniel looked up, and saw Niles standing over him.

"There was an accident. What's the last thing your remember?" Niles asked, crouching down on his heels, and flashing a small torch into his eyes to check the responsiveness of his pupils.

"You were found unconscious, here at the park."

"I heard singing, sounded like a choir. And there were these colourful lights, green and blue and-- Oh my head, it hurts!" Daniel clutched his head and groaned.

"I will take you for treatment. Like I said, you've been in an accident. You were out in this field- "

The sound of snapping and popping like static electricity charged the air, and the area was bathed in sickly green light.

"Niles!" Pippin shouted a warning in vain.

Niles spun around only to see his fellow agent, Pippin, engulfed in emerald light. His flesh melted away from his bones, and then he dissolved into nothingness.

A second flash of green lit up the copse. Niles screeched as sharp pain drilled into the back of his head, and then his vision went black.

Daniel drew up to his full height without effort, and spoke to the unconscious man at his feet. "I lied, Niles Eddington. The last thing this body remembers? Jack Harkness giving me a dire warning: 'Never threaten the wife of a Time Lord.' Sage advice indeed. Too bad Daniel Higgins didn't live to take it to heart." He smiled darkly. "Hello Family of Mine, I missed you most dearly," said Son with a wry smile as his family emerged from the trees.

"Son of Mine, can you smell him? Can you smell the Time Lord?" Father said with manic glee, emerging out of the shadows, sniffing the air.

"I can, Father of Mine." Son sniffed. "Oh! I can!" He grinned madly.

"The Time Lord was here. I can smell a trace of him." Father looked down at Niles, limp at his son's feet. "It seems, Son of Mine, that the man whose body you have taken was rather foolish. He tried to hurt the wife of the Time Lord. It is confirmed. Jane Smith is Rose Tyler. But who is the Time Lord?"

"Haven't Daughter of Mine and I tried to tell you all along that John Smith is he?" asked Mother.

"Yes, dear Mother of Mine," agreed Sister. "Why do these two males continue to question us?" she asked, looking at Father and Brother with disdain.

The man formerly known as Daniel Higgins stood proudly and shook out his stiff-from-Retcon
limbs. "The man John Smith, may or may not be the Time Lord, Sister of Mine and Mother of Mine. Perhaps Jane Smith is drawn to her own husband, and the Time Lord was not as crafty as we thought. However, I have a thin memory of a man around whom time swirls."

Son walked dramatically around Niles's body, amidst his family.

"Right before his weak mind was chemically altered, Daniel Higgins's eyes saw a vision of the Time Lord, though the actual image of his face remains hidden to me," he said. "The memory erasure was rather complete, but a few memories are still accessible. The woman named Bess Cooper, the man named Jack Harkness, and the man named Niles Eddington are most certainly at the heart of the storm," said Son. "These names were swirling in his head."

"Niles Eddington and Bess Cooper are of this time," added Mother. "The former owner of this body, Eve Woods, has known Bess Cooper for fifteen years, and during that entire time, Bess Cooper and Niles Eddington have been a mated pair."

"John Smith began to work at Prescott Publishing merely one month ago," stated Father.

"But he has been writing his silly science fiction books for years," added Sister. "Priscilla Bootkins was quite keen to this fact as he had made quite a bit of money as an author, and she was almost as greedy as we." Sister smiled wickedly. "However, a Time Lord would be clever enough to create his own history."

"Jack Harkness is the best friend of John Smith. Jane Smith spoke of him at the silly pre-marital ritual I attended this afternoon," explained Mother.

"Niles Eddington, Bess Cooper, and Jack Harkness have encircled themselves around Jane Smith, protecting her. Perhaps one of these humans also holds the secret of the Time Lord's identity? It is obvious that they know Jane Smith's secret. They have gone to great lengths to punish this Daniel Higgins for the sake of the woman," said Son.

"And what have you done to this man on the ground? Why not simply kill him? He is of no consequence," Mother asked Son, kicking Niles with her sensible shoe.

"I adjusted my weapon per Brother of Mine's instructions. He is the one who told me to spare him!" Sister hissed, defensively.

"I want to hear what our brilliant Son has planned," said Father.

"The setting which Sister of Mine used on the man has put him in a temporary coma, from which, in due time, he will recover. He will surely be found by his compatriots when he doesn't report back to Jack Harkness. He will be taken to hospital. Now think like a human for a moment, think sentimentally. Niles Eddington is the consort of Bess Cooper, the friend of both Jane Smith and John Smith, as well as the associate of Jack Harkness." Brother walked around Niles's body.

"His friends will gather around him to comfort his mate in her time of distress. We will play upon their human sympathies, and at the appointed time, Niles Eddington will awaken, and then, we will strike. We will use him as a hostage, force them to divulge the identity of the Time Lord."

"And what of the scent of time we caught tonight? What of that, hmm?" asked Mother.

Brother smiled wryly. "You are wise, Mother of Mine. Tonight I encountered a man around whom time faintly swirls and bends strangely. Perhaps the Time Lord has camouflaged himself as a human, but his essence is leaking through? Perhaps he is becoming weak from the effort of staying hidden?"
"One of the men who was here tonight is definitely the Time Lord," pronounced Father. "But which man?"

"I still believe it is John Smith," said Daughter.

"I have a new theory," said Mother. "Which man has risked himself for Jane Smith? Which man gave Son of Mine the warning?"

A demonic smile took over Son's face. "Jack Harkness."

oOo

Jane heard faint rattling and the snick of a lock. Her stomach clenched in fear as the door creaked. She heard several pair of shoes scuffling.

"Would you look at this place," said a man with a thick Irish accent. "There she is! I found her!" he called out urgently.

Jane shuddered against the cold as the blanket was pulled away.

"I'll untie her," said the man with the Irish accent.

"Oh sweetest Jane, you're safe. We found you."

It was John. She wanted to smile, but her face was frozen. Jane's mind relaxed the moment John's gentle hand cupped her cheek.

"It's over, love."

Jane felt nimble, gentle, and familiar hands remove the mask from her face, but she still couldn't see his beloved face, as she couldn't out her eyelids. The second man worked the cords that were binding her limbs. Her wrists were finally free, but she couldn't lift her arms. Her thinking was muddled, and her body and voice were frozen. John's coat -- she could smell his aftershave -- now covered her.

A radio squawked. "Leprechaun here. Sweetheart has been secured. Send an ambulance and get the coppers here.

"I would tear off the head of the man who would dare to do this to my darling Maureen!"

The cheap bed groaned and creaked as John sat on the edge. With careful, kind and gentle hands, he moved Jane so that her head was resting in his lap. With long, slow strokes, he smoothed her hair off of her forehead.

"You're married, Robbie?"

"I am. To my childhood sweetie. She's expecting our first little one in two month's time."

Jane tried to smile, but couldn't make her mouth work as John placed gentle kisses on her face, in her hair, and on her limp hands. Soon, sirens blared and John's strong arms scooped her up and carried her out of the building. She missed his touch the moment he relinquished her to the stretcher. The cot was hoisted into the ambulance and locked into place.

John climbed into the ambulance, and then found a safe spot to sit. "Where are you taking her?"

"Royal Hope. They have a physician who specialises in female trauma," the ambulance technician
explained. He listened to Jane's heart through his stethoscope and attached a blood pressure cuff around her bare arm. Her vitals were strong, though slowed. He lifted her eyelids and examined her pupils with a small torch, and saw that they were very dilated. "I think she's on dope. Drug abuse is common by the sort of people who are in this line of work."

John's eyes snapped away from Jane's pale face. He gritted his teeth, and nearly growled, "Jane is not in this line of work! She was kidnapped! And if there are any drugs in her system, it is because Daniel put them there!" John replied furiously.

"I'm sorry sir, I thought, well, with those clothes and all, and that bein' a movie studio..."

John raked his hand down his face.

"So, are there any signs of," John sighed, "trauma?"

"I'm not authorised to do that sort of an examination. I'm sorry, sir." The ambulance technician answered kindly, with much more sensitivity than his previous comment.

John held Jane's hand and searched for signs of responsiveness. "Oh my Jane, I'm so sorry. One week from tomorrow, love. Just one more week. I picked up our rings this afternoon. They're beautiful. Perfectly matched set. And I had an idea for chapter six. I know it's a way off, but sometimes writing a book happens out of order, when the mood strikes. I want the Professor and Iris to get married in a spur of the moment ceremony."

Jane's eyelids felt just a little bit less heavy. She felt them flutter just the slightest bit. "John." She breathed his name and barely moved her fingers, just enough to let him know she was aware of his touch.

"Don't try to talk, love. Just rest. I'm here, I'm not going-"

"You need to know," she interrupted. "I need you to know." Her voice was shaking. She breathed in and out, as if she were expelling the toxins from her body, cleansing herself of unseen filth. She drew in one more long breath. "He didn't hurt me," Jane said in the smallest of voices, squeezing John's hand again.

She opened her eyes and looked up at her fiancé. "You saved me. I knew you would come. You told me you would, and you did. I heard you talking to me the whole time. You kept telling me to be strong. You told me when to be quiet, when to speak up. You saved me." She smiled and then closed her tired eyes once again, but this time, she was smiling.

Upon arrival at Royal Hope Hospital, she was met by an orderly, a nurse, and a physician.

"I'm Dr. Margaret Lambert. Are you related to the young lady?" she asked John quietly.

"I'm John Smith, Jane's fiancé," he replied.

The physician nodded. "I will be conducting the examination. I am sure you understand, but I must have you wait here."

"I'm all right," Jane answered weakly. "He didn't touch me."

"Love, are you sure? You were rather incoherent." John looked at the kindly physician as he spoke.

"I would know. I promise. I would know. He didn't touch me. Well, he kissed me." Jane's voice was becoming stronger each sentence she spoke. She moved her arms and legs a little bit.
John's face became stony at this revelation.

"And he was rubbish," she said with the hint of a twinkle in her eyes.

"Of course he was," he replied with a soft smile. "Once these lips kissed yours, you were ruined for anyone else, Jane Smith."

Jane laughed quietly. "You think you're so impressive."

"I am so impressive," he said, lifting his eyebrows.

The physician watched this interchange carefully, looking for any signs of emotional pain. "Miss Smith, even so, I would feel better if I was able conduct an examination."

"Quite right," replied Jane.

John frowned, clearly worried.

"It's okay John, nothing I haven't been through before. Mum was a nurse, remember? And even though she was terrible about explaining... things," she said, deciding that 'things' was now a private joke between the two them, not an avoidance of the word 'sex'. The point was further proven by the hint of tongue poking though her teeth. "Mum was very diligent and demanded yearly physicals."

"I'll be waiting for you, love." John squeezed her hand once more, and then kissed her lips.

"I know."

Jane was wheeled away for the examination.

oOo

An hour and a half later, Dr. Lambert returned to the private waiting area where John was waiting.

"I have good news, Mr. Smith. Jane's injuries are superficial. She has mild bruising on her wrists and ankles, but those are the extent of her injuries."

"So she wasn't..." He stopped himself from saying the word.

"No. She was not violated."

John sighed in relief and stood. "And how is she feeling?"

"Well the abrasions probably sting a bit--"

"No, I mean, how is she feeling?"

"Ah. I understand. You are wise to ask. Jane is almost euphoric. Adrenaline, I would say. She is joking with the nurse, laughing about the ridiculous film plot. Even made fun of the wedding dress and the underthings."

"Humour can be a healthy coping mechanism, doctor," John offered.

"Yes, you are correct. Her reaction to the ordeal is unusual, though not completely unheard of. Now what else can you tell me about this Daniel Higgins fellow?"
John told of the events leading up to tonight. How Daniel had invited Jane to lunch, threatened her, followed the two of them, photographed, and ultimately attempted blackmail in an attempt to break his engagement with Jane with the false wedding document.

"He is clearly obsessed. Jane is very lucky that she wasn't harmed, Mr. Smith."

"What did he drug her with?"

"From what she described, I don't believe that the drug Jane was given was illicit. I have ruled out heroin, opium, and cannabis. It was most likely something pharmaceutical, a strong sleep aid perhaps given at a very high dose.

"What about withdrawal?" asked John, nervously.

"The medication is almost out of her system already."

"Good. That's good." He nodded nervously. "What now? When can I take her home?"

"I would like to keep her overnight for observation. She has been through quite an ordeal. I want you to stay here with her. She is clearly comforted by your presence. The two of you have something special. I can tell. I see a lot of women come through here who are discharged and sent home with no one to love them back to health after they have been hurt."

"Jane is my world, doctor, she's my shining star. She's my muse. We're a team, in fact the next book is going to be co-written by the two of us."

"You mentioned that she's your transcriptionist. What sort of books do you write?" Dr. Lambert asked conversationally, trying to calm the nervous man.

"Science fiction. Probably nothing you have heard of, let alone read. I have written a series of books about a time traveller."

"Hold on, you are the John Smith? The Professor and Iris? Madman in a Box?" Dr. Lambert asked.

"That's me," John replied, more than a bit chuffed.

"Can I ask you something?" She was suddenly and unexpectedly shy.

"Of course," said John, nodding with a little smile.

"Are the Professor and Iris ever going to, you know, be a proper couple?" The way she asked the question made her sound half her age.

"You know I can't tell you that!" he said loudly with a dramatic flair, but then he leaned in and spoke quietly. "Do you think I should put them out to their misery?"

"They have suffered far too long, Mr. Smith. Give them their happiness," she said with a wink. "I convinced all of the nurses in this ward to read your series, and we all agree that the Professor and Iris Mason are destined to be together!"

"Have you been plotting with Jane?" he said with a devastating grin.

Dr. Lambert laughed merrily and regained her doctor persona. She squeezed his arm. "Mr. Smith, with you by Jane's side to aid her in her recovery, she is going to be just fine. All right then. I will be writing an order for her to be given a leave of absence from work for the next three weeks. This will give her time to recover emotionally. That doesn't mean I want her cloistered. Get her out. Go
to a museum, to the park. Perhaps to the cinema and dinner. Remind her what a real healthy relationship is supposed to be like, although I have a feeling that is not a foreign concept for you two."

"All right, I can do that," he agreed.

"And I understand your wedding is one week from..." She looked down at her watch. It was 12:45 am. "One week from today. I would ask you to at least consider postponing your wedding."

"I will talk to Jane about it," John said, but not convinced he would.

"The drug which she was given, if I am correct in my guess, has been known to cause memory loss at the level which she was probably dosed. It is possible she won't remember much of what happened today. Don't be surprised if tomorrow she is rather confused. I am going to wait to discuss treatment with her until tomorrow, all right?"

John followed the physician into the examination room. Jane was very talkative, and her limbs were moving freely now. The lurid clothing was in a paper bag, collected as evidence for the pending criminal investigation. An IV had been put in place to treat her mild dehydration, and to completely flush the drug that Daniel had administered out of her system.

"The authorities will want to speak with you tomorrow morning, Miss Smith. Do you think you are up to it?" asked Dr. Lambert.

"You bet I am!" she replied. "I would talk to a DI tonight if he could see me. I want Daniel and that awful Renaldo bloke thrown in prison for eternity, and if there is anything I can do to make that happen, I will." There was fire in Jane's eyes.

John couldn't help but smile at his fiancée's fortitude.

"Well dear, try to get some rest." Dr. Lambert said. "You're staying with her tonight, Mr. Smith." It wasn't a request, and then she left with a small smile.

The nurse remained, writing a few things in Jane's chart and asked a few final questions. "Is there anything I can get you to make you more comfortable Jane?"

"I'm hungry. Haven't eaten since noon yesterday, and then all I had was a teensy watercress sandwich. Ladylike food, Bess called it," she giggled.

"Cafeteria is closed I'm afraid, but I will see what I can cobble together for ya'," replied the kind nurse. She checked the IV flow of the saline solution one last time, and left, closing the door quietly behind her.

"Hello," John said quietly, his hands pushed deeply in his pockets.

Jane looked up at him as her head rested on the thin pillow, her hazel eyes wide open and searching. Her lips quivered, and the long delayed, but inevitable tears began to stream. She brought her hands up to fully cover her face.

John lunged for her and scooped her into his arms. He ran a gentle hand over her back in big circles, and held her head to his shoulder, hushing her. Bess had arranged her hair this morning in an elaborate hairstyle for the party, and now it was loose and messy. He felt a few hairpins pressing into the palm of his hand as cradled her head, so he pulled them out and ran his fingers through the silky strands freeing Jane's hair. It fell down around her shoulders, wavy and natural.
She nuzzled into his shoulder. "Stay with me?" she asked. Her voice was small and childlike.

"I'm not going anywhere, love." John softly kissed her forehead.

Ever so gently, he eased her onto the bed, and pulled the covers up under her chin. Without a word, she moved to the side to make room. He laid down next to her on top of the covers, but she shook her head, and motioned for him to climb in with her. It was a tight squeeze, and both of their backs were pushed up against the hard metal bed rails, so they simply moved closer to one another.

"Your still have your shoes on," Jane said, her voice giving away just how tired she was.

John removed his slip-on shoes, and dropped them over the side of the bed. They fell onto the floor with a double thunk. Jane and John turned towards each other and simultaneously, they wrapped their arms around each other, and soon, both were asleep.

Fifteen minutes later the nurse returned carrying an orange plastic tray with a cold ham and cheese sandwich, an apple, and a glass of orange juice. She began to speak and then saw the couple asleep, sharing the small hospital bed. She smiled, and as quietly as she could, the nurse set the tray down, turned off the lights, and shut the door.

The next morning, John awoke first, and soon, Jane was stirring as well. She opened her eyes to find that was John stroking her hair with a look of perfect contentment on his face.

"G'Mornin'," he said, his voice still thick and low from sleep. There was none of the awkwardness that was present during their last shared bed experience.

"What time is it?" asked Jane quietly, looking out the window at the early morning light.

John glanced at his wristwatch. "Half six."

Jane looked around and half smiled. "We're sharing a bed."

"Yep."

"You're wearing your clothes, and I'm in a hospital gown."

"Correct again," replied John with a cheeky grin. "It's a nice look for you, but they can be a bit draughty."

Jane gasped a bit and confirmed that she was fully covered. She rolled over onto her back and then turned her head to face John, who was laying on his side, his head propped in his hand.

"What happened? Why am I in hospital?" She finally asked the most obvious question.

"What was the last thing you remember?" He took her hands and held them close to his chest.

"Well, I remember being with Bess after my hen party. We'd stopped for some reason to make a telephone call."

"That's right, go on," encouraged John.

Jane closed her eyes and pursed her lips. "I, um, Bess wanted me to go to the cinema with her, but I didn't really want to. I wanted to go to your flat, to hide out there. So I called you. That's it, I called you, and gave her the telephone. She wanted to try to convince you that I'd be okay. I went and stood up against a building. It was raining hard and the wind was blowing, so I was under an awning." She sighed. "I don't remember much after that. S'weird, something about red velvet and a
wedding dress." Jane draped her arm over her eyes, and then sat up.

John followed her, sitting up as well.

"What happened John?" she asked, with firmness in her voice.

He didn't answer.

"Tell me, John."

"Daniel kidnapped you, love. He was going to-- " He looked at her with a pained look on his face.

"You can tell me, John. It's okay. I need to know. I'll remember eventually and I'd rather hear it from you, instead of remembering at some unexpected moment when I am all alone!"

"He was going to film himself... violating you, Jane. He even hired a filmmaker."

"Oh." She sighed heavily and the nervously looked around the room. She wrapped her arms tightly around her torso. "Did he... was he... did it... I don't-"

"No. He didn't touch you. He drugged you, but he didn't touch you, well, except for one kiss. You told me it was rubbish," he said, smiling slightly.

Jane blew air through her lips. "Where is he? Daniel I mean?"

"Jack said he's been taken care of," replied John.

"Is he dead?" she asked quietly.

"No, but Jack has assured me that the situation is under control. I don't need to know more. I don't know if I want to know more about it," John said, tugging on his ear.

"Who found me?" Jane fiddled with the rough white blanket.

"Jack forced the location out of Daniel. An associate of Jack's and I went straightaway and rescued you," John explained, stroking her face.

"My hero," she whispered, and then kissed him softly.

"Knock, knock," called a female voice through the closed door.

"Come in," replied Jane. She pulled the covers up high around her chest.

"Good morning Miss Smith, do you remember who I am?" asked her kindly doctor.

"You're Dr. Lambert."

"Good. Sometimes the drug that you were given can make short term memories difficult to recall."

"John was just telling me what happened to me, or at least, what they think happened," Jane stated.

"Jane and John, I am proposing that you delay your wedding."

"Absolutely not! I will not delay our wedding! No!" Jane crossed her arms, even though she was laying flat on her back.

Again, John couldn't help but smile, and he reached to squeeze her fingertips.
"I can see that I won't be able to convince you," she said with a half smile. "Now the authorities will be here in about an hour. Do you think you will be able to give them a statement?" asked the doctor.

"Sure, well, yeah, but I don't remember much." She looked at John, and then her face blanched. "Daniel's gonna get away with it, isn't he? If I can't remember, he's gonna get away with it!" she said in a panic.

"No, he won't." Jack stepped into the room. "Hi Janie." He was holding a large bouquet of pink roses.

"I'm sorry sir, this is a closed ward." A harried nurse chased down Jack as he came into the room without knocking.

"I'm sorry Dr. Lambert, I tried to stop him, but he-" continued the flustered woman.

"Please doctor, let him stay," said Jane. "He's the man who's responsible for finding where I was being held."

"If it's all right with you, it's all right with me," replied Dr. Lambert. "I run my ward a little differently than others," she said with a wink. "And I see no reason why you can't be released today, Miss Smith. However, I want someone with you at all times, even overnight. Understand?"

"I have a flat mate, she's also my best friend. She'll be with me at home," explained Jane.

"Actually, she may not be able to be with you, sweetheart." Jack stood at the foot of her bed. "Niles is here. Upstairs. He's in a coma. John, may I speak with you outside?"

John looked at Jane, and she smiled and nodded. Dr. Lambert checked her vitals and asked the nurse to remove the IV. John followed Jack into the hallway.

"How's she doing, buddy?" Jack asked, kindly.

"She doesn't remember much of anything after he nabbed her. When she woke up this morning, she didn't even remember why she was in the hospital," John said, worried. "Her physician has suggested we put off the wedding, but Jane flat-out refused."

"Of course she refused." Jack grinned.

"I don't want to wait, either. But I'm going to follow her lead."

Jack cleared his throat. "John, there's something you need to know. I don't want you to panic, and I don't want you to tell Jane, at least not yet. Daniel is missing," Jack said plainly.

"Missing. What do you mean by missing? How could he be missing? When I left, there were four two Torchwood agents within five feet of him!" John hissed quietly, leaning into Jack's personal space.

"When Niles and Pippin didn't report back to HQ last night, I went back. Niles was unconscious, and Pippin was gone. But the car was still there. And I have no way of knowing if the treatment worked."

"Treatment? What treatment?"

"Uh, nothing. Forget it."
John clenched his fists. "No, I am not going forget it, Jack. What treatment?"

Jack looked left and right, and then leaned in. "I'm so going to be drawn and quartered if anyone finds out I'm telling you this. We have a drug that removes memories."

"What?" John pinched his face. "How? Why?"

"Will you keep it down?" hissed Jack. "That really doesn't matter at the moment!"

John scrubbed a hand over his morning stubble. "So Daniel is wandering around the countryside with no memories."

Jack paused. "I don't know if his memories are gone or not. With Niles knocked out, and Pippin MIA," Jack smiled nervously. "I dunno."

