I Was Here

by mrsbertucci

Summary

Rose Tyler moves to Broadchurch for a career opportunity and meets a rude but incredibly handsome Detective Inspector.

Notes

No Time Lords or aliens in this story. Strictly AU. I wanted an Alec/Rose story so I figured I'd give it a shot. Will be a multi chapter story. I own nothing but did take certain liberties since it's fiction :) Hope y'all enjoy!

TenRoseForeverandever is my friend and beta. She encourages me and pushes me to be better and I am so grateful for her presence in my life! Thank you <3
Welcome to Broadchurch

I Was Here

Chapter One

Welcome to Broadchurch

The wind whipped Rose Tyler’s hair into her eyes the second she stepped from the shelter of the train station. She sighed, knowing she should have been prepared. It was a beach town after all but, after the early morning train ride, Rose’s brain was still mush even at nine-thirty. Stepping back for some cover, she used the hair tie around her wrist to quickly fasten her hair into a bun. Being a dancer meant that she could style a bun, messy or not, with her eyes closed. Feigning a sense of calm she most definitely did not feel, she shouldered her rucksack and ventured forth.

The next gust of wind brought with it the smell of smoke and not the good kind. Rose looked up and could see gray wisps floating into the atmosphere. Whatever was burning was in the direction of the dance studio Rose was headed for and she silently prayed that smoke was not coming from her destination.

She pulled the crumpled envelope from the back pocket of her jeans where she had scribbled Amy’s directions and reread the words she had memorized hours ago.

She hoped they would lead her to a fresh start, one that she would forever be grateful for. Rose had called Amelia Pond to see if her fellow dancer and uni friend knew of any jobs, and had cried with relief when Amy told her that she had opened a dance studio in Broadchurch and was desperately seeking an instructor.

"There’s not many professional dancers here. I have one who travels from the town over and I thought me and her would be enough. Turns out a lot of parents were happy about my studio opening because it meant that their children could take dance without having to travel to other towns. Would you be willing to teach ballet and hip hop?"

Amy’s words had been music to her ears and she had accepted the job. Thankfully, Amy owned the building that housed her studio and the tiny flat above it. Rose was going to live in the flat and maintain the upkeep of the studio in lieu of paying rent. Amy had warned her the flat wasn’t much of a living space but, no matter what it looked like, it had to be better than the place she’d been living for the past two weeks.

Rose rounded a corner that put her on Bluffs Street, but before she could look for the building, numbered 138, that housed the studio, her attention was drawn to the cause of the smoke. An empty husk of a building that was barely standing on its own was smoldering. Small fires were still being put out inside what was left of the space. The bright morning sun shining down on the charred remains gave the scene an eerie haze. It was absolutely chilling.

Fire trucks and police units lined the street and men and women, be it workers or bystanders, were all over the place. Two stood out among the rest. A woman, who looked a bit taller than Rose and had her dark curly hair pulled back into a ponytail and wearing a bright orange anorak, surveyed the scene with her arms crossed over her chest. A tall, lanky man with brown hair had his back to Rose, hands on his hips. His dark blue suit looked just a bit too big for him, like someone who had lost a lot of weight and never took the time to buy new clothes. He was turning around, taking in
the surroundings but stopped when he spotted Rose. His bearded face was scowling as he made his way across the street, the woman rushing to catch up with his long strides.

"Hey! You!"

Rose's eyes widened in surprise. What could she have possibly done to earn this man's ire? He stopped a few feet away from her. Even though he looked scruffy and in need of a good nights sleep, Rose thought he was an attractive man with his chocolate brown eyes and the freckles she could see peeking out from the beard on his cheeks.

"Who are you? Why haven't I ever seen you around here before?"

Attractive but an arsehole. Story of her life.

His Scottish brogue made the words sound harsh but she was pretty sure he'd meant for them to. She clutched the straps of her rucksack tightly, unsure of this man.

"My name's Rose. I just got off the train."

"Can you prove that? Rose wha'?"

Rose's brows furrowed in frustration. She had just been left by a verbally abusive wanker and her long dormant 'estate attitude' was about to reassert itself. "What's it to ya? Who the hell are you?"

The man reared back in surprise before crossing his arms. "Excuse me?"

Rose was grateful when the woman stepped between her and the angry stranger. "Okay. Hello. We seem to have missed the introductions. I'm DS Ellie Miller and this grump is DI Alec Hardy. This building caught fire somewhere around eleven last night, which is a bit of an unexpected circumstance 'round here and you yourself are unexpected. One thing about a small town, everyone knows everyone. You can understand us wanting to talk with you, yeah?"

Rose relaxed at the explanation and gave DS Miller a small smile. "Yeah, yeah. 'M Rose Tyler. My mate, Amy Pond, hired me to teach at her dance studio. Here." She reached into her pocket and withdrew her ticket stub which stated the date and time of purchase and the projected nine a.m. arrival to Broadchurch. She held it out to the DS but DI Hardy snatched it to read first. She frowned at the blatant rudeness of the police officer as he silently passed the stub to his partner.

"Oh, you did just get here." DS Miller handed the stub back to Rose. "I know Amy. She's such a sweetheart. The whole town is excited about the dance studio opening. Makes me wish I had girls, but I have two boys so it's all football and dirt."

"Boys can take dance, too." Rose said, smiling at Ellie. But a scoff from Alec brought the frown back. "What? Oh, don't tell me... you don't think boys should dance?"

"Just think dance is a waste of time. You cannae get any real job being a dancer."

She heard another voice speaking similar words.

"What kinda money you gonna make teachin' dance? That's not a real job. You'd make better money dancin' naked in some club. Too bad your tits are too small."

Violence was never a solution Rose stooped too but, damn, was it tempting right now. Instead of yelling and showing him all the hurt and anger that his words had dredged up, Rose used up all her self-control for the month.
She nodded at Alec. "Right. You can piss off." *Okay, maybe not all of her self-control. She turned to Ellie. "It was lovely to meet you, DS Miller."

"Same to you. The studio's just down there, about four more blocks and you should be there."

Rose nodded her thanks to Ellie and returned to her journey to the dance studio, trying not to laugh at a wide-eyed Detective Inspector.

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Keep Calm and Dance On was located in a two-story building that had once housed an appliance store. The large front glass windows of the ground floor were covered with purple and white chevron patterned curtains that went well with the white brick exterior of the building. The studio's name was etched into the all glass door, the frame painted purple. Rose took a deep breath and pulled open the door.

The bell above the door chimed and Rose heard a soft Scottish accent (so different from the one she'd heard earlier) call out to her from down the hall. "Be there in a bit!"

Rose took a moment to look around. Walls had been put up to divide the large showroom, making three dance studios. All three studios had one wall of mirrors, a bar lined up on another wall, and the same black Marley flooring. At the end of the hall to the left, Rose could see light coming from a doorway. She started making her way down, assuming the room was the office, when the doorbell chimed. Out of habit, Rose turned to see who had entered the building.

Her eyes widened at the sight of two identical men. One was dressed in light blue scrubs and wore black frames and the other was dressed as a reverend.

"Hello." It was the reverend that offered the greeting.

"Hi." Rose's reply was soft and shy. Meeting the gruff detective right off the bat in a new town kind of put her off of meeting other residents of Broadchurch.

"Rose!"

Right as she turned, she was enveloped in a tight hug. Rose returned the hug, spitting strands of ginger hair from her mouth. "Amy! Oh, I've missed you!"

"I've missed you! Let me look at you!" Amy stepped back, but kept her hands on Rose's upper arms. "You're a lot skinnier than I remember, but still as beautiful. How was the train?"

"It wasn't a bad ride. 'M just happy to be here. Thanks so much for this, Amy."

"I'm happy to help, Rose. Besides, I think you're helping me more!" A throat cleared behind them and the reunited friends turned towards the sound. Amy walked over and kissed the man in the blue scrubs on his cheek. "Hello, darling. Rose, this is my fiancée, Rory Williams."

Rory took Rose's hand in a delicate grip. "Nice to meet you. Amy has been talking about you nonstop. The two of you had some interesting times in uni."

Fighting down the blood rushing to her cheeks as she remembered some of the things she and Amy used to get up to, Rose shook his hand. "We were a little silly at times."

Amy giggled behind her. "Yeah, silly. That's it." She gestured to the reverend. "I'd like you to meet Rory's twin brother, Paul Coates."
As if he had been anticipating the question, Paul spoke. "I decided to use our mother's maiden name as my own. Just wanted to try to make things a bit easier on us."

"I can understand that. It's lovely to meet you both."

"Just go into the office and I'll join you two in a second. I wanna show Rose around and get her settled." Amy led Rose over to the very first room on the right once you entered the front door. "We are planning a surprise anniversary party for their parents but, since both boys work, we have to do it on their breaks." Amy leaned against the doorjamb and gestured into the room. "This will be your studio."

"My own studio? Wow." Rose looked around the room. The room was easily four times the size of the one she taught at before coming here. But the studio she came from had been located in the slums of London, so the building was nothing to write home about. Rose had loved it though, teaching the underprivileged kids. Growing up poor herself made her want to reach out and inspire the little girls who would be told that they could do no better and should just accept their lot in life.

Amy's voice brought her out of her thoughts. "Let me show you the flat upstairs and once you get settled, you can just meet me down in the office."

She pulled some keys from the pocket of her hoodie. They walked out the front door and to the right. Around the corner and on the side of the building was a solid purple door. Using one of the keys, Amy opened the door that led to a stairwell. Rose followed her friend up the two flights of stairs to another purple wooden door. She was thankful the door had a peephole; it made her feel a little bit safer.

Amy unlocked the door with the second key on the ring. "Remember, it's not much, but I think you'll like it." She jiggled the door handle. "Sometimes it sticks. There is another way here from inside the studio. That door doesn't give me fits."

Once the door opened, Amy stepped in and flicked on the light. Rose took in the flat with appreciation. When Amy said it wasn't much, she underestimated big time. The walls were the same white brick as the building's exterior. On the opposite end of the space was a door, similar to the one they just entered, with a deadbolt. Probably leads to the studio.

The left wall housed black appliances: a mini-fridge with a microwave sitting on top, a two-hob stove, and a sink. A small, dark wood pantry squeezed its way in between the fridge and stove. In the corner between the kitchen and the other door, was a small loo, the entrance covered with a cobalt blue curtain. The room came equipped with a stand-up shower, loo, and small vanity sink with mirror.

The other long wall that was obviously the front of the business had several old single paneled windows that looked to have been the originals from when the building was constructed. Single paneled? I'll need to pick up some extra blankets. Perpendicular to the wall closest to entrance sat a red and cream paisley loveseat: a loveseat so hideous it was beautiful. An old tube television was on a cheap looking stand across from the loveseat, a glass coffee table separating the two.

The loft was stationed directly above the sitting area. Rose climbed the wooden staircase, thankful for the railing, and smiled when she saw the full size mattress on the floor. Finally, a seemingly comfortable bed! Amy had thoughtfully made the bed with pink sheets and a plain yellow duvet, just like Rose's bed had been at uni. The ceiling was high enough that she didn't have to slouch but low enough it made her feel like a giant.

Turning to Amy with tears in her eyes, Rose hugged her ginger friend. Coming to Broadchurch to
start over was scary, but she was ready to face anything that was thrown her way!
We Meet Again

Chapter Summary

Our beloved Alec and Rose meet again. Also, we find out Rose's story!

One of my shorter chapters. TenRoseForeverandevever is my beta and I am so proud to say that!!

I Was Here

Chapter Two We Meet Again

Two days after the fire, Alec and Ellie were still in the process of interviewing the occupants of Bluffs Street since the official word had come back: Arson.

It was tedious and extremely irritating to Alec because no one claimed to have seen anything, and somehow, he found that very hard to believe. Another thing he found hard to believe was how his thoughts kept circling back to the blonde who told him to piss off. Rose Tyler. He wasn't thinking of her as a suspect; she'd already proven she hadn't been around at the time the fire had started. He was just thinking of her.

He had to admit, he had been incredibly rude to her, even by his standards. He had been up all night the night before, having been called around midnight about the fire, and it made his normally gruff demeanor even worse. Predictably, Ellie had torn into him once Rose had left.

The partners walked in silence as they made their way to the next business. Keep Calm and Dance On. This was where Rose worked. Alec held the door open for Ellie. After working together for so long, Ellie had managed to instill some manners in her boss. The wide hallway was filled with girls of all ages and sizes in various dance apparel. Alec checked his watch: 5:50p.m. They'd been at this for almost eight hours.

"Can I help you?"

Alec let Ellie handle questioning the redhead that had approached them. And, of course, not one person had seen anything. Clara Oswald, the other dance instructor, hadn't either, since the studio closed at nine at night. That had been two hours before the fire had been started. Three to nine, Monday through Thursday; what kind of rubbish was that? What I wouldn't give for ridiculous hours like that, Alec thought to himself.

Just as Ellie was ending her line of questioning, a studio door opened behind them and several little girls ran out to their parents. The kids in the hallway went into a different room and Clara excused herself.

Alec froze on the spot when Rose came out of her studio in a full body, black leotard. It was sleeveless and the back portion of it was made up of lace. It was incredibly sophisticated. And
fucking sexy. Get a grip, Hardy. You're thirty-eight years old, not six-bloody-teen!

Amy, oblivious to the look the DI was giving her friend, called Rose over. "Rose! C'mere for a sec."

Rose turned and her eyebrows rose when she took in the sight of the grumpy DI. She brushed the hair that escaped her bun behind her ear as she made her way to where they stood near the office.

"Rose, the police are here to ask questions about the fire from the other night. Can you spare a minute before your next class?"

"Sure, Amy, but I've met them already. Right off the train. Hello, DS Miller." She turned and leveled a frosty look at Alec. "DI Hardy."

Alec was used to the chilly greeting, but he didn't like it coming from this woman. He was undeniably drawn to her, despite her cheeky words the other day not to mention the fact that she was far too young for him. For cryin' out loud, she's barely out of nappies. He could at least apologize to her. He cleared his throat, and peered at her from under his fringe. "Miss Tyler. Miller here informed me that I was ruder than usual to you the other day and I shouldn't have been. So..."

Rose took in everyone's shocked expressions with wide eyes. Must be a rarity for the DI to say anything like this. But what was he trying to say?

"I'm not entirely sure how to take that. Is that an apology or just a statement of fact?"

"Em... an apology, Miss Tyler."

Ellie made a choking sound and covered her mouth with her hand before she said something she shouldn't to her boss. She couldn't recall the DI ever apologizing to anyone. Turning her eyes to Rose, Ellie saw the young woman smile in amusement.

"If you say so. Thank you, DI Hardy." Rose gave a nod and ran her oval locket along its chain.

"Alec."

Her hand stilled its restless movement. "M sorry?"

"You don't have to call me DI Hardy. You can call me Alec... if you like. Hell, he should just shut his gob now! He hated his name, had done so his whole life, but he would bet ten quid it would sound like singing angels from her lips.

Good thing he'd had a pacemaker implanted, because that tongue-touched smile she gave him would have stopped his heart.

"Alright, Alec." Jesus Christ, he knew it! "You can call me Rose... if you want."

Before anyone could comment on the pinkness of Rose and Alec's cheeks, the bell above the door chimed violently.

"Rose Marion Tyler! Have I got a bone to pick with you!"

Rose turned to see her adopted cousin fuming in the doorway, looking like a fiery goddess that hadn't had her monthly sacrifice. Rose suspected she was going to be the next offering to the goddess.
"Donna! Hi-

"Don't you 'Donna, hi' me! It's been three weeks since Granddad and I've heard from you. Three weeks! I've been trying your mobile and after not being able to reach you, I made the trip to your flat only to find that you'd moved out! You know who told me that? The new tenants of your flat!"

"Donna-"

"Shut up, blondie. So next, I go to your job. Who tells me that my cousin moved to take a job in Broadchurch? Astrid, that's who. What the hell is going on with you? Where's that no-good wanker, Jimmy?" Donna stood with her hands on her hips, not happy with Rose's silence. "Well? What have you got to say for yourself?"

Rose stood there, mouth opening and closing like a fish out of water. Rose was grateful for Amy when she came to stand next to her. "Rose has a class to teach. Why don't you come have a seat in the office and wait, Donna, is it? It's hip hop so the class is just half an hour."

"Fine." Donna stormed past Rose, who had her eyes down, and followed Amy to the office. "I can wait a little longer."

Rose felt like a little girl getting scolded in front of her friends. With barely a glance at the detectives, she mumbled, "'Scuse me." She escaped to her room and transitioned into her dance teacher persona, 'Miss Rose'.