The muscles in John's jaw rippled. "Do something useful. Go buy Jane some clothes! Something that doesn't remind her of Daniel!" John commanded, his voice biting. He composed himself and returned to Jane's room.

oOo

The neurologist had no explanation for Niles's coma. The x-ray showed no skull trauma, no closed head injury, no tumour or blood clot or mass. There wasn't even a shadow on his perfectly healthy brain. The only clue to his state of unconsciousness was an odd mark on the back of his head. An equilateral triangle, 10 mm on each side, was etched into his dark blonde hair, and where the hair had been burned away, the exposed skin bore a second degree burn.

Bess sat in a hard green plastic chair by Niles's bed, looking out the window. Niles was motionless, and his face was blank. It was now one in the afternoon on Sunday, and Jane was in the process of being discharged from Royal Hope. While Bess had not had an opportunity to visit Jane, she had spoken with John on the telephone early Sunday morning. Bess was relieved to learn that Jane had not been harmed.

Jack stood in the doorway for a moment before coming into Niles's room to stand by Bess.

"So are you going to Retcon me? Because I know about the Doctor being an alien?" Bess asked without looking at Jack. "Will you make me forget the only true friend I have ever had?"

"Bess..." Jack said her name in that quiet, regretful way that led her to believe she had probably just been given her answer.

"No. You can't. I won't let you," she replied quietly.

"But knowing about him, just knowing about him is dangerous!" Jack said, sadly.

"But you and Niles, you know about him! You've kept his secret! I have come to love those two people more than I love my own family. I will keep their secret!" Tears formed in her eyes. "And if you take away my memories of them you take away my memories for a month. Work. Niles. That is not right."

"Any improvement?" Jack asked after a moment of silence, clearly avoiding her subject.

"No. The neurologist is stumped. Didn't used that word of course, but I know when someone is bluffing with clever language. Besides, I could tell he was lying. I saw in his mind that he is at a complete and utter loss." Bess shook her head. "The last time I talked to Niles, I was angry. And
now that's my last memory of him!

"Have you tried to see into his mind, Bess? I know you have telepathic and psychic skills," Jack said plainly.

"I don't know how to control it. It comes and goes. I just see things. Images. Or I can feel someone's emotions. I can't even tell if it's someone's memory or their future or just their imagination." She sighed. "There has only time I have been a sorely certain what I was seeing was going to happen. I was out shopping with Jane. I was walking past the bridal department at Henrik's, and I saw John and Jane marrying, and Jane was wearing a wedding gown that was on display at Henrik's. I bought it on the spot."

"When was that?" asked John.

Bess smiled a bit. "During the weekend that Jane thought they were over."

Jack closed his eyes and muttered to himself. "So that was after I lost my coat, and you had it and you had the watches, right?"

Bess nodded.

"Did you start having more visions after you started carrying them around with you?"

"Yes." She pulled the two precious fob watches from her handbag and cradled them, one in each hand. Bess looked at them hard for a long moment. "I've always had a bit of 'the sight' as my Auntie used to say, but yes, I have had more instances since the day I put them in my purse."

Jack nodded. "But sweetheart, you can not open them."

"All right."

"Bess, there is a way to get around having to Retcon you. If you come to work for Torchwood..."

"What?" she asked, confused. "I couldn't be some monster-fighting James Bond!"

"You're psychic, Bess. In fact, you are a very talented psychic. I can't help but think that exposure to the watches has probably pushed things along a bit. Torchwood could really use your services. We really need someone to set up a psychic training program."

"I'd have to think about it Jack, but frankly, after everything I've seen and learned in the past few days, I don't know how I could ever go back to reading boring and often terribly written novels for a living. OH!" The watches fell into Bess's lap. She grabbed her head and doubled over in pain.

Jack went to his knees in front of her. "What's wrong Bess?"

"No! NO! It's Daniel! They killed Pippin! And Niles! Oh Niles! They did this to you! They're looking for Jane. But they don't know who John is. They are arguing. They think the Time Lord is... they think the Time Lord is... you!" Bess looked at Jack and slumped.
Chapter 28 - John & Jane Jet

"I don't know why I have to be in this silly push-chair," Jane said, whinging. "I'm perfectly able to walk."

"I'm sorry Miss, them's the rules." The tall man hunched over the chair as he pushed Jane down the long, hospital green corridor to the lift.

"Can I push her?" John asked.

"Sure, no rule against tha'. But I still have ta escort ya ta the discharge desk."

John took over the transport duties, and the orderly walked alongside the quiet pair. Checking Jane out didn't take long, and John signed the paperwork as the one responsible for her post-hospitalisation medical care.

"Take care miss, an' I 'ope things go well for ya," said the kind orderly, wheeling the push-chair away, off to pick up the next patient.

John immediately took Jane's hand in his, and pulled her out the door, anxious to take her away from the memories of the past thirty-six hours.

She stopped him the moment they were outside of the hospital. "Hold on just a minute mister! Why won't you tell me what happened to Niles?" Jane asked, hotly, her hands on her hips.

John was taken aback by her feisty attitude. "You just worry about yourself right now, love," he answered.

"I can worry about more than one person at once. As if I wouldn't worry about my friends. I want you to take me up to see Niles and Bess before we go. Take me now." Jane crossed her arms and raising a single eyebrow.

John sighed and ran his hand through his hair. "You know, I don't even know if we'll be allowed in the critical care ward. We aren't family." John was afraid if Jane even caught a hint as to why Niles was in a coma, she would feel responsible, and her recovery would be threatened.

"You're sure making a lot of excuses, John." She frowned and saw a look on his face that she guessed meant 'guilty as charged.' "Please tell me why you really don't want me to see him or Bess. I've been asking all morning and every time the subject comes up, you try and change the subject!"

John sighed. Yet again, it was as if Jane could read his thoughts. That was exactly what he had been doing: directing conversation away from Niles's health crisis. Honesty would be best, he finally decided. "Jane, he's in a coma because something happened while Daniel was being subdued."
"What? What happened?" she screeched loudly, no longer angry.

"Jack doesn't know what happened," John answered quietly, nervous. "Another man who was there is missing." He looked away.

"John, what aren't you telling me?" Jane was now fearful, but she needed to know.

He closed his eyes. "Daniel's gone missing."

Jane looked nervously to the left and then the right, hugging herself. "He's going to come after us, isn't he? He's going to want revenge," whispered Jane. "John, what are we going to do? What are we going to do?" she asked him again, holding onto his upper arms with a death grip.

John leaned down and looked her in the eyes possessively. "I'm taking you away from here. I'm going to hide you, keep you safe. He will never hurt you Jane. I promise. I promise on my life."

Jane swallowed hard, but saw something in John's eyes that burned like fire. She felt completely safe.

"John, before we go, I need to see Bess. I have to. Please? She's just upstairs. Please?" Jane begged John.

He couldn't ignore the pleading in her eyes, so he relented. "All right, but we are only staying a few minutes, understand love? Just five minutes! It's for our safety."

Jane nodded nervously. "Where are we going to go?" she asked, whispering. "He knows where I live, and it wouldn't be too difficult for him to discover your address. A hotel? A hostel? What your home in Scotland, up in Inverness?" Jane asked.

"Oh I wish we could go there," he shook his head passionately, "but we can't, love, not yet." He gently touched her face. "I can hardly wait to take you home." He smiled and then became serious again. "I have some ideas where we'll be safe, and I'll tell you about them once we get going. I don't want to risk being overheard. That devil of man has ears everywhere it seems, and I'm sure by now he knows you were taken to hospital." John held the door open and ushered Jane back inside Royal Hope, but this time through the main entrance, not the door used by discharged patients.

The statue of Hippocrates outside of the main entrance shifted its gaze.

oOo

Jack slipped his arms under Bess's shoulders and hauled her back into the chair. Her eyes sprang open and she gasped.

"You with me Bess? You with me?" Jack looked into her eyes, scrutinising for signs of distress.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm okay. Wow. That that was different." Bess shook her head and squeezed her eyes shut for a moment.

Jack put his hands on her shoulders, once again kneeling before her. "Tell me what you saw Bess."

"Uh, um, Niles and Pippin were leaning up against a tree waiting for Daniel to wake up from the Retcon shot, and it was taking too long. When he finally came to, Niles knew something went wrong. Wait, no." Bess sucked in a breath. "Niles saw Pippin die." Her eyes went wide. "Jack, someone killed Pippin! He wasn't taken, he was executed! There was this green light and then, oh my stars, the flesh melted right off of him, he just disappeared and all that was left was a skeleton,
and then that simply dissolved! And then I felt Niles get shot in the back of the head. He fell to the
ground, but after that, I couldn't see anything anymore, but I could hear everything. It was like I
was in Niles's head listening in.

"Daniel said something. But Jack, he isn't Daniel anymore! It's like he's been possessed by a
demon! And Priscilla and Jim the Lift Man and Eve Woods from work where there too! And they
called each other the oddest names. Sister of Mine, Daughter, Brother, Husband of Mine, Father,
Wife, Mother, and Son." Bess was speaking rapidly now, spitting out the words. "And they know
about Jane! They know Jane is Rose, but they were arguing about the Doctor. Priscilla thinks John
is him, but Daniel and Jim disagreed with her. And then Eve suggested someone else. Oh! No!
They think you are Rose's husband! They think you are the Time Lord, Jack!"

"Well isn't that just... swell." Jack smiled dimly and shook his head. "The Family is here. Bess, we
have to get John and Jane away from London right now! I need to find out if Jane has checked out."

Jack fled the room for the nurse's station, and Bess put the fob watches in the pocket of her
trousers.

oOo

"Sweetheart, I need to find out if my friend Jane Smith has been released." Jack leaned against the
counter, anxiously drumming his fingers. "She was in the women's trauma unit."

"Certainly Mr. Harkness." The nurse picked up the telephone. "Hello Mrs. Johnson. Has Miss Jane
Smith been discharged? She is one of Dr. Lambert's patients." There was a short pause. "Who took
her home?" There was another pause. "Thank you."

"Yes, she was discharged around one thirty, after the police interviewed her. Her fiancé, John
Smith, took responsibility for her care."

"Where is he taking her? Did she say?" Jack asked, hopeful.

"She didn't. Shall I find out?"

"No, that's okay. I'll just call John myself." Jack swore under his breath and hit the counter angrily.
"Sorry doll, not your fault." He pushed his hands into his pockets, and his great coat swept behind
him as he turned and walked away.

"Oh wait! I almost forgot!" the nurse called after Jack as he took off down the corridor. "Dr.
Weissman needs to speak with you. He's in his office."

"Thanks, doll," replied Jack with just a fraction of his trademark charm. He headed to find Dr.
Solomon Weissman, who in reality was with Torchwood. Several physicians and nurses at this
hospital were either Torchwood-approved or employees as the organisation did not have its own
medical facility. Dr. Weissman, and the nurse to whom he had just spoken, were two such
affiliates.

Jack rapped twice on the frame of the door that was ajar. "You wanted to see me, Sol?"

"Harkness, why do you always bring me problems?" joked the older man with false seriousness
and a distinctive Eastern European accent. "So the patch on the back of Eddington's head was
definitely the result of technology which I have not previously seen. I consulted the Torchwood
Medical Science committee and we concur that it is highly likely that whatever harmed the man
was extraterrestrial in origin."
"Any way to pull him out of the coma?" asked Jack.

"No way that I know of. However, there is more. His mind is perfectly healthy. His brain has sustained no injury. Completely unharmed. X-ray shows no tumour, no mass, no skull fracture, and no haemorrhaging."

"Then why's he in a coma?" Jack asked, confused.

"I simply don't know." The man stroked his white beard thoughtfully. "And furthermore, I have no idea how to bring him out of this completely illogical coma. I performed an EEG this morning, and it indicates he is aware of his surroundings, he hears us, he just can't communicate."

"Sol, what if I told you know a telepath?" Jack said, leaning on the man's desk with both hands.

"My friend, why didn't you tell me this before?!" the man said jumping up from behind his desk. "How soon can this person be here?"

"She's already here. It's Niles's girlfriend, Bess. Sol, Torchwood brass can not know. They would haul her in and test her without mercy. You know how they are. And she has only recently come to realise her abilities. Bess would make a valuable asset for Torchwood, but she is very unskilled. We'd have to butter them up. Now, I know I can trust you, right?" Jack winked at the man.

"It you want it kept secret, a secret it shall remain. Anything for the man who saved me out of that death camp. I assure you, her secret will be safe, Harkness," he said, nodding gravely. "I'm first and foremost a physician, who just happens to be employed by Torchwood."

Dr. Weissman stood up from his executive leather chair to follow Jack to Niles's room.

oOo

"Good afternoon. My fiancée and I are here to visit Niles Eddington. We understand he has been in an accident of some sort." John played dumb, knowing that there were most likely visiting restrictions in place, put there by the hospital, or Torchwood, or both.

The grey haired woman behind the counter scanned through admissions roster. "Are you family?" she asked curtly.

"Yes," Jane answered immediately. "I'm his adopted sister, and this is my husband, well, will be in one week. Close enough. What is his room number?" she asked confidently, smiling.

"Room 924, ninth floor. Lift is just around the corner." The woman pointed to her right.

Jane looped her arm through John's and squeezed. She looked over at him, and he had an eyebrow raised, questioning.

"Adopted sister?" he asked with a small smile once they were in the lift.

"Close enough. I guess I could have said adopted sister-in-law, but since Bess and he aren't married, that would've been too much of a stretch."

"Very Iris-like," John said with a bright grin.

"Thank you. I will take that as a compliment," she replied, smiling proudly, the first happy and carefree smile since Saturday afternoon. The lift doors opened, and they emerged into the quiet hallway.
"I really hope Niles is going to be okay," Jane said to John.

With confidence, they made their way to Niles's room, quietly chatting about things which had nothing to do with memory loss, comas, or kidnappers.

John quietly knocked on the door. "It's Jane and John."

Jane heard quiet sniffing, and sadly looked at John.

"Come in," Bess called quietly.

Jane went straight to Bess and pulled her into a crushing hug. "I'm so sorry, Bess. I am so, so sorry."

"Any improvement, Bess?" John asked, trying to move the conversation away from the subject of blame.

"No improvement, but he is stable. Hi Jane, John," said Jack nodding in greeting from the doorway. "Jane Smith, John Smith - no relation, by the way, well yet - meet Dr. Solomon Weissman. He's Torchwood."

John shook the physician's hand.

"I understand, young lady, that you had quite a close call yesterday. I am very happy to hear you came through unscathed. I have five daughters and six granddaughters of my own," said the kind man.

"Thank you Dr. Weissman," replied Jane, blushing a bit knowing that this grandfatherly man knew about the details of her capture. She still had no clear memories of her captivity, but was beginning to remember, in reverse order, the horrifying events of the past day and a half.

"Now my dear, I understand you have experienced some memory loss. I don't believe it is permanent. I have consulted with your lovely Dr. Lambert. And from what she has told me, I agree that the monster who kidnapped you administered a very strong sleeping aid in a dangerously high dose. You are lucky that you came out of it."

"Uh, Jane, you should know. Dr. Lambert is a Torchwood approved physician as well." Jack said a bit sheepishly.

"Is everyone in London bloody Torchwood?" asked John, his voice high with alarm.

"Only the best people," said Jack, cheekily.

"Jack, we have to go. I promised Jane she could see Bess and Niles before we left, but we really do need to get out of here." John ran his hand through his hair nervously.

"What do you mean, leave?" asked Jack.

"With Daniel out there on the loose," John motioned widely with his arm, "I am not going to risk Jane's safety. I'm getting her out of London." John turned to Bess. "Bess, I know it isn't Niles's fault, but the fact remains that Daniel got away. I will not let him get his hands on my Jane." He faced Jack once again.

"I'll get the two of you into a safe house." Jack offered almost desperately.

"A Torchwood safe house? I don't think so. Hasn't Torchwood done enough, Harkness? It's time I
take care of my fiancée. I should have followed my instincts in the first place. I'm taking her to Scotland," John said definitively.

Jack panicked. His home in Inverness didn't exist. It was a creation of the TARDIS, an elaborate false memory. "Buddy! John! Think about it! That's the first place Daniel will look! He will get his hands on your employment records at Prescott, and find your permanent address, and he'll go straight there." Jack pulled a small notebook out of his pocket, and scribbled some directions on a sheet of paper. "Go here instead. It's still in Scotland. It's gorgeous. You will be more than safe. There are a few caretakers on site, but otherwise you'll be all alone. I'll come up and join you as soon as I can."

"Jack," John drawled his name in irritation. "Do you think I would be so stupid as to actually take her to my home? Of course Daniel would go there first! I've got some other places in mind. Very remote, very private, and very safe."

Bess had been quiet since Jane had released her from her hug. Jane turned and noticed that her friend was staring at her. "Go where Jack has suggested. You'll be safe. Get married there. Jack can make the arrangements for the Banns to be transferred to the church in the village. He will be able to pull strings and have the dates moved up. Is tomorrow too soon? Clerical errors have been known to happen," she said with a raised eyebrow.

"Bess?" asked Jack. It was only then that he noticed Bess was holding the closed fob watches.

Dr. Weissman had been studying the woman the entire time, fully aware of what was happening. From the research he had been forced to conduct by the Nazis before he finally refused and was sent to that camp, he immediately knew that Bess Cooper was a telepath of the highest order.

Bess's eyes cleared of their glassy gaze and she focused on the here and now. "John and Jane, you have to agree to Jack's plan. Go to Torchwood House. The country will do you good, Jane. Fresh air. The windy Moors. Open sky is what you need. John, you'll be free to be outside under the stars at night. Jane, you'll be able to remember in a safe place without the worry of Daniel. John, you can write. You owe me a few chapters. You're behind," she said with a small smile.

"Bess?" asked Jack again.

"And Dr. Weissman, it's time for Niles to wake up. He'll be fine," her voice became soft. "He will be fine for now." She straightened her back. "Jack, I want to work for Torchwood. I need to know how to control this whatever it is I can do now."

Jack smiled. "Well all right. I'll see what I can do, Bess."

Bess turned back to her friends. "John, you need to leave right now. They're looking for Jane."

"Who's they?" John asked, alarmed.

Bess felt a flush, immediately realising her mistake. "Daniel. His friends. Look how he's enlisted help all along," she said covering her mistake. "Jack, take them to John's car. His Aston Martin is certainly faster than anything you have."

John couldn't help but smile smugly at Bess's compliment.

"Don't worry about clothing, darling. We'll will take care of whatever you need," said Bess with authority to Jane. "Now goodbye Jane. We'll see you tonight," Bess said cryptically, and then hugged Jane fiercely and kissed her on the cheek. "Now scoot!"
John pulled Jane out of the room by the hand, and Jack looked at Bess with amazement. "Niles is a lucky man," he winked at her, and Bess winked right back at him. "Hey, did you say see you tonight?"

"Yes of course I did. You, Niles, and I - us. The three of us will be joining them tonight. We have to keep an eye on them, now don't we?" She lifted the watches slightly and shook them. "Now go and make arrangements for a helicopter to transport us. I'm going to get Niles out of this silly coma. Like those aliens could ever stop me, I'm brilliant!" Bess said with confidence. "And Jack, do what you have to do to make that wedding happen, even if you have to fake it. It's almost time for the Doctor and Rose to wake up. John and Jane deserve this glimmer of happiness before the storm comes."

Jack nodded as a chill ran up his spine. Somehow he knew Bess was right. The storm was coming. He hurried out to catch up with John and Jane.

oOo

John pushed the limits of his Aston Martin through the countryside as he drove north to Scotland. Both were unusually quiet, deep in thought.

Jane pondered the idea of being married as soon as tomorrow. It was both terrifying and wonderful. Her life was about to change radically.

John couldn't stop thinking about how he was going to protect Jane. He felt both powerful and inadequate. Her life was in his hands.

"John?"

"Jane?"

They both spoke simultaneously after fifteen minutes of silence, and then laughed quietly at the coincidence.

"What happened back there? With Bess?" Jane asked quietly.
"I don't really know. I'm starting to get the feeling that Torchwood isn't some secret spy agency."

"What do you mean?" Jane turned in her seat to face him.

"When I was with Jack and the other bloke that rescued you, they wouldn't let me get out of the car. Locked me in. And I heard these ungodly hisses, clicks and screeches from inside of this lorry that'd they shoved Daniel inside. When he came out of the truck, he looked like he had seen something terrifying. I think there was something alien in there, love."

"Alien? Like from space? Like in your stories?" she asked calmly.

"Yeah, like in our stories," he corrected her, and she smiled at him fondly.

"Bess has acted oddly on a few occasions, too. The night of our--" Jane blushed and then steeled herself. "The night of our infamous chat," Jane said, looking over at John, he smiled and waggled his eyebrows at her. "Stop it," she said playfully as she lightly slapped his arm. "That night, she said something really strange. I can't remember what it was exactly. But the way she said it, it was almost like she'd seen into the future. It was weird. And then the next day, she stopped talking to me."

"She told you that she was under pressure from work, and despondent about Niles, right? But you
think she didn't want to see you for a different reason, don't you?” asked John.

Jane nodded. "I'm starting to think so, yes. On another occasion, she asked me if I was singing, but I wasn't. Sounds like nothing really, but the way she asked it? She seemed worried or something." Jane gasped and slapped the side of her head. "Why didn't I see it before! The night that she broke up with Niles? When we went to the pub and she danced on the table, she read Niles's mind John! You should have seen the look on his face! He knew she was looking in his head, John! And there was no way she should have known what she knew! She knew about the mistake on the marriage certificate even before you did, and that Niles knew about it, and had lied! And then she said she knew that he had been lying about his reasons for not marrying! No wonder she was so furious!"

"She's telepathic," John said quietly, squinting his eyes deep in thought. "Did you see those two things that looked like fob watches that she was holding? Maybe there's something about those watches? Maybe Torchwood has advanced technology?"

"There is more on heaven and earth...?" Jane quoted a modified version of *Hamlet* to John's delight. "Blimey."

"Blimey, indeed," said John.

They both laughed nervously and Jane fiddled with her ponytail.

"Would you look at this place," John breathed. He slowed down as he drove into the crushed rock courtyard.

"It's a proper castle," Jane added.

It was nearing midnight, but the size of the large stone house was clearly discernible even in the pitch black of the countryside. There were a few windows illuminated, but the majority of the castle was dark.

They got out of the car. Since they had no luggage, they walked straight to the door and knocked.

"Hiya, buddy. We beat you and that hot car of yours by a few hours. Had the advantage of a helicopter. Couldn't risk requisitioning a helicopter for the two of you, though. Hope you had a nice drive. Welcome to Torchwood house." Jack ushered them in.

Jane's mouth gaped open as she spun around, looking at the massive entryway. "This place is amazing. What is it?"

"Oh, just some old building that Torchwood owns," he replied cryptically, still unsure whether or not the Doctor and Rose had met Queen Victoria in their own timeline. "It's used for meetings, conferences, as a safe house from time to time. Come on, let me give you the grand tour."

Jack led the pair through the dark hallways, up and down the grand staircases, into the library with its impressive glass ceiling, and through the dining room, the modernised kitchen, and finally to the telescope room.

John drew in a breath. "It's beautiful!" he gasped. "May I?" he asked Jack, hoping to look through the impressive piece of equipment.

"I don't think it works," he said, "but knock yourself out."

John looked through the eyepiece and pulled away scowling. "Must not be calibrated correctly, it's
fuzzy. Oh well," he shrugged and pushed his hands into his pockets.

"You guys hungry? Or just tired? There's some takeout left. Someone will go into the village tomorrow and buy groceries. The caretakers don't keep much in the way of supplies, since it's usually just the three of them and the wolves."

"Wolves?" asked Jane, nervously.

"Yeah, they live out on the Moors, of course. You'll hear 'em tonight I'm sure. If you get scared, you could always snuggle up with John. I'm sure he'll chase away any nightmares," Jack said, winking.

Jane blushed, and John grinned, rocking on his heels.

"She will do no such thing, Jack Harkness!" Bess said, coming into the room with a smile. "Tonight is the night before your wedding, darling. Traditionally, you shouldn't even be in the same room with your fiancé right now. Come with me. You need to go to bed, Jane. It won't do for you to have bags under your eyes in your wedding photos. Goodnight boys," she called over her shoulder, ushering Jane out of the room without further ado.

"Hey, wait a minute! You can't just take her away like that without explanation! What do you mean tonight is the night before our wedding?" asked John.

"Oh, didn't Jack tell you? He was able to procure a special license. Apparently one of Jack's friends knows the Archbishop of Canterbury."

"So you're telling me we are getting married tomorrow? Here in Scotland?" John asked, alarmed. "Call me stupid, but the Archbishop of Canterbury isn't in charge here. This is Church of Scotland territory."

"You're overthinking this, buddy! Tomorrow's your wedding day!"

"Harkness, you are full of surprises."

"Yep." Jack slapped John on the back, and then draped his arms over both John's and Jane's shoulders, standing between his two friends.

"But the rings, and clothing! What about Jane's dress? What about a tuxedo? I can't get married in dungarees!"

"John, stop worrying about all of these things! None of it matters! We're going to be married!" Jane slipped out from under Jack's arm and embraced John, kissing him sweetly on the cheek.

"I already told you we'd take care of everything!" said Bess, rolling her eyes. "Now say goodnight to Jane properly, and then she is off to bed. That's our cue, Jack. Give those two a moment."

Bess and Jack left the two alone in the beautiful room.

"Oh John, I am so, so happy I can hardly stand it!" Jane jumped up and down like a school girl. But then John stopped her by pulling her into his arms and bringing his lips down to hers passionately. He kissed her soundly, letting his hands skim her curves, and cup her buttocks, pulling her against him firmly.

They broke the kiss, both gasping for air. He leaned his forehead against hers. "Only one more
cold shower for me, Jane Smith. Kiss me again. Kiss me like you aren't going to stop. I can survive a few hours without you."

Jane complied, pulling him over to the sofa against the wall. They sat down next to each other, and kissed again, hard and passionate, sloppy and grabby. Hands roamed, and hair was mussed. There were groans and there was panting. And finally, John pushed Jane away.

"Time for you to go, my sweet Jane. Sleep well, tomorrow we won't have to stop."

Jane's eyes were still closed after their toe-curling kiss. She leaned into his ear and whispered. "I love you, John David Smith."

"And I love you my Jane Donna Smith, soon to be Mrs. Smith."

oOo

After a cold shower, John came down and met Jack in the dining room. He was tired, but his mind was racing, full of questions. At one end of the massive formal dining table, they shared warmed-over sausages and chips from a pub in the village.

"Jack, I have to know. I think I deserve to know. Does your job have anything to do with things not of Earth? You know, from," he waved his hand blithely, "other planets?" John took a bite of his food, followed by a swig of ale.

Jack made a series of sounds that were a mixture of choking and guffawing, and a pshaww thrown in for good measure. "Aliens Doc? Really?" He swallowed hard, pasted on his brightest smile and laughed too heartily to be sincere.

"Yes, Jack, aliens." John set his fork down, leaned back in his chair, and then folded his hands casually in his lap.

"Well, let's see. How much can I tell you? Torchwood is a secret organisation after all," he laughed nervously as he stalled. He heard shuffling in the hallway and the door opened, and in came his diversion. "Niles! What are you doing up?" asked Jack.

"I have a bit of a headache, and am sort of tired, but that's all," replied Niles, nonchalantly. "I heard Jane and Bess in the hallway, so I decided to come down and say hello to John."

Slack-jawed, John stared at the man in pyjamas. He finally spoke. "What are you doing out of bed, let alone out of the hospital? A few hours ago you were in a coma."

"I came out of it," he replied casually.

Niles sat down like it was an everyday thing that one was shot in the back of the head by an alien ray gun, placed in a coma, and brought out of it by one's slightly psychic girlfriend. "Mmm, that smells good. Did you leave enough for me?" he asked, smiling.

"Jack? Would you care to explain to me what the bloody hell is going on?" John asked, heated.

"Can't, buddy. Sorry."

John crossed his arms and harrumphed. "Can you tell me at least how you managed to obtain a special license for Jane and me? On a Sunday?"

"You expect me to give up all of my secrets?" Jack flashed a cheeky grin and shoved a chip into his
mouth.

Of course, he didn’t tell John that the certificate was a fake. It wasn’t like they weren’t already married, he told himself. He hated lying to his friend, but Bess had been right. John and Jane needed a bit of happiness before they faced what was to come.

"Hey, how about we finish that poker game that was so rudely interrupted?" suggested Jack. "Who knows the next time you'll get to be out with us boys, John. Only one more night as a bachelor, you know."

"Sure," said John.

Jack left the room to find the caretakers to round out the game, John cleared the remnants of supper, and Niles gathered the remaining bottles of ale.

"There's a poker table in the game room down the hall." Niles motioned with his head and John followed him out.

The men played poker for an hour, but all were tired, both emotionally and physically, from the events of the past days, and retired to their rooms. Everyone slept soundly, John included.

oOo

Bess and Jane sat quietly in the sitting room that was attached to Jane's chambers. It appeared that at one time, the rooms had belonged to the mistress of the estate. There was a dressing table with a mirror, and several still-life paintings of flowers hung on the walls. The clothing that Bess had gathered for Jane was hanging in the wardrobe.

The vehicle that had been hired for Jane's hen party had been found. The police had left the personal belongings with Mrs. Butterfield, who was always ready to cooperate with the authorities. Of course, the moment that Bess came home, the ever vigilant Mrs. Butterfield had called after her, and tried to get as much information as she could.

Bess related the story to a very amused Jane. "So Mrs. Butterfield yelled out of her window the minute I stepped out of Jack's car, 'Are you all right dearie? Some lovely policemen came by with all of these shopping bags. Who does all of this belong to? My, my, what sort of shopping trip were you on?'" Bess mimicked the woman's creaky voice to perfection, and Jane laughed hysterically.

"I bet she peeked," said Jane, taking a sip of her tea.

"I know she peeked! The tissue was rumpled! Probably got the shock of her life when she saw that ridiculous thing Betty bought for you!" Bess snorted, and then laughed hysterically at the snort, almost falling on Jane.

"It has feathers." Jane covered her face and giggled before composing herself. “I’m going to miss you when we move to Scotland,” she said quietly.

"I'm going to miss you, too. Can you believe we were only flat mates for a month? I feel like I've known you forever, Jane darling." Bess's eyes were glistening with unshed tears.

"Well it's not like I'm moving to China," Jane said with unconvincing false cheer.

Bess nodded, unable to speak, knowing the truth was so much further from that. "I think we had better call it a night." Bess looked at her wristwatch. "It's almost one. Your nightgown is hanging in the wardrobe. I'm just down the hall. And no sneaking out to see John, understand?" she said,
"Understood. Too tired to attempt any shenanigans, anyway," Jane said, trying to stifle a yawn.

"Sleep in. I know I'm going to. The chapel is booked for three in the afternoon, so we will have plenty of time to prepare."

"I still can't believe it's happening tomorrow. I'm a bit overwhelmed," Jane said quietly.

"Goodnight darling, sleep tight." Bess kissed her friend on the cheek.

oOo

She is in a dark, damp, cold basement. The blonde woman with Jane's face is chained to a group of terrified men and women. On the other side of the room, a man sits hunched like an animal in an iron cage. The blonde woman speaks to the man, trying to learn why he is in a cage. The others beg her to stop talking to him. She can't hear the conversation between the feral man and the blonde woman, but the man in the cage is becoming agitated. He says something to the blonde woman that frightens her.

The moon is about to stream into the cellar, and the blonde woman rallies the prisoners to pull with all their might to break the chain that binds them. Their efforts are successful and the chain breaks. The poor, tortured man turns into a wolf right before her eyes, his screams turning into howls. Someone kicks in the door. It's John.

Jane screamed, woke up, and found herself sitting up in bed, drenched in sweat. The door to her room flew open and John grabbed her, pulling her close.

"Just a dream, it as just a nightmare, love. It's all over. I'm here."

Jane nodded, yawned and he eased back down onto her pillows. "What time is it?" she asked quietly.

"Half nine. You slept in."

Jane's eyes sprang open, she sat up and smiled, no longer tired. "Wedding day. Wedding day!" she said, grinning, her hands clasped together in front of her face in anticipation. "Go away! You aren't supposed to see me!"

"You're going to stand by that old tradition? After all we've been through?" he said, right before he nuzzled his nose into her neck, his soft hair tickling as his lips found her bare shoulder where her gown had slipped a little bit.

"John, we have made it this far, we can wait a few more hours.”

"I'm not suggesting anything as serious as that," he said with a waggle of his eyebrows. "How about a little kiss? Just one?" He pulled away, pouted his plump lower lip, and stared at her with those big, brown eyes.

Jane kissed his cheek quickly.

"You're a cruel, cruel woman Jane, and you will pay dearly for that kiss on the cheek," he said with a wicked grin.

"I hope so," replied Jane, easily falling into the teasing banter of well-acquainted lovers,
though they had not taken that final step. "See you at the church." Jane bit her lower lip and dipped her head.

John cupped her cheek and kissed her sweetly on the lips. "See you at the church." The bed moved slightly as he stood up. He slowly left her room, walking backwards, not taking his eyes off of her until the door was closed behind him.

Jane grinned, squealed and kicked her feet like a child.

oOo

"Jack Harkness has taken John Smith and Jane Smith to the land of the Scots. Jack Harkness, Bess Cooper, and Niles Eddington have flown in a loud, rotary wing aircraft," Son reported to Father.

"Then we must travel north as well. We will fly. This wheeled transport is inefficient and dangerous," stated Mother.

"How did Niles Eddington come out the brain sleep, Brother of Mine?" asked Sister.

"Perhaps the Time Lord used one of his tricks," replied Brother. "Is it not clear now? Jack Harkness is the Time Lord! I can clearly smell time in this room!" he sniffed deeply.

"Yes, Time was here. But so was John Smith. I still contend that John Smith is the Time Lord," argued Sister, with confidence.

"To the ship, Family of Mine. We have ground to cover and a Time Lord to hunt."

Father led the others out of the hospital room, following the faint trail of the scent of Time until it disappeared in the corridor.
Monday morning dawned clear and bright, though Jane did not see the sunrise. She had awoken from a nightmare around nine-thirty to John's comforting embrace. Her nightmare was quickly forgotten as her soon-to-be husband had kissed, flirted, and teased away the terror. They had parted reluctantly, but knowing that this would be the last time they would ever have to say goodbye in such a frustrating fashion.

This afternoon, he would be hers, and she would be his, and they could kiss and touch and finally, \textit{finally} give into their passions as husband and wife.

Jane Smith smiled as she pondered all of this, and let her mind roam as she luxuriated in the enormous, deep claw-footed tub in her en suite. Rose-scented bubbles billowed up to her nose.

"Time to get out of the tub before you turn into a prune, darling!" Bess called from Jane's bedroom. She was sitting on the bed in a dressing gown. Her hair was styled beautifully and her makeup, perfectly applied.

"You need to give yourself enough time for your hair to dry or I won't be able to do it up properly. Come on Jane, scoot!" Bess yelled, examining her freshly varnished fingernails.

"You are so bossy! I don't know how Niles puts up with you!" Jane laughed and then immediately regretted her words. Hastily, she wrapped the thick, terry cloth dressing gown around her small frame and scurried out of the bathroom. Water was dripping down her forehead from her sopping wet hair that she hadn't bothered to wrap in a towel. "Bess, I am so, so sorry, I shouldn't have said that."

"No, no, you're right." Bess’s smile had faded. She slumped and sighed. "I'm not cross with you," she finally said, as she fiddled with the sash of her dressing gown. "Am I really that bossy?"

Jane pinched her lips together.

"Go on, tell me!" Bess stopped and cringed. "Ooo, I am bossy aren't I?"

"Well, you can be a \textit{bit} bossy, but Bess, it's a \textit{good} kind of bossy. The kind that motivates people to get things done." Jane smiled fondly. "Usually."

"Usually?" Bess frowned.

"Well," Jane drawled and then cringed. "Sometimes you can be… somewhat overbearing."

“I know.“

"But you wouldn't be you if you weren't a bit bossy. And you know what? If you weren't a bit
bossy, I wouldn't have ever have had the courage to tell John about Rose, and I would still be wearing brown potato sack suits and sensible shoes. I certainly wouldn't be getting married today, now would I?" The bed dipped as Jane sat down next to her friend. She bumped Bess's shoulder. "And I would probably be terrified about tonight, instead of just nervous," she added with a giggle.

Bess patted Jane's hand fondly, and then sighed. "Do you think Niles can ever forgive me?" Bess asked sincerely.

"Yes. But he isn't without fault, Bess. Have the two of you spoken, I mean really talked since the pub?"

"No, we haven't. I want to. I really do, but, well…"

"Well what?" Jane turned toward her friend. "Perfect opportunity. There is going to be a wedding, you know. Weddings are awfully romantic," she said with a half smile. "You know what they say, one wedding begets another."

"He obviously doesn't want to marry me," said Bess, bitterly.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. Maybe he just needs a little shove in the right direction." Jane bumped Bess's shoulder again.

"You think so?" Bess asked, with an uncharacteristic lack of confidence.

"I don't think so, I know so!" Jane stood up, and put her hands on her hips.

Bess smiled. "What's gotten into you? Look at you! All confident and bossy!"

"Don't know," Jane shrugged. "Just feel different. Less timid, I guess." She thought for a moment. "You know what it is? I know I'm safe. For the first time in weeks, I feel safe. Nuts to you, Daniel Higgins! I'm going to go comb out my hair, and then you are going to make me beautiful," she said, winking over her shoulder.

oOo

"How do I look? Kilt crooked? Tie straight? How's the hair? I hate when the hair isn't right. What about-"

"You look perfect John, now stop worrying," Jack admonished his nervous friend. "Why are you nervous?"

"Cos I'm getting married. Isn't every groom nervous? Where are the rings? Where are the rings!?!" John asked staring in the mirror, tying his black silk bow tie for the third time.

"Still in my pocket. They haven't gone anywhere." Jack grinned and shook his head.

"Show them to me."

Jack smirked. "Here. See?"

Niles walked in the room. "Jack, the cake is going to be delivered here around four along with the food. The flowers are in the car."

"And I have a date for the wedding," said Jack with a wink. "Barbara the baker is gorgeous! Long ginger curls, green eyes. Hope you don't mind, Doc, but I invited her to the reception. It was either that or monopolise Jane and Bess during the dancing."
John nodded, absentminded, as he again fiddled with his tie. "Pink and yellow roses?" Jack asked.

"Robert picked them up."

Niles looked over at John and snickered as John fumbled with the bow tie. “Stop fighting it. I'll go get Bess. She always has to tie mine.”

John laughed quietly. "Quite right."

oOo

Jane watched, sitting on the elegant silk stool at the dressing table, as Bess skillfully manipulated her hair, and then pinned her veil into place. Bess had wanted to put it into some sort of twist or knot, but in the end, Jane decided she wanted it down and pulled off of her face. Bess then applied Jane's makeup, more dramatic than usual, but no blue eye gunk. When Bess's work was complete, Jane took off her dressing gown, and Bess helped her step into her wedding dress.

Side by side, the friends looked at themselves in the large oval floor mirror. Bess's rose-pink dress was a luminous silk shantung, with a bell-shaped mid-calf skirt, form-fitting bodice, and tight, elbow-length sleeves. The boat neck collar and large flat bow at the waist accentuated Bess's graceful neck and trim figure. Atop her head, Bess wore a pink pillbox hat with a small netting veil. The full skirt of Jane’s tea-length gown swished richly as she turned and looked at herself from all angles.

Both women wore simple white heels, which Bess predicted would be off of their feet by early evening.

"You are the bride of my dreams, darling," Bess gushed.

"Tell me this is real?" Jane breathed the question as she continued to stare at herself in the mirror.

"It is," Bess relied quietly. "Time to go get married."

Jane followed Bess out of the richly appointed Victorian boudoir, down the stairs, and into the waiting car.

"Jane, you look lovely," Niles said over his shoulder from the driver's seat. "And Bess, you look lovely as well," he said, a bit shyly.

"Thank you Niles," replied Jane, blushing.

"Niles, you look very handsome, as usual," said Bess with conviction, as she looked from her spot in the back seat at Niles's reflection in the rear view mirror. She saw him smile at her as he caught her eye.

"These are for you, ladies," Niles said, passing two white boxes over the seat to Jane and Bess, before he drove away from Torchwood House.

Jane opened her box to find a fragrant nose gay bouquet of pink and yellow roses. "How did you arrange for flowers? How'd you know pink and yellow?" she asked before she inhaled the sweet fragrance of the hot house blossoms.

"I called in the flower order first thing this morning to a shop in Aberdeen. Do you like them?" asked Bess.
"They're gorgeous! Better than the ones I ordered in London! Oh! I'll have to cancel the flowers and cake!" Jane gasped.

"I'll take care of the cancelations tomorrow, darling. You'll be busy doing other things." Bess winked saucily, and Jane blushed, but then giggled, soon joined by Bess. Bess lowered her voice so as to not embarrass Jane, and spoke into her friend's ear. "I've booked hotel rooms for Jack, Niles and myself in the village tonight. You and John will have the estate to yourselves."

Jane smiled and looked down.

"I thought you might feel more comfortable knowing the two of you were alone."

"Thank you Bess, I really appreciate that." Jane squeezed Bess's hand.

Jane looked out the window as the uninhabited landscape gave way to periodic cottages, and then, finally, the village with its stone houses, row of shops, and the ancient stone church.

"Here we are, right on time." Niles pulled up in front of the beautiful Presbyterian church, and the bells started ringing.

"Oh no, I'm going to cry," Jane said, fanning her face.

"Oh no, you will not, that's my job!" Bess said as her voice broke.

A few residents of the village of St. Catherine’s stopped and watched as the beautifully dressed strangers got out of the expensive black car and headed into their church. Two elderly ladies crossed the cobblestone road and slipped into the church to watch the wedding, a rarity in their village.

The minister greeted Jane, Bess, and Niles in the narthex.

"Miss Smith, welcome to St. Catherine's, I'm Reverend MacLeish," said the white haired man with a jolly smile. "This is my wife, Irene."

"Thank you for officiating our wedding on such short notice, Reverend," Jane said kindly. "Nice to meet you Mrs. MacLeish. This is my best friend Bess Cooper and her—boyfriend, Niles Eddington. Niles is the closest thing I have to a brother, and as my parents are both deceased, he will be escorting me down the aisle. I don't really have anyone giving me away," she said sheepishly.

"Oh, no worries my dear. You aren't the first to marry without parents. Though I daresay you have wonderful friends to have arranged all of this for you and your beloved on such short notice."

"They are my family now," Jane said fondly.

"I understand you are a guest at the grand Torchwood House. My great, great, great grandfather was the brother of the infamous Sir Robert of Torchwood," said the Reverend with a grave nod.

"Oh? I'm sorry, I don't know the history of the place," replied Jane.

"Make sure you and Mr. Smith inquire during your stay about the storied history of Torchwood. Very exciting!" said Mrs. MacLeish with a twinkle in her eyes. "The proprietor of our pub is our resident expert on the events of Queen Victoria's ill-fated visit in 1879. Pop in for a pint and some supper before you leave."
"I think we'll just do that," promised Jane with a smile. "John and I love history. He's a writer, and his stories often integrate history."

"You don't have to tell me about your fiancé's books, Miss Smith, I'm an avid reader of his series!" replied the Reverend with a grin. "Now, as is the way in close knit communities, news travels fast in St. Catherine's, and it isn't very often that a wedding takes place here in our wee village. Don't be surprised or offended if there are a few uninvited guests."

"Actually I'd be glad for a congregation, it would feel more real," laughed Jane.

"Aye," he said with a nod. "Now. If you are ready, lass, I do believe that there is someone anxiously waiting for you inside."

Jane breathed deeply in and out a few times, closing her eyes, and then opened them. "I'm ready," she said with resolve.

The minister quickly explained the order of service, and Mrs. MacLeish added a few more details.

"Follow me please," instructed Mrs. MacLeish.

"This is it, darling," said Bess. She kissed Jane on the cheek and pulled the veil over Jane's face.

The organist began to play *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* and Mrs. MacLeish nodded that it was time for Bess enter. She made her way up the short aisle, walking in a natural gait to the somewhat quick tempo of the music.

When the organist added in the countermelody, Mrs. MacLeish opened the heavy wooden doors and nodded for Niles to bring Jane to her bridegroom. Jane looped her shaking arm through Niles's as together they stepped through the doorway.

oOo

Three shadowy figures crept up the ancient spiral staircase into the balcony.

"I know I don't have to remind the two of you about the rules. No talking. Extremely quiet whispering is fine, but use discretion, all right? The acoustics in this building are very *acousticky.* " He frowned. "That sounded better in my head. Anyway, no moving. Keep as still as possible." The Doctor smiled wolfishly as he instructed his bond mate to keep her mental hands to herself. "And most important? No touching ourselves! Oh that sounded better in my head too, but I know you know what I mean, right? Can you remember these rules?"

Wife and mother-in-law nodded gravely.

"If I'm right and I usually am, we're going to be here any minute." The Doctor pulled out his sonic, and activated the perception field devices hanging around each of their necks. Blue lights pulsed and now the three of them were perfectly hidden in plain sight.

"You're sure the Family won't find us, Doctor?" Rose whispered into his ear.

"I'm certain, love. They weren't here, well, aren't here. I'd be able to feel them," said the Doctor.

"Oh, there you are!" Rose squeezed her husband's hand. "What were you thinking right now?"

"Want the romantic answer or the real answer?" he asked with a half smile.

"Yeah, well, I was thinking the same thing," she winked. "The two of us sure were randy," laughed
"Were?" he asked before kissing his wife full on the mouth.

"Oi! I'm right here!" Jackie screeched loudly.

"Quiet Jackie!" the Doctor hissed.

"Mum, you have to be quiet," Rose said to her mother as she rubbed her nearly flat stomach.

"Fingers. On. Lips!" he ordered.

"Don't you dare fingers on lips me, mister!" Jackie replied in a stage whisper. "I can't help sniffin'! My only child's about to get married down there, an' she don't even know I'm here!"

"What do you mean I don't even know? I'm right here!" Rose whispered, mildly amused.

"That you thinks I'm dead, thanks to the crazy story that blue box you call a home concocted up," Jackie was still angry that she had missed the Doctor and Rose's first wedding, not fully understanding the private, intimate nature of a Gallifreyan bonding ceremony.

"That box, as you so rudely call her, saved our lives, Jackie. Rose, your grandchild, and I wouldn't even be here right now if she hadn't have concocted that crazy story! Now please stop talking or we will have to leave. One word: Reapers and Family of Blood."

"That was five words, Doctor," Rose giggled, nudging him with her elbow.

The Doctor smirked. "I know that you understand how risky this is, Rose. If your mother won't listen to me, maybe she'll listen to you."