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Alec and Ellie started towards the next business, the former studiously ignoring the glances of the latter. He knew her silence wouldn't last much longer.

"So..."

"Leave it, Miller."

"No. I don't think I will." Alec directed his most threatening scowl her way. Didn't faze Ellie one bit. "No. You just told someone they could call you Alec. I'm sorry, not just someone... a very beautiful woman."

He stopped, hands on hips. "Yeah, so?"

"Ask her out for Pete's sake!"

There was no way in hell Alec would admit that he wanted to do just that. Ellie would never let it go and it was something he needed to forget about. Someone as bright and beautiful and young as Rose would never look twice at him. Even if she did (by some miracle) have any interest in him, his doom and gloom attitude would snuff out her bright light. Nah, nothing good would come of it. Besides, the last thing he needed was a distraction. He needed to focus on the investigation and the investigation only.

Alec shook his head at Ellie, and opened the door to the Italian bakery.

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Rose placed the kettle on the stove as Donna took in the tiny flat. Once tea was made, Rose led Donna to the sitting area. She sat on the floor with her back leaning against the wall while Donna sat on the loveseat. Donna took a hesitant sip of the hot brew. Rose just cradled the mug in her
hands, waiting for Donna to start demanding answers.

She was shocked when Donna asked quietly, "What happened, Rose?"

She shrugged. "You were right. Everyone was right."

"About what?"

"Jimmy. You told me he would bring me down and he did. I busted my arse for those scholarships for uni, to make a better life for myself and I threw it all away. And for what? A sweet talkin' loser whose only joy in life was pointin' out my faults."

"Oh, Rose. I'm so sorry."

Rose couldn't take the compassion her cousin was showing her. "What you should be sayin' is 'I told you so'. He left me for another woman, takin' all my money with him. Wanker left me drownin' in debt."

"Why didn't you call? Me and Granddad would've helped. We've always considered you family, even before your mum and dad died. You could've come to us."

"I know, but I was too embarrassed. I needed to take care of this on my own since all of it was my fault. I made my bed and now I have to lie in it."

"No, you don't." Donna moved to sit next to Rose. "We all make mistakes, yeah? Remember Lance?"

"Oh, yeah. Man, I hated him. Thought he was too high and mighty for the likes of us. Made it seem like he was doin' you a favor by marryin' you when all along you were too good for that berk."

"Just as we all knew you were too good for Jimmy. Rose, he didn't hit you, did he?"

"Nah. Never even yelled. That I coulda handled. I did grow up around you after all."

"Oi!" Donna playfully scolded, but bumped shoulders with Rose.

"He just constantly made me feel like I was this tall." She held her thumb and index finger about an inch apart. She took another sip of her tea then rested her head on Donna's shoulder. "The studio paid me but not enough. I had to sell everythin' to pay back the debts. Well, everythin' but the locket Mum and Dad gave me." She sighed. "Had to get rid of my mobile and the flat."

"Where'd you go?"

"St. Luke's women's shelter."

A small gasp escaped Donna, making Rose look up. Tears trickled down Donna's cheeks.

"Please don't cry. It was just 'til I could get back on my feet. I only had to stay there two weeks before I got in touch with Amy."

The ginger woman sniffed and wiped her cheeks. "Thank God for that." Setting her mug down, she grabbed Rose's hand. "This is what's gonna happen: Granddad and I are gonna come down this weekend and we're gonna get you a new mobile and replace some of the things you had to sell."

"Donna-"
"I swear to God, blondie, if you tell me no, I'll knock you into next week!"

Rose gave a sheepish nod. "Thank you. I really have missed you and Granddad. I thought about you two. I just couldn't bring myself to call. I didn't want you to see me at rock bottom."

"Well, now you know better. Come on, my bum is numb and I'm hungry."

Rose stood and helped Donna stand.

"Dinner's on me, blondie."
Friends

Chapter Summary

Rose and Alec cross paths a couple of weeks after their first meeting with interesting results!

TenRoseForeverandever, you are a godsend!!!

P.S. Fred's speech is based off of my son's :)

I Was Here

Chapter Three Friends

Rose slowed to a stop and took a minute to stare out at the water. Running on the beach had become part of her morning routine. The sand offered the perfect amount of resistance to help keep her in prime dancing shape, and the view calmed and inspired her creative mind.

She allowed herself a few more minutes of solitude. She needed to head back to the studio to get it cleaned up for the day but, for right now, she was enjoying being out in the fresh air. After Donna and Wilf's visit, Rose had taken to secluding herself in her flat or studio, scared to venture out. Everything was so different here in this small town. She felt as though everyone was staring at her, an unwanted outsider. She'd gone to Amy's house for dinner a few times but, besides going to the grocery, that was it.

Still, since Donna and Wilf had set her up with a mobile and data plan, she'd been talking to them more. One Sunday, Wilf had called while Donna had been out doing the shopping.

"How are you, sweetheart?"

"Doin' fine, Granddad. The line went silent. "Granddad?"

He sighed. "Rose, no you're not. I know you and, even though you are starting fresh, I can hear it in your voice. You're sad."

"Not sad... just... lonely, I guess."

"Oh, sweetheart. I bet you spend all your time cooped up in that flat of yours. Get out! Go for walks, explore the town! You might meet some people."

She smiled at his enthusiasm. "You know what? I think I will."

Rose had started running and, as Wilf had said, she'd met a few of the residents of the town, mostly the elderly. Not many people her age were up that early in the morning and that was fine with Rose. To be accepted into Broadchurch, she felt it was the older population that she had to win over. So far, everyone she offered a smile to returned the sentiment, giving her hope.

She turned to start back home and was surprised to see Alec Hardy slouched down on the bench
near the pavement. She gave him a small wave and made her way over to him when he returned
the gesture.

Rose took in his rumpled suit and tired expression as she sat next to him. "Hello, Alec. Have you
been up all night?"

"Yeah. Workin'."

She tucked her hair behind her ear, even though she knew the wind would just blow it out again.
"Did you find the person who set that fire?"

He shook his head. "We're at a standstill until new evidence decides to present itself."

Alec knew he shouldn't be discussing the case with Rose; he was just so damn excited to actually
be talking to her. He had been so busy the past couple of weeks trying to find the arsonist, he
hadn't had a chance to go back to the studio and speak with her. He had scorned Ellie's idea of
asking Rose out, but he couldn't shake the thought of her smile and had wanted to see it again. He
had sat down on his walk home to contemplate the direction everything was going in when he had
seen her running. Now, Ellie's advice of asking her out seemed plausible... not that he'd ever admit
that to her. Seeing Rose out on the beach had firmed up his resolve.

"That has to be frustrating."

"Eh. It's by no means my most frustrating case. I've definitely had worse."

Rose leaned forward, resting her elbows on her knees, trying to hide her reddening cheeks. How
could she have forgotten the Danny Latimer and Sandbrook cases? "Right. Sorry, shouldn'ta said
anythin'."

He gave her a sideways glance. "Heard about those, have ye?"

She sat up, running her hands along the top of her thighs. "Well, yeah. The first person I meet is a
rude, good-lookin' copper. Course 'm gonna ask about him."

Rose bit her lip and closed her eyes when she realized what she'd said. If her cheeks weren't red
before, they were now.

"Good-lookin', aye?"

She peeked open an eye to steal a glance at Alec and her breath hitched. He was giving her the
most adorable grin. Embarrassment pushed aside, she whispered, "You should smile more often."

His smile grew. "Must make me more good-lookin'."

"Piss off, Hardy." Her giggles took the sting out of her words.

"Now, a beautiful woman tellin' me 'piss off' makes more sense. Might have to have you
committed, callin' me good-lookin'." Alec reached up to tuck in her hair that escaped from its
perch behind her ear, but pulled back at the last second. Ye glaikit old fool! Don't scare her off.

"You called me beautiful. Now who's barmy?" Rose bumped him with her shoulder and secured
her hair away herself, wishing he would have followed through.

Alec shifted forward, gripping the edge of the bench in both hands and stared down at his shoes.
"I've been meanin' to come talk with you. That woman at the studio, Donna was it?" Rose
nodded. "She isn't givin' you problems, is she?"
"You remember that?" He nodded and she gave him a brief smile. "Donna Noble does make a lasting impression. But, no, she isn't. She was right to be mad at me. Hit a low point in my life, me. Lowest I've ever been an' I was ashamed an' cut myself off from her an' our Granddad. She was just remindin' me what family's for."

Neither one said anything for a few minutes and the silence was surprisingly comfortable. The sound of the waves crashing ashore provided a soothing background. Rose pulled her new mobile from her armband and checked the time. She needed to go so she could get the studio cleaned up, yet she was reluctant to leave.

"Rose, do you have any plans for Saturday?" Alec stared out at the water. If he wasn’t looking at her, it wouldn’t hurt so badly when she inevitably rejected him. Or so he thought. People always seem to disappoint him; it’s why he never let anyone get too close. Momentary insanity was what was making him take this chance.

"Um, just doin' a bit of laundry at the laundromat. Why?" Rose tried to keep her breathing under control. Was he going to ask her out? Did she want him to ask her out? She was definitely interested in the DI, but she didn’t want to jump into another relationship so soon.

"Well, Miller and her partner, Brian, are takin' her eldest to a footie match and I told her I'd look after her wee one. I thought I'd take him to the fairground. You could come with us."

Rose chewed on her thumbnail. "Like a date?"

"It could be, if you want." He snuck a glance at her and his heart dropped at how anxious she appeared to be. Here it comes, the thanks-but-no-thanks.

"I'd like to go on a date with you, but-"

"It's fine. You don't have to say anythin-"

"Alec!" He flinched when she called his name. He was jumping to conclusions and she needed to put that to rest. She would have laughed at his shocked expression, but she didn't want to crack his already fragile opinion of himself. "Listen to me, alright?"

"Aye."

Feeling brave, she reached over and grabbed his hand, smiling when their fingers laced together automatically. "I'd like to go on a date with you, but not just yet. I just got out of a toxic relationship an' need a bit of time. Can we just go as friends for right now?"

He gave her the same adorable smile as he did when she'd called him good-looking. "Aye. Friends for right now."

One tongue-touched smile and a new phone number later, Alec Hardy walked home with a smile on his face.

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[AH]: Just picked up Fred. See you soon.

Rose smiled at the thought of Alec frowning at the phone screen as he texted her.

[RT]: Can't wait :)
She was nervous about this outing. Even though her mind said 'just friends', her heart was saying 'date'. More than a month had passed since Jimmy had walked out but Rose had left the relationship long before then. Maybe it wasn't too soon after all.

A modest, blue sedan pulled up to the front of the studio. She stood from her perch on the front steps and approached the car as Alec stepped out. Rose had to consciously work to keep her jaw from dropping. Instead of his usual frumpy suit, Alec was dressed in a pair of dark wash jeans and a white oxford he'd left untucked. A brown leather jacket acted as his shield from the wind.

He was bloody gorgeous.

Alec gave her a shy smile. "Ready?"

"Y-yeah."

Alec walked around to open her door. As Rose made her way over to him, he took her in. She wore a short red, floral print dress with sheer black tights. She topped off the ensemble with a jean jacket and a pair of gray Chuck high tops.

"Are you goin' to be warm enough in tha'?" He nodded his head towards her. "Doesna look like it."

Rose shrugged. "I'll be alright. Just a bit of wind."

She climbed into the car as Alec mumbled, "Suit yerself."

"Hi!"

Rose jumped at the high-pitched greeting. She turned to see the cutest little blonde haired, brown-eyed boy sitting in a booster seat. He looked to be about three.

"Hello, 'm Rose. What's your name?"

He kicked his feet. "Fred. You Unca Lec's gir fren?"

Her blush was as red as her dress. "Um, I'm no-

"Fred, what did I tell you? Miss Rose is my friend."

"Oooooooh. She pretty."

Alec beetled his eyebrows at the boy. "Yes. Yes, she is. Ready to go?"

"Go! Go! Go!"

Rose watched the interaction with a smile. Fred was a darling little boy and Alec... well, Rose was leaning more towards "date" even more.

ARARARARARARARARARARARARARAR

Rose stood at the railing of the pony rides watching Fred go for a ride and trying not to shiver out of her shoes. The wind was cutting through her denim jacket with precision. She hadn't thought it would be this chilly during the day, but she also hadn't thought the fairground would have been on a cliff top. Granted, there was fencing in place; it still seemed like a silly location.
Fred waved as he passed by... again. Rose waved back, smiling wide when the boy blew her a kiss. She had learned that Fred was three and a half and loved dinosaurs. She also learned that 'Unca Lec' was his most favorite person. Watching Alec and Fred interact had been the highlight of her day.

Alec was really good with him. She had even told him so, which brought up the subject of his fourteen-year-old daughter, Daisy, and his fragile relationship with her. Rose couldn't say she had been shocked to find out he'd had a daughter. He seemed to be a natural father. Coincidentally, Alec had stepped away to take a call from Daisy just as Fred started the pony ride.

The time for Fred's next wave came and, as Rose returned the gesture, a gust of wind plowed into her. She mumbled out a curse as a hard shiver ran through her body.

"Would it be mean of me to say I told you so?"

Alec's voice made her jump. She turned to see him slipping his leather jacket off. Knowing what he was about to do, she held up her hand to stop him from draping it around her shoulders. "Yes, it would be, but you can make it up to me. Put that back on."

He frowned at her stubbornness. "For the love-

She poked him in the chest. "Hush, you. I have an idea."

He rolled his eyes but complied and slid his jacket back on. Rose moved to stand toe to toe with him and slipped her arms around his waist beneath his jacket. He had to admit he liked this plan as he hugged her closer to his body. However, he couldn't deny the feeling of being sent mixed signals. Especially when she nuzzled her face into his chest.

"Rose? It's been a long time since I've done anythin' like this... since I met my ex-wife if I'm honest. This right here doesna feel like just friends."

Rose pulled back to meet his questioning gaze. He was right, it didn't feel like they were just friends. There was something more between them. Just go for it!

"You're right. I think I'd like to reconsider the whole 'being friends' thing. I'd like very much if we could call this our first date."

First date. First, as in out of second, third, and so forth. She wanted more? This wasn't the first time Alec had been glad for his pacemaker since meeting Rose Tyler and he had a feeling it wouldn't be the last. Never one for public displays of affection, he decided to say to hell with it and leaned down to place a kiss on those luscious lips. Unfortunately, the pony ride ended and Fred had barreled into them.

"Wose! Can I want to ride the fake horsies now?" He turned to point at the carousel.

"Yes, just one second." Rose turned her face back to Alec, pulled him down by his jacket and pressed a kiss to his lips. She kept it chaste since they were in public and had a little kid with them. A kid who kept pulling on her dress.

She separated from Alec's lips and looked down at Fred. "Alright, little man. Let's go ride the fake horses." She turned to Alec and held out her hand. "You comin', Uncle Alec?"

With lips still tingling from their kiss, he took Rose's hand and let her drag him to the carousel, knowing he had to have had the most ridiculous smile on his face.
"I probably shouldn't've let him have the entire caramel apple," Alec said apologetically as he watched Rose's futile attempt at wiping Fred's vomit off of her dress and hands. Apparently, the carousel was too much for the toddler causing him to upchuck on Rose as she had reached to help him off his horse.

They stood next to a portable hand washing station. Alec was holding a sleeping Fred, silently cursing the fact that his first date with Rose was now over. He'd never heard of a positive dating outcome when vomit was involved.

"It's alright. Really." Rose tossed the paper towels into the rubbish bin and turned to Alec. "I teach little girls how to dance. I've been thrown up on before in the name of stage fright. I always hated to see them get so upset." She sighed. "Guess 'm gonna head home. Get cleaned up an' all."

Alec picked up on the disappointment in her voice. Maybe... "My place is closer than yours and Miller should be picking up Fred soon. You could get cleaned up there and we could order takeaway."

It seemed he didn't want their date to end either. She smiled coyly. "You got somethin' I can wear?"

"Might do."

"Lead the way, Detective Inspector."
More Than Friends

Chapter Summary

The rest of Rose and Alec's date!

TenRoseForeverandever, words cannot express how much I appreciate all that you do for me!!!

I Was Here

Chapter Four More Than Friends

Alec walked back into the living room, checking on Fred first. The wee tyke was still sleeping. He settled on cleaning up while waiting for Ellie, who had called to say she was on her way.