Rose nodded. "Please Mum, stop crying. You want to see the wedding don't you?"

"Well of course I do! You're my daughter, and that alien over there didn't think to invite me to your real wedding," Jackie said sourly.

"How many times do I have to tell you. Gallifreyan bonding rites are private. You couldn't have been there. Not all species make a big fat production of marriage, Jackie."

"I happen to like big fat production weddings, and I'm sure that Rose wouldn't have minded one, either. Isn't that right Rose?"

"I'm perfectly content with my two weddings, Mum. Now would the two of you stop bickering? You're upsetting TT." Rose looked down at her belly and rubbed her hand in small circles.

The Doctor and Jackie looked at each other, feeling soundly chastised.

Jackie sniffed. "At least you finally got my Rose a ring. And on that count, you did good, Doctor."

"Didn't he though?" Rose replied, looking down with fondness at the exquisite sapphire ring that graced her hand.

A handful of elderly men and women were sprinkled throughout the beautiful sanctuary. The afternoon sun streamed in through the stained glass windows, casting colourful jewel-toned spots of light throughout the room.

The organist began to play *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* on the small pipe organ. The Doctor leaned
against the railing and watched intently as his human self and Jack walked in through the side door. John stood as still as a statue, hands clasped behind his back. His eyes were fixed on the back of the sanctuary, waiting for his Jane to emerge.

"Have I ever told you how completely ravishing you looked that day?" Rose whispered to her husband. "I was distracted the entire time. Kept wondering if you had anything on under that kilt."

"May have a time or a hundred, but I think you still find it distracting," he growled back at her.

"Got that right." Rose kissed the Doctor until her mother elbowed her sharply, and they broke their kiss.

"Oh, here's Bess!" Rose sighed as her friend walked down the aisle.

"Aww, look at himself! He looks so happy." Jackie whispered to Rose. "Well now, doesn't Jack look good enough to eat?"

"Don't he though?" Rose cooed.

"And what about me? Don't I look foxy?" he asked, a bit hurt.

"Doctor, I just told ya, remember? I think you know just how delicious you look, and I seem to remember I showed you just how delicious you were or rather, are, tonight, or don't you remember?" Rose's pupils dilated as she sent her husband a few private memories. This certainly was not a conversation she wanted to share with her mother.

The music surged as the countermelody began, and they saw Jane walking down the aisle on Niles's arm.

"Look at my hair! It's huge!" Rose turned to her mother and whispered.

"That's some powerful hairspray you're using. Oh Rose, your dress is darling!" Jackie cooed.

"I loved that dress. Felt so pretty in it."

"You looked beautiful, my Jane," the Doctor whispered in her ear. "You want to know what I was thinking the moment I saw you? What I was really thinking?"

Rose nodded her head, and processed John's memories that the Doctor cherished and carried. "Can you hear my thoughts?" asked the Doctor.

"Yeah, you're bubbling over with happiness, like you are gonna burst if she doesn't run down the aisle and snog you this instant. You ever sorry that it didn't last for them? Do you miss us being them?" Rose asked.

"That's a complicated question, and I don't now if I have an answer to it, to be honest, love. Do you miss John?" he asked Rose.

"Yeah, sometimes," she replied, truthfully. "But you're him, and he was you."

"Jane was brilliant. But John was for Jane and Jane was for John. They belonged together, just like we belong together." He paused and watched as Jane approached the front of the church. "But yes, I miss Jane, sometimes. Do you mind?"

"I don't mind." Rose smiled and looked over at her husband. "Not at all." She looked down at her belly, took the Doctor's hand and gently placed it on her abdomen.
The Doctor's long fingers splayed out over the fabric, and he smiled.

Jackie pulled them from their private moment. "Bess is so pretty, and Niles doesn't look any different now than he did then."

"Shhh! The ceremony is about to begin," said the Doctor, silencing the women.

Niles escorted Jane down the aisle. John felt his face might break from smiling as he saw his precious Jane coming to him, to be his wife. He knew, without a doubt, that he was already wholly hers. As the music reached its crescendo she, reached the end of the aisle, and stood, impatiently waiting until the music echoed, and faded. Reverend MacLeish began the ceremony with the reading of a traditional wedding blessing.

"A thousand welcomes to you, With your marriage kerchief. May you be healthy all your days. May you be blessed with long life and peace, May you grow old with goodness and riches."

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God to witness the union of these two people, John David Smith and Jane Donna Smith. Marriage is a solemn, holy estate, not to be entered into lightly."

John and Jane faced the minister absorbing every word. Through the white haze of her veil, Jane glanced sideways and caught sight of her groom. She moved slightly, and John turned subtly, catching Jane looking at him. He waggled his eyebrows at her, and in response her pink tongue slipped through her teeth as she grinned right back at him.

The number of uninvited guests had grown to about two dozen. As predicted by the minister, they had come out of curiosity to witness the mysterious, surprise wedding. They sang the hymn with quiet reverence, aware of the solemnity of any marriage, even though they didn't know the bride and groom.

The minister shared words of wisdom regarding the sanctity and purpose of marriage, the duties of a husband to his wife and of a wife to her husband. When the time for the vows arrived, John and Jane turned to each other and clasped hands.

"John David, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wife, and wilt thou pledge thy faith to her, in all love and honour, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her, and cherish her, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage?"

"I will," said John resolutely.

Reverend MacLeish turned to Jane and asked her the same questions. "Jane Donna, wilt thou have this man to be thy husband, and wilt thou pledge thy faith to him, in all love and honour, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with him, and cherish him, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage?"

"I will," replied Jane, with just as much strength as John had pledged.

Reverend MacLeish faced John. "Repeat after me. I John, take you, Jane, to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful husband, in plenty and want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live."

John repeated the vows, but stopped short. "Reverend, I would like to add something, if that's all
Reverend MacLeish nodded his approval with a small smile.

"I promise to be your protector, to stand between you and harm's way as long as we both shall live."

The minister pursed his lips seriously, and nodded his approval. He then turned to Jane. "Will ya be wantin' ta add your own words as well lass?"

"Yes, Reverend," Jane replied, her voice watery through her smile.

"All right then, repeat after me and then add what you will. I Jane, take you, John, to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful wife, in plenty and want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health as long as we both shall live."

Jane recited the vows perfectly and then continued on her own. "I promise to listen to you go on and on," she said with a small smile, "to keep you company, and to trust you without doubt. I promise these things for as long as we both shall live."

"And who has the rings?"

Jack reached into his pocket and pulled out the two precious platinum bands. The minister placed the rings on his open Bible and spoke of their symbolic significance to the Church and society.

John picked up the smaller of the rings, and took Jane's hand into his. He slid the delicate ring onto her finger as he spoke. "My love, my sweet Jane, I give you this ring as a solemn vow, as a lasting symbol of my love and fidelity, of all that I have promised, and all that I will share with you."

Jane picked up John's ring and slid it onto his finger as she recited her pledge. "My John, I give you this ring as a solemn vow, as a lasting symbol of my love and fidelity, of all that I have promised, and all that I will share with you."

Reverend MacLeish took the couple's hands into his withered grasp. "I now pronounce you husband and wife. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Kneel please." John and Jane did as he bade. He offered a prayer of blessing, and then they signed the Marriage Schedule.

"John and Jane Smith, I had not met the two of you before this afternoon. But when our mutual friend, Mr. Harkness, told me how you came to be in need of my particular expertise, I knew it would be an honour to be the one to officiate your wedding. Now at this point in the ceremony, I normally offer a little bit of advice to the new couple. For the two of you, I give you this: never forget what brought you here this day, but don't dwell on the evil events which have transpired. Instead, move on. Create a new life together not built upon fear, but upon love and fidelity. And to this congregation, you have witnessed something monumental today, the union of two people whose very existence means more to you than you will ever know, more than they, themselves, understand."

John and Jane looked at each other, confused, but grateful for the kind words given.

"And now the words you have been waiting to hear John, you may kiss your bride."

John grinned and waggled his eyebrows. Clumsily, he lifted Jane's veil and flipped it back over her head. With their hands clasped between them held close to their hearts, they met in the middle and
kissed each other sweetly, a simple, but lingering press of the lips. Husband and wife turned and looked at their happy friends. John pulled her down the aisle anxiously.

The members of the congregation smiled at them as they passed, and some nodded their heads in silent support. John and Jane were followed by Niles, Bess and Jack, and finally the minister.

In front of the church, John's car was waiting for them to return to Torchwood House for their reception. The newlyweds halted at the bottom of the stairs to greet their friends and the minister.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith, it was an honour to officiate. I wish you God's blessings and every happiness!"

Bewildered, John shook the enthusiastic man's hand. "I don't understand what you meant inside. Honour? That we're important?"

Jack swept in and gave John a bear hug and a firm kiss on the lips, much to John's displeasure. The groom immediately wiped the offending memory with his sleeve. Jack then turned his attentions to Jane. He grabbed her, dipped her across his arm, kissing her soundly.

"It's an old American tradition," John announced with a grin.

"It is not," John protested.

"It should be," joked Jane.

"Jane Smith, darling, just look at you! You're already glowing!" Bess said, hugging her dear friend.

"Thank you for everything, Bess. It wouldn't have happened without you," Jane sniffed, and they hugged again. Jane put her mouth to Bess's ear. "Stand on the far right. I'll aim in your direction when I throw my bouquet."

Bess hugged Jane again.

Niles hugged Jane fondly. "Thank you for asking me to walk you down the aisle. You do know you're like the little sister I never had, don't you?"

"Thanks big brother," replied Jane, kissing him on the cheek. She whispered into Niles's ear as well. "Don't waste today. Please talk to Bess. She misses you. She loves you, Niles. The two of you need to make things right. Please?"

Niles squeezed her tighter and nodded. "I will. I have some explaining to do, don't I?"

Most of the uninvited guests lingered outside, watching the wedding party with curiosity.

"Everyone is invited to Torchwood House for the reception," announced Jack. "Bring your families. There's plenty of food, and drink. And a record player isn't gonna cut it. We need a band, so if you know anyone who can play, spread the word."

"I've been known to play a rousing tune from time to time," called out an older gentleman.

"Clyde and his kin are just what you need to get your feet dancing!" Mrs. MacLeish said to John.

"I play the fiddle, Tommy blows the whistle, Bruce, the guitar and I think we could persuade James to pull out his pipes," Clyde added. "We'll have a good old fashioned country dance."

"Fantastic!" exclaimed Jack.
"John, you going to show me how to dance?" laughed Jane.

"I don't know if I remember how!" he laughed, "But I'm sure they won't hold it against us."

"John and Jane, Terrence here is going to take a few pictures, and then we'll head back for the reception," Niles announced.

Photos were taken by the Torchwood groundskeeper, who was also an amateur nature photographer.

John led Jane to his car and helped her in, and away they went.

Jack watched his friends drive away, and as he did so, he heard a familiar whooshing sound in the distance. He grabbed Niles and Bess by the arms. "Shhh! Listen! Hear that sound? Sounds kind of like groaning or heavy breathing?"

"What is that?" asked Bess nervously.

"Well I'll be damned, they came," Jack said with a magnificent smile.

"Who? Who came?" asked Niles.

"That was the TARDIS. The Doctor and Rose. They came to their own wedding. And they didn't even say hello." Jack shook his head. He was still smiling, but his friends heard the sadness in his voice.

oOo

An hour later, the great hall at Torchwood was teeming with people. Word spread quickly through the village that a party was going on out at the mysterious old place, and far be it from anyone in the village to say no to a good party.

Within two hours, the pub had closed down and all of the food that had been prepared for the day had been brought over to Torchwood. Wives had gone home and returned back with their suppers and treats to share, and the biggest party that the village had seen in fifty years was underway.

The reception was still going strong at ten o'clock. John pulled Jane outside for a breath of fresh air and a bit of time to themselves.

"Hello, wife." John pulled Jane close and kissed her full on the lips until she was breathless.

"Hello, wife." John pulled Jane close and kissed her full on the lips until she was breathless.

"I wish these people would go home," she whispered into his neck with a laugh. "I really want to go upstairs."

"Who says we can't?" he replied with a sly grin. "With all these people here? They'd know what we were doing!"

"Don't you think they have an idea that's what we're going to be doing tonight anyway?" he replied in a gravelly, lusty voice.

Jane wrapped her arms around John's back and pulled him closer still, and sighed contentedly into his chest.

"I know you wanted our first time to be at our flat. Are you disappointed?" John asked quietly.
"Not at all. Not one bit. We're practically in a castle," she joked. "But truly, no. I couldn't be happier, John."

"Good. Let's go back in. I have a surprise for you." John led Jane back into the hall. At the end of the song, a recording came on.

As soon as the strains of the song were recognisable, Jane grinned and John took her into his arms and they danced to Moonlight Serenade.

oOo

"Bess, may I have this dance?"

She put down her bottle of ale and silently agreed. "How are you feeling? Has your headache gone away?" she asked, choosing a relatively safe topic of conversation as they glided across the floor.

"A bit tired. Being in a coma can take it out of a bloke, you know," he joked dryly.

"I'm glad you're safe," she said, looking into his eyes for the first time in weeks.

"I've missed you Bess." Niles rubbed a small circle at the base of her spine as they continued to dance like professionals.

"The truth hurt, Niles. Knowing that all along you had been lying. Finding out that you didn't want to marry me. It hurt."

"I know it did. I'm very, very sorry. Hurting you was never my intention. I was scared, Bootsie."

"Of me? Or of marriage in general?"

Niles collected his thoughts. He did not want to mess up this chance. "Neither. I was scared of failure. I didn't want to fail like my parents did. Their marriage was a disaster, Bess. I don't know what a good marriage is supposed to look like. We were so happy, I figured why ruin a good thing? Better than good really. What we have, well, had, it was wonderful. And I ended up ruining it anyway."

"We could try again? Maybe? Start afresh?"

"From the beginning?" Niles asked, a bit disappointed.

"No. Not from scratch," Bess replied with a wry smile. "I owe you an apology as well. I've been rather bossy it seems."

"I like when you're bossy. It's very sexy," Niles replied, his voice low and husky.

"I'll have to remember that," Bess said, and then kissed him, slow and languid. "But out of the bedroom, I've been a bit of a dictator, and that's not right."

"Now that you know what I do for a living, perhaps you understand why I have been so passive with you. There are times that I have to do things that I really hate. The decisions I have to make have weigh me down. People's lives are at stake, and I have to make hard choices. So, when it came to you and me, I took the easy path. I let you be in charge all the time."

"I think I can understand that. I guess I'll have to get used to loosening the reins? Sharing the load?"
"I'd be happy to share it with you, if you'll have me back," Niles said.

"All right. On one condition."

"What's that?"

"You aren't angry when I tell you that I'm coming to work for Torchwood. Well, maybe. If Jack convinces them that they can use me."

A slow grin spread on Niles's face. "I think I rather like that idea."

"All the single ladies! I need all of the single ladies here!" Jack announced. "Jane is ready to throw her bouquet. And if you don't catch it, never fear, Jack is here to ease your disappointment!"

"Jack!" John called out.

Jane faced her back to the women, and counted to three, and tossed the bouquet, aiming for Bess. There were feminine squeals and then the happy whoop of a familiar voice. Jane turned around to see Bess jumping up and down, proudly holding the bouquet high above her head.

"And now, the garter toss! Gents, your turn," called out Jack. "Same offer stands for all of you disappointed men."

"Jack," again drawled John.

"Kidding! I'm kidding," said Jack with a grin. "No I'm not," he said quietly so only John could hear him.

Jack brought over a chair, and Jane shyly planted her foot. John went down on one knee, and made a show of slowly slipping the dark blue garter off of her leg. The men made cat calls and Jane blushed fiercely, though her pink cheeks were only noticeable to John in the firelight of the dim room. John sling-shot the garter haphazardly, and it landed on the floor.

None of the men advanced to retrieve it, and the women started to boo until one man stepped out of the crowd. He bent over and picked up the garter. He walked to his woman and held it out to her, twirling it on his pointer finger. Bess took it from Niles, and pulled him into a white hot kiss.

They left the reception without saying goodbye.

Tuesday had arrived, so the band packed it in at midnight. All of the impromptu guests and their closest friends left, and the newlyweds found themselves alone in the dwindling firelight of the grand hall.

"Tell me this is real," said Jane, leaning against John's side as they sat on a sofa and stared into the fire.

"Oh, it's very, very real." John turned and pulled Jane into a kiss. He could taste the remnants of frosting on her lips from the one piece of wedding cake she had finally been able to eat five minutes before. "Mmmm, vanilla and almond," he said, licking his lips.

"I didn't know you could play the penny whistle," Jane said with a smile after he pulled away from the slow, languid kiss. "And the bagpipes."

"I have fantastic lung capacity," he bragged, his voice low and husky. "Bagpiping requires significant… physical… endurance," he added quietly, kissing her between words.
"All that running you did in school probably, right?" asked Jane innocently.

"Probably. Love the running. But endurance is important for other physical activities, too," he said with a sexy rumble in his voice as he traced her jawline with a fingertip.

Her eyes went wide when she suddenly understand to what he was referring. She swallowed hard. "Endurance is good." She blushed and looked down at her lap, suddenly not sure what to do with her hands.

"Jane, let's go upstairs."

Jane nodded, and shyly slid her hand into his. He pulled her off of the sofa, and together they walked up the grand staircase to the master suite. Their things had been moved from their individual rooms into the grand bedroom, which had been occupied by its mysterious owner nearly one hundred years ago.

They reached the door, and John opened it revealing a room fit for a Lord and his Lady. A merry fire was dancing in the stone fireplace. Sweet smelling candles had been lit throughout the room, filling the air with the scent of jasmine. The luxurious bed linens were drawn back. Champagne was on ice. Pink and yellow rose petals were strewn in a path from the door to the bed, and blanketed the bed itself.

John and Jane both swallowed hard as they looked at each other, knowing what was next. Without a word, John scooped up his bride and carried her into the room. He kicked the door closed with his foot and then walked the petal-path to the enormous four poster bed. Reverently, he set her down, and kissed his bride knowing this time, neither of them would stop until both were satisfied.
**John & Jane Do Married Things**

Chapter Summary

Finally, John and Jane don't have to stop. And oh yeah, that pesky Family shows up.

Chapter Notes

It's time for John and Jane to do the deed. While this chapter isn't explicit, it is definitely a hot PG-13, light R. But there is also plot, and it is important.

**Chapter 30 - John & Jane Do Married Things**

Rose giggled as she pulled the luxurious bed linens back, carefully arranging the bed so the room was fit for royalty. She tossed fragrant pink and yellow rose petals over the bed, and then made a petal-strewn path from the bed to the door. She picked up her rucksack, and dug around until she found a tall pearlescent bottle of exotic bath salts. The Doctor had taken her to the market on Shan Shen the day before yesterday. There was a famous merchant who sold a morning sickness remedy that was effective and safe for human-Gallifreyan pregnancies. She set the bath salts on the floor next to the tub. A white card with Chinese characters on one side, and the Doctor’s scrawl on the other, hung from the neck of the bottle by a red silk cord: "Use these in your bath."

Rose walked out of the bathroom wearing a worried look. "I still can't figure out how this works, Doctor. Isn't it a paradox? Us leavin' all this stuff here for ourselves to use? Setting up the room and all? It's like some never-endin' circle. They use the stuff because we put it here because they used it because we put it there. See? It just goes on and on and on! But what if Jane doesn't like the way the bath stuff smells, so they don't use 'em John thinks they smell too girlie or somethin'? What if one of the candles gets snuffed out by a draught because they open a window that we left closed and they look to see why the light went out, and because of that they don't snog as long as they shoulda and do somethin' else instead, and a chain reaction happens? Will that change our history? What if--"

"Rose, hold on, stop!" He silenced his nervous wife with a gentle touch to her lips. "But we did use them, so no paradox, right? If we hadn't have used them, we wouldn't be setting up the room like this. And no, snuffing out one candle is not going to change history in this case. I promise, it will be okay." He hugged Rose and kissed her forehead, moving to push a bottle of fine Champagne into the silver ice bucket next to the bed. "You've been so nervous since I parked the TARDIS. How come?"

"I'm scared that something is gonna happen and I won't get pregnant tonight," she answered quietly, rubbing her nervous stomach. "If one little thing doesn't happen perfectly right, will our baby just cease to exist?" She surveyed the room.

"You're borrowing worry from tomorrow, love. Well yesterday or really a month ago, actually," the Doctor said scratching the side of his face. "In any rate, I promise, everything is going to work out
exactly as it should. I would never ever risk the life of our child. What we are doing is completely one hundred percent safe." The Doctor kissed Rose on the nose, and fondly touched her still flat stomach. "Right my little Jamie or Zoe? Let Mummy know you're going to be fine," he asked bending over to kiss her tummy.

Rose felt a wave of warmth in her mind from both her husband and unborn child. She felt reassured and safe. "That it then? Did we forget anything?"

The Doctor pressed his tongue against the back of his teeth as he thought. "Fire, rose petals, aphrodisiacal bath salts, jasmine scented candles to cover the musty smell of a five hundred year old house, Champagne, crystal goblets left on the kitchen counter. Oh!" He went into John's luggage and pulled out a blue and white striped pyjama top. He waved it in front of Rose. "Almost forgot this." He waggled his eyebrows and draped it casually across the tufted bench at the foot of the of bed.

"You sure have a thing for that top," Rose said huskily as she snaked her arms up around his neck and kissed her husband's sideburn.

"You have no idea, Rose," he said with a half grin. "John nearly popped his cork when he saw Jane wearing that the night she stayed over."

"Yeah, well the feeling was pretty mutual, Doctor. Jane nearly assaulted him in her sleep, remember?"

They both laughed and then sighed, still slightly melancholy at the memory.

"Not even a chameleon arch could keep us apart, hmm?" The Doctor ran his hands down Rose's back and squeezed her bum, pulling her close. "Just one more proof that John was really me."

"And Jane was me."

"I still do have a thing for you in my clothes, you know," he whispered into her mouth.

"Well what are we waiting for then? Let's get me out of these clothes and into some of yours. How does a strategically placed ridiculously long striped scarf sound?" Rose said, seductively.

"Oooh, going retro," the Doctor growled. "Or how about Swinging Bachelor Boss and Not So Innocent Girl From the Typing Pool? You put on the glasses, stick your hair up in a knot with a couple of pencils. You be coy and shy, I'll start kissing behind your ear, and you say, "Mr. Smith! What kind of girl do you think I am?" and then we tumble onto the orange sofa in my swanky wood paneled office to the strains of Bobby Darin."

"Mmm, sounds fun."

"And speaking of retro, how would you like to go and see Ian Dury in 1979?"

"You are just a big old punk, aren't you? With a bit of rockabilly thrown in!"

Rose laughed when the Doctor screeched a bit of *Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick*.

"You know, something tells me we haven't seen the last of this place," he said with frowning suddenly.

"I had the strangest dream when I was Jane. I just remembered it! The night before our wedding, I dreamed that you and I were here, at Torchwood, and there was this really creepy werewolf! I was
locked in the basement with it and—"

"Tch, tch, tch." The Doctor held up his hand to halt her from speaking, and manically pulled out his sonic screwdriver. He fiddled with it and waved it around the room. "Time echo. We need to get out of here before we see any more of the future. That wasn't a dream, Rose. Jane saw our future. They're coming soon anyway. Let's go and find your glasses and typewriter. Allons-y," he growled as he grabbed his wife's hand.

Together, they fled down the back stairs, and out into the darkness to the waiting TARDIS.

oOo

In the flickering firelight of the room, Jane could see a hungry look in John's eyes that she hadn't seen before. Jane blushed under the intensity of his scrutiny. She was married now. Why was she blushing? She wasn't putting off what she knew was coming next, but she would be lying if she said she wasn't nervous. It seemed like she had imagined this man making love to her at least once every waking hour since the day that John Smith had walked past her desk at Prescott Publishing on his way to his brand new office — even if she'd hadn't known everything that had meant until recently.

"John, I'm nervous," she said quietly looking away from her husband into the crackling flames.

"Why, love?"

"What if I'm rubbish at sex?" Jane said, turning to look into John's eyes.

"I think you have already proven otherwise," he said with a chuckle. "Park bench at midnight? Hairy arms?" He paused. "Our shared naughty dream? And what about the way you said goodnight last night?"

John sat down next to Jane and pulled her into his arms and kissed her hungrily. She pulled away, needy for air.

"Mrs. Smith, I do believe it is finally time, and I mean finally," he chuckled, "for you to have your wicked way with me."

Jane squeaked as John kissed her yet again. This time she didn't pull away. She let herself melt into his embrace. It was John who broke their kiss, with a final tug of her bottom lip.

"Stay there, don't move an inch. I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Where are you going?" she asked. Now she was the needy one.

"Our friends gave us Champagne, but no glasses. Going down to the kitchen to find some."

When he’d left, Jane looked around the room, and smiled, as she saw the striped pajama top she had worn that night. She quickly took off her wedding dress, the constricting and thoroughly unsexy undergarments, and slipped on the top. She experimented with poses, and found that she felt rather alluring laying on her side with one arm draped over the rise of her hip. She looked down at her chest, and at the last minute, pulled her top open so that her husband would be afforded a peekaboo view of her chest.

John took the stairs by twos as he hastily returned from the kitchen with two beautiful antique crystal goblets he had found sitting on the counter. He flew into the room with a wide smile. "Fast enough for..." His voice faded.
Just as John had fantasised the week before, Jane was laying on her side on the bed. She was wearing his blue and white striped pyjama top. A hint of white lace was peeking from under the hem, and the collar was gaping open, revealing the swell of her breasts.

John's feet froze to the carpet, and his mouth gaped open just a bit.

"Hello," Jane said quietly. She reached up into her hair and pulled the hairpins out. She ran her fingers through the stiff from hairspray golden locks to free her blonde waves.

"Uh," was all he could muster before he finally found his feet. He set the goblets on the bedside table and sat down on the bed.

"Do you remember asking me to wear this on our wedding night?" she asked quietly as she fiddled with the hem of the shirt.

"I don't," he said, with a half grin. "But I'm very glad you remembered. When did I ask you to wear this?" He traced her collarbone with a fingertip.

"The night I stayed over. After I asked you to hold me, to comfort me after the nightmare. You thought I was asleep, but I was pretending. I was too excited and nervous to sleep, bein' in your bed with you right there next to me. You whispered into my ear, ‘Wear this on our wedding night.’"

"Seeing you in my pyjama top that night was the sexiest thing I had ever seen in my entire life. But, I think that is about to change." He started to unbutton the three silver buttons of his black waistcoat, but Jane sat up and gently moved his hand away.

"May I do that for you?" she asked.

He nodded, more than happy to comply.

Early into the evening, John had shed his black Prince Charlie jacket, removed the silver cufflinks from his shirt, and rolled up his sleeves, exposing his manly, hairy arms, just for Jane. She noticed it when they were outside taking a bit of a breather from the raucous dancing and had rewarded him with a luscious kiss, away from prying eyes. Soon after that, he had loosened his black silk bow tie, and left it to hang under the collar of his shirt. He'd unbuttoned the top button as well as the room had grown hot and stuffy from all of the people, the freely flowing alcohol, and the lively dancing.

With slightly fumbling fingers, Jane unbuttoned John's white dress shirt. Next she pulled the already-untied black silk bow tie from his neck and carefully laid it on the bedside table. She liked how it looked, like the ribbon from a gift she had just unwrapped.

Jane slid her hands under the black waistcoat and slid it off of his shoulders. Next, she put her hands under the white shirt, and ran her palms over the thin white cotton of his vest, feeling his lean, muscled chest before pushing his shirt off of his shoulders. She untucked the tails, and John shrugged it off of his arms and flung it onto a chair. His white vest was all that remained between her hands and his chest.

Jane smiled and with vigour, pulled the vest out from his kilt. "Arms up," she said a bit commanding, "please," she added, biting her lip. Of course John complied and she pulled the white cotton off of her husband. She held it for a minute and then with a raised eyebrow, threw caution to the wind and flung it across the room.

"I see you don't mind making a mess in our bedroom," John said with an eyebrow waggle.
"Are you calling my housekeeping skills into question, Mr. Smith?" she asked, losing some of her nervousness. But then she realised what was left to remove and her stomach fluttered and flipped once again, the nerves returning in full force. She stared down at his waist and chewed her lip.

"Want me to do this bit?" he asked. His voice was kind and gentle.

"Uh, no. I—I will," she said, furrowing her brow. "Why— why don't you stand up and I'll—I'll get this kilt off of you."

She stood in front of him, but instead of removing his kilt, she put her hands on his chest, and felt the smattering of soft hair that was there, running her hands across the taut muscles a few times. "You are so beautiful," she said, awed. "I know men aren't supposed to be beautiful, but you are," she said earnestly. She looked up at him, and he kissed her on the lips, silencing her.

She released her lips and knelt down on the floor, sitting on her heels to untie the long laces of his ghillie brouges. She placed her hand on his ankle and encouraged him to step out of the shoe, and repeated the long process with the second. She pulled off his white hose and flashes, and set them aside. Jane rose to her knees, and swallowed hard as she saw the sporran, slung low on his hips, realising she was right at eye level with the most obvious thing that made him male. She paused a moment, closed her eyes and breathed in and out through her nose in an effort to calm her now shaking hands.

Jane opened her eyes and removed the sporran. She started to remove the silver dagger kilt pin, but John quietly told her it could stay there. She swallowed hard and looked up at him, moving to the silver belt buckle with the Smith family crest. The kilt loosened, and he stepped out of the voluminous piece of fine fabric. Jane carried it over to the chair, taking care to drape the special garment carefully over the seat back.

"Not gonna chuck this across the room," she said.

"You are too practical Jane. We only get one wedding night. You should have flung it."

Jane laughed, but then realised he was standing in front of her, just in his pants. His very thin pants.

"It's my turn, love." John walked slowly to her, and she backed up a little bit. "Uh, uh, uh," he tutted with his finger. "No running off my sweet Jane. You know I can run faster than you," he said with a deliciously seductive smile.

"I'm not running off, I'm making you come and get me," she said with a sultry grin, remembering Bess's advice to make him work for it a bit, because sometimes men liked to pursue.

"Oh well now, that puts a whole new spin on things, doesn't it?" John lunged at Jane, and grabbed her around the waist, he lifted her and deposited her on the bed onto her back.

She laughed hysterically and kicked her feet, helpless, as his hands dug into her sides.

"You're ticklish!" He said with an evil grin, threatening to squeeze her waist. He had her pinned underneath him, his knees on each side of her hips, and he was hovering over her. He flashed to a memory. This was his fantasy in the flesh. Jane had the same flushed, happy look on her face. Her cheeks were red from laughing. He lost his desire to tickle her into submission.

"Jane, my wife, unbutton for me?" he asked.

"Don't you want to do it?" she asked. "I thought you would want me to undress you, and you would undress me," she said, hopefully.
"Remember the night you stayed over? And, well, you wore this shirt? I sort of, well, had a bit of a fantasy about you in this shirt."

"You had a fantasy about me? Naughty boy," she said, teasing him.

"Cannae help a lad," he said with a grin. "Don't think I'm crazy, but, well, it's come true. The fantasy, that is. Right now, you look exactly like you did. It's almost like I saw the future. And in my fantasy, you unbuttoned the-"

"Like this?" Jane moved her hands to the top button of the pyjama top. Keeping her eyes on him, she moved down the placket until all buttons had been unfastened, though she remained covered.

"Aye."

"And then, did I do this?" Jane pulled John down to her, put her hands into his hair and massaged his scalp while she kissed his breath away.

John pulled away from her lips and then slipped his hands under the shirt and pushed it aside. His breathing sped up as he took in the bare beauty of his beloved Jane for the very first time. He didn't say anything further, choosing instead to communicate with this lips on her skin.

"Oh John..." she said quietly. She reached one of her hands into his hair and gently pulled it in wordless encouragement as he explored her flushed skin with his lips.

John sat up and moved off of her when he noticed she was shaking a bit. "Still nervous?" he asked. She shook her head, but she was looking him directly in the eyes, not averting his gaze.

"I have an idea. Why don't we take a bath together? It will give us a chance to get to know each other in a more relaxed way. I'll scrub your back, you scrub mine?"

"Just my back?" she asked, cheekily.

"Oh, I can think of some other places I will want to scrub," he replied.

Jane got off of the bed and wrapped the pyjama top around her protectively, but John halted her, parted the shirt and pulled her up against him so that they were now skin to skin. Their hearts both began to race madly. John moved his hands to the silk and lace of her white bridal knickers.

"Take it off?" John asked.

Jane closed her eyes, bit her lip, and let the blue shirt slip to the floor.

John breathed in deeply, and lowered his eyes to her chest. He pulled her into his chest, a bit roughly. He hooked his thumbs under the waistband of the white satin that rode low on her hips.

"Take them off," she whispered against his lips.

John pushed her white satin panties down to her knees, letting them fall to the carpet on their own, and stopped to kiss her stomach before standing up and moving away so that he could see his Jane from head to toe, naked.

"Absolutely beautiful," he said with a small shake of his head.

Jane smiled at him, shyly ducking her head slightly, though not feeling nearly as self conscious as she thought she might when this moment finally came.
“You want to do mine?”

Jane blew a breath through her lips. “Um, could you do it?” Her voice shook slightly.

“Aye.” He nodded kindly and then he removed his boxers.

Jane averted her eyes for a moment. John guided her eyes back to his with a gentle touch under her chin.

“It’s all right, sweet Jane. We’ll take this one step at a time. All right?”

She nodded. “Thank you for understanding.”

“Of course. You wouldn’t be you if you weren’t a bit shy. I love that you’re shy.”

Why don’t you stay here for a moment, and I’ll draw us a bath, hmm?”

She nodded, and averted her eyes as he walked away. The water ran for at least five minutes before John returned for her. He took her hand, and led her to the en suite. The Victorian claw-footed bathtub, while not huge, was definitely larger than any Jane had seen. It was more than adequate to accommodate two people sitting in tandem or facing one another, and deep enough so that the water would be high almost to her neck.

“Why don’t you slip into the tub. I’ll join you in a minute. Just relax for a moment. You let me know when you’re ready for me to join you.”

Jane nodded, and sank into the water with a hum of relaxation. “What are those?” She pointed to a tall bottle on the sink.

John picked up the bottle, read the label. “Bath salts.” He uncorked the bottle and sniffed. “They’re a bit girlie. But they smell nice. Want some?”

“Sure.” She continued to avert her eyes from her bare husband’s form.

John shook the dazzling crystals over the water.

"Magic bath salts?” Jane asked as she watched the water turn slightly luminescent and fill the room with the scent of jasmine, rose, and exotic, unrecognisable spices. She sighed as a gentle warmth built low in her belly. She dappled her hand on the surface of the water, watching the pearly ripples. She sighed as her desire for John began to grow. She turned, and looked at him for the first time, running her eyes up and down his body. ”

He half smiled. “Getting brave, are we?”

“Get in,” she almost ordered.

The water sloshed over the edge a little bit as John sank into the water, facing her. They mingled their legs, toes dangerously close to places neither had touched.

"I don't think I could have imagined you looking any more beautiful as a bride. Absolutely perfect.”

"You didn't look so bad yourself," Jane replied. "I didn't know you were going to wear a kilt. You looked so handsome." She licked her lips.

John shrugged. "Neither did I. Jack dug it up from the back of my closet. I was planning on wearing
my white dinner jacket and black trousers."

"I'll have to thank Jack," she said growled.

"Don't thank him too much," he joked. "Bess caught your bouquet. Do you suppose she and Niles will finally reconcile?"

"They left together and they were holding hands. That's a good sign, isn't it?" Jane moved her hands across the surface of the water. "Bess bought me the dress, and you will never guess when." She paused for effect. "The Saturday before Easter, right after I broke our engagement."

"Really?" he asked, genuinely surprised.

"Mmm hmm. I was off in another department and she saw it. She told me that she bought it because, and I quote, 'I heard a voice tell me to buy it, that I knew you and John were going to be married and everything was going to be okay.' How is that for spooky?"

"Bess is a bit spooky, isn't she? Brilliant, but spooky," John said with a grin. "What do you want to do tomorrow?" he asked.

"How about we go to that pub that Mrs. MacLeish mentioned. We could have some dinner, dance a bit maybe?"

"But what about the rest of the day?" asked John, hoping he knew the answer.

"What do you think we're going to be doing?" she asked enigmatically and then peeked her tongue through her teeth with a grin.

"Stop talking about other people. I want my wedding night."

John frowned, but was still smiling. "What's gotten into you?"

"Dunno. Seeing you all naked and sexy. And me being naked. I'm feeling a bit… warm." She licked her lips.


"Oh. I'm sorry, it's a habit. I'll try and stop it if you don't like it."

"Oh, don't you dare! It is so sexy. I just couldn't do anything about it until now." John lunged in the water and pulled Jane to him, kissing her hungrily. He pulled away and moved her to the middle of the tub, took her spot and pulled her back to him so that she was now sitting between his legs, leaning against his chest.

"You know what drove me crazy?" asked Jane.

"What? John asked. With Jane distracted by their conversation, he noticed she was not nearly as nervous as she had been just a minute before, and he began to explore placed which had been covered until now more thoroughly.

"Your glasses."

"My specs? Why?" he asked genuinely curious.

"Sexy doesn't even begin to describe how you look in those glasses. Before we were... us, I sort of... thought about you. You know, imagined you and me together. You were always wearing
them." Jane sighed and relaxed, letting her head fall against his shoulder, relaxing into the exploratory touches of his hands. He hadn’t touched anything sensitive or wanting yet, seemingly teasing her.

"Tell me what you imagined?"

"You were the Professor, and I was Iris."

"Don't need to pretend anymore. You are my Iris, and I am your Professor."

Jane turned her head to the side and sought his lips. John moved his hands down her stomach, deeper into the water, and rested them low on the softest part of her belly, right below her navel. She sighed letting her head fall back against his shoulder, more than ready for her husband to take his exploration further.

Jane moved out of his lap and turned to face him. Her eyes told him she was ready for more, but still wary.

"You don’t seem as nervous now," he stated.

"Just a little," she replied, but she was looking him directly in the eyes, not averting her gaze. "How about you show me just how nervous I don't need to be," she said bravely.

John stood up, and extended his hand to her, pulling her to her feet. Together they stepped out of the tub and onto the plush bathmat. Jane reached for a thick white towel, and dried off John, beginning with his chest, moving down his stomach and then down his legs. She went to his back and finished the job by gently patting his mop of brown hair. John took the other towel off of the bar, and he repeated the process for her.

"I think my bum is dry now, John," Jane said with a laugh.

"Can't be too careful about these things," he said, with one final wipe.

"Catch me!" Jane fled the bathroom and jumped onto the bed, landing on her hands and knees. John was close on her heels and soon, Jane found herself in the same position she had been in just a half hour before. John was straddling her, looking down on her prone form. She threw her arms above her head and smiled.

"Would you like a glass of Champagne?" asked John, climbing off of her to sit on the edge of the bed.

"Could do," she replied, sitting up onto her knees, behind him. She put her hands on his shoulders and kneaded the wiry muscles. "How does this feel?"

"Lovely," he replied with a sigh. "But keep doing that and I might just relax too much and fall asleep. And I would be sorely disappointed if I fell asleep without, well…” he turned around and kissed her soundly, "making love to my wife on our wedding night."

"Hate to tell you this John, but it's our wedding morning, now." Jane inclined her head to the alarm clock on the nightstand which indicated it was 12:45 am. "We have now been married about nine hours. Happy nine hour anniversary."

"That calls for a toast." John poured wine and handed her a crystal goblet. They touched glasses and drank a few sips.
Jane set her glass down and reclined onto her elbow. "You trying to get me drunk?" she asked, her eyes slightly heavy. The small amount of Champagne on her almost empty stomach had even further relaxed her and lowered her crumbling inhibitions.

"Nope. No more wine for you. I know how you get when you're tipsy, and I want you in your right mind, and able to remember every beautiful second of our first night."

"So do I, so I am definitely cut off for the night." She grinned at him.

"Having fun yet?" John asked.

"You have no idea," she said, shaking her head and then laughing. "Here I was so scared a few days ago. Terrified out of my mind."

"Let's not talk about that man on our wedding night," John said firmly.

"Oh, I wasn't referring to being kidnapped, John." Jane laughed and shook her head. "I'm talking about sex."

He fell onto his side, and pulled her close so they were stretched out face to face. He placed his hand on the rise of her hip and then down into the well of her waist.

"I guess I always knew in the back of my mind that I wouldn't ever go through with it until we were married. I was committed to waiting until this moment, even if at times I didn't really act like it. And I am so, so glad we did. Thank you John, thank you for being a gentleman from the start, and patient, and not pressuring me, or taking advantage of me those times when it would have been so easy for you to change my mind. You are the best man in the universe." Jane leaned in and kissed him.

Without another word, John and Jane slid under the covers. They rested their heads on the pillows, officially claiming sides of the bed for the first time. Jane was on the right, and John on the left, just as she had guessed ten days before.

Jane put her hand on John's arm, and slid it down to his hand. She took his hand into hers, and threaded her fingers through his. They traded soft, languid kisses for a while, until the soft kisses turned fevered, hungry, deep, and desperate.

He touched her in places she’d never been touched. Sucking and licking and stroking. He explored her body with his lips — from lips to neck, the well of her throat. He paused at her chest, and brought her to the point of gasping, but moved away before she could tip over the edge. Down to her hips, the soft swell of her belly, the sensitive skin inside of her thighs, until she was almost shuddering, wanting his lips right there but not brave enough to ask.

He slid back up her body, quickly retracing his path with his mouth, and then repeated the process with adding touch to his kisses. And this time he touched her where she needed it. At first, the touches barely grazed her, feather light, until she made it clear with her rhythmic movements that she was ready for more.

"Oh, Jane, you’re so ready for me. Tell me you want me."

"Want you. Please," she breathed, focusing her attention on the exquisite need that was building.

John nudged her legs apart with his knee and settled over her. "Ready?" he asked tenderly, but with purpose.
She nodded, biting her lip nervously.

John calmed her with quiet words of love and assurance while he caressed her face and hair. "Oh my Jane, my beautiful wonderful Jane..." he whispered into her ear as they finally physically united. "I love you so much."

Jane held onto her husband tightly, closed her eyes and memorized the moment.

"Are you all right?" he asked tenderly, looking at the intensity written on her face as one single tear dribbled down to the pillow.

"I'm okay," she said, and blew a puff of air through her lips. "M not crying 'bout that, John," she smiled. "I'm crying because I am so happy."

John made a sound that sounded almost like a growl, and then kissed her again, devouring her, drinking her in. He was slow and gentle at first, but Jane urged him on. Jane was no longer the hesitant and blushing bride, but a yearning lover. And when the moment came that they finally both reached ecstasy, the marriage bond of the Time Lord and his wife awoke, if only for a moment.

A sound that was something like music emerged from deep within their beings, and then music turned to singing. John pulled his lips away from his wife. He needed to see her face, and as soon as he looked into her eyes, she said his name, and it was the most beautiful word he had ever heard her speak. But she didn't call him John, yet he knew it was his name, his real name, his secret name known only by his bride.

They collapsed into each other and slowly returned to reality, completely satisfied and wholly in love.

"Wake me when you're ready for another go," Jane said as she smiled into his mouth for one last kiss. She turned onto her side and nestled into her husband's lap.

"Sleep well my Jane," John said quietly as he pulled her close.

"Goodnight my John," she said, completely safe and content in his arms.

Neither of them remembered the mating song of the Time Lord and his wife, or the golden essence of time that had swirled around them. The universe heard and saw the beautiful beacon of their eternal bond, the only such bond in existence.

But so did a family of hunters.

oOo

John and Jane stirred from sleep still wrapped up in each other, unsure where one began and the other ended.

John ran his hand down Jane's arm and moved it around of her front, holding her hands in his. He kissed her neck and whispered into her ear, "Good morning."

Jane stirred lazily and then stretched out her legs before turning in his arms to face him. "Hi," she said quietly, smiling.

"How are you feeling?" he whispered.
"Perfect," she said, cupping his face lovingly, "and very married." She bit her lip shyly.

John furrowed his brow, concerned. "You okay? Really?"

"Of course I am." Jane kissed him. "This will just take a bit of getting used to."

"Which part?" he asked, flirtatiously. "This part?" His hand moved around to her backside and squeezed.

Jane giggled and snuggled closer.

"Or this part?" John kissed her neck, and then moved his lips down to the softness of her chest. "Or how about this?" He deftly flipped Jane onto her back and stretched himself over her, holding her hands above her head, and as he kissed her passionately.

"I was going to say not sleeping alone," Jane laughed. "I think I am more than used to all of the other parts."

"Yeah? You sure you don't need more practice getting used to the other things?" John waggled his eyebrows.

"Oh, of course. You're right. I think we definitely need to practice some more."

"There’s something I’d like to do for you. Trust me?" asked John.

"Always."

The next thing Jane knew, her eyes were wide open, and she was experiencing things that people really did do. Very pleasurable things.

John looked up at her face, and grinned. “Liked that, did you?”

“Um,” she blushed, “that is the best thing I have ever felt. And I thought last night was fun!”

"We're married, aren't we?" said John, moving up her body so that they were face to face. “We are," she replied with a grin.

He kissed her hard, and she squeezed his hairy arm.

"So, Mrs. Smith, what do you want to do today?" he asked.

"How about we go to that pub that Mrs. MacLeish mentioned. We could have some dinner, dance a bit maybe?"

"But what about the rest of the day?" asked John, hoping he knew the answer.

Jane reached out for John and then moved onto him. She pushed her hands into his hair and dropped her lips to his, and in the leisurely way of lovers in the morning, John and Jane practiced getting used to each other. But this time, Jane was in charge.

oOo

After bathing and changing into casual clothing, John and Jane emerged from their bridal suite in search of food. They walked into the kitchen holding hands and giggling. Bess, Niles and Jack were sitting around the long wooden table laughing and talking over eggs and fried sausages.
"Hey, hey! It's the newlyweds!" Jack announced loudly with open arms and bright smile. "Wondered when you were going to come out of your love nest. Have some lunch," said Jack looking at the wall clock that indicated it was nearly noon. "I'm sure you two have worked up quite the appetite," he teased.

Jane turned into John's shoulder to hide her red face for a moment and then looked up at her proudly smiling husband.

Bess gave Jane a silent questioning look, which Jane answered by biting her lip shyly, raising her eyebrows as she smiled at her friend.

"We'll talk later, darling," said Bess.

Jane broke into a wide smile and rolled her eyes, once again, blushing.

Niles and Jack took turns shaking John's hand and slapping him on the back. "How does it feel, old man? Married, tied down, domesticated?" asked Niles.

"Fantastic. I highly recommend it," John said heartily.