As he shuffled the papers from his coffee table together, his thoughts kept drifting back to Rose in his shower. He was in over his head here. What was he thinking, inviting a lass... woman (sorry) back to his place? A woman who was very much naked in his bathroom. What the hell have ye done, Hardy? Yer aff yer heid!

After putting the papers back in his office, he walked to the living room just in time to see Brian's car pull up. Alec opened the door before Ellie had a chance to knock and wake up Fred.

"Everything alright?" Ellie asked, stepping into the house.

"Yeah. Fred's asleep and I didn't want the knockin' to wake him up."

Ellie leaned over her son, taking in his slumbering form before gently picking him up. She slipped the bag Alec was holding out to her over her shoulder. "How'd it go with Rose?"

"I don't see how that's any of your business, Miller."

"The hell it isn't. Seeing you had my child with you, it makes it my business." She watched as he glanced towards the back of his house and worked to suppress a smile. "She's still here, isn't she?"

"I don't see how that's any of your business, Miller."

"The hell it isn't. Seeing you had my child with you, it makes it my business." She watched as he glanced towards the back of his house and worked to suppress a smile. "She's still here, isn't she?"

Alec sighed in frustration. He might have known Ellie would have noticed, being the brilliant detective she had become... after his tutelage, of course. "Aye, she's here. But only because she needed to take a shower since your child puked on her after the carousel." Seeing Ellie's horrified expression, he felt the need to soften his tone. Bloody women making me give a rat's arse. "But he was fine after. Just ate too much before the ride. And Rose isn't upset at all, so don't worry about it."

A car horn honked and Ellie moaned. "That'll be Tom. He's in a hurry to get home. A girl he fancies is supposed to call tonight." She made her way to the door. "Please give my number to Rose. I'd like to make it up to her."

Alec rolled his eyes. "Will do, Miller."
"And maybe I'll get the juicy details about what happens tonight." She waggled her eyebrows. "Thanks, sir!"

She left an open-mouthed Alec standing in his doorway.

ARARARARARARARARARAR

Rose couldn't believe she was here... in Alec's shower, using his shampoo and soap. She had eyed up his bathtub when he'd showed her to his en suite. All she had at her flat was a small stand up shower and, oh, how she missed baths. Knowing that taking a bath would be a bit much, she had watched Alec's instructions on how to work the shower knobs.

"I'll leave you to it then." Alec had brushed his fingers across her back as he'd exited the bathroom.

Initially, Rose hadn't planned on washing her hair but, after cleaning her body, she'd still been able to get a whiff of vomit and had decided to go all in.

She made her way into the living room, her hair combed out and still damp past her shoulders. She had dressed in the dark blue jumper and blue and white striped pajama pants Alec had left out on the bed for her. She had rolled the waist of the bottoms as much as she could and did the same with the sleeves of the jumper. She was drowning in both his clothes and his scent and she wasn't about to complain one bit.

She stopped as Alec came around the corner. "Rose, do you want- oh!"

Alec looked up, not expecting to see her standing right there, thinking she was still in his room. He knew he was far too attracted to her for his own good, but now seeing her dressed in nothing but his clothes? He was done for. He couldn't take his eyes off of her. His clothes absolutely swallowed her. She'd tried to make adjustments but, in the end, he still couldn't see her feet, and her hands just poked out from the sleeves. She was adorable and enchanting.

"Earth to Alec!" She waved her hand in front of his face and he jumped. "You were about to ask me something?"

He closed his mouth that had fallen open in his frank admiration of her. "Aye! Aye." He looked down to the menus in his hands. "Pizza or Chinese?"

She took the menus and began perusing them. Alec couldn't help but stare at her teeth biting into her plump bottom lip. He thought of the sweet kiss she had given him outside the pony ride and wondered if he'd be lucky enough to get another.

Rose held out the Chinese restaurant's menu. "Have you ever had their sesame chicken?"

"Never eaten there, to be honest. I stayed away from places like this 'til I got my pacemaker put in." Rose marveled at how casually he said the words as he looked over the menu. "Sesame chicken and lo mein sound good?"

"Uh, yeah. Sure." She followed him into the kitchen where he called to place the order.

Setting the phone down on the kitchen island, Alec met her gaze. "Should be here in about twenty minutes. Would you like some tea?"

"Tea would be lovely, ta." Rose sat on a stool at the island and watched as Alec moved around his kitchen. He didn't seem very familiar with where things were. She couldn't hold back a little
laugh. "Did you rearrange your cabinets or somethin'?"

He poked his head out from behind a cabinet door. "Huh? Oh!" He chuckled. "No, nothing like that. I just moved into this place about a month ago. Had a smaller place by the water." He pulled down two mugs and made sure the kettle was on as he walked over to sit next to her. "But since I've repaired my relationship with Daisy, I wanted to have somewhere bigger for when she visits. Which, after talkin' to her earlier, her next visit might become more permanent."

"Really?"

"Things aren't goin' well with her mother. Tess is... Tess is rather officious and-"

"She's officious? That's sayin' somethin' comin' from you."

He smirked her way, accepting the tease. "I am quite tame compared to her." His tone turned serious. "Nothin' is ever good enough for Tess. You have to be perfect in her eyes and that's not doable, especially from a fourteen-year-old girl. When Sandbrook happened, I wanted to protect Daisy's relationship with Tess. Daisy was so angry with me when she found out the truth (that her mum had the affair and not me), but now that we've been talkin', I can see how Daisy's self-esteem is suffering. I told her she could come live with me if she wanted. She's gonna talk to her mum about it. I offered to talk with Tess, but Daisy wanted to do it herself."

"She might want to have what my mum used to call a 'coming to Jesus' meetin'.'"

The kettle whistled and Alec went to make their tea. "What's tha'?"

"It's where you try to show the person how their behavior affects you or others. Basically, you're tryin' to show them the error of their ways in hopes that they'll fix 'em."

He placed a mug in front of her, contemplating what she'd just said. "Be that as it may, I expect I'll get a very angry phone call from my ex-wife very soon."

They sat in silence while they prepared their tea. As she added sugar to her drink, Rose couldn't stop thinking about all Alec had told her. He didn't seem like the type to share personal feelings, yet here he was confiding in her. Hopefully, this development would stick.

Rose watched his hands while he worked, admiring their visible strength. Oh, how she wondered what those soft and commanding hands could do in other situations. Alec reached up and scratched at the upper left side of his chest and something he'd said earlier popped into her mind.

"So, you have a pacemaker? You seem kinda young for one of those."

"Aye. It's no secret that I made myself ill workin' those particular murder cases. Developed an arrhythmia. It was either get the surgery or die. So..."

"I'm glad you got it. I'd've hated to miss the chance to meet you." They gave each other shy smiles. "And I definitely would've missed the chance to actually want to talk to you the second time we met."

He laughed, a full sound. It warmed her heart.

"Second chances, gotta love 'em. I got one with my life, one with my daughter... and...well, then there's you."

Their eyes met. Alec reached up to cup her cheek, his long fingers sliding into her hair. He watched Rose for any sense of displeasure. Finding none, he leaned in.
He sighed, pushing the air out his nose. Instead of the deep kiss he had wanted to give her, he settled for a peck on the lips. He rose to get the door, mumbling about "bloody delivery boys" and "perfect timing."

Rose giggled, which was his intent. He paid for the food and hoped his next attempt to kiss Rose Tyler would not be interrupted.

ARARARARAR

Alec and Rose made their plates and brought them out to the living room. They sat on pillows on the ground in front of the coffee table, having an impromptu picnic. She had laughed as Alec folded his long limbs awkwardly in his attempt to sit.

"Oi," he'd said, "you try being tall. 'S not easy."

They ate in silence at first but it didn't last long when Rose noticed Alec watching her with furrowed brows. "Why are you lookin' at me like that?"

He leaned back against the armchair behind him and took a sip of his water. "I've just realized that I've told you quite a bit about myself and I don't do that. So, I'm wonderin': what is it about you...?"

When his voice trailed off, Rose finished for him. "That makes you share things about yourself?"

"Aye."

She shivered at his low tone. He had been very forthcoming about himself and yet, she had been tight lipped. She should fix that.

"I've just got one of them faces, I guess. 'M glad you've told me about yourself. I know I haven't volunteered much about myself. Feel free to ask me anythin'."

It seemed that was exactly what Alec was waiting to hear. He jumped right in. "Alright. How old are you, Rose?"

Rose hesitated, sensing that her answer to this question could possibly to make or break anything that could happen between them. "Twenty-five."

He nodded and mumbled, "Thirteen years difference."

"Is that gonna be a problem? If it is, we can go back to 'just friends'." Rose asked, nibbling on her thumbnail.

Alec leaned forward and started to twirl some noodles on his fork. She followed his lead and took a bite of her chicken while she waited for his answer.

Thirteen years. He didn't want it to be a problem. It's only a problem if you make it one. Since when did his inner voice sound like Miller? "It shouldn't be."

"Well, it's not for me. You're what, thirty-eight? That's not old." She looked down at her plate, just pushing the food around. "My parents were ten years apart and they didn't let that stop them from chasin' their happiness."
Alec let her words sink in. Did she really think that she could find happiness with him? *One thing at a time, Hardy. Time to deflect.*

"Were?" He cocked his left eyebrow. "What happened to them?"

Rose put her fork down and drew her hands into the sleeves of his jumper. "Oh, uh, remember that big train collision nine years ago? Just outside of London?"

"Aye, I do. I'm so sorry. Nine years ago... you were only sixteen? What did you do?"

"Some family friends took me in an' I stayed with them until I went to uni."

"Donna?"

"Yeah, her an' her granddad, Wilf."

They went back to eating in silence. Rose watched Alec open and close his mouth several times.

"I can't imagine you bein' this reluctant when questionin' criminals. Just ask me what you want to ask."

"I'm trying not to turn this into an interrogation. It wouldn't be pleasant for you."

"You're that good?"

"Aye, damn good." He pushed back his plate and leaned forward on his arms. "I was trying to decide what question to ask but I think I have a good one."

"Alright then. Lay it on me."

"You said you came to Broadchurch after hitting a low point in your life. What happened?"

"You're right. That *is* a good one," she teased.

He bowed his head. "Why, thank you." Alec shifted his legs, laying them straight before folding his right one up.

Rose took a sip of her water and stood. She held out her hand to Alec. She smiled when he placed his hand in hers. "C'mon. Let's get you and your long legs comfortable."

Rose settled herself in one corner of the couch, her back against the armrest and her arms wrapped around her knees. He sat opposite her, resting his long arm along the back of the couch.

She debated on what all she should tell him. When it came down to it, she knew about the skeletons in his closet, so she decided on full disclosure.

"I grew up on a council estate. Mum did hair outta the flat and Dad tried to sell his crazy inventions. Didn't make much money, but they were happy." She smiled at the memory of her parents dancing in the kitchen. "Anyways, livin' where we did wasn't easy. You're looked down on. People just assumes once you're livin' on an estate, that's where you'll stay. People get comfortable and just accept what they have. I swore that wasn't gonna happen to me.

"The community center had free dance and gymnastics classes for estate kids an' my dad signed me up. Mum thought it'd be a waste of time, said I needed to find a hobby that would help me later on in life. Apparently, that's still the popular opinion."
She smirked at his look of contrition. She assumed he was remembering his blunt opinion of her career when they first met. "But Dad encouraged me. Told me to be brilliant. My teachers told me I had a natural talent and that I could make somethin' of myself. I took every type of dance an' gymnastics class I could and after my parents died, I threw myself into school an' dance. With the money I got after Mum and Dad's accident an' the scholarships I'd been awarded, I went to uni. Studied dance and business."

Rose leaned over and grabbed her water bottle and took a sip. She watched as Alec did the same. She set her bottle down while he held onto his. She marveled at the depth of his chocolate-colored eyes. He was paying attention to her, listening.

"It's always been a dream of mine to open my own studio so, when I got my first job as a teacher, I started puttin' money aside. I worked at a run-down studio near the estate. I was always told that I could work somewhere better, but I wanted to be there for the little girls that were startin' out like I did.

"For me, learning to dance gave me a confidence about myself that I don't think I'd've found on my own. It helped me see for who I really was and made me see that anythin' was possible. I want to instill that in others that are always told they won't do any better in life, that they're stuck. No one should settle or just accept what they're handed if that's not what they want. They should reach for it and realize their dreams can become real. People out there think it's a useless job, but it's so not. Watching kids transform themselves into poised dancers and own the stage..." Rose smiled at Alec, knowing that her eyes were bright with wonder. She loved talking about her students. "There's nothin' else like it in the world. And that self-assuredness carries over into everyday life. I want to make a difference, to stand up and let people see that I was here doin' everythin' I could to help."

"I've never thought of it that way. Daisy took ballet when she was younger and loved it, but it got pushed to the side once school started picking up."

"She should get back into it." Rose scratched at a spot on her knee. "It would help with her self-esteem issues she's havin' right now."

Alec nodded. "I'll be sure to mention it to her." He folded his arms. "But, you, Miss Tyler, have yet to answer my question."

"'M gettin' there! Hold your horses." She laughed and noticed Alec's smile grow when she did. "The studio I worked at was next door to a music shop and that's where I met my ex, Jimmy. He was movie star-handsome and quite the charmer. Donna and Wilf hated him, said there was somethin' about him that didn't sit right with them. I didn't listen." She looked up at the ceiling, then closed her eyes. "God, I was such a cow to them."

Opening her eyes, she was met with Alec's compassionate gaze and she fell a tiny bit farther for him when she saw the little crinkles at the corner of his eyes. She wanted to kiss them. "Before I knew it, we were in a relationship and he was movin' in with me. Jimmy never supported me teachin' dance. Always told me I'd make more money as a stripper even if my body wasn't nice enough."

"He said that?" She nodded. He sighed. "And here I belittled your career the first time I met you. I am so sorry, Rose. Really."

She reached out for his hand, squeezing it once the warmth of his hand was in hers. "You apologized. Besides, you did better with your second chance."

"Thank God for that."
"I'll say." Their hands stayed linked. "As you can imagine, that's not all he would say. It took me a long time to understand that I was in an abusive relationship. I always thought there had to be physical violence for it to be considered that. I was sinking farther and farther down the hole. At the time, I didn't see it for the miracle that it was but Jimmy left me for someone else and took all the money I had saved for my dream. I had nothing, not a penny to my name."

Alec's eyes blazed with anger. She could almost hear the gears turning in his head, but she didn't ask him about it. She needed to finish her tale. "I had to leave my flat 'cuz I couldn't pay. I sold everything I could, except for this." She showed him her silver locket, opening it to show him the pictures of her parents. "My parents saved up to give me this for my thirteenth birthday."

"It's beautiful. You look like your mother." His voice was soft, gentle.

"Thank you." She closed the locket and looked down at their still joined hands. "I went to stay at a women's shelter. I was too ashamed to call Donna or Granddad. They'd been right about Jimmy. I needed a new start. But, I couldn't stay at the shelter forever. I'd heard about Amy setting up her studio here, and she and I were thick as thieves in uni and I always hated how I lost touch with her. I called her one day and my luck changed. So here I am! She lets me live at the flat above the studio rent-free. All I have to do is keep the building and dance classes clean and ready for students." She gave Alec her cheekiest smile. "Does that answer your question, Detective Inspector?"

"Aye. It-" Alec was cut off by his mobile ringing. "Bloody hell. Excuse me." He pressed the green icon. "Hardy... Are you serious? Where?... Aye, I'll be there shortly."

She watched as he ended the call and closed his eyes. "Everythin' okay?"

"No." He opened his eyes. "Another buildin's burnin'."
I Was Here

Chapter Five Making Time

Rose hadn't heard from Alec since he had dropped her off at her flat the night of their date. It had been five and a half days. Five and a half days since the butcher's shop went up in flames. On the plus side of the horrible situation, the entire town smelled like cooked meat. The aroma made Rose yearn for Granddad's Sunday roast.

She'd been scared to call Alec, not wanting to bother him when he was obviously busy. But surely sending a text would be okay. Right? At any rate, she just wanted him to know she was thinking about him.

[RT]: Miss you. Hope you're doing ok.

There. That was good. She really did worry about him. He'd made himself ill during the last major cases he had worked. Arson wasn't as bad as murder but, from what she saw of Alec, he could be a right stubborn arse. She wouldn't put it past him to run himself ragged again in his pursuit of justice.

She hit send, silencing her mobile after. It was time to teach darling five-year-old kiddies the various ballet positions.

ARARARARARARARARARARARARARARAR

Miss you. Hope you're doing ok.