Jane poured herself a cup of coffee and leaned against the counter trying hard to project the picture of casual nonchalance. "So John and I were talking, and thought it might be fun to go into the village and get a bite at the pub this evening. What do you think?" She nibbled on a piece of toast spread with orange marmalade.

"Sounds good," answered Jack before he took a sip of strong coffee.

"I'm going to have to go back to London tomorrow morning, darling," Bess said to Jane. "I told them I had a family emergency, which is true because you and John are absolutely my family. But I can't put work off any longer."

"I'll drive you back, Bootsie, and then I'll come back up here tomorrow night," offered Niles.

Jane smiled when she noticed that Niles and Bess were holding hands under the table.

"Wonder what's going to happen to Prescott now that Daniel is gone, and a wanted man," John wondered as he made himself a cup of tea.

"I don't know how substantial his investment was. But I doubt it will go under, now that we have John here," Bess said, patting John on the hand as he sat down at the long table.

"Fancy working on a chapter today, love?" John asked casually. "Do our part to keep Prescott afloat?"

"Sounds nice. We could find a cozy little spot and hunker down. Jack, you think there's a typewriter anywhere around here?" Jane asked as she pierced a sausage from the platter in the centre of the table.

He stared at her. "It's your honeymoon and the two of you want to work." It wasn't a question.

"Sure, why not? Have a few hours before we go to the pub, might as well write," added John.

Jack shook his head and laughed. "Sure, I'll see what I can find."

Jack did find a typewriter and brought it up to John and Jane's room forty-five minutes later. He knocked and John cracked open the door and poked out his messy-haired head.
"Here's the typewriter. Where do you want it?"

"Just leave it outside the door. Thanks. Bye." John quickly closed the door. "Can't I come in?" Jack asked, in a teasing voice.

"No. Go away Jack."

"That's not very hospitable of you, buddy." Jack replied, trying hard not to laugh.

"See you later Jack," Jane called from deep inside the room.

"Knew you guys would find something better to do than write!" Jack hollered through the closed door. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and laughed all the way down the stairs.

oOo

At six o'clock, the five friends squeezed into the large, black Torchwood vehicle and Jack drove them into the village of St. Catherine’s. The two groundskeepers tagged along behind in an old Jeep. It was rare that they got to see their buddies from Torchwood London, and were hungry for stories and scuttlebutt.

"Tonight's on me, everyone," John announced as they walked into The Howling, the only pub in town.

As it was a Tuesday night, and while place wasn't filled, but neither was it empty. They found a large round table, and everyone ordered. Some of the regulars scowled at the young newcomers who had come and, in their eyes, were taking over the place. Jane was disappointed to see that there wasn't any designated place to dance.

"We'll make room then," said John, moving a few tables, further encouraging the grumpiness of the locals.

"What'ya think you're doing laddie?" asked an older man with a cane.

"I'm sorry, were you using this table?" he asked in his thickest accent. "See, my new bride asked me to take her dancing tonight, and seeing as there isn't any proper dance floor, I thought I'd make one for her."

"Ach! You're the new groom! Why didn't ya say so! O' course ya can move the tables! Ya look different outta your fancy duds. Mighty fine party last night out at the old Torchwood place."

Jane joined her husband and held his hand.

"And here's your lovely bride. Best wishes to the two of ya. You'll sure make some fine lookin' bairns!" The old man elbowed John, and croaked a laugh.

"I understand that there is some history or legend about Torchwood House? Can you tell us about it?" asked Jane.

"Not I. Ask Kenneth over there. He knows all about it. Named this place after the legend in fact."

"This pub is named The Howling, right? Why? Is Torchwood haunted?" asked Jane in an excited voice, ready to hear a scary story.

"Not haunted. Werewolf!" he whispered, nodding and winking simultaneously. "Kenny!" the man hollered. "Come over here. These lovely people want to hear about our local legend."
A spry old man jumped out from behind the bar and made his way to the table, wiping his hands on his white apron.

John and Jane took seats at the table and listened to the man’s terrifying tale from the past.

oOo

A green beam of light lit up the rough countryside as a craft floated above the surface of the ground, seeking Time, catching its scent and honing in. The craft landed not far from the village. Four human forms emerged from the invisible ship.

"Is your army at the ready Son of Mine?" asked Father.

"Indeed it is, Father of Mine. We're lucky that this island has an obsession with statues. These humans seem to have a need to carve their likenesses into stone."

"I rather like those little winged creatures that hang from the rafters," said Sister as she looked up at a gargoyle.

It shifted and pulled itself off of the building. Stone and mortar fell to the ground as it freed itself from its perch. The stone soldier followed the foursome down the cobblestone lane.

"If I were the Time Lord, the last place I would take my bride would be a public gathering place. Yet, he has made another mistake. I am beginning to question the Time Lord's intellect," said Father.

The foursome pulled weapons out of their pockets and entered the pub. Father shot an old man holding a dart and he disintegrated into a haze of green. Shouts of terror filled the room.

"Every person will stand still and no one will leave." Father's voice boomed throughout the pub.

Jane screamed in spite of herself when she saw Daniel emerge from behind Jim. John grabbed her and held her close. The foursome turned and faced Jack.

"Hello Time Lord, we've been looking for you." Father stepped forward.

Jack slowly raised his arms. "I don't know what you are talking about," Jack replied, uncharacteristically nervous.

"If you won't answer, perhaps we can persuade you." Daniel grabbed Jane. "So Time Lord, will it be your wife?" He shook Jane roughly, and then pointed his weapon at John. "Or your friend? Your choice. Turn yourself over to us, or one of these people will die."

"Daniel, you don't have to do this, I— I— “ Jane stuttered, looking at John.

"Daniel? You think I'm Daniel?" The alien grinned oddly and laughed. "Hardly. Daniel's long dead, and I think you will find I'm much more terrifying."

"Stop! Just stop!" Jack said. "I'm going to reach into my pocket and pull out something. It's me. It's me you want. You don't want them. I'm the one you're looking for," Jack announced, finding his courage. He pulled the Doctor's sonic screwdriver out of his pocket and held it up. "See? It's the my sonic screwdriver. "It isn't even a weapon. I use it to put up cabinets, open doors, that sort of thing. But it's unique, and this proves I'm him. I'm the Doctor. Ya' found me. Now let them go. Let Jane and John go."
"You're simply going to let your wife go with this mere human?" Mother asked, spitting the words in disgust, pointing her weapon at John.

"My wife?" Jack laughed heartily. "You have your facts wrong, Ma'am. I don't have a wife. Time Lords don't marry. In fact, we take a vow of celibacy. These humans are just friends. That's all, just friends." Jack shook his head to emphasise the point.

"Jack? What's going on?" Jane asked, her voice wavering in terror, as Brother kept her in a stranglehold, and two weapons were pointed at her husband.

"Don't worry, sweetheart, everyone's going to be fine," he said with fire in his eyes.

Jane furrowed her brow at the memory of the term of endearment. "Sweetheart," she said as a hazy memory of Kyoto, running and a man in black leather with blue eyes filled her mind. She struggled against her captor, feeling braver.

"The Doctor," John whispered to himself, recalling Jack's declaration a moment before. He stared at the screwdriver that Jack continued to hold. "The Doctor?" he asked Jack, out loud. "Jack, what are these people talking about? What do they want from you?"

"Don't worry about it, John," Jack said through gritted teeth.

Bess closed her eyes, hoped and prayed that the watches would remain silent, hidden deep in her handbag. Niles held onto her from the side, calming her, stroking her arm.

"So I see your friend has come out of his coma. How did you manage that, Time Lord?" asked Daughter.

"Oh, you know, bit of Doctorish jiggery pokery," Jack said through a false smile.

Father sniffed Jack. "You've made yourself human. Time to turn yourself back, Time Lord."

"Can't do that," replied Jack, shrugging his shoulders.

"Turn yourself back!" screamed Son furiously, veins bulging in his neck as he tightened his hold on Jane.

"Sorry. I literally can't. It's a one way ticket. Kind of stupid, in hindsight." Jack crinkled his nose. "I turned myself human to save my life, but I lost my Time Lordishness in the process. Sorry guys, you're gonna have to find another battery."

Sister made a furious sound, her face full rage, and pointed her weapon at Jack. "He's lying. Just look at him. He is clearly lying."

"What is he lying about Sister of Mine?" asked Brother, sniffing.

"Jack Harkness is not the Time Lord. He is protecting the Time Lord and the Time Lord's wife." She looked at Jane and John. "Isn't he, Rose Tyler?" Sister drilled her furious eyes into Jane's. She pulled the trigger and Jack Harkness disappeared in a cloud of green.
Chapter Summary

The Family of Blood probably wish they’d never met the Last of the Time Lords.

Chapter 31 — John & Jane & The Doctor & Rose

In what seemed like an hour, but was in reality only the space of a few seconds, John and Jane Smith's world was turned upside down.

Jane stared in silent horror as her mind registered the fact that her friend had been obliterated before her eyes.

John howled in anger and gritted his teeth, seething, as he fixed on the spot that had once been occupied by his best friend, Jack Harkness.

Niles's heart raced dangerously as he wondered just how Jack was going to come back from this one.

Bess's eyes popped out of her head and she screamed like a woman in a horror film.

Sister stood tall and proud as she held her still-hot weapon, but then the eyes of her family turned upon her in judgement.

"You made a poor tactical decision, Sister of Mine," admonished Father.

"He was expendable," Sister said smugly in her own defence.

Father and Mother stared at Daughter, silently chastising her.

Niles saw that the hunters's eyes were off of their prey, so he focused his thoughts and squeezed Bess's hand, hard. Her eyes went wide as she saw what Niles was envisioning. He surreptitiously slipped her the keys to the Torchwood vehicle, and amidst the ensuing chaos and domestic discord amongst the Family of Blood, Bess slipped away, escaping out the front door.

Brother still had Jane in a stranglehold and his weapon was trained on John, whose hands were in the air.

Niles nodded and made a subtle hand motion to the caretakers of Torchwood House and then performed a perfect roundhouse, kicking the deadly weapon out of Brother's grasp.

At that, mayhem ensued inside of The Howling. Two men well past the age of eighty let out a battle cry as they lunged at the young, blonde woman. Her weapon was knocked out of her hands, and went flying across the room as she was startled by their attack. It landed behind the bar with a clang. Two men held her arms as she screamed in fury.

Jane's survival instinct triggered and she kicked and scratched, bit and fought with all of her might to free herself from the alien wearing Daniel's face.
As John no longer had a weapon trained on his brain, he lunged at Brother, freeing his wife from his clutches.

John grabbed Jane's hand. "Run!" he hissed, and run they did, right on out the door, and into the darkness of night.

One of the Torchwood caretakers kicked the sonic screwdriver towards Niles who scooped it up.

Sister roared in anger when she saw that their prey had escaped, but she was still being subdued by the surprisingly strong octogenarians. Mother successfully fought off the feeble attempt of a large man who tried to sit on her. Family squared off against humans, and for the moment, they were evenly matched.

Niles escaped and jumped into the waiting vehicle outside of the pub. Bess pushed the accelerator to the floor and away they sped in a desperate search for John and Jane. The village was a labyrinth of cobblestone alleys and lanes, all unlit, and the perfect place for two people on foot to hide.

Back in the pub, Son regained his weapon, and fatally shot one of the Torchwood agents, and then ran outside to head off Niles and Bess. Father and Sister finally freed themselves. Not only had they lost their prey, but their leverage as well.

"They escaped," Son spat as he stormed back into the pub. Niles and Bess, their perfect hostages, were gone.

Father jumped onto a heavy wooden bench in the centre of the pub, and discharged his weapon into the ceiling. A small fire started in an ancient wooden beam. "Attention people of St. Catherine’s.” His voice was unnaturally loud and somehow amplified throughout the village. "We are the Family of Blood. You will help us find John and Jane Smith. You will turn them over to us. You will cooperate, or your village and every living being within its boundaries will be destroyed. That is all.”

With that ominous threat, the foursome left the pub, leaving disarray, terror, and death in their wake.

"I do love a good hunt." Son sniffed the air and summoned his army.

oOo

"Who are those people? What do they want? Why'd they call me Rose Tyler?" Jane screeched. John caught her as she twisted her ankle over the uneven cobblestones.

"I don't know!" John yelled. A car come up behind them, and they dodged into an alley to hide. The car screeched to a halt.

"GET IN!" Niles hollered through the open window.

Jane and John jumped into the back seat and Bess sped away.

"Niles, what the bloody hell is going on?" John yelled.

"Doctor, you have to remember. It's time." Bess quickly looked over her shoulder.

"Doctor? Who is this Doctor person? I'm John Smith, I'm not a doctor!" he protested.

"Yes you are! You have to remember now!" Bess hollered at him. "Rose, tell him! Make him
believe," Bess pled as she drove into the countryside.

"Bess, I'm Jane Smith, I'm not Rose. That was just a fake name! You know that! Stop calling me that, you're scaring me!" Jane held onto both of John's hands for dear life as they huddled together in the back seat.

Bess stopped the vehicle in front of a small home next to St. Catherine’s Presbyterian. She got out and motioned for the others to follow and knocked on the door.

Reverend MacLeish answered. "I heard the hubbub. Come in quickly, quickly now!" He looked at the car. "Hide your motorcar in my garage out back. It's empty at present." The elderly man hobbled as fast as his feeble legs could carry him and unlocked the garage.

Bess quickly stowed the car and returned inside. Mrs. MacLeish ushered everyone into the parlour. Niles had drawn all of the drapes and turned out all of the lights.

"May we have a minute with our friends?" Bess asked calmly of the minister and his wife. The elderly couple nodded and exited into the kitchen to kneel and pray.

Bess pulled two watches out of her purse and held them out. Her hands were shaking. "Do you recognise these?" she asked desperately.

"No, should we?" asked Jane, terrified.

"Jane." Bess took Jane's hands and closed the golden watch within Jane's grasp. "Darling, your real name is Rose Tyler. You are married to the Doctor."

"No, I'm married to John! You were there! Just yesterday, Bess! How can you say these things?"

Bess turned to John. "You're the Doctor." She closed her eyes and tried to remember what Jack had told her about the man. "You aren't human. You're a Time Lord from some planet that sounds like a town in Ireland, but I can't remember the name. You're over 900 years old, and you and your wife, Rose Tyler, travel and live in a blue box. It's called the TARDIS. Your stories, the books that you write about the Professor and Iris, they're real. All of them. You and Rose have lived those adventures. Why do you think the stories come so easily to the two of you?"

"Wha— What?" John stuttered, "What are you and Niles up to?"

"Doctor, please! You have to remember! They are looking for you! They are coming for you and Rose and they are going to kill you."

"Who's they? This is unbelievable!" John ran his hand through his hair nervously.

"Please Doctor, you have to remember! I don't know what to do! Jack is dead, well for a while, who knows how long, and Niles and I, we don't have a clue how to fight these demon creatures!" Bess drew in a deep breath and straightened her back. "But you do," she said earnestly. "The Doctor — you — you know what to do. You have to save your wife and yourself! You can't die Doctor. Earth needs you. The Universe needs you." Bess slowly turned and looked at Jane. Her eyes drifted to Jane's belly. "Your baby needs you."

"Baby? What baby?" Jane shook her head. "I'm not pregnant, I can't be! We were only— Bess you know last night was— That was our first time, Bess! My very first time! You have to believe me! It's simply not possible that I am pregnant!"

Bess nodded. "You are, darling. Apparently first time's the charm for you two," she said, wiping a
tear away. "You won't know for a month or so, of course, but I can see it. I'm spooky, remember? Said so yourself to your husband, just this morning."

John and Jane's heads snapped at each other remembering their conversation in bed.

Jane gasped. "You were outside of our door? Listening?"

"No!" yelled Bess. "I wasn’t! You have to believe me. Please!" She pressed the silver toned watch into John's hands.

He furrowed his brows as it grew warm in his palms, begging him to be opened. He flipped the latch and the golden essence of time sought its lord. John slammed it shut and turned to Jane.

"No. I can't. I can't do it. It'll be the end of John! I don't want to go! Jane, I don't want to lose you! Please, no! Please don't open yours!"

"Doctor, Rose," Bess looked at each of them in turn, "John and Jane were wonderful people, and I loved them so very dearly. But they aren't real. These…" She pointed to the watches. "Inside of here — you are what is real."

The watch in Jane's hands was warm as well, and it whispered to its owner. "It’s time. Open me." It was her own voice.

"John," she violently wiped a tear away with the back of her hand. "Oh my beautiful John, Bess is right. We have to do this. I feel it in here." Jane covered her heart with her hand. "One of my hearts is missing." Jane covered his chest with both of her hands. "I need your other heart back."

"But what about our baby? I don't care that Bess is right! I don't care about this Doctor person! I am John and you are my Jane!"

"Oh John, I will always be your Jane! No matter what happens, you and I, we belong to each other!" Jane begged.

"What will happen to our child if we change? The watch is telling me Bess is right! We, John and Jane, not this Doctor and Rose person, we made a child last night!" John said desperately.

Niles took Bess's hand and led her out of the parlour, leaving John and Jane alone for what both knew were their final moments together.

"We are them, and they are us, Doctor." The name came out of Jane's lips, and John knew she was right. "Our baby will be beautiful, and he or she belongs to the Doctor and Rose too."

In resignation, the Smiths sank to the floor and leaned their backs against the brown and yellow floral sofa. They closed their eyes and embraced each other as their life together, what could have been, flashed before their eyes.

John and Jane are living in a stone cottage on the outskirts of St. Catherine’s. Jane is seated at a typewriter near a leaded glass window. She pushes her glasses up her nose and then rubs her swollen belly. John is pacing like a wild man, but somehow, Jane keeps up as he dictates, offering opinions here and there.

John and Jane’s first co-authored book is released with much fanfare, but they miss their own release party. Jane is rushed to the hospital because her water breaks in the lobby of Cooper-Eddington Publishing. They name their son John David, Jr., but call him JD.
Jane's skirts progressively rise well above her knees, just as John had predicted three years before on their first date at the Tiki Tiki. They always spend their anniversary in London, and go to the Tiki Tiki for dinner. But Robert retires and sells the place and it becomes a disco in 1974. They never go back.

Two more children, fraternal twins, come along a few years later. Elizabeth Rose and Ian Jack.

Book number fifteen shows up on the New York Times Top Ten Best Seller list and eventually holds spot number one for four weeks. More smash hit books follow.

JD is living in London. He is in his residency at Royal Hope Hospital when he is approached by Torchwood Medical section. Uncle Jack takes him to the bench for lunch for a man to man chat, and the next day, JD turns down the offer.

John and Jane are starting to grey when they proudly send their twins off to the University of Edinburgh. Bessie wants to study history and literature. She leaves home a shy, quiet girl with mousy brown hair, but she blossoms into a confident young woman while away. She comes home Christmas of 1979 as a platinum blonde.

Ian is both a genius and an incessant flirt, which often gets him into trouble. To his parents's disappointment, he leaves university only months before graduation. He tells them he feels antsy and he needs to travel for a year. But he promises to go back and finish, and he does. Eventually, he joins the RAF, becomes a pilot for the sole purpose of getting a shot at becoming an astronaut. He never gets to see the stars, but after he leaves the RAF, he moves to the States because he’s been hired by NASA.

When they can get away from Torchwood, their best friends Niles and Bess Eddington spend their weekend summers with John and Jane in St. Catherine’s. They have one son, Jack. He is three months younger than John and Jane's firstborn, JD. Bessie and Jack have grown up together, and of course, their mothers planned their wedding when they were toddlers.

Bessie and Jack are married at St. Catherine's Presbyterian, just like her Mum and Da. Bessie wears her mother's dress and her hair is back to its natural brown.

The books become harder to write as minds aren't quite as sharp as they once were. The Smiths publish their last book and retire, and then one day not so long after that, Jane becomes ill quite unexpectedly. Her family and closest friends gather around her and quietly mourn as her last breath passes over her still-full, pink lips.

John walks outside and looks at the stars. He pulls two watches out of his pocket and finally lets tears fall as he thinks of what should have been.

The shared vision subsided. "They're calling to us, we have to say goodbye, John. We can't turn our back on our real selves. You're my Doctor and I'm your Rose."

John nodded, resigned. "We'll do it together. But wait, there's one thing I have to do before I go." John stood up and pulled Jane to her feet and into his arms. They kissed the kiss of lovers saying goodbye forever. "I will remember you, Jane. Will you remember me? Please? Remember how much I loved you."

Jane nodded, unable to speak through her quivering lips. Simultaneously, the Smiths opened the watches, not taking their eyes off of each other.

Golden tendrils of energy, the very essence of the being of the last Time Lord, poured from the
Doctor's watch, seeking, searching and finding, and without fanfare, the Doctor remembered. He remembered every beautiful moment with his Jane, and then he remembered everything it meant to be the Doctor. And it was the Doctor who was now standing tall and proud.

The golden glow of the Time Vortex, the Bad Wolf captured in a fob watch, howled and restored Rose to her not-quite-human state. Jane Smith's shy smile was replaced by the wide grin of Rose Tyler as her memories returned and her bond with her Doctor was restored. She too remembered every last breath with her John.

But then something unexpected happened: the last bit of energy from the Doctor's watch swirled around Rose like a vortex, slowed and settled over her belly. That newly fertilised egg, that spark of life, absorbed his or her birthright. The TNA of the Time Lord joined the Time Vortex-altered DNA of his bride.

Rose opened her eyes fully aware that she was herself. She flung herself at the Doctor, and he pulled her off of the ground and swung her around in his arms. She wrapped her legs around his torso and they kissed like reunited lovers who moments before had thought they would never see each other again.

"Hello, Rose Tyler," he said, his warm Estuary London accent.

"Doctor," she said in her merry Cockney voice. She hugged him tightly, her eyes squeezed shut wearing that smile that had melted the hearts of an old soldier in black leather.

The Doctor quickly kissed her again and then Rose slid out of his arms.

"Bess? Niles?" Rose called out and their friends hesitantly returned.

Without hesitation, Rose hugged Bess. "Thank you Bess, for everything."

The women hugged again. Bess pulled away and held Rose at arms's length. "So you do remember me?" Bess asked hesitantly.

"Of course I remember you! How could I forget my very best friend? Well, best friend besides the Doctor." She sent a warm look at her husband. "I remember every single minute, Bess," she laughed a bit. "Was I really that shy?" She laughed again.

Bess stared, her brows furrowed.

"Bess," Rose took her hands. "I'm still Jane, but I'm Rose too, just like John will always be a part of the Doctor." Rose looked over at her husband, moved to take his hand.

"Hello, I'm the Doctor." He wiggled his fingers in greeting, and then pushed his hands into his trouser pockets. "Rose, I really miss my coat. I love my coat. Janis Joplin gave me that coat. And what are these clothes?" He turned to his friends. "Niles, thanks, and all that. Really, I appreciate everything you've done for us. We'll catch up later," he said a bit rudely. "Where's my TARDIS?"

"It's in London, in a warehouse, safe and sound," said Niles. "Jack and I moved it from Cardiff when you ended up working at Prescott. Jack thought you'd want it close. Oh, I think this is yours too." Niles pulled the Doctor's sonic out of his pocket.

"Oh brilliant," he growled and kissed his beloved tool before shoving it into his trouser pocket. The Doctor began to pace and ruffle his hair so it was sticking up in a thousand directions. He stopped on a dime and turned to face Rose.
“First. You’re going to have a baby.” He pursed his lips and nodded his head. "A baby! That is just… brilliant!” The Doctor said in his high-pitched giddy way.

"I know!” Rose squealed and they hugged.

The Doctor continued his manic list. "Second, we need to get the TARDIS back. Third, I need you to stay here."

"What do you mean, stay here?” she asked, confused, her giddiness gone.

"Rose, I have to handle this alone."

Bess and Niles watched their conversation like a tennis match.

Rose planted her fists on her hips. “Don't you dare leave me behind, Doctor.”

"Rose, this situation is unlike anything we have ever faced!” he said looking down at her, eyebrows raised, the Oncoming Storm brewing, though not directed at her. "I am keeping you and our child safe. The Family cannot get their hands on you. That power in you, it’s the power of the TARDIS herself. You are far more dangerous in their hands. With me, they get eternity. But with you, they get the power to bend life and death. And now that you're pregnant, it's even more critical that I keep them away from you." He gripped his hands on her shoulders and looked straight into her eyes. "Promise me you will stay here. Promise!"

Rose nodded silently and for the first time, touched her belly knowing that inside, a new life was cradled.

"Rose, I'm going to have to do something that I never thought I'd have to do. But I promise, it will only be for a little while. You're going to have to trust me."

"Always."

"I'm going to block our bond."

"What?” Rose asked, her voice fearful and quiet. "I though you said that was impossible. You told me that it couldn't be broken, it was too strong!” Her voice was rising in a panic.

"Not break, block,” he corrected her firmly. "Remember the dampening field on Barcelona?"

"Yeah,” she drawled, furrowing her brows.

"Like that, but this time, I'm the one controlling the intensity of the dampening field.” The Doctor tapped his head with his fingertip. "Now, you can't, under any circumstances, attempt to override that. Do you understand?"

"I understand," she replied. "But I don't have to like it," she said with a scowl, crossing her arms in petulance.

"Rose, this is rule number one. Under no circumstances! This is very, very important!” His voice was frighteningly serious, but then he couldn't help but half smile as he saw her stance, so reminiscent of teenaged Rose.

He broke through her frustration with his smile, and she softened. She hugged her husband tightly around the middle.

"I promise,” she said looking up into his eyes.
"I need your watch."

Rose handed him the now empty gold fob watch, and he slipped it into his pocket along with his own.

"I'll let you know when it's safe, all right?" This time his voice was soft and gentle as he whispered into her ear. The Doctor slid his hands up and down her arms and hastily kissed her forehead, bent over to kiss her stomach, and finally left a sweet kiss on her lips.

"Niles, I need you to come with me," ordered the Doctor.

Rose could almost imagine his brown coat sweeping behind as he flew out the front door without another word. The Doctor was back.

oOo

The vast majority of the inhabitants of the village of St. Catherine’s had been brought into the world by the loving hands of Dr. MacDougal. Most were baptised in the Presbyterian church, and those who were married had walked down the aisle there as well. All were bid farewell and laid to rest in the tidy cemetery next to the church. It had been this way for hundreds of years.

There were legends about this place, terrifying stories that had been handed down for almost six hundred years. A star fell from the sky. A young boy would disappear from time to time. A wolf would howl. There were rumours that the once God-fearing monks who lived at the remote monastery had switched their allegiance and had become tools of the Devil himself before disappearing a hundred years before.

Outsiders rarely visited the beautiful village, and seldom did new people come to live here. Rarely, a non-native would marry an inhabitant, and those brave souls were immediately brought into the fold, accepted as readily as a tenth generation St. Catherinite.

They’d been brought up on legends of space travellers, monsters, werewolves, and the Magical Blue Box of the Moors that appeared out of thin air in their time of need. Ballads had been sung, poems written, and generations of children terrified out of their wits by grandfathers telling fireside tales.

So when the terrifying voice echoed through the stone village, the villagers were appropriately afraid. They did not take the threat lightly, nor did they panic. Those unable to fight, fled to safety. Anyone able or simply willing to pick up arms remained behind to defend their territory. They retrieved hunting rifles, crossbows, muzzle loaders, surplus weapons from wars once fought, pitchforks, ceremonial dirks, dressing knives, sgian-dubhs, and ancient swords. They didn't know if their efforts would be sufficient, but they had to try.

Led by the village provost, the cadre of the brave marshalled on one end of the stone bridge that led into the heart of the village.

The ominous and unnatural sound of stone scraping against stone grew steadily louder. Illuminated by the light of the waning moon, the soldiers of stone advanced.

The village provost stood at the front of his band of brave defenders. He readied his shotgun and steeled himself for the fight.

"Stand to arms, lads and ladies!"

oOo
Rose sat on the floor of the minister's lounge. Ever since the Doctor had left she had been distant. Bess could tell that something significant had changed. The Doctor had said something to Rose about blocking a bond, but she wasn't sure what that meant, but it had obviously disturbed Rose greatly.

"Would you like some tea, dears?" asked Mrs. MacLeish.

"Uh, yeah," replied Rose, drawing her knees up close, and dropping her forehead onto her knees.

Mrs. MacLeish retreated to the kitchen. Reverend MacLeish had gone to the church to aid any who sought spiritual solace.

Bess sat next to Rose and hesitantly slipped her arm around her new, yet still dear friend. "You all right?" she asked.

Rose shook her head slowly, but kept her forehead on her knees, hiding her tears. "I can't feel 'im. It's like my heart's empty."

That last thing Bess wanted right now was silence, and she could also sense intuitively that Rose needed a diversion from the sudden departure of her husband.

"Guess I'm going to have to get to know my best friend all over again," Bess said lightly, trying to ease the tension. "Well? Aren't you going to tell me?"

"'Bout what?" Rose asked, raising her head off of her knees.

"Last night, of course!" Bess said with a devilish grin.

Rose raised her head and looked at Bess, blushed, and burst into a fit of giggles. She stretched her legs out and relaxed a bit. "Guess some things will never change about you 'n me, Bess." She sighed. "Well darling," she imitated Bess's posh accent, "it was," Rose closed her eyes and whispered, "spectacular!"

The two friends leaned into each other and laughed like schoolgirls. What Rose didn't know was that Bess had just given her the telepathic equivalent of a hug.

"Bess, I've been meaning to ask, but, well, things sort of went pear-shaped, to say the least. You and Niles? Are you okay?" Rose asked.

"Yes. We are." Bess patted Rose's hand. "We talked last night, I mean really talked. Probably for the first time ever. Decided to get married, too," said Bess, looking down.

"Aren't you rushing things a bit?" Rose asked with a straight face, and then spewed a laugh when she saw the fiery look that Bess gave her.

"Oh, I like you, Rose Tyler!" Bess announced.

"And I like you, Bess soon-to-be-Eddington! When's the big day? I am going to be your Matron of Honour, after all, even if I have to waddle down the aisle."

"We are taking a cue from John and Jane, and are going to post banns as soon as we return to London."

"I'm so happy for you, Bess!" Rose hugged her friend. "Hey, why don't you just use the flowers and cake that we ordered for my wedding. Just call and change the date!"
"Good idea. But I think I'm going to change banana cake to good old wedding white."

"Oi! Bananas are good!" Rose countered, levelling a look at her friend.

"So Rose, tell me about yourself." Bess folded her hands in her lap.

"Blimey, this is weird. I have all Jane's memories, and they feel real, but at the same time, sort of like a dream. Jane and I are the same in some ways, but really different in others. Was Jane really as shy as I remember?" Rose asked.

"Afraid of your shadow, more like it." Bess noticed that she had referred to Rose and Jane as the same person, while Rose referred to Jane as someone completely different.

"The day I met you, I wondered what century you had come from. It was almost like you were from 1863 instead of 1963."

"That's rich, considering I was born in 1987!" Rose laughed. "So I grew up on a council estate, the really rough part of London, down southeast. My dad died when I was just a baby, so it was just me and Mum growin' up. I dropped out of school at sixteen for a stupid boy." She turned and looked at Bess, who was hanging on every word.

"Jane didn't get her A Levels because she was scared, and I didn't get 'em because I was foolish."

"This boy, were you in love with him?"

"I was in lust with him. Luckily he wasn't," she cleared her throat, "capable, so I never acted on those feelings. Turns out he was more than incapable, he was an idiot. Fancied himself a musician, but he was just a punk. Stole a bunch of money from me even, ended up in jail later."

"You are different than Jane," Bess said. "I don't think Jane could have even said the word lust."

Rose laughed. "Lust! Lust! Lust!" she chanted. "Then there was Mickey. Guess what his last name is?"

"Smith?"

"Mmm hmm, Smith." Rose's tongue peeked through her teeth. "Really fantastic boyfriend. He and I just weren't meant for each other romantically. I wanted to be mates, but, well, we drifted apart."

"Why didn't you go back to school? You're obviously bright," said Bess.

"Jane was the one with the brains," asserted Rose.

"Oh pish posh! You're brilliant, whether you're Jane or Rose! Believe me, that man you're married to would never marry anyone who wasn't!"

"You're just sayin' that 'cos you're my friend," Rose said with a self-effacing roll of the eyes.

"I'm spooky, remember?" Bess tapped her forehead. "I'm telling you, you are bright!"

"Um, how much of that particular conversation did you hear?" Rose asked, stuttering a laugh.

"Enough to know it was time to stop listening in," Bess answered, perfectly calm.

Rose groaned and held her head, embarrassed.
Bess elbowed her. "See, right there. That was Jane!" Rose slugged Bess playfully on the arm.

"But who knows, if I hadn't have quit school, I don't know if woulda ever gotten the job at Henrik's, an' if I never worked at Henrik's I never woulda met the Doctor. You know, I never thought about that before," she said, looking at Bess.

"Tell me about this bond that the Doctor mentioned." Bess chose her words carefully.

"The Doctor, he's telepathic, and where he's from, when people marry, they form this bond, their minds are linked together. So when the Doctor and I were married, well, we became joined in our heads. I can feel him, and sometimes, even hear him. Before all of this happened, I was just learnin' how to get better at talking back to him. We hadn't been married too long before we ended up hidin' from the Family of Blood. That's who we were hiding from. We were newlyweds. Still are, I suppose." Rose rambled through the explanation. Bess understood more than Rose knew.

"Newlyweds twice." Bess winked.

"Yeah, and the not so much fun part twice, too." Rose scrunched her nose.

"Ugh, sorry," Bess cringed. "Wait, how-"

"May I have your attention please!

Bess startled mid-sentence and the friends looked at each other and immediately stiffened.

A familiar disembodied voice echoed both through the town and within the walls of each and every residence. This time, it was Son who spoke. His tone was mocking and cruel.

"Rose Tyler! Someone wishes to say something to you."

Daniel's voice was replaced by another.

"Jane, Jane my love," he sobbed. "I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry! Don't blame me! It's not my fault! He did this to us. No, they did this to us! That Doctor person and Rose Tyler. And, and, oh my Jane, this is the hardest thing I have ever had to say. If— If I don't come out of this alive, I want you to do just one thing for me. Just one. Have a good life."

In the background, she was certain she heard the whirring of the Doctor's sonic screwdriver.

Rose stood as still as a statue as she thought about the words she had just heard her husband speak. She nodded to herself, knowing it was a ruse, though she didn't understand his plan.

Bess went to put her arm around Rose's shoulders, sensing her friend's worry, but immediately withdrew. "Rose? What that sound?"

A slow smile grew on her face and Rose ran outside. Bess followed close on her heels. Mrs. MacLeish came to the window and cautiously pulled back the curtain and peeked through a sliver of a gap. In her garden stood what she knew to be the Blue Box of the Moors.

A ball of green light streaked through the air, followed by an explosion a few streets over.

"They're attacking the village!" Bess screamed. She ran back inside and urged Mrs. MacLeish to abandon her home, but she refused. Bess ran back outside to find Rose in a panic, talking to herself.

The ever-present key to her home was not on a chain around her neck. "My key! I don't have my key! Please open," she asked the beloved ship, both out loud and in her mind.
The door opened, Rose kissed the door in relief and ran up the ramp. The sound of her white plimsolls slapping on the metal grate echoed throughout the cavernous room.

Bess followed Rose, but the moment she comprehended just where she was, she stopped. With arms outstretched to balance her suddenly spinning head.

"Rose?" Bess drew out her name. "How is the outside smaller than the inside?"

Rose spun around and faced her. "Isn't she gorgeous?" she gushed.

A hologram flickered, and their attention was captured as the Doctor appeared.

"Hello, love. If you are watching this it's because the Family has me." The smile on his face was incongruous with the gravity of the message he was sending.

Rose's breath hitched.

"Rose Tyler, don't you dare worry about me," he said firmly, pointing a finger directly where she was standing. "I probably got myself caught on purpose. Maybe. Or not. So this is Emergency Programme Three, and before you panic, no, I am not sending you home, because you're already home." He smiled brightly.

Bess noticed that Rose looked visibly relieved at his explanation.

"So this is what I did." The Doctor's words poured from his mouth. "I created a setting for my handy dandy sonic screwdriver that would send a message to the TARDIS on a subwave frequency initiating a materialisation slash dematerialisation place-to-place jump, honing in on a homing beacon, which in this case, is you. Obviously, it worked, because the TARDIS woke up and found you. Of course it worked! I'm brilliant!" He said smugly and adjusted his tie.

Rose rolled her eyes, but laughed as well.

"Now, what I need you to do is bring her to me. Can you do that for me? If I am right, and I usually am, I probably told you not use our bond, right? Right. This is me telling you to send me your biggest, juiciest psychic snog when this holo-recording is complete. I'll answer you back, and the TARDIS will be able to find me. I'll guide you through the navigation sequences, so don't worry about that. Won't be too difficult. No console acrobatics will be involved, although, you are very skilled in acrobatics." He wagged his eyebrows. "So, now that it's all said and done? How did we turn out? Did we like each other? Hope so, because that would mean that my second bit of brilliance worked."

He held up a data chip of some sort and waved it. Turning sideways to the camera, he bent over and plugged the data chip into the console. He looked mournfully into the camera. "Help me Rose Marion Tyler, you're my only hope." It didn't take him long to break into a grin. "I've always wanted to say that. Well, not always, just since 1977."

Rose covered her mouth and giggled. Bess just raised an eyebrow.

"That little disc that I plugged in there just now?" He became serious. "I wrote a programme that will guarantee that I am transformed into the man of your dreams. Well, the man of the changed you's dreams." The Doctor sadly looked on the floor where Rose assumed the woman who would be Jane must have been. His eyes were soft, filled with love. "See you soon, Rose Tyler." He held up his hand in a goodbye gesture and the hologram dissipated.

Rose's eyes were misty, and then she closed them and smiled, projecting all of her love and trust in
her husband through their once-again open psychic connection. She opened her eyes, walked to the console and stood in front of the screen.

"All right old girl, let's go to our Doctor."

Coordinates and instructions flowed into her mind, as the TARDIS and her bond mate spoke to her, worked through her, to reunite their family. The console room was filled with that wonderful warm green glow as the rotors began to pump, grinding out the sound of Time as the ancient ship moved.
The Doctor & Rose

Chapter Summary

Justice is served. Revenge is exacted. This adventure concludes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 32 - The Doctor & Rose

The inside of the hull of the Family's ship was covered with switches, buttons, tubes, gauges, and flashing lights. Everything was cast in an eerie green light which originated from an unknown source.

Sister stood close to their terrified prize and sniffed. "He's still human!" she hollered angrily.

"Of course I'm human! What else would I be? Is there an option?" The man in the custody of the Family shivered and shook in terror. Cowering, the man pressed his back flush up against the hull of the alien craft, flipping a few switches as he did so. "Can't we just talk about this?" he pled.

"Talk?" Brother laughed sardonically. "We are the Family," he smirked. "We don't talk. We don't negotiate. You humans and your weak notions about peace and harmony. Pathetic!" He spat the word.

"Those poor people in the village have done nothing wrong!" The Doctor feigned desperation. "Please! Please stop your bombardment of St. Catherine’s!"

"Until they produce your wife the shelling will continue," Father said with frightening coldness.

"I'm not married to this Rose person! And I don't know who this Doctor person is either! I am John David Smith! I'm married to Jane Donna Smith! I'm a writer! Jane is a typist and— and my co-author!"

"The Doctor didn't just make himself human, he turned himself into an idiot!" Sister said with a scowl.

"Let’s— Let's just hypothetically assume, not that I believe it for one minute, but what if this Doctor person did this to himself? It's not like we had any control over this, he made us into humans. We're completely different people! We're nobodies!" he said, his voice dripping with mock terror.

"Ha!" exclaimed Sister. "Where do you think all of your silly little stories came from, hmm? Your pathetic human brain? They aren't stories, John Smith," she said with derision, "they're the adventures of the Doctor and his bride, Rose Tyler.

"I cannot believe the two of you never made that connection before now! Professor? Doctor? Iris Mason? Rose Tyler?" Mother said angrily to Son and Daughter. "And you read his books too, you're just as much to blame!" Mother hissed to Father.
While the Family squabbled, the Doctor flipped more switches as he pretended to cower against the wall.

"Enough! This isn't getting us anywhere!" Brother howled, grabbing the Doctor by the throat and shaking him.

"It's all a mistake, I am begging you, please stop your reign of terror!" the Doctor exclaimed, and then whimpered a bit. "I— I have these two watches. My friend Jack gave them to me before you," he closed his eyes, "murdered him. I think, maybe... Are these what you're looking for?" he asked hopefully.

The eerie green glow of the alien ship creating a sickly countenance. "It's the Doctor you want, right? If what you say is true, and he's the one who made me into this human, then now I understand why these watches keep haunting me. And I don't want to be him! I don't want to change back! I want to be with my Jane. Please! Let me be with my Jane," he begged. With shaking hands, he slowly pulled the timepieces out of his trouser pocket. He bowed his head and offered them up to the Family of Blood.

Father greedily stared at the watches. Mother grabbed them without hesitation. Sister and Brother gathered close.

The Doctor flipped more switches as he pressed up against the wall.

Mother handed one of the watches to Father. Sister licked her lips and Brother violently shoved Sister aside for a closer view. Both watches were opened, and all four aliens gathered around, closed their eyes in hungry anticipation, breathing in deeply.

"They're empty!" screeched Mother. "He's tricked us!"

All pretence of humanity evaporated from the man they believed to be John Smith as the Doctor pushed himself off of the wall and stood tall and proud. "Oh, I think the explanation might be you've been fooled by a simple olfactory misdirection. Little bit like ventriloquism of the nose. It's an elementary trick in certain parts of the galaxy. But it has got to be said, I don't like the looks of that hydroconometer. It seems to be indicating you've got energy feedback all the way through the retrostabilisers feeding back into the primary heat converters. Oh. Because if there's one thing you shouldn't have done, you shouldn't have let me press all those buttons. But, in fairness, I will give you one word of advice. Run."

Alarms shrieked and the Doctor fled the ship closely followed by the Family. As they cleared the copse, the ship exploded in a ball of orange and green flames. Now that the source of their power was burning in the field behind them, the Family could no longer telepathically communicate and their weapons were useless. They fell to the ground clutching their heads, devastated by the loss.

"My beautiful ship!" Father stared back at the burning wreck.

"What have you done? What kind of monster are you!" Mother shrieked.

The Doctor proudly tipped his face upwards, looking down upon his captives. "I'm worse than any monster." He bared his teeth and hissed. "I'm a Time Lord."

Niles emerged from his hiding place and produced four sets of handcuffs, ankle manacles, and a heavy chain. At the stroke of midnight, the Family was secured into a chain-gang, and ushered into the nearby waiting TARDIS.

The Doctor herded the helpless Family of Blood into his TARDIS. The door shut with bang before
Niles, Bess, or Rose could either see or follow them inside. A few moments later, it evaporated into thin air before their eyes.

oOo

Millennia later, Daniel would still remember how the Doctor never raised his voice when he stood as judge, jury and executioner. And then he discovered why this Doctor, who had fought with gods and demons, why he'd taken his wife and hidden. The Doctor was being kind. He believed in giving a chance, but only one.

"No second chances, I'm that sort of man."

The Doctor was going to secure Father by unbreakable chains, forged in the heart of a dwarf star.

He was going to trick Mother into the event horizon of a collapsing galaxy to be imprisoned there forever.

Far across the universe, the Time Lord felt the mind of his Rose, and seeing her desire for justice, not revenge, begrudgingly agreed to her quiet request for mercy. The Time Lord agreed to sentence Father and Mother to life in prison, which meant living out the remaining two months of their short lifespan in a stark cell of his own making, where they would quietly die a natural death.

To Sister and Brother he would have shown the same mercy. However, Brother and Sister were no longer the two people who were chained to the coral strut in his console room.

The memories that had been stolen by Retcon were restored to Daniel Higgins, and to both, he reanimated the human consciousness that Brother and Sister had buried. The two people who had dared to threaten his sweet Jane, the alternate face of his most precious Rose, would suffer forever. He showed them that he wasn't called the Oncoming Storm without reason.

But then the Doctor went one step further and planted one of the Doctor's most terrifying memories into their minds to replay forever and ever: Rose Tyler emerging from his TARDIS in all of her Bad Wolf magnificence, dividing time and space, turning evil to dust, bringing life to those whom she loved. It was then that the monster and his mistress understood exactly whom they had dared to threaten.

Priscilla was trapped inside of every mirror in the universe, catching glimpses of Rose Tyler and the Doctor from time to time, but only when the Doctor chose to reveal themselves to her. The Doctor thought it was an appropriate sentence for a woman who thought she was the most important woman in the world.

As for Daniel Higgins, he was suspended in time. The Doctor put him to work standing sentinel over the dead in the quiet little cemetery next to St. Catherine's Presbyterian. With his own hands, the Doctor fashioned a hideous stone gargoyle and somehow embedded the essence of the man inside. On the base of the mysterious marker which was erected overnight to the curiosity of the townspeople, he carved a poem. To unknowing eyes, it appeared simple, humorous even. But to those who knew the author and sculptor, it was damning epitaph, indeed.

Jane had beauty and innocence rare

Evil Daniel, he dared try to ensnare

But then True Love transformed

Back to Wolf and the Storm
"Right." The Doctor nodded gravely at his handiwork. He tucked his sonic back into the pocket of his brown pinstriped suit coat. "Not Shakespeare, but it gets the point across," he said to himself.

He pushed his hands into his pockets and stared grimly at the statue. The Doctor had landed in 1863, and Daniel would have one hundred years to ponder his evil deeds before he once again saw John and Jane, on their wedding day, walking down the steps, the very embodiment of joy and love. One hundred years before he saw the downfall of his own family.

"Until we meet again, Danny." The Doctor returned to his TARDIS, back to those whom he loved.

And so Daniel Higgins discovered very quickly that eternity was going to be a very, very long time, especially since it only took a few seconds for the him to repent of his sins.

A repair crew was already on its way to the village, funded by the healthy Torchwood budget. The buildings that had been destroyed would be fully restored.

One of the Torchwood after incident teams was on its way up from London via convoy. A security perimeter would be set up around the smoking hull of the spaceship, and as soon as the wreckage was cool enough to transport, it would be dismantled and moved to London to be studied, catalogued, and placed into storage, and any useful technology would be appropriated. The broken remnants of approximately three dozen stone statues lay on the village green, the only evidence of the stone army conjured up by Brother. Every last piece would be confiscated by Torchwood.

Jack Harkness was officially listed as missing in action, but it was looking more and more like this was going to be the death from which Jack would not be able to come back. After acting as Torchwood liaison to the local emergency authorities, Niles had returned to The Howling, the scene of Jack's execution. He waited in the pub until late in the afternoon on Wednesday, and then returned back to the Torchwood property to grieve the loss of his friend with Bess and Rose.