Alec reread the text he had received hours ago. Rose missed him. Him, the ornery DI who had been nicknamed 'Shitface' by his coworkers.

He missed her, too. She was such a breath of fresh air and he wanted more, and this arsonist was keeping him from her. This whole cock-up of an investigation. Alec was incredibly frustrated. Both buildings, the first an older building that had housed an insurance firm and the second a butcher's shop, had no connection. The only similarities had been forced entry and no trace of an accelerant. The structures had burned too fast and too hot for nothing to have been used, so that indicated the criminal was using isopropyl alcohol, most commonly known as rubbing alcohol. The fire marshal had concurred with the DI's suspicions. But that was where the investigation had stalled, just like the first one.
Instead of wallowing alone in his office, Alec decided to do what he'd wanted to do since Saturday: he was going to see Rose. He put on his jacket, grabbed his keys and walked through the empty bullpen of desks. While he usually walked to work for the exercise, today he had driven due to the rain. He started the engine, making a quick glance of the clock. Eleven-thirty. He made his way over to the dance studio, hoping Rose would still be up at this late hour.

He had made the mistake of not spending enough time with Tess and that was one of the issues that led to the downfall of their marriage. He did not want that to happen with Rose. He already felt badly that she even had to send him a text. He hoped this was not history trying to repeat itself. Having a relationship with Rose all boiled down to one thing: he had to make time for her, for them.

The lights were still on at the studio. Sending his thanks to anyone who might be listening, Alec went to check his reflection in the rearview mirror but quickly squashed the notion. He knew he looked like shite, an embodiment of all his frustration and disappointment over the lack of progress in the arson cases. Nothing he could do to change that, at this point. He just wanted to see Rose.

Having given up on any pretense of grooming, he stepped out of his car and was surprised to hear music. *There shouldn't be a class this late. They close at nine.* Opening the front door, he stepped in and saw the reason for the pop ballad playing at full blast. Rose.

Alone in her studio, Rose was lost to the rhythm of the song. Alec watched in awe as she leapt, spun, flipped, and swayed, performing her dance with precision. She looked gorgeous in her painted-on black dance shorts and lavender camisole. The song reached its climax and, as Rose was beginning to start her next steps, she noticed Alec standing in the doorway. Startled, she yelped and stumbled, twisting and landing on her bum.

Alec lunged into action, stopping the music before making his way over to her. He knelt down next to where she sat, massaging her left lower back.

"I'm so sorry, Rose. I didn't mean to startle you."

"That why you stood there without makin' your presence known?" She giggled at his bewildered expression. "It's alright, Alec. I had the music too loud anyways."

He noticed she winced when she touched a certain spot on her back. "Here." He sat down on the floor and pulled her to sit between his legs. "Let me." He took over massaging the tender muscles.

She moaned at the contact. Her own feeble attempt hadn't been cutting it and his was just perfect. *I bet his hand would be better than mine in other places, too!* She smiled to herself and leaned her head back against his shoulder. Catching their reflection in the wall of mirrors, her smile widened. She was cradled in her DI's frame as he helped heal her body. When she looked at his mirror image, she was surprised to see him watching her with a shy smile of his own.

"Thank you, Alec." Rose whispered her words, not wanting to break the spell of the moment. She sucked in a breath when he placed a kiss to the side of her neck. "What, uh, what are you doin' here?"

He ran his hands down her arms to lace his fingers with hers. "I missed you, too."

Blood rushed to her cheeks in a blush and she ducked her chin down against her shoulder. "Yeah?"

"Yeah," he whispered, lips pressed against the shell of her ear. His beard tickled where it touched
her skin and, instead of laughing and squirming away, Rose shivered, wanting to feel the sensation all over her body.

"Wanna come up? Have some tea with me?"

"Aye."

In a fluid motion, Rose stood, turning to offer Alec her hand. He didn't need her help but he accepted it just to hold her hand. He didn't let go as she turned out lights and locked the front door.

"You really should lock the door if you're here by yourself."

Rose turned to walk backwards as she led him to the door to her flat. "Then how would you have gotten in?"

Alec stood, hands on hips at the base of the stairs, trying his damnedest to glower at her. "Ye cheeky wee besom!" Any amusement he felt vanished. "I'm serious, Rose. You didn't know I was coming. I want you safe."

She stopped halfway up the stairs. "Hey, I was kiddin', okay? I'll be more careful. I promise."

He nodded and the pair continued their climb. He chose to let Rose lead the way, not because he didn't know where to go, but he couldn't get enough of her bum in those shorts. I might pop off in my pants just lookin' at her glorious arse! It's been way too long. His eyes snapped up when she spoke.

"Make yourself at home. I'll start the kettle."

Thankfully, she didn't notice where his focus had been. He removed his suit jacket and tie as he looked around the tiny flat, throwing the clothing over the arm of the hideously ugly loveseat.

"This looks like something my great-gran would've had in her house."

"I have a feelin' that's not a compliment. How do you want your tea?"

Alec headed up the stairs to check out the loft. "One sugar."

She wasn't surprised how the DI walked around, checking everything out. Apparently, he couldn't turn off the detecting instinct. She made the cups and turned to watch him in his exploration.

He had removed his jacket and tie and Rose licked her lips in appreciation. He rolled up the sleeves of his light blue oxford as he descended the loft steps.

"Te-.

"Tea's ready."

She tilted her head towards the loveseat and he met her there. Alec sat first, slouching against the back of the furniture. He carefully cradled the mug in his hands, resting it on his stomach. Rose sat sideways, worming her toes under his thigh.

"How've you been?" Rose asked quietly.

He blew out a breath. "Fine. Frustrated, but fine."

"Work?" Rose sipped her tea.

"Aye." He drank from his mug, staring off into the distance. He blinked and, keeping his head
against the back of the loveseat, turned his head to face her. "What about you? How has Rose Tyler been?" He gave her a grin. "Besides missin' me, of course."

She poked him in the side with her toe. "Piss off, Hardy." He caught her foot and, after placing his mug on the coffee table, began to massage it. She moaned. "How are you so good at this? You know what? I don't care, just keep doin' it."

"Yes, ma'am. Tell me about your week."

Setting her mug down, she reached for the blanket next to the couch. The flat was drafty and she only had her skimpy dance clothes on. She wrapped the fleece material around her shoulders. "I've been alright. Spent this week trying to get established here. You know, like changing my address on my license, setting myself up with an OBGYN and a pharmacy." She blushed knowing with his always-working mind he could guess the meaning behind her words. "Other than that, Amy, Clara, and I have been working on songs and costumes for the recital."

He switched to the other foot and she gave a hum of appreciation. He wanted to be the only one who could make her sound like that. She was so beautiful. *Speakin' of beautiful...* "Your dancin', Rose, was incredible. I've never seen anythin' like it. The way you moved... Why aren't you on some stage somewhere?"

Heat rose to her cheeks. "Thank you, Alec. I used to think that's what I wanted, but I really do love teachin'. Seein' those kids filled with pride is all I'll ever need."

This girl, no, woman, had such a beautiful soul. She could make him better. *Maybe I wouldn't be such a cantankerous bastard with her by my side.*

He studied her and found her blush had spread down to cover her chest. He couldn't wait anymore. He *had* to kiss her. Letting go of her foot, he reached for her hands and pulled her over to him. He swallowed hard when Rose took it upon herself to sit astride his lap. He felt himself begin to harden when she started running her fingers through his hair. Running his hands up her sides, he pulled her closer and brought her mouth to his.

Their lips met and parted with a wet smack. Alec quickly overcame his nerves from not having kissed a woman in some time and dove in for more. He was finally kissing Rose like he had been wanting to.

She tugged on his hair and that broke the damn. Growling, he sat up and pulled her further into his lap and against his erection. She keened into his mouth and he took that as permission. His hands slid down to her perfect arse and squeezed, holding her tight against him. He broke the kiss when she began rocking her hips, giving his cock the friction it had been missing.

"Fuck, Rose!" He tilted her head and kissed his way down her throat and fastened onto her pulse point. He gave a sharp suck and she cried out. He was afraid he'd gone too far when she pulled back but instead, she met his eyes and held them as she pulled her camisole up and over her head, tossing it behind her.

He stared at her bared breasts with lust heavy eyes. As much as his hands loved their current position on her bum, they had new territory to explore. He cupped her breasts and brushed his thumbs over her nipples, causing Rose to gasp and give a sharp rock of her hips.

She started unbuttoning his shirt as he continued to knead her soft flesh. She tugged it open and gently traced a finger over his light pink surgical scar before moving to rake her nails down his chest. Alec gasped at the sensation. Not being able to hold himself back, he grabbed her under her arms and pushed her back. He sensed her confusion at the position change, but knew she'd caught
on as he leaned down to capture a nipple between his lips, giving the bud a long, hard pull. Her fingers laced into his hair to hold him in place and he pressed his hips up to grind against her heat. The sounds Rose was making were sinful and his ego and his cock swelled with pride at being the cause of those moans and groans.

She undulated her pelvis faster as he switched breasts. "God, Alec. Please!"

He spoke around her nipple, unwilling to separate from her body. "Protection?"

"Shit! No and my pills aren't effective yet."

He released her nipple with a wet pop and kissed up her neck to her jaw. "Then we'll have to save that treat for another time. But for now..."

As his voice trailed off, the hand not on her breast ran up her inner thigh. Her tiny shorts made for easy access and he slipped two fingers into her soaked folds. "Christ, Rose. You're so wet. All for me, eh?"

"Yes. You, Alec," she panted.

"Good." Shifting his wrist, he slid two fingers inside her velvet heat.

"Yes! Fuck!"

Alec set up a punishing rhythm, his control long gone. He leaned back and watched as Rose met the thrusts of his fingers. She balanced herself with her hands squeezing his shoulders in a death grip. He'd probably have bruises and he wouldn't mind one bit. Her arousal coated his fingers and slid down onto his palm. She was fucking gorgeous with her head thrown back, eyes closed and mouth open in ecstasy.

He thought of slowing his pace to draw out her pleasure, but one look at Rose and he decided against it. He wasn't going to stop until Rose cried out, hopefully his name. She was whimpering now. "That's it, my Rose. Come for me."

Four more thrusts of his fingers, Rose ground down hard on his hand and screamed, "Fuck, Alec!"

He slowed now, drawing out her orgasm. His other arm wrapped around her waist so he could hold her through her tremors. He placed kisses along her collarbone as she calmed.

"Alec?" Rose whispered. When he met her eyes, she gave him the most exquisite smile he'd ever seen. He smiled back, causing their teeth to clash when she leaned in for a kiss.

The smile was wiped from his face when he felt her tiny hand cup him through his trousers. Now, he began to devour her, thrusting his tongue into her mouth just like he had done to her with his fingers. When she pulled away panting, he whined. He should be bloody mortified, greetin' like a wee bairn, but before he could think on it further, Rose's lips had left his mouth to trail kisses down his throat and chest.

Slowly, she made her way lower along his body, kissing and caressing his skin. Alec sucked in a breath when she slipped off the sofa onto her knees and began unbuckling his belt. She made quick work of his button and zip. He was panting by the time she had his cock in her hand, stroking him slowly.

She met his eyes as she licked him from base to tip, sucking the leaking fluid into her mouth. He fought the urge to thrust up into her mouth. "Rose..."
She started stroking faster. "I want you to come in my mouth." She positioned her mouth over his cock but stopped to look up at him. "And, Alec? Don't hold back."

He was concentrating on not popping off, so all he could manage was a nod. If she didn't want him to hold back, who was he to argue?

He laced both sets of fingers in her hair as she engulfed his length. The heat and moisture of her mouth made him cry out. His fingers tightened when she took him all the way to the back of her throat. Bloody hell, she was impressive! He didn't want to brag, but being well endowed was one thing he had always had working in his favor, and his Rose met the challenge with ease.

Rose began bobbing her head, running her tongue along his cock, and he knew he'd forever remember that sight. When she started to add heavy suction, Alec used his hands to set the fast pace he wanted, even knowing the pleasure she was giving him would be over more quickly, but he was beyond ready to release himself inside of her. He felt the pressure building in his balls and when he passed the breaking point, he thrust his hips up and held her head down, forcing his cock deeper into her throat. He felt her muscles working as she swallowed his seed. He shook as the aftershocks worked their way through his body. Rose continued with light suction until the stimulation became too much. He gently tugged her hair to get her to rise up.

She licked her lips as she took her place back on his lap. Once his breathing had calmed, he pulled her to his chest and placed kisses on her lips, cheeks, and eyelids.

"I didn't hurt ya? Wasna too rough?"

She wound her arms around his neck and rested her forehead against his. "God, no. I said I didn't want you to hold back. I suspected you'd be a bit rough. Gotta be the Scottish blood."

He gave a low chuckle. "Nah, I think it's the bonnie lass in my lap." He ran his fingers through her hair and pressed a gentle kiss to her full lips, getting a taste of himself. "You're amazin', Rose Tyler."

"You're not so bad yourself, DI Hardy." She shivered, the chilly air making its presence known. "Can you stay?"

"Not tonight. I'm expectin' a phone call from Daisy in the morning. Can I take you out on Saturday night? A proper date without a three-year-old chaperone?"

Rose giggled as she stood, wrapping the discarded blanket around her. "Can you be trusted if you're not in Fred's sight?"

"I guess we'll find out. What say you?"

"I say it's a date."

Alec buttoned his shirt, threw on his jacket, but held his tie in his hand. Rose walked him to the side door and he wrapped an arm around her waist to pull her to him for a good night snog. A breathless minute later, Rose bid Alec sweet dreams. Alec wasn't sure how he got home that night because his mind, heart, and cock could only focus on one glorious thing: Rose Tyler.
Rose couldn't get Alec off her mind. Last night had been amazing. His beard was as scratchy on her skin as she'd hoped it would be, leaving her body tingling long after he had left.

Having had only two sexual partners in her young life, she didn't have much experience, but she knew what she liked and Alec hadn't been scared to give it to her. He had kissed her like a man starved and played her body with his large hands as if he could read her mind. And when she took his cock into her mouth, his Scottish blood had ignited, giving them both what they'd wanted. She had wanted him to lose control but to also take it. He had used her to find his pleasure.

Rose had never been more disappointed to not have condoms. It was a damn shame.

He had ruined any other men for her and she hadn't even slept with him. She'd only seen male anatomy that big in the cheesy pornos Shareen would steal from her brother when they had sleepovers. If his fingers could make her scream, she couldn't wait to see what he could do to her buried between her thighs. It was thoughts like this that had fueled her fantasy as she had touched herself last night after he'd gone.

Alec had been aggressive with her, but he had also been incredibly sweet and tender. Rose had felt treasured in a way no one had ever made her feel. They had a date tomorrow night, but she needed to see him now.

She had cleaned the studio that morning. She had developed a routine, so tidying up didn't take her long. After changing into some jeans and her uni sweatshirt, she made her way over to the deli a few blocks from the police station to pick up lunch for her and Alec.

She tried not to fidget as she entered the station. The constable at the front desk smiled. "Can I help you?"

"Um, yeah. 'M here to see DI Hardy." It was a statement that sounded like a question when Rose's tone turned uncertain.

"Yes, ma'am. Do you have an appointment?"

"Oh. No, I didn't know I needed one. I was just bringin' him some lunch." Rose chewed on her thumbnail, waiting for his answer.

"DI Hardy? You are bringing Detective Inspector Alec Hardy lunch?"
Rose heard the humor in his voice and couldn't fathom where it could be coming from. "That's what I said. Can I bring it to him or not?"

The cop actually giggled and stood. "Yes, ma'am. In fact, I'll escort you myself."

Puzzled, she nodded. "Alright. Lead the way."

It was a short ride in the lift. The doors opened to a large room with several clusters of desks spread throughout. To the right of the room, Rose noticed the entrance to the break room. On the left was a wall made up of glass. The blinds were drawn but the door situated in the middle of the wall stood open. Near the back window of the far wall was a dry erase board with pictures taped up. That's where she saw Alec standing, Ellie by his side.

The young man who had brought Rose to the bullpen cleared his throat. "DI Hardy? Someone's here to see you."

Alec whirled around, irritation clear on his face. The second he saw Rose, the scowl dropped and astonishment shone through. "Rose!"

By now, everyone's eyes were on her as she made her way over to him. She smiled with a tiny hint of tongue.

"Hello. Sorry to interrupt. I just wanted to bring you some lunch." She held out the bag that also contained her lunch and pointed over her shoulder with her free hand, nerves taking over all rational thought. "I'll just go."

At the mention of her leaving, he snapped out of his stupor and stepped closer to her. "Don't go. Stay and eat with me?"

She giggled like a schoolgirl. "Okay."

He placed a gentle, but firm, hand on the small of her back and steered her towards his office. Though he smiled at Rose, he glowered at his subordinates, noticing their wide-eyed stares. He turned his body slightly to shield Rose from their prying eyes "Oi! You lot, get back to work!"

Smiling to herself at Alec's gruffness, she entered his office, taking in the bland decor. The only bright spot of color was a picture of a young, blonde girl. *This must be Daisy.* Stepping over to his desk, she picked up the frame and studied the photo. "This your daughter?"

"Aye."

She jumped, not realizing he had shut the door and now stood right behind her. She turned and smiled. "She's beautiful, Alec. She has your eyes."

He leaned over to set the food on his desk. "That she does."

Placing the frame back where it belonged, Rose turned to face him. "How did your call go this morning? Is Daisy alright?"

Alec had been watching her with a soft expression. Her breath caught when he reached over and tucked her hair behind her ear. Neither one spoke, reveling in the pleasant tension in the air. She found herself being pulled into his center of gravity, floating into his waiting arms.

"You wanted to see me." It wasn't a question. It was a statement made in awe.
Rose held on to the lapels of his jacket. "Yeah, I..." she trailed off, feeling her cheeks getting warm. After last night, she didn't know why she was feeling shy. Maybe it was the tender way he gazed at her.

"You...?" he prompted.

She melted at the sight of his hopeful eyes and blurted out the truth. "I couldn't stop thinkin' 'bout you an' I wanted to see you."

Alec had to really concentrate on where they were. Being in his office at his place of employment was the only thing stopping him from taking her right there on his desk. She brought him lunch because she had been thinking about him and wanted to spend time with him. No one had ever done something so kind and romantic for him before. *My wife never even did that, for fuck's sake!*

"Is that alright?"

He focused on Rose. She had her bottom lip trapped between her teeth and was running her locket along the chain. When had she stepped out of his arms? Needing to rectify that situation immediately, he wrapped his arms back around her waist. "Rose Tyler, that is most definitely alright."

A knock on the door made the pair jump back from each other. Alec barked, "What?"

Ellie peeked her head around the door. "Just me. No need to shout." She smiled at Rose. "Hello, Rose. We still on for lunch next week?"

"Of course!"

"Miller," he growled in warning.

"Alright, don't get your knickers in a twist. 'M off to take Tom for his physical. I'll be back in a bit. You two keep your hands where we can see 'em."

Alec pointed his long finger towards Ellie. "Out!"

The DS wrinkled her nose in his direction, sent a wave to Rose, and closed the door. Alec shook his head with fond exasperation as he walked to sit at his desk. He gestured to the chair across from him. "Please, have a seat. What'd you get us?"

Instead of sitting, Rose stood and opened the bag of food. "Well, I wasn't sure what you'd want so, I got a club sandwich with some crisps and a chicken Caesar salad. There's some water in there, too. Take your pick."

"I'll take the sarnie. Had plenty enough of salads while I waited for my pacemaker."

They prepared their meals and tucked in, eating in companionable silence. Rose's gaze fell back on the picture of Daisy, reminding her that Alec had never answered her question.

"Did you talk to Daisy this morning?"

"Aye. She's decided she wants to come live with me. She wanted to talk to Tess, give her another chance to see if she'd change and it didn't work out. She's gonna tell Tess tonight when she gets home from work and wanted to give me a heads up."

Rose swallowed her bite of salad. "Tess is gonna call an' raise hell, isn't she?"
"Oh, aye. But I can handle Tess. Once I gave up hope of us bein' a family again, I stopped holdin' back."

Keeping her eyes on her food, Rose quietly asked, "Is that somethin' you'd want if she offered? To be a family again?"

She was glad the opportunity came up to ask the question. If there was a possibility of him getting back with his ex-wife, Rose wanted to know now so she could walk away and protect her heart.

"Look at me, Rose." When she met his eyes, he spoke. "Right after I moved out, I was lost. Tess and I hadn't been happy in a long time, but I was willin' to work to fix our marriage. I wanted us to be the happy family we were when Daisy was a bairn. But Tess knew it was over. It just took me a wee bit longer to realize it. Now? I know I could never be happy with her."

Rose could see the honesty radiating from his chocolate eyes. She gave him a shy smile. "'Kay."

Alec took a bite of his sandwich, debating on telling Rose what he'd told Daisy. He'd heard the uncertainty in her voice when she had asked about getting back with Tess. With that in mind, he forged on. "I told Daisy about you."

Her head popped up. "You did? What'd you tell her?"

He dropped the rubbish from his lunch in the bin and wiped the crumbs off his tie. He went over and sat in the chair next to her. "I told her that I was seeing a woman named Rose and that I was dead chuffed for the two of you to meet."

"You are?"

"Isn't the detective supposed to be the one asking questions?"

Rose huffed out a tiny laugh. "Fair point. 'M just surprised you said anythin'. I mean, we've not been together long or said we're exclusive."

Alec furrowed his brows. "Do you want to be?"

"Exclusive?" He nodded and she smiled at his seriousness. "Yeah. I'd like to see where this is goin'. S'just scary, you know? If Daisy doesn't like me, I know that'll be a deal breaker for you."

He knew she was right. He couldn't continue to date a woman who his daughter couldn't stand, could he? Daisy hated the man Tess left him for. That was actually one of the reasons she wanted to come live with him. But looking at Rose, Alec didn't want to give her up on a chance. She made him happy just from knowing her the past several weeks and he didn't want that feeling to end. It came to his attention that he'd neglected to mention his daughter's response.

Leaning forward, Alec brushed Rose's fringe from her eyes. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. After all, Daisy said anyone who'd turn my eye was worth gettin' to know." He smiled wryly. "Apparently, I'm a tough nut to crack."

"I can agree with that." Rose worked to keep her smile out of her words, but lost it when Alec gave an exaggerated scowl. "Oh, stop. You know you can be difficult."

He stood, pulling her up with him. "I admit nothing. Come on. I'll walk you out."

As soon as the door opened, silence reigned over the bullpen. Rose leaned over to Alec. "You must not get many visitors."
"Too right."

"You're gonna need a bigger board."

"Wha'?" Alec looked down at her non sequitur to find her pointing at the board full of photos from the arson case. "Nah. Miller can make it work."

He surprised himself, probably Rose, and definitely everyone in the office when he took her hand to lead her out. He couldn't help but do what felt natural to him.

"You know, I knew this bloke growin' up on the estate. Liked to set fires an' watch 'em burn. Watchin' was actually how he got caught. Coppers noticed he was in all the photos taken at the scenes and pulled him in for questionin'."

By now, they were stepping into the lift and Alec froze. How could he have been such a glaikit? Arsonists *thrive* on watching their work. The lift doors closed as he tangled his fingers in Rose's hair and pulled her to him for a snog, thrusting his tongue deep into her mouth. He was pleased with how fast she overcame her shock and started kissing him back. It was messy and frantic. Alec pulled back as the lift dinged its arrival, both of them trying to control their breathing.

"Rose Tyler," he panted. "You are *brilliant*! I'll call you later?"

She nodded, wide eyed over what just happened. "Please do. If I don't answer, leave me a message. 'M teachin' some private lessons this evenin'."

He pressed a quick kiss to her lips before sprinting to the stairwell.

ARARARARARARARARARARARARARARARARARAR

By the time Miller had returned from Tom's appointment, Alec had gone through every single photo that had been taken at both scenes. Between the two of them, they were able to identify most of the people in the pictures. If anyone appeared in the photos for both scenes, their name was written on a notepad resting on Alec's desk. Ellie continued to go over the photos as a second set of eyes as Alec began to start his search on the few people of interest.

Ellie gazed up at her boss, smirking at his grumpy mumbling about technology. "That was sweet of Rose to bring you lunch." Alec gave a noncommittal grunt. "She must *really* like you if she came to see you here at work. You're not exactly Mr. Sunshine when you're here."

He sighed and turned his head towards her. "Is there a point to your drivel?"

She leaned back in her chair, folding her arms across her chest. "You know, I'm this close," she held her fingers less than an inch apart, "to giving up on you."

"Don't get my hopes up, Miller."

"Hopefully, you're a *completely* different person with Rose or maybe you're hung like a horse."

"Millah!" Hardy turned his reddening face back to the computer screen, trying to ignore Ellie and her snickering. He was saved from any further awkward conversation with his DS by his mobile ringing. He looked to see who was calling, praying it was Rose.

"Bollocks. Tess would have to call now. Miller, step out a minute." He waited until Ellie shut the door before he accepted the call. "Hello, Tess."
"Don't 'hello, Tess' me. Did you tell Daisy she could come live with you?"

Alec leaned back in his chair. "Of course I did. She's my daughter, too."

"Well, she's not coming. I won't allow it."

"I hate to bring you back down to reality but the universe does not revolve around you. Daisy is unhappy, Tess. She's miserable and I know she tried to talk to you about it."

"How dare-"

"Shut up, Tess. Daisy talks to me, tells me how you put her down, and push her to be who you think she should be! And I believe her. I've seen how you are with her. She's her own person and you're not givin' her the chance to be that person. She may hate livin' with me and want to move back, but she should have the choice. Don't try to stop her, Tess, because I will fight you on this."

"I don't think you will. You-"

"When were you goin' to tell me that the bastard you broke our family for moved in with you and our teenage daughter? Hmm?" Alec was standing, pacing his office, and working to reign in his temper. "My fourteen-year-old little girl is livin' in a house with a man who she doesn't like when our divorce papers specifically state that any cohabitation has to be discussed and approved with the other parent?"

"I-I have no idea what you're talking about."

He could hear the quiver in her voice and knew he had her right where he wanted her. His voice was quiet and dangerous. "Oh, yes you do. I told you, Daisy talks to me. Give me a week to get her enrolled in school here. Take care of everything you need to on your end and get her packed up. I'll be there to get her next Saturday."

"Fine." The line went dead.

Alec plopped down in his chair and puffed out a deep breath. Tess had always been able to drain every last bit of strength he had. He couldn't wait to get Daisy away from her abrasive personality. Alec swore right then and there that he would do right by Daisy, be the father he'd never been able to be. He honestly felt he could do it. He'd seen a change in himself since meeting Rose. Where Tess zapped his strength, Rose built it back up. The change wasn't going to be easy: it was going to take some adjustment on everyone's part, but he felt that his life here with Rose and Daisy would work out. In time, everything would be just fine.
I Was Here

Chapter 7 Hidden Romantic

Rose had sent Alec a text early that morning asking if there was a particular dress code for their date.

[AH]: It's a surprise. Dress warm.

*Men!* That did help her at all. In a panic, Rose had called for reinforcements. Amy and Clara had come to her rescue. Both women were aware that their friend's wardrobe wasn't what it used to be and had come more than prepared with bags full of clothes and shoes.

Due to height and shape, Rose had to stick with Clara's clothes. Amy was too tall and willowy and her wardrobe reflected that, however, she had killer tastes in shoes. Rose squealed in delight when she remembered she and Amy wore the same size.

After a mini fashion show, the trio had decided on gray fleece-lined leggings and a pink fitted sweater dress with a cowl neck. Black knee-length boots completed the ensemble.

Rose was putting her locket in her mini safe (something she'd bought with her first paycheck) when Amy said, "I don't know about that dress."

"What? Why? You just said you liked it." Rose accepted the silver hoop earrings Clara was holding out to her.

"You're lookin' to get lucky, right?"

Fastening the back of the earring, Rose turned to Amy. "Well, yeah, but I don't wanna look like a slag."

"I can understand that, but you just look so pink and princess-y."

"Hey! Those are my clothes you're talkin' about!" Clara laughed and threw a pillow in Amy's direction.

"Alright, children," Rose chuckled. "I may look like a little girl to you, *Amelia*, but I can assure you I don't look like that underneath the dress."

After she had eaten lunch with Alec the previous day, she'd stopped at a small women's boutique and picked up a matching pair of undergarments. The black bra's cups were translucent, leaving
nothing to the imagination. The thong was made the same. Alec would have no trouble seeing how bare she was. She'd always be grateful to Shareen for preaching the clean-shaven look.

With an hour left to go until Alec was due to pick her up, Amy and Clara left, leaving Rose alone to do her hair and make-up. Smokey eyes and tousled waves took a bit of time, so she got to work, hoping she'd be finished before Alec arrived. Rose was fluffing her hair when her mobile vibrated with an incoming text.

[AH]: On my way.

Rose took a deep breath. She was going to enjoy tonight, whether or not she slept with Alec. She truly loved being in his company.

Rose did a final mirror check then grabbed her denim jacket and headed out the door. She took her time locking up first her door, then the door that lead to the side of the building. She came around the corner in time to see Alec pulling up. She smiled as she put her keys in her small handbag; her excitement was making her giddy.

Alec parked but left the engine running. When he stepped out of the car, Rose flashed back to their first date. His attractiveness had floored her then and the effect had only intensified as they'd gotten to know each other. He wore denims, a black oxford with a cream jumper over it, and black...

"You have Chucks!" Rose laughed. "That is brilliant."

Alec's cheeks turned an adorable shade of pink. "Is it still brilliant if they are from when I was in uni?"

"Of course." She walked up to him and grabbed his hand. "Where we goin'?"

"It's a surprise, woman! Be patient." He silenced the start of her cheeky retort with his lips. She melted into his arms and his smile broke their kiss. "You look stunning, Rose."

She gave him her tongue-touched grin. "And, I'm quite stunned by you, Detective Inspector."

He smiled down at his shoes, overwhelmed by the surge of affection for this tiny woman. He couldn't resist the urge to touch her, so he caressed her cheek. "Let's get goin'."

He handed her into the car and drove off. Alec hoped she liked where he was taking her. He hadn't dated in a long time and didn't feel comfortable asking Ellie for help, so he had turned to the dreaded Internet. For once, bloody Google came through and he had found something that he was pretty sure Rose would enjoy and had begun to make plans.

"It's about a thirty minute drive to where we're goin'. Feel free to play with the radio." Alec was concentrating on merging into traffic and didn't notice Rose's silence. Once on the motorway, he realized there was no music playing. He chanced a look over at her and saw she looked worried.

"What is it? What's wrong?"

She opened her mouth to speak but closed it. She felt silly all of a sudden, but her past experience left her wary. 'Nothin'. It's nothin'. 'M just... do you not want to be seen with me?"

"What? No! I'm just tryin' to do somethin' nice. Why would you think that?"

He looked extremely upset at her question. Shit! She needed to fix this, to explain what was going on in her mind. 'I'm so sorry, Alec. I'm very excited 'bout our night out. It's just... ugh!" Rose closed her eyes, mentally kicking herself for messing things up.
The car slowed and Rose looked up in confusion. Alec was bringing the car to a stop on the side of the motorway. Why was he stopping? Was he kicking her out? *No, Alec wouldn't do that!* Watching his every movement with trepidation, she waited.

"Rose." Voice soft, he reached over for her hand. "Tell me."

She squeezed his hand and took a deep breath. "I told you my ex cheated on me, yeah?" He nodded. "What I didn't tell you was we used to always go a pub on the outskirts of London for our dates, said he found the distance romantic, like we were on holiday. Turned out I was one of his pieces on the side. He'd been seein' some woman in North London where a lot of his supposed gigs were. It finally made sense why he always played the weekends I taught. What's worse is she wasn't even the one he left me for." She shook her head, thinking of how much of a blind idiot she had been. "I thought he loved me, but all he ever needed me for was an address to have his post sent to. He proved everyone right: I was just a dumb chav from the estate."

Threading their fingers together, Alec brought her hand to his mouth and pressed a kiss to the back. "Please don't refer to yourself like that ever again. You are so much more than that, lass. I hate that the bastard treated ya that way. Why did you no' tell me this before?"

Rose shrugged and chewed on her thumb that wasn't in Alec's hand. "It's just so... *embarrassin'*. I let some bloke take over my life and make a fool o'me. I didn't want you to think less of me."

"Lass, it's no' possible for me to think badly of you. I would be, no... *I am* proud to have you next to me. If anythin', you shouldn't want to be seen with me, a hairy, old curmudgeon."

"You shouldn't talk about yourself like that." She laughed. "Listen to us! We don't think very highly of ourselves, do we? But I have an idea."

"What's tha'?"

"Whenever we're together, let's not focus on the past. Let's focus on the fact that we are two people who like each other very much and not listen to a damn thing anyone has to say. Even if we have to tell our own minds to shut it. We'll just enjoy us."

"Aye. I think it'll be harder to do than you think, but we'll do it. You make me want to be better."

It was her turn to kiss his hand and, instead of saying something to negate his statement, Rose accepted the compliment. "Thank you for sayin' that."

His beaming smile melted her heart. He got them back out on the road and Rose turned on the radio, heart lighter than it had been in a long time.

**********

Alec turned down a long, tree-lined gravel road and Rose noticed a sign for Wilson Park. Farther along the road, a banner was strung up announcing an event called "Symphonies and Stars". Each weekend hosted a different symphony for an outdoor concert.

"Is this where we're goin'?"

"Aye. You like it?"

"Aye." She smiled when he laughed at her poor imitation of his brogue. "This is wonderful! Dance is my first love, music is my second."

Eventually, he entered into a roped off area designated as the car park. Once parked, Alec held
Rose's door for her and took her hand. He smiled when she threaded her fingers through his. "We're goin' across the street, but I need to get somethin' from the boot."

Letting go of her hand, Alec popped open the boot and grabbed a deep red Sherpa blanket. Rose raised an inquisitive eyebrow, but Alec remained obstinately silent. Securing her hand in his, he led the way to their destination.

Rose couldn't stop the widespread smile that lit up her face. Between two towering oak trees sat a group of teens collecting money for tickets. But beyond the trees was what caught her eye.

A portable stage was set up in front of moss-covered castle ruins, chairs draped in black cloth with music stands placed in front. Strands of fairy lights connected the branches of the scattered trees, paper lanterns hung throughout. In front of the stage sat an open area of grass and some people had already set up blankets and were enjoying picnics. On the outskirts of the field were several padded swings arranged in an arch with tags tied to some of them. Food stalls lined the far side of the field, selling things like fish and chips, hamburgers, and various types of desserts.

A touch to the small of her back made her jump. Alec chuckled in her ear. "It's only me, sweetheart."

She leaned into his side. "Alec, this is gorgeous! Thank you for bringing me here."

Wrapping his arm around her waist, he began leading her to the line of swings. "Don't thank me yet. We just got here."

"Tonight's gonna be amazin'. I just know it."

He didn't say anymore, just pressed a kiss to the top of her head. He led her to a swing in the middle of the arch. This particular swing had one of the tags Rose had seen, and written on the tag in black marker was Hardy. The padded canvas of the swing was a burnt orange and it had a white metal frame. Two matching pillows sat on opposite ends.

"I called and reserved a swing for us so we don't have to sit on the cold ground. And this," he held up the blanket, "is for us to cover up with."

She gave him a tongue-touched smile. "You mean we get to snuggle?"

"Aye."

After getting two orders of fish and chips with two lagers, the couple sat next to each other with the blanket over their laps, enjoying their meal. By now, the musicians were tuning their instruments, the discordant sounds somehow soothing.

As Alec was tossing their rubbish into the nearest bin, the conductor spoke into the microphone. "Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming out to our first performance of the season. We go by Macabre Melodies and hope you find our music as haunting and memorable as we do. Enjoy!"

"I'm sorry, lass. I didn't think to see what symphony was playin' tonight. I wouldna picked the depressin' one."

"Alec, it's fine. Would you believe me if I told you that I've always been a fan of the darker elements?"

He smiled down at her. "A regular Tim Burton junkie?"
"That's me. I actually did my final performance in uni to Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata'. I hope they play it tonight."

Rose had not even finished her sentence when the first heavy note of 'Moonlight Sonata' vibrated through the night. She turned her face up to Alec and gave him a beaming smile. "Told you tonight was gonna be amazin', my darling."

The term of endearment swelled within his heart and he leaned down to capture her lips with his, slowly coaxing her mouth open so he could get a proper taste of her. Someone clearing their throat caused the couple to break apart like teenagers caught snogging by their parents. It just so happened it was one of the teenagers that was working the event.

"Let's keep it kid-friendly, people."

Both adults mumbled out apologies, turning to one another after the worker had gone to muffle their laughter. Alec laid a kiss to her forehead once he got his mirth under control, silently agreeing with Rose that this night was turning out to be amazing.

**********

"Thank you and good night!"

Rose and Alec stood and stretched out their limbs after the applause died down. The concert had been beautiful, the eerie music adding to the romantic atmosphere.

Wrapping her arms around his waist, Rose kissed his chest just above his heart. "What a wonderful night. Snugglin' with my man and listenin' to music under the stars. I don't think anyone could've planned a more perfect date."

He folded the blanket around her shoulders. "Oh, I doubt that. I just got lucky."

She took his hands and dragged him with her while she walked backwards. "Nope! You, Alec Hardy, are a hidden romantic. You come across all gruff and rude but, deep down, you're a tall, Scottish softie."

He let out a loud laugh, which Rose thought sounded incredibly sexy, and pulled her to his chest. "No, sweetheart. You've got that all wrong. I am gruff and rude. You're the only one who gets this new me."

She furrowed her brows. "What d'you mean 'new me'?"

He brought one hand up to rub the back of his neck. "Remember when I said you make me want to be better? I meant it. You bring out this side of me. I feel... light an'... an' happy when I'm with you and I want to be the one who makes you feel the same. It's never been like this for me."

"Alec, you do make me feel that way. You treat me like a princess. I've never been treated with such respect by someone outside of the family."

"That's terrible. You deserve only the best."

She gave his middle a squeeze. "Good thing I have you, yeah?"

Alec rolled his eyes. "I'm far from the best."

Rose pinched his side, laughing when he yelped. "That's what you get for talkin' about yourself like that."
He huffed out a breath. "Fine. I'm the best. Happy, lass?"

"Why, yes. Yes, I am." Rose tried to stop the shiver from traveling over her body, but he noticed.

"Come on an' let's get you warmed up." Keeping the blanket wrapped around her, he placed his arm over her shoulders, attempting to add to her warmth. They kept a brisk pace as they headed to the car.

As soon as he could, Alec got the heater running, but he didn't need it. His nerves were heating his blood just fine. Turning to Rose, he smiled at the sight of her bundled up in his blanket. She kept stealing his heart piece by piece. He wanted her and he was almost certain she wanted him too.

"Rose." His voice was just a whisper. She looked up at him through her long lashes and his breath caught. Resisting the urge to kiss her senseless, he asked her the question that had been on his mind all night. "Come home with me?"

"Yeah, I'd like that."

***********

Alec unlocked his front door and ushered Rose into his house. He now knew Rose had the same outcome in mind when she had asked if they needed to stop at a chemist. Her smile when he had said he'd already taken care of it set his blood on fire.

"Mind if I pop into your loo for a minute?"

"Not at all." He led her to his en suite, knowing that bathroom was clean. Turning on the light, he stepped out of her way. "Do you... would you like some tea?"

"Nah, I'm good. I won't be long."

"Alright. I'll just," he pointed his thumb over his shoulder, "I'll just be here. Out here. Waiting... for you."

Rose covered her smile with her fingertips and nodded. Once the door clicked shut, she let out a deep breath and spoke quietly to her reflection. "Okay, Rose. Don't be nervous. You're both adults and both want this."

Rose removed her boots and set them in the corner. Her tights were next, folded neatly, and set on top. She debated on going out there still wearing her sweater dress, but finally decided to go all out. The pink fabric was added to the pile.

After using the loo and making sure everything was clean, she stood in front of the mirror and fluffed out her hair. Now or never.

She opened the door and was met with the sight of Alec in his black oxford and black boxer briefs. He looked up when the light from the bathroom hit him. His eyes widened and she tracked the swallow making its way down his throat. Lips parting, he wet them with his tongue. "My God, Rose."

Giving him a shy grin, she padded over to him. His gaze never left her, even when she reached out and began to unbutton his shirt. On every patch of toned skin that was revealed, she placed open mouth kisses. She felt one hand slide into her hair near the back of her neck and the other landed on her hip. Before she reached the last few buttons, he pulled her up to his mouth.
Alec devoured her. When she had come out of the bathroom, for a second he'd thought he'd died and gone to Heaven. The sight before him was one he wanted to see for the rest of his life. Her body was a sculpture of soft skin over firm muscles. She was in front of him before he had been able to complete his examination, and he wanted to be as thorough as possible, but she had started undressing and kissing him. He had let himself get distracted and decided that wouldn’t happen again.

He stroked her tongue with his, going as deep as possible while backing her up to his bed. Reluctantly, he broke the kiss. "Lie down, lass. I want to see you."

Rose moved to the center of his bed and lay down with her arms above her head, causing her breasts to jut out. "Can I see you?"

"Aye." His voice was coarse and low. He made quick work of his oxford and then his pants.

Rose began rubbing her thighs together when Alec stood before her totally nude. She'd seen his chest and had the good fortune of having had his cock in her mouth, but seeing him like this... completely bare made her wet and desperate for him. She craved the feeling of him filling her, stretching her. She held out her hand to him.

He wrapped his long fingers around her wrist and placed it back above her head. "I'm no' quite ready yet." He got up onto the bed and straddled her thighs. "Now, be a good girl and stay still."

He reached up and ran the back of his hands down the length of her arms, stopping when he reached the sides of her breasts. He cupped her over the lace and circled her hard nipples with his thumbs, causing her to moan and arch up.

"I want to write a letter to whoever designed your knickers and thank them. You're so fuckin' gorgeous, lass. And you're mine, aye?"

"All yours."

"Too right you are." With that, he leaned down and took a nipple between his lips, worrying the sensitive flesh with his tongue.

The rasp of the lace and the friction of his mouth overwhelmed Rose. She keened out a cry and laced her fingers through his hair, holding him in place at her breast. He switched breasts, suckling her. She writhed and moaned as her thighs became slick with want.

Alec released her breast only to kiss and lick his way down her torso. He stopped with his face just above her lace-covered folds and pressed his nose to the damp fabric. "The smell of your wet cunt alone could make me come. Let's see how you taste."

He pushed her legs apart and ran his tongue up the seam of her thong, lapping at her center. As he drank from her, Rose ran her hands over any part of him she could reach. The pleasure he was bestowing on her was intense but not enough to pull an orgasm from her. And while she had dreamed of the burn of his beard against the tender skin of her thighs, tonight, she needed him to be inside of her.

"Please, Alec. Please."

Rising up to rest on his haunches, Alec took in the woman below him. Her skin was flushed and glistening, her chest was heaving, and her eyes were dark with lust for him. He could die right now and he’d die a happy man.

He reached up to caress her cheek before moving over to open the bedside drawer. He felt
movement from her while he opened the foil packet. Turning back to his lover, he saw that she had removed her bra and knickers. Pacemaker be damned, his heart full-on stopped. Alec thought women this beautiful were only in the airbrushed pages of magazines, but Rose was so real. Slowly, keeping her eyes on his, she spread her legs in an offering he would be only too glad to take. He was amazed that he managed to put the condom on, his hands shaking as bad as they were. Alec moved to settle between her legs; relieved he’d done so without mucking something up. His cock throbbed in anticipation, weeping literally and figuratively, wanting to be sheathed inside of her.

Once he settled above her, Rose ran her fingers through his thick hair. "You are the most beautiful man I've ever met, Alec Hardy."

Rose couldn't stop the guttural moan from coming as Alec slowly slid into her body. He was so long and thick; she was stretched farther than she had ever been. But she was greedy and still wanted more of him. She opened her legs wider, thankful for being so flexible.

He held still, giving them both a moment: her to adjust to his size and him to not pop off right away. He slid his left arm up under her until he could knot his fingers in her hair.

Rose's hands had not been idle. She groped his bum with one hand while the other held on to the back of his neck, pulling him down to her. She placed kisses from the right shoulder to the left, stopping at his pacemaker. She could feel the machine that aided his heart just below the skin. Thankful for the technology that had given him a second chance, she laid reverent kisses on the spot.

He could feel her gratitude in each kiss as she worshipped the metal that rested just beneath his skin. Now, more than ever, he was so fucking happy that he'd had the surgery and it appeared that his lass felt the same. The feeling of being wanted, of being desired, rushed through him like a drug.

Alec inched out, surging back in with speed. Panting, he repeated the motions, maintaining a leisurely pace. Every time he pressed in to the hilt, Rose let out a sweet mewling sound, sending shocks of pleasure to his groin. He wanted to give her more.

He rested down on his elbow, covering her breast with his now free hand. Rolling the nipple between his fingers made Rose’s cries louder. When he accentuated a deep thrust of his cock with a sharp pinch of her nipple, she cried out, "Again!"

Seeing her starting to come undone beneath him broke his control and Alec began pumping into her, maintaining as much body contact as possible. The sweat that collected between them, her hand squeezing his arse, her cries of ecstasy, and the feeling of her hot, wet heat gripping his cock was all too much but not enough. His release was still too far out of reach. He needed to grab it and take it.

Alec tightened his hand in her hair, pulling her head back and used his other arm to hook under her knee and raise it to her shoulder. He was now as deep as he could be, buried inside his Rose. Sweat was dripping from his forehead down onto her neck and chest. He latched his mouth onto the join of her neck and shoulder, lapping and sucking the moist skin, tasting both of them.

"Fuck, Alec! Almost... there. Harder, please, fuck me harder!"

His blood ignited and he became a wild man of the highlands. He pulled her hair roughly and sank his teeth into her neck while pounding his cock into her. Two more thrusts and Rose was screaming his name. The clenching of her internal muscles worked him over and, with a feral roar of her name, Alec came harder than he'd ever come in his life.
He released her skin from his teeth as they both worked to catch their breath. Limb by limb, Alec released his Rose, first her leg then her hair. Eyes closed, he collapsed on his back. He jumped when he felt her fingers on his still-sensitive cock. He looked up to see her taking care of the condom, tying it off and tossing it in the bin by the nightstand.

Rose looked down at her strong, very capable lover and wanted to take care of him. After binning the condom, she leaned over and took his softening member into her mouth, cleaning him of any excess semen. She couldn't wait for the next time she could have him hard down her throat.

Satisfied that he was clean enough, she crawled up his body and settled into his open arms. Alec covered them up and they exchanged lazy kisses until they both fell asleep with smiles on their faces.
New Relationship Feels

Chapter Summary

This chapter is just smut and fluff. NSFW. I am posting a day early because tomorrow is my daughter's birthday and I have a very busy day planned.

As always, TenRoseForeverandever is my amazing beta! Go check out her fics! They're fantastic!!

I Was Here

Chapter Eight New Relationship Feels

Rose became aware of three things: it was still dark out, she needed to pee, and a warm body was wrapped around her from behind with a rough hand cupping one of her breasts.

Alec.

She smiled as she replayed their date over in her mind. The evening had been perfect, something straight from a romantic movie. To think, she'd almost ruined it with her insecurities and doubts, but Alec had been patient with her.

It seemed to her that being with an older man would prove to be a positive experience. He had been married and, while that marriage had failed, he had (hopefully) learned from the mistakes that had been made. He'd told her that she made him want to be better and she wanted to believe him. She just prayed Alec was the real deal and not another repeat of Jimmy. Rose didn't think she could recover from another heartbreak like that.

Really needing the loo now, she carefully extracted herself from Alec's arms and made her way to the en suite. Business done, she walked back to the room and stopped short.

Alec had rolled over onto his back when she'd gotten up and the sheet had shifted. He was lying with one arm above his head and the other resting on his stomach, and Rose couldn't get over how beautiful he was. Her gaze travelled lower to his long legs, one raised and bent at the knee, the other straight. His suits didn't do him justice. There was no denying that Alec was skinny, but hidden under the baggy clothes (not the jeans, mind) was a lean, powerful, muscular frame. And he had demonstrated just how powerful, earlier.

Rose hadn't bothered to look in the mirror just now, but she knew she sported one hell of a love bite and she didn't mind one bit. Never had she ever had a sexual experience like that. Her previous two lovers, Mickey then Jimmy, were selfish in bed, leaving Rose to get herself off. But Alec had taken care of her, had given her what her body craved and she couldn't wait to do it again. She felt herself getting wet thinking about him.

With a wicked grin, she crawled into the bed and lay beside him. She planted wet, open mouth kisses against his neck, gradually trailing her lips down. Rose felt him take a deep breath under her and straighten his leg. Hands found her body, one in her hair and one on her back by the time
she reached his navel. Alec moaned when she shifted and settled herself between his legs.

She was delighted when she grasped his cock and felt him standing proud. He was rock hard and ready. Leaning forward, she licked a line from his balls to the tip.

"Christ, Rose," he growled, raising his hips. "Do that again."

Smirking, Rose did as he commanded and worked his erection with her tongue, taking him in her mouth after every few licks. Hearing his harsh breaths from her giving him pleasure made her sex swell and slicken further. Deciding she had teased him enough, she wrapped her hand around his base. She was about to start working him to completion when he spoke.

"Stop."

She released him immediately and sat up, wondering what she'd done wrong. Glancing up at him, relief rushed through her. If his filthy smirk was anything to go by, she had nothing to worry about. He shifted, sitting up against the headboard, grabbing her hands to pull her closer to him. Cupping her cheek, he leaned in and kissed her. When he released her lips, he leaned forward until his hot breaths were brushing her ear.

"Get on your hands and knees and suck me off."

A shiver ran its way through her naked body at his command. Getting into position, she gave him another long lick before taking him back into her mouth.

Alec watched as she bobbed her head, running her hot mouth up and down his cock. Rose kissing and touching him awake was a very nice surprise. He'd hated to stop her, but when the mirror above his dresser caught his eye, he'd gotten an idea. And it turned out to be a fan-fucking-tastic idea.

Watching Rose suck him off was incredibly arousing, but having her on her hands and knees with a mirror behind her was mind-blowing. He threaded his fingers in her hair as he stared at her arse in the reflection. When the clouds moved and the moonlight shone through the window, the light touched her curves, and he could see her folds glistening with arousal.

His balls tightened at the glorious sight and he used his hands in her hair to quicken her rhythm. "Fuck, lass. 'M gonna come."

The vibrations of her hum of approval tipped him over the edge and he grunted his release down her throat. She continued to move with light suction until he couldn't take the sensations any longer. "Rose, get up here."

She sat up and he held his arms out to her. She went willingly and they met in a ferocious kiss, all teeth and tongues. When Alec starting to nip his way down her neck, she caught her breath.

"I take it you're not angry I woke you up?"

He laughed against her collarbone. "No, my lass. Feel free to wake me up for that any time." He massaged her bum with both hands as he returned to her lips, pulling the bottom flesh gently between his teeth. He pressed his forehead to hers. "You're so beautiful, Rose. Can I show you how beautiful you are?"

Overcome with happiness, Rose worked to fight back tears and nodded. "Show me."

"Turn around and get on your knees." He watched her move and felt his cock begin to stiffen again at the lust in her eyes when she figured out what he had planned. He came up behind her.
"Spread your legs."

She widened her stance, spreading her knees, and he pulled her to sit on his lap, his chest pressed against the smooth skin of her back. Rose stared at their reflections in the mirror. Alec rested his chin on her shoulder, turning his head to press kisses to her neck. His large hands cupped her breasts and his fingers rolled and pinched her hard nipples.

"Look at yourself, lass." One hand released her breast and travelled up to grasp her chin. "Look at your eyes, so alive, and those fucking lips. Gorgeous." Now, he fondled her breasts. "These are perfect. Perfect shape, perfect size and they're all mine." She gasped as he gripped her harder. "It's goin' to take all the self-control I have to keep my hands off of you, because now that I've had a taste, I never want to stop."

Rose whimpered, his words and touch causing her wetness to run down her thighs. Slowly, he ran his hands along her sides and over the tops of her thighs. "Look how soft your skin is. My hands have never felt anythin' smoother."

A single tear of bliss dropped from her eye and ran down her breast, but it went unnoticed by Alec. His hands had shifted and were now making their way up her inner thighs. She watched him in the mirror and when he encountered the slickness just below her groin, he closed his eyes and pressed his nose into her neck.

"For me?" he whispered in awe. Rose wasn't sure she was supposed to hear that, but it both stole her breath and broke her heart. She vowed, right then, to make sure Alec knew just how desirable he was.

Her thoughts died on a moan as he ran his middle and ring fingers through her slit. He began stroking her clit at a leisurely pace, causing heat to flash through her naked form. The friction was delicious and turning her bones to jelly. She raised her arm, fisting her hand into the hair at Alec's nape and gripped his wrist that was near her core with her other hand. Rocking her hips, she encouraged him to move faster.

Alec gazed at the goddess in the mirror. Her eyes were lidded, her mouth was open and her chest was heaving as her pleasure increased. Along with the blush, a light sheen of sweat painted her skin, causing her to glow. He'd never seen anything so perfect or beautiful in his life.

The circles he lavished on her clit got faster and tighter and the hand that had been lying dormant on her hip, rose to pay attention to one of her sensitive breasts. Alec's erection was back at full mast, solid and weeping on his lover's lower back. He pressed his length against her to give him some relief from the hot, relentless throbbing.

Rose's mouth opened in a silent scream as her back arched, and her head pressed back into Alec's shoulder, her orgasm tearing through her body. She was aware of him drawing out every drop of ecstasy he could, but she pulled his hand away when his touch became too much for her to handle. She kept her hold on him as she sagged in his arms.

Molding his lips to the join of her neck and shoulder, Alec attempted to ignore his aching need, but the sight of his lover coming apart in his arms while he watched was too much for his body to ignore. He needed her. "Rose?"

"Hm?"

He brought his lips to her ear. "Can I have you, lass?"

She turned her head, searching for his mouth. Their kiss was sloppy, but exactly what she
wanted. She opened her eyes to look into his lust-darkened ones. "Any way you want me."

He placed a reverent kiss on her lips and felt her shiver. "You're cold. Get under the covers for me."

Rose did as she was told. She lay in the middle and had to work to stay awake. Alec had thoroughly worn her out but he wanted her. She would give herself to him as many times as he desired even knowing she wouldn't come this time. She heard the crinkle of a wrapper and opened her eyes just in time to see Alec sliding under the sheets.

He settled between her thighs and bestowed small, tender kisses to her cheeks. Rose crossed her arms behind his neck and pulled him down. Nuzzling his face into the warming skin of her neck, he entered her still wet channel. His thrusts weren't frantic, but controlled at a pace he knew would bring him off the fastest without being too uncomfortable for his lass. Her soft cries of his name told him he was doing right by her.

When she brought her hands down to cup his bum, he came after two pushes of his slender hips. She held him, running her fingernails along his scalp, as his breathing calmed and his muscles relaxed.

"Don't fall asleep yet. Wait for me, sweetheart."

Rose let out a contented hum. "'Kay."

Alec rushed through his clean-up, eager to curl up around his lass. Sliding under the covers, he became the big spoon to her little spoon. "Wanna go for breakfast in the mornin'?"

She turned to press a kiss to his chin. "Aye."

He bussed her shoulder. "You're accent is dreadful."

Smiling to herself, Rose mumbled, "Piss off."

The last thing she heard before the sandman came was Alec's rumbling laughter.

ARARARARARARARARARARARAR

After the studio closed Thursday night, Rose, Amy, and Rory went to the Broken Propeller Tavern to have a few drinks. Alec had planned to meet Rose there when he left the station. He and Miller had spent most of the week tracking down the people seen in both sets of crime scene photos, so she hadn't seen much of her Detective Inspector since the night of their date.

The three friends took up the far corner of the bar with Rose sitting in the last spot along the main bar and Amy and Rory perpendicular to her. It was refreshing to go out with her mates. Between them and Alec, she was coming close to having a proper social life. She smiled at the thought.

"When're you headin' out tomorrow, Rose?" Rory popped some peanuts in his mouth. Rose really liked him. Seeing how happy he made Amy made it impossible not to. He treated Rose like the sister he'd never had.

Taking a swig of her drink, she spilled some down her chin. She reached for a napkin to wipe her face. "Shit. I've got a hole in my mouth! What were you sayin'?"

Amy handed Rose another napkin when the blonde realized she'd gotten lager on her shirt. "He asked when you were leavin' tomorrow to go to Donna's."
"My train leaves at ten and I'll get back Sunday around four in the evening."

Rory signaled the barkeep for another round. "You need us to pick you up?"

"Nah, but thanks. Alec’s pickin’ me up and 'm gonna have dinner with him an' his daughter."

Amy laughed. "I still can't believe you're datin' the grumpiest man in the universe an' are happy with him." Rory nodded in agreement. "But! It warms my heart because he makes my friend smile."

Rose could feel the cheesy grin stretching across her face. "He makes me smile alright."

"TMI, Rose Tyler!" Amy groaned.

They were discussing the songs they had picked for the upcoming recital when Rose's phone pinged with a text.

[AH]: On my way

"We're gonna head out, Rose. You gonna be okay here?" Amy asked as Rory helped her into her coat.

"Yeah." She pointed to her mobile. "That was Alec. He's on his way."

"Alright. Tell him we said hello and I'll see you Monday."

After her friends left, Rose leaned on the bar, eager for Alec to arrive. She missed him. She understood he had an intense job and had to work crazy hours; she just hoped he was taking care of himself. He'd sounded so tired on the phone last night.

The barkeep placed another bottle in front of her.

"Oh, no. I don't want another one. Thanks."

He smiled, showing his gap-toothed grin. "It's from him." He jerked his head towards the back of the bar.

She turned and saw a young man walking towards her. She groaned internally; she didn't want to deal with this. The stranger leaned against the bar. "Hello. You're new here."

It wasn't a question. Again, that was the curse of living in a small town. She studied him. He had short, dark brown hair framed with rather prominent ears and a butt chin. He could be considered cute, but he just seemed too cocky to her. Right, time to get rid of him.

"Yeah, I just moved here."

"Well, welcome to Broadchurch. I'm Olly Stevens. I work at the paper so I'm very familiar with the town. No one could do a better job showin' you around ..."

He was fishing for her name. He'll find it out eventually. Might as well get it over with. "Rose. Rose Tyler."

"Beautiful name for a beautiful girl. So, when are we goin' on that tour?"

"Thanks for the drink, Wally, but I have a boyfriend who's already shown me the sights."

"It's Olly and, no big deal. We can be friends, can't we?" Rose was about to answer when she
noticed a change in his demeanor, as he cast a glance over her shoulder. "What the hell is he doing here? That prick shouldn't be allowed around people, piece of shite that he is."

Her back was to the door, but she had a feeling she knew exactly who Olly was talking about.

"I hate this man and, oh fuck, he's coming this way." He looked at Rose. "Sorry, Rose, but you're about to meet the worst thing about our town."

Rose felt the heat of Alec's body behind her and fought to keep the shit-eating grin off her face.

In what she assumed was posturing, Olly stood straight up with his shoulders back. "What do you want, Hardy?"

"Nothin' from you." Alec snaked his arm around Rose's waist. "You ready to go, sweetheart?"

The look of shock on the paperboy's face would go down in history as the best face of ultimate disbelief ever. Rose couldn't help but laugh a little bit. "Just about. Wally here was asking to be my friend. He even bought me a drink." She gestured to the bottle. "Wally, I'd introduce you to my boyfriend but you seem to already be acquainted."

"Ye-yeah. We've met." It was clear from his tone that Olly was not impressed.

Alec was enjoying Olly's discomfort way too much. The little bampot had been a thorn in his side since he'd come to Broadchurch and now it appeared as if the lad was trying to pull his lass. He couldn't deny that Rose's disregard for Olly made him giddy. Let's add insult to injury, shall we?

Alec reached for the lager Rose had indicated and took a nice long drink. "Thanks for the drink."

He set the bottle down and wrapped Rose's jacket around her shoulders. "C'mon, Rose. Let's go home."

Rose stood and took Alec's hand. "It was nice to meet you, Wally. I'm sure I'll see you around."

She and Alec walked out the tavern amid incredulous stares. He led her to his car. "Why was everyone starin'?"

He held the door open for her. "They were probably tryin' to figure out what I'm usin' to brainwash you."

She laughed as he shut the door. When he climbed in, she leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Should I go back in and tell 'em what an amazin' lover you are?"

He didn't pull out of the car lot and met her gaze with insecure eyes. "Is that what you were gonna tell Olly? He was tryin' to pull you."

"He can pull all he wants. I can spot a smarmy bloke from a mile away, nowadays. He said some mean things about you, too. Immediate disqualifier in my book."

Alec smiled shyly, cupping her cheek. "I don' deserve you, lass."

"Yeah, you do. C'mon. I wanna go home with my DI and shag his brains out."

"Oh, shall I stop and pick him up?"

"Such a comedian, you are!"
I Was Here

Chapter Nine Alec's Flowers

"More wine?" Rose tilted the bottle of Moscato in Donna's direction.

"I should say no, but I'm not. Might as well finish the bottle." Rose topped off both of their glasses. "You, blondie, are a bad influence."

"Yeah, but I learned from the best."

"Cheers to that!" Donna raised her glass. They laughed as they clinked their drinks together, laughing even harder when the action caused some of the wine to spill.

Rose relaxed into the soft leather chair, pulling her legs to her chest. "So, now that Granddad's gone to bed, tell me all about this Lee."

Donna blushed redder than her hair. "Oh, Rose! I met him last month when I was planning a wedding reception. He'd just got promoted to manager of the venue."

Rose smiled at her adopted cousin. After Lance, Donna had thrown herself in to finding her passion in life. It turned out she could put together an impressive party and thus became an event coordinator. She was wildly in demand in London and had been able to get enough work to buy "one hell of a posh home" for she and Wilf to live in.

"Was it love at first sight?"

Donna grimaced. "Not in the slightest. You know how I am-"

"Borderline abrasive but lovable," Rose supplied.

"Basically, yeah. Well, I didn't know he was the new manager and I had another appointment that afternoon and was in a bit of a hurry..."

Rose covered her face with her hand. "Oh, no. Donna, what did you do?"

"It was awful, blondie. The worst moment of my life." She took a large gulp of wine. "I was demandin' to see the manager, Carl, and Lee was tryin' to tell me something and, well, I yelled 'spit it out, Porky' and he got all red in the face and ran away."
Rose furrowed her brows as she took a drink. "That doesn't seem too bad. It's definitely not the worst thing you've ever said to someone."

Donna was shaking her head before Rose finished speaking. "No, you don't understand. That's not the worst part. After he high tails it outta there, I go try and find Carl. Gretchen tells me that Carl retired and the new manager was a man..." she winced, "... named Lee. Oh, Rose, it was just terrible."

Rose put her glass down. "What? Tell me already!"

"Gretchen said he was a tall bloke with dark hair, a nice smile... and a stutter." Donna held a throw pillow up in front of her face.

Rose closed her eyes in secondhand embarrassment. "A stutter and you..."

"Called him an American cartoon pig that just happens to have a stutter." Another gulp. "So you can imagine how bad I felt! I had to man up and apologize. Gretchen called him to the office for me and, when he comes in, I can immediately see how gorgeous this man is. He has laugh lines when he smiles and you know I'm a sucker for those. He lets me apologize but then surprises the hell outta me by telling me he's sorry!"

"What's he sorry for?"

"Listen to this: he tells me he's sorry 'cause his stutter isn't usually that bad, he was just nervous because he thought I was beautiful." The women squeed in sync. "He asked me for my number and we had drinks the following weekend. He's perfect, Rose. Absolutely perfect!"

She'd never seen Donna look so happy. Rose found parallels between her situation and Donna's. Both had been burned by complete wankers and now it seemed they had both found someone wonderful. Rose had to admit she was happy with Alec (well, a lot more than happy, if she was being honest), but she couldn't help the harboring fear that their relationship was too good to be true.

"'M so happy for you, cousin. You deserve all the happiness in the world. I'll have to meet him sometime."

"You'll love him. Granddad adores him, says I finally found a good one."

"If he gets Granddad's seal of approval then I'm sold." Rose gathered their glasses and the empty bottle and headed into the kitchen to clean up. Donna followed, turning on the kettle for tea.

"So, you still seein' that policeman?"

Rose got out the shortbread biscuits and set them on the island counter. "Yeah and he's a Detective Inspector."

Donna set out the sugar. "The DI formerly known as the worst cop in Britain, right?"

"You read up on him?" Rose prepared her cup without making eye contact. Truth was, she was scared of Donna's opinion of Alec. She had been spot on with Jimmy.

"Course I did." She retrieved the shrieking kettle. "The way he took the blame for his ex-wife to protect their daughter, that was admirable." Donna poured the water while she decided how to broach the topic she was worrying over.

Rose laughed. "Donna, I can tell you want to say somethin'. For someone who speaks her mind..."
without pause, I've always been able to tell when you're holdin' back. You look like you're havin' a serious case of indigestion."

"Oh, hush." Donna shoved a biscuit in her mouth. "It's just," she swallowed her bite, "I watched his press conferences and interviews and he's very... abrupt, rude even."

"Well, I told you about our first meetin', yeah?" The ginger woman nodded. "He is rude, but not with me. He told me I make him want to be better, but he's a good man. And romantic!"

Rose gushed about their date in the park and knew she was smiling like a loon the entire time. Her mind turned to Thursday night. After he had picked her up from the bar, they'd gone back to his house and she had shagged him on his couch. Her blood ignited just thinking about how hard she had ridden him.

"Look at you! You're face! He's not just a romantic, is he?"

"Oh, Donna, you have no idea. I'm a dancer and a gymnast and he manages to make me walk funny."

"Too much, blondie! I didn't tell you anything about Lee."

Rose dunked her biscuit in her tea. "Yeah, that's because nothin's happened with him yet." Donna blushed. "That's what I thought. 'M sure I'll get an earful once the deed is done."

"You bet your arse you will!"

ARARARARAR

Rose had finished packing her things so she wouldn't have to worry with it tomorrow. She wanted to spend every second with Wilf. Every now and then he would seem to be short of breath and Rose wanted to talk to him, make sure everything was okay. He had reassured her he was fine, but he was her Granddad... she was going to worry.

She plopped down on the bed in her new room (Donna insisted Rose have her own room) and pulled out her mobile. She hadn't heard from Alec all day. She knew he'd gone to pick up Daisy today and wondered how that had gone. She opened her text app, not wanting to disturb him by calling late in case he was sleeping.

[RT]: Hey. Hope everything went ok today. Miss you.

"Aaaaand send." Rose looked at the clock. Ten forty-five. Guess I'll go to bed, too. She set her phone on the nightstand and settled under the covers. She was just entering a light sleep when her phone pinged. She squinted at the bright screen until her eyes adjusted.

[AH]: Was in the shower. Daisy is all moved in.

[AH]: I miss you too sweetheart

Rose smiled to herself, loving the fact that she was someone's sweetheart. Her smile slipped. She hoped she'd stay his sweetheart after meeting his daughter.

[RT]: Still on for dinner tomorrow?

[AH]: Yes. Stop worrying. It will be fine.

[RT]: You really are a good detective!
Alec stood on the platform anxiously awaiting Rose's train. After dealing with Tess for the majority of Saturday, he had quickly realized how fortunate he was to have Rose in his life. The age difference between them still concerned him, but he had a feeling his unease was due to Daisy's impending reaction. He did talk with her about Rose; he just neglected to tell her about the thirteen years age gap.

Thirteen bloody years! What am I doing? My girlfriend was eleven when my daughter was born, for fuck's sake! I'm a bloody cradle robber!

He was spiraling down a dark path of thoughts that were leading him to actually breaking things off with Rose but, as fate or luck would have it, her train screeched to a stop. He saw her standing by the door, bouncing in place with a tongue-touched grin aimed at him.

He took a deep breath. Her beautiful face was all he needed to see. Daisy would be fine with the age difference. Maybe not at first but, once she got to know Rose, she'd love her as much as he did.

LOVE? Down, boy. You went from grateful for your lass, to breaking up with her, to loving her. Never mind having Daisy at home, you're a goddamn teenager!

"Hey, you!" Rose stopped in front of him and dropped her bag.

Snapping out of his inner rant, he stepped forward and wrapped his arms around her and every chaotic musing in his mind settled peacefully. He pulled back and placed a lingering kiss to her luscious mouth.

"Mmmm, I missed your lips." Rose murmured against his mouth.

"Just my lips?"

"Nooooo." A quick peck. "I missed your bum, too!"

He laughed when she reached around and gave said bum a pinch, actually laughed. That was something he just didn't do anymore. Well, not until he'd met his Rose.

"Let's go. I don't know about you, but I'm famished."

He held Rose's hand for the ride home to keep her from chewing her thumb clean off. He tried to offer her reassurances but he didn't really have any to give. He didn't want to admit it; he was nervous too.

He killed the engine and turned to her. "Do you want to bring your bag inside?"

She shook her head. "Nah, it'll be fine out here."

"I do want you to stay, lass. It's just..." He trailed off looking helpless.

Rose squeezed his hand and offered a small grin. "I understand, Alec. I don't think I'd be
comfortable stayin' just now, anyway."

"C'mon."

Following his lead, Rose exited the car and took several deep breaths. Please let her like me. Please let her like me. The same prayer was set on repeat in her mind. It wasn't until they reached the front door that she realized she was trembling. The next thing she was aware of was Alec pulling her to him in a fierce hug.

"Rose, my darlin', it'll be fine. I promise everythin' will be fine."

She let his warmth and rumbling burr soothe her. He was right. Even if Daisy didn't like her at first, Rose wasn't going to give up. She would work to win the teenager over.

"Ready?"

Blowing a breath through pursed lips, Rose nodded. "Yeah. I am."

Alec opened the door. "Daisy? I'm back."

Rose had a death grip on his hand as she waited for Daisy to come into the living room. Footsteps sounded from the kitchen shortly before a beautiful, young girl appeared. Her wavy, blonde hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail and she looked smart in her long, khaki skirt and blue jumper. Rose tried not to see the girl's eyes widening as a bad thing.

Alec's hand nudged Rose forward. "Daisy, I'd like you to meet Rose Tyler."

"Hello, Daisy. It's very nice to meet you. Your dad's told me all about you." Rose put out her hand and wanted to sigh with relief when Daisy took it.

"Likewise." Daisy dropped Rose's hand after a quick shake. "Da', I took the lasagna out a few minutes early. The top was lookin' a wee too brown."

"Thanks, Flower. Did you set the table?"

"Yes, sir," Daisy drawled in the way only teenagers can.

Rose watched the father and daughter interact as the three made their way into the dining room. As worried as Rose had been to meet his daughter, she loved seeing this side of Alec. His happiness at having Daisy living with him was palpable and she couldn't wait to see the two interact over dinner.

"You two go and sit down. I'll get everythin' served up." Alec nodded encouragingly to Rose.

Rose followed Daisy and yielded to her on where to sit. Rose sat across from her and an awkward silence descended upon them. Rose watched the younger girl pick at her nails. Okay, ball's in my court.

"Your dad called you Flower. Is that a special nickname?"

That drew a hesitant smile from Daisy. "Um, yeah. For, like, three years in a row, I was Flower the skunk from 'Bambi' for Halloween and it stuck."

"That's darling! I was a dinosaur for a couple of years." Rose laughed. "My mum couldn't understand why I was so attached to that costume. I just liked it 'cuz it had a tail." Her heart stung a little at the thought of her mum.
Daisy looked like she was going to laugh, but fought it back. The silence returned. Alec barged in with the salad. As he was turning back to the kitchen, his mobile rang.

"Who could that be?" He grumbled. "You can start on the salad. Lemme see who this is."

Rose offered the salad to Daisy first and her offer was declined. "Alright. I think I'll have a little. I had an early lunch with my Graddad and cousin and 'm a bit peckish."

Rose started making her salad, and was so startled when Daisy finally spoke she spilled the salad dressing.

"My da's no' rich."

"What?" Rose had heard her and she was pretty sure she knew what Daisy was getting at.

Daisy furrowed her brow. "I said my da's no' rich."

As Rose cleaned up the spilled dressing, she contemplated Daisy's words. This was a delicate situation and Rose knew she had to handle it just right. She couldn't be angry with the girl, she was protecting her father from someone she saw as a money-hungry-airhead who was looking for a sugar daddy.

Here goes nothin'.

"Oh, I know that. Doesn't bother me none. I grew up poor, so 's not like I don't know how to stretch a pound."

Daisy looked the epitome of confusion. "What do ya mean?"

Rose took this as an opening to pull her into a conversation. "Growin' up, my parents barely made ends meet. I never knew what they went through until I got older, how tight money got. My dad-"

Alec walked in with the pan of lasagna and took his seat between them. "What are you two talkin' about?"

Not wanting to give the reason for the topic of conversation away, Rose fibbed a bit. "I was just tellin' Daisy about my dad and a game we used to play."

"Well, don't let me interrupt. Carry on." He reached for Daisy's plate to start serving.

Rose noticed how Daisy's shoulders relaxed some when Rose had answered Alec. She had obviously been scared that Rose was going to tell Alec about her pre-judgment.

"Alright." Rose thought for a moment on how to work the answer to Daisy's question in her story. "Whenever the power would go out, I would get scared. To distract me from bein' afraid, my dad would grab three flashlights and me, him, and my mum would pretend we were on adventures in space. You know, lookin' for aliens and new planets, things like that. I never got scared when the power went out anymore. And it happened quite a bit 'cause my parents couldn't always pay the electric bill when it was due. Found that out once I got a bit older. My heart hurt for what my parents went through, but they made sure I never worried. Taught me a lot about money management, for sure, but also to never let yourself be weighed down by set backs."

Daisy stared at Rose in astonishment. "I can't believe you actually lived like that."

"Daisy-" Alec started to scold.
Rose put her hand over Alec's. "It's fine. I know she didn't mean anythin' bad. I can understand how kids nowadays might think livin' like that is like livin' in the dark ages."

"Yeah, uh, yes, ma'am. I didn't mean to be rude, it really is just hard to imagine."

Rose took in the blushing teenager. She looked contrite as if she was ashamed of how she had labeled Rose as a gold-digger. Wanting to show Daisy there were no hard feelings, she waved her hand as she spoke. "None of this ma'am stuff, please. Just call me Rose."

Alec's house phone rang causing him to growl. "Can't people leave me alone?"

"Well, they all know how charming you can be." Rose smiled sweetly at him as he got up to answer the call.

Alec raised an eyebrow, pointing a finger at her. "Watch it, you."

She giggled as he tickled her side and kissed her crown as he passed. Rose gathered some of the Italian dish on her fork and was just about to take a bite when she noticed Daisy staring. "What?"

"I've never... I've never seen him like tha'."

"Like what?" The teenager had tears in her eyes. Unable to help herself, Rose reached out and took Daisy's hand. "Are you alright, Daisy?"

Daisy's eyes flickered between where Rose's hand held hers and the older woman's face. "I can't even remember the last time I saw my da' being playful. I had to've been verra wee. It's sad, but all I can really remember are my parents makin' each other miserable."

Rose felt badly for the young girl. Life on the estate had never been easy, but one thing she could always depend on was her family's love for one another. There were rows, no doubt, but they were never left angry or bitter. Rose squeezed the girl's fingers. "I'm sorry you had to go through that."

"No, I'm sor-" Daisy stopped when Alec returned. She looked at Rose, trying to say what she wanted with her eyes. Rose smiled and mouthed 'later'. Daisy nodded and turned to her father. "Who was tha', da'?"

"Miller. I turned off my cell after she called the first time. Cheeky woman called back on the house phone." He looked at his girls and waved his fork in the air. "Work stuff."

Alec wasn't stupid, he knew there had been some tension between Rose and Daisy at first, but whatever the issue had been seemed to be resolving. The knot that had been lodged in his stomach loosened.

"Did I tell you, Flower, that Rose teaches dance?"

"Aye. It's one of the first things you told me."

Rose cut her lasagna up. "Well, he told me you used to dance. Any interest in continuin'?"

"Oh, I don't know. I haven't danced in a long time."

"Come down to the studio one evening after school and check us out. If you wanna get back into it, we can do some private lessons as a refresher." Rose took in Daisy's overwhelmed expression. "Or not. You don't have to take lessons with me. Amy and Clara are amazin' teachers. Our doors are always open to those who want to dance."
"Thank you, Rose. I'll think about it."

Alec smiled to himself, happy with how well his girls were getting on.

Rose hugged Alec's daughter. "It was lovely to meet you, Daisy. I'm serious about comin' to the studio. You have my number now. Call or text me anytime."

Daisy returned the embrace. "Thanks, Rose. I'll let you know."

Alec opened the front door and ushered Rose out. He turned back to Daisy. "I'll be back. Don't open the door for strangers."

"Aye, Dad."

Rose was already down the front steps but she could hear the eye roll. She chuckled at the thought of Alec dealing with the teenager. An arm made its way around her waist.

"What's so funny, lass?"

"Nothin' really. Just thinkin' about you an' Daisy havin' eye rollin' competitions."

He handed her into the passenger side. "I'm so glad we can amuse you. Should I keep score for you?"

"That'd be great. Thanks!" She flashed him her tongue-touched smile and she received the mother of all eye rolls.

Alec's lean body pressed Rose harder into the door of her flat. They had managed to make it inside the first door and up the stairs, but the sight of Rose's bum climbing said stairs made him impatient to taste her.

He thrust his tongue deeper into her warm mouth, both hands massaging her tight arse. Wanting to keep control of their amorous activities, he attempted to ignore where her hands were wandering, but that was proving to be difficult. One hand had knotted itself into his hair and the other had journeyed up his inner thigh to cup and knead his balls.

Reaching up, Alec pulled the collar of Rose's jumper aside with the intent to mark his lover, but she stopped him.

"Let's get inside first." She was panting into the crook of his neck and his erection throbbed with each breath.

He sighed, knowing he really wanted to go inside with her but shouldn't. He had told Daisy he'd be right back. Also, Miller had called to tell him they'd finally identified the last man in the photos and he was supposed to be coming in for an interview, so Alec needed to prepare for that. But the thought of being inside his Rose...

He rested his forehead against hers. "I'm sorry, lass. I don't have time."

She kissed his chin. "We can make it quick."

He huffed a laugh. "I've no doubt but I don't want to fuck and run. You deserve better than that."
"Ooooooookay, but what if it's what I want?"

He looked into her eyes that were dark with lust. *If it's what she wants...*

"Condoms?"

She bit his chin. "Pill's effective."

"Open the door."

Her squeal of excitement as she turned made him smile. Making her happy, it's all he wanted to do. Walking in, he dropped her bag by the loveseat and kicked the door shut.

"Strip," he commanded as he unfastened his pants. He watched as his beautiful lass peeled herself out of her clothes while he stroked his cock. When she was standing bare before him, she raised an eyebrow and sent him a filthy smirk.

He rushed her, lifting her in his arms. He sat her on one of the steps leading up to the loft. The laughter that was sparkling in her eyes disappeared as he spread her legs wide and thrust into her hot core. Her moan of pleasure was downright sinful and he started pumping his hips, relishing in the feel of being bare within her.

She threw her head back, grabbing the railings with both hands. He was entranced. Alec wanted to feast on her hard nipples but opted to just watch her breasts bounce with each drive of his hips.

With the arousing sight of his lover lost in the throws of lust, Alec's release was fast approaching. His hands left her hips, one spreading across her upper chest and the other dropping to rub her clit. Apparently, she was closer than he thought. Rose pulled herself up when her body clenched tight as she came.

He felt her relax and pushed her back down again, his hand leaving her clit to grab onto her hand gripping the railing. Alec chanted her name as he pounded into her, the wet sounds of their flesh slapping together egging him on. His orgasm blew through his veins and he grunted as he filled her with his come.

Breathing ragged, he collapsed on top of her, pressing his nose into her cheek. Since he was still fully clothed, he was drenched with sweat, but couldn't bring himself to care one damn bit. Rose ran her fingers through his hair and all Alec wanted was to crawl in bed with her.

"I don't wanna go."

Rose used her hands in his hair to push his head back. Smiling at the unwilling-to-be-named-yet emotion in his eyes, she took his lips in a sensual kiss. When she did speak, she didn't separate far from his mouth. "I know, my darling. I want you to stay, but we have to bide our time."

"Aye."

"I need the loo, then I'll walk you out."

He watched Rose prance awkwardly to the loo as he tucked himself away. When she stepped from behind the curtain, she was wrapped up in a purple towel. Taking his hand, she led him to the door.

"Don't come down, lass. I'll make sure the outer door's locked."

"Alright. Dream of me."
He snogged her, still reluctant to leave. When they parted, he whispered, "I have ever since I met you."
Merry Christmas, Everyone!! Here we get a glimpse of Rose and Alec's life in Broadchurch. We have some angst, some NSFW-ness, and a meeting of the Ex!

TenRoseForeverandever, there aren't enough words to describe how you inspire me to be better!!

I Was Here

Chapter Ten Life in Broadchurch

"See you next week, Miss Rose!"

"Bye, Elizabeth!" Rose called, waving to the young girl and her mother. After the last mini-ballerina left, she turned to the teenagers sitting in the waiting area. "Come on, you lot. Street shoes off, ballet shoes on."

This class was Rose's favorite being a mix of ballet and contemporary. She loved the classical, disciplined structure of ballet and the freedom of emotional expression