The three friends sat around the kitchen table. Rose was still trying to comprehend the fact that Jack Harkness had actually been alive at all. And what Niles had just told her — that Jack Harkness was the man who, up until now, couldn't die.

"I don't understand Niles. You're telling me that Jack has been stuck on Earth and working for Torchwood since the late 1800's?" Rose asked, aghast. She couldn't believe her ears.

"Yes," Niles nodded grimly.

"And he's died and come back to life how many times?" she pressed.

"I think he's given up keeping track of the number, but it's a significant." Niles sniffed quietly. "I suppose being disintegrated into atomic particles proved to be too much." Niles took a sip of Scotch.

"But how? Why is he like this?" asked Rose.

"It's complicated." Niles knew that was an understatement.

He knew that the Doctor and Rose had something to do with his friend's condition, but he didn't know the details. More importantly, Niles felt it wasn't his place to be the one to tell them all he knew about Jack's immortality.
"I don't think he's coming back from this one."

Rose stared into her cup of tea and then felt tears in her eyes.

The sound of the TARDIS echoed eerily within the stone walls of the kitchen, and the trio ran outside. The Doctor emerged from the TARDIS slowly, and Rose walked into his open arms. He held her, resting his chin on the top of her head as she nuzzled her cheek into his chest.

"It's done, love."

Rose nodded silently and closed her eyes. She didn't want to dwell on what her husband had just completed. She could feel that her husband wanted to put the ugly part of this chapter of their lives behind him as well. They pulled apart and the Doctor plastered on a grin.

"So. Niles and Bess. I hear congratulations are in order. When's big day?" he asked, changing the subject.

Rose slid her arm around her husband's waist.

"Three weeks," answered Niles, also ready to ignore the sadness, at least for a moment.

"You'll come won't you? Rose is my matron of honour." Bess looked at the Doctor sensing that he wasn't the type to linger in one place too long. He already seemed impatient. He'd left the door to the TARDIS open.

"Well, the thing is-" the Doctor began to decline.

"Please Doctor?" Rose asked him silently. "She did so much for me. They both did. I've never had a friend like her before."

The Doctor looked down at his wife and smiled. He couldn't say no. "Wouldn't miss it for the world," he answered out loud.

Rose turned and hugged him gleefully, and then kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you. I know you don't like to go back."

"I suppose being a married man has changed some things about me, love. I have someone else to consider now."

"You'd better be going, though," Niles said a bit nervously. Torchwood London operatives would be arriving any moment, and the TARDIS could not be spotted.

"Quite right," replied the Doctor.

"Wait! What about your car?" Rose asked, ever the practical one of their twosome.

"Niles, would you drive Sexy Two back to London for me? Just park her in front of my building. I'll pick up the keys when we come back for the wedding." The Doctor pulled his keys out of the pocket of his long brown coat.

"You already added the keys to your Aston Martin to your keychain?" Rose noted with a smirk.

"I love that car!" he said fondly.

"Sexy Two?" Bess asked, raising an eyebrow.
"She's Sexy One," the Doctor said, pointing over his shoulder at the TARDIS, "and the Aston Martin is Sexy Two." He shook the keys on his key ring.

"Doctor, I have an idea. What if we give them Sexy Two as a wedding present," Rose suggested suddenly.

"But I love my car! Lots of good memories in that car! You were awfully impressed by my car, Jane Smith," he said, showing his wife a mental memory of Jane stroking the interior and fiddling with different buttons.

"It's not like we need it, John. Besides, if we ever do need a car back on Earth, we're going to need one that can accommodate a car seat for baby Jack or Gwyneth."

The Doctor scratched the back of his head. "You're right there. Unless I made her bigger on the inside," he mused. "Niles, I tell you what. Why don't you and Bess keep the Aston Martin. Consider her an early wedding present. And the flat, too! We won't be needing that either, and it would be a shame for all of that magnificence to go to waste. It really is a fantastic place, even though it isn't dimensionally transcendent. I'll need to clear some things out of there, of course, but after your wedding, consider it yours. It's paid for too. And I happen to know that in about, oh, thirty-five years it's going to be worth a fortune. Property values in that neighbourhood are going to go through the roof! Cash in on it and you two will be set for retirement."

Bess and Niles looked at each other with wide eyes and then turned to their friends. Bess hugged the Doctor and kissed him on the cheek fondly. Likewise, Niles hugged Rose. Niles then shook the Doctor's hand, and Rose and Bess joined each other.

"I'm going to miss you, Bess, so, so much," Rose said wistfully.

"Oh darling, I'm going to miss you too!" Bess became weepy.

"But we'll get to see each other again in a few weeks. Oh! Let me give you my mobile number. Give me a call anytime you wanna chat." Rose reached into one of the Doctor's bottomless pockets and pulled out a notepad and pencil and wrote the telephone number on a slip of paper for her friend.

"What's a mobile?" Bess asked, looking at the phone number.

"Just a bit of jiggery pokery I cobbled together for Rose a while back. It's a telephone without wires, and it works anytime, anyplace," he said proudly. "Niles, you're a good man. Thank you. Thank you for everything." He extended his hand to Niles and they shook, but then Niles pulled him into a manly hug, complete with back slapping. "And Niles, I'm really sorry about Jack. He was a very good friend. The best, really." He pressed his lips together hard and nodded, pulling Rose to his side, noticing her eyes were glistening at the mention of their dear friend.

They heard cars in the distance.

"We need to go," the Doctor said, knowing now that it was time.

Rose wiped her tears away and hugged Bess one more time. "See you soon!" she said, voice high and watery. She breathed in and out, effectively calming herself. "Call me! I need to know what colour of dress to wear!"

"I will, darling!" Bess replied, blowing kisses and waving goodbye to her best friend.

The Doctor and Rose retreated into their ship. Niles and Bess watched on in wonder as the
TARDIS took their friends away.

"Doctor!"

Jack came running out the back door wearing a fluffy pink dressing gown.

"Jack!" Bess turned around and ran to the man. She hugged him and then kissed him hard on the lips. "You're alive!" she joyfully proclaimed.

"I just might die more often if I get a greeting like that every time," Jack said flirtatiously, but his good humour quickly disappeared. "I missed 'em. By one damn minute. After almost a hundred years. I missed the Doctor and Rose."

Bess nodded. "The Doctor thinks you're dead, Jack. Doesn't he know about you?"

"He, well, to be honest, I'm not sure what he does and doesn't know. He left me stranded in the future. And then he regenerated at some point. Maybe he didn't have a choice about leaving me." Jack didn't sound very convinced of his own words.

"Does it help to know that he said you were the best friend he could ever have?" Niles asked, squeezing Jack's shoulder as a sign of support.

"And that they are coming back for our wedding?" Bess added with a sly smile.

"Well why didn't you tell me before I was about to get all weepy and melancholy?" Jack screeched. "So. What'd I miss?" He stood between his two friends and draped his arms around the shoulders of both of them, leading them back inside.

"I'll tell you about our excitement, but only after you tell us why the bloody hell you're wearing a ladies dressing gown," said Niles with a chuckle.

Bess laughed and shook her head. "Working at Torchwood is going to be quite amusing, I think."

"Never a dull moment, Bess." Jack laughed genuinely. "Have I got a story for you. And I truly, truly hope that I never die that way again. Coalescing back from a million billion pieces smarts!" he said with a cringe. "So about six o'clock this morning, I woke up with the worst headache of my life. I was naked, of course-"

"When aren't you naked?" Niles asked with a smirk.

"Why hide all of this glorious manliness under clothing?" Jack replied cheekily. "Anyway, I wake up naked in the cemetery next to the church. Mrs. MacLeish sees me out of her window and throws this fluffy pink bathrobe at me. I don't think she appreciated the fact that I was standing next to her husband's church without any clothes on."

"Oh gee, I wonder why," Bess said with a roll of her eyes.

"And guys, you just gotta see what I found in the cemetery!"

Rose sat on the white bench in the console room watching the Doctor as he fiddled with something on the console. She knew he was stalling, trying to avoid talking.
"When are you going to come sit next to me and tell me what's wrong?" Rose finally asked.

He turned to face Rose and leaned against the console. "We ran away and hid. We did give them a chance, didn't we?" he asked.

Rose didn't answer yes or no, neither with words or the smallest inclination of her head.

"Rose? Love?" The Doctor searched her face and her mind for a hint of what she was thinking.

"There's always a choice Doctor, you taught me that. Priscilla chose to hate me because she was jealous. Daniel chose to do what he did because he was selfish and driven by lust. The Family of Blood chose to hunt us because they wanted to live forever. Actions have consequences. And sometimes the consequences are pretty bloody awful. I'm sorry you had to do what you did. But they had to be stopped. They couldn't have your Time Doctor, or my whatever it is they wanted from me."

"But Rose, I didn't just stop them. I had a choice, too. I chained up Jim and Eve and simply left them to die."

"They weren't Jim and Eve. They were alien hunters who wanted us dead." Rose crossed her arms.

The Doctor nodded and ran his hand down his face. "But I chose to condemn Daniel and Priscilla to an eternity of misery."

Rose closed her eyes and sighed. "I know." She opened her eyes and stood up. She moved to where he was standing and put her hands over his hearts and looked up at him without condemnation. "You could always change your mind, after they learn their lesson. Maybe?" she suggested hesitantly. "You could go back and do what you did for the other two of 'em. Put 'em outta their misery?"

She could feel his answer in his mind. His fierce protectiveness of his wife, and now of his child, overwhelmed her, washed over her, engulfed her. The anger in his mind directed at those two evil people was borne from his love for this woman who had saved him. Rose knew at that moment that any being who would dare threaten her or their child might suffer a similar fate, and the knowledge frightened her.

The Doctor knew she was afraid. He knew she was feeling the darkest part of his Time Lord self. The part that he had wanted to hide from his dear Rose on the night of their bonding. He hadn't been ready to share it with her then, and he still didn't want to, but his wife persisted, delving deep into this dark part of his mind.

"Rose, please don't, I don't want you to see. It's ugly in here," he said painfully.

"Don't you dare Doctor! Don't you dare shut me out!" Rose said with quiet force as she moved her hands from their comforting spot over his twin hearts and onto his face.

She gently put her fingers on his temples, as he had done with her during their most intimate moments. This contact was not necessary for them to share thoughts and feelings. It was simply a reminder of their connection, in the same way that a hug or a kiss reminds two lovers of their affections for one another.

"I'm not gonna try and talk you outta bein' mad at them. But you can't hold onto this forever. It'll eat ya alive, Doctor."

"I'm not ready to let go Rose. Not yet. I love that you always want to see the good in people, but
my sweet darling girl, I have been around almost a millennia, and there is an awful lot of evil out there. I don't know that you can comprehend it."

"You're right. I don't know all of it and I don't want to know all of it. But you know what I do know? I don't love you any less because of what you have seen or have had to do." Rose removed her hands from his temples and slid her arms around his neck. She stood on tiptoe and kissed him slowly and softly.

The Doctor pulled her into a frantic embrace and kissed her hard and deep, until the need to breathe forced Rose to pull away, gasping.

"I need you. I need my wife." His voice was husky, deep and needy.

"I'm here."

Rose grasped his hand and together they walked down the corridor into their bedroom. The Time Lord and his bride reunited, and the song of their bond echoed throughout the universe, the beacon of their love.

After their passion, the Doctor and Rose faced each other, side by side in the dimness of their bedroom. Rose lazily fingering the hair on his chest as he stroked his fingers up and down her arm.

"Hello," they said simultaneously, and then grinned, speaking for the first time since they cried out each other's names in ecstasy a few minutes before.

"Can you believe we didn't do that for a whole month? How'd you ever hold out?" Rose asked cheekily.

"It was torture. Believe me." The Doctor rolled onto his back and chuckled quietly.

"Tell me about him," Rose asked kindly and nestled into the crook of his arm. "Tell me about John."

He sighed. "Before all of the," he waved a hand in the air, "stuff happened, John was so carefree. He knew nothing about the lost moon of Poosh, the Slitheen in Ten Downing, or Daleks. His biggest worries were which shoes he was going to wear, which film he would go see, and thinking up an excuse to stop by your desk."

"Really?" Rose asked surprised.

"Why do you think he was always wandering up and down the hallway past the typing pool?"

"Because I was your brilliant muse, of course!" she replied, with that tongue-peeking grin that had driven John mad, first with lust and then love.

"Well that goes without saying," he said definitively. "But I was also trying to get your attention." He became quiet. "I thought I didn't have a chance with you."

"If only you knew." Rose shook her head.

"Now that our bond is fully functional," said the Doctor sending her an intimate contact to which she squealed, "I can see just how attracted you were… Jane." He growled her human name.

Rose licked her lips, and the Doctor rolled back onto her and captured them. Rose ran her hands up and down his back, pulling him close. They parted and both sighed, and sank back into their
"When was John first attracted to Jane? I don't mean the Rose that I made up, I mean mousy, dull Jane," Rose asked.

"First of all, Jane, you were never dull or mousy. Timid, shy and inexperienced, yes, but never, ever dull or mousy."

Rose shook her head and buried her face into his shoulder, slightly embarrassed, a bit of Jane bleeding through.

"And to answer your question, I suppose it was, well, in the elevator. When Jane stood up to John. In the memories that the TARDIS created, no woman had ever stood up to him like Jane did that day. Women had always fallen at his feet, but here was this shy girl challenging him. There was an awful lot of you in Jane at that moment. I was unbelievably turned on, Rose."

They relaxed into each other for a moment and were quiet in their thoughts. "Doctor, I think it's time we go tell my mum about us," Rose said out of the blue.

The Doctor deflated a bit, and sighed dramatically. "New rule. There shall be no reference, either direct or indirect, to Jackie Tyler while you and I are in bed."

"Doctor, we've been married for almost two months in my time. I think it's only fair. And now with the baby coming, I think we, well, we can't put it off. Won't be too much longer before I'm gonna start feelin' sick and then I'll be tired and showing and she'll slap you. She'll think you knocked me up if we don't tell her about us."

"I think she already knows about us," he reminded her.

"Yeah, but we've never actually told her," she countered. Rose felt a soft thud. "Did we just land?" she asked, sitting up startled.

"Yep." The Doctor put his hands behind his head casually.

"Where are we?" Rose asked.


"You big..." she started to playfully slap him, but he grabbed her, and flipped her onto her back. "Big what?" he asked with a growl.

"You big, wonderful, fantastic, brilliant alien."

"That's me!" Those were his last words for before she attacked his lips.

oOo

"It's about time you came back for a visit," Jackie whinged, but then grabbed the Doctor's face and kissed his lips to his utter disgust. She fondly patted his face and then turned to hug Rose lovingly. "Hello sweetheart, so good to see the two of ya'. Tell me all about where you've been. Now don't leave anything out." Jackie went into the kitchen to prepare tea.

Rose couldn't help but snicker at the look that remained on her husband's face long after the kiss had been wiped away by his sleeve.

"That box of yours has been down in the courtyard for about three hours now. What you two been
up to in there?" Jackie called from the kitchen.

Gingerly, both the Doctor and Rose sat down on the sofa side by side. Rose cleared her throat.

"Mum, the Doctor and I, well, see the thing is we," Rose blew air through her lips. "It's been about two months for us hasn't it Doctor?" Rose's mouth went dry. "How long has it been since Christmas, Mum?" She asked with false brightness, stalling.

"Today's Valentine's Day, so about a month and a half. I hope you remembered to get somethin' for my daughter, Doctor," Jackie said, returning from the kitchen with a plate of biscuits and a couple of bananas.

"You could say that," Rose said quietly, her voice trailing off.

"Happy Valentine's Day Jackie! Rose and I are married." The Doctor blurted out and then rather roughly grabbed Rose's hand and flashed the sapphire ring in Jackie's general direction. "See! Got her a ring and everything!" The Doctor slipped on his own wedding band, now that the news was hanging in the air.

"Oh, I know you're married, you daft alien, but ya two haven't visited me right after it happened before. Always been in your history a bit.” She flapped her hand. "Those rings are new, though, aren't they? You two have never had those on before. Pretty posh, Doctor. What'd you do, rob Tiffany?" she asked with a smile. "Naw, I'm kid din'. Come on, lemme see 'em up close."

Jackie yanked Rose's hand from the Doctor's to examine the ring, now joined by the platinum wedding band that John had slid onto her finger at St. Catherine’s Presbyterian.

"What do you mean, new rings?" The Doctor scowled. "And what do you mean you know about us being married?" he asked much more slowly, his voice low and serious.

"Oh. Wait, lemme think. Was I supposed to say that?" Jackie put her finger on her cheek and squinted. "Oh well. Can't un-say the words now. Won't make you forget," Jackie said with a blithe flick of the wrist.

"Well actually, I can make us forget," the Doctor replied quietly, his eyebrows raised. "Jackie, if I'm right, and I usually am, if you know about us being married, it means that future us have visited you in your past. Wait! Don't answer that! I'm just hypothesising." He put his finger on his lips and stared at her for a moment.

Jackie nodded with wide blue eyes, and nodded sagely. "That wasn't agreein', that was sayin' I understand."

"Good." The Doctor sprang up from the sofa and paced back and forth in front of Rose, stepping over her outstretched legs with each pass until she moved them out of the way. "I probably left you a list of instructions of what you could talk about and not discuss because I really don't think you could remember all of my instructions."

"Oi! I see marriage hasn't made you any less rude," Jackie said with a scowl. "Yeah, you gave me something." Jackie frowned at him, disappeared into her bedroom and returned with a sheet of paper in the Doctor's handwriting. "Here, Mr. Rudypants."

The Doctor slid on his glasses and read his scrawl. He had also written notes to himself in Gallifreyan. He took the glasses off, and looked at Rose with an odd look on his face.

Time's been re-written, Rose, he told her telepathically. You weren't pregnant the last time Jackie
saw you, which is six months from now in our time.

Rose looked at the Doctor and rubbed her stomach maternally. *Does that mean I'm gonna lose the baby?* she asked fearfully.

*No, and of that I am sure,* he said firmly. *Gallifreyan is a very precise language. There is a specific word for the beloved female who is carrying firstborn offspring of her mate, and I haven't used that word once in this note. I have specifically referred to you with the word for beloved female mate who has never been pregnant, but the mate, meaning me, would be thrilled for her to be in that condition.*

Rose giggled out loud. "Your vocabulary tests must have a bit harder than mine in primary school."

"Yeah, just a bit," he replied out loud with a nervous laugh.

"Would you two stop doing that brain talk thing? It's rude." She crossed her arms and tossed her high ponytail.

"Jackie, I need you to answer this question. Yes or no. Do you know about Barcelona, the evil queen, and the noseless dogs?"

"Sure I do. Ya two got married and didn't even invite me to the wedding." Jackie huffed. "And all you two will say is, 'it was private,'" she said in a mocking tone.

"Well it was Mum! You couldn't be there, it woulda been embarrassin'. It wasn't like the kinda weddin' you're used to. It was a Gallifreyan bonding ceremony."

"Why would I be embarrassed? Do ya get married starkers or somethin'?"

Rose and the Doctor both turned three shades of red, and Jackie's mouth flew open. "You made my daughter get married without any clothes on didn't you, you bleedin' alien!" Jackie seethed.

"Mum, just leave it, this is more important!" Rose said firmly.

The Doctor regained his composure and walked closer to where Jackie was standing. "Remember, only answer yes or no. Have we ever told you about John and Jane Smith?"

"No," she replied decisively.

The Doctor slowly sat down next to his wife. "Jackie, I think you're gonna wanna sit down for this." The Doctor looked Rose in the eyes and held her hand.

Jackie lowered her eyebrows, and lowered herself carefully into a chair.

The Doctor drew in a breath, let it out, and began.

"Once upon a time there was a devastatingly handsome man named John, and a sweet, innocent, shy, and completely enchanting girl named Jane." Rose leaned her head onto his shoulder and the Doctor told their story…

Jane Smith was a mouse of a girl: shy, tidy, habitual to a fault. Her favorite color was brown, and she usually wore a suit of a conservative cut. Her hair was brownish, her eyes were brown, but outstanding, everyone said so.

"Why don't you wear some makeup, for heaven's sake?" her work acquaintances would say.
"Would you do a world of good. Men like that sort of thing these days. A bit of color, a bit of flash.
Maybe try out a different color of suit? I know, pink! And you could bleach your hair blonde and cut it like Doris Day! You would be a doll, Jane! You'd be fightin' off the blokes."

She would smile and quietly say, "Thank you. Maybe next payday."

John Smith, on the other hand was a lion in every way. (No relation to the aforementioned Jane by the way.) Tall, lanky, confident, and proud. A man's man, a lady's man, the toast of London. His suits were Saville Row, perfectly tailored. His sleek blue roadster was sexy. His Chelsea flat was sexy. Even his job was sexy.

John Smith was the genius author behind a wildly successful, fantastical and often blush-inducing series of science fiction books about a mad professor and his lovely assistant. Everyone loved the books, though few would admit to reading them. He didn't care. The money was coming in hand over fist. He had a brand new publisher, and he was about to become a worldwide phenomenon.

John Smith was King of the Jungle.

Jane was tea and toast.

John was toast of the town.

Jane was in the typing pool.

John penned the words which she typed.

Jane hid her feminine charms.

John flaunted his masculine appeal.

Jane's head was in the clouds. But so was John's.

But that was about the only thing they had in common. Except for the fact that John Smith and Jane Smith -- no relation, remember -- were soul mates, meant for each other, separated by necessity, a plan of their own design. They just didn't know it. Yet.

Chapter End Notes

To all of you who remembered this story, and to those of you who requested that I post it again, THANK YOU. It has been a pleasure falling in love all over again with John, Jane, Bess, Niles, and Jack.

The next story in the FoundVerse is "Found & Revisited". When I took it down in September of 2015, it was a work in progress. I have not added anything to it since then. Once I post it, it will still be incomplete. I plan on finishing it as quickly as I can.

End Notes
As I don't think it's fair to give spoilers in the opening notes because many don't want to be spoiled, but I also feel strongly about giving trigger warnings, I'm placing the spoilers here.

Jane is stalked in this story, and is threatened with rape. She is drugged. Her stalker (Daniel) hires a pr*nogr*aphic filmmaker to film himself taking Jane. It would be her first time, as she is a virgin. This is the major plot for most of the fic, so please heed the warnings.

Here are the spoilers regarding the threat of non-con:

Daniel Higgins sends threatening letters, gifts, and flowers.
He verbally threatens her and sexually harasses her.
He witnesses Rose and John having an intimate moment -- Rose's first, ahem, Big O (while she is dressed). He films the moment, and threatens to show the film to the office.
It is revealed that other women in the office have been forced to comply with his wishes to keep their employment.
Priscilla Bootkins acts as his accomplice.
Jane is kidnapped.
Jane is forced to wear revealing clothing.
Jane is restrained with ropes and handcuffs, and tied to a bed in a film studio.
Jane is rescued before Daniel can go through with the rape.
Jane is dosed with sleeping drug.
Daniel kisses her without her consent.
No film is made.
Jane undergoes a physical examination at the hospital after she is rescued. (This is only referenced.)
Regarding her virginity:

John and Jane wait until their wedding night to make love. Jane is very strong in her convictions about this, and John begrudgingly accepts it. He knows going into their engagement that this is the case, and he never pushes the point, but he supports her, even though it is difficult for him. There are some close calls.
That moment is included in the love scene, but it is a happy, wonderful event for them.
Please shoot me any questions on tumblr.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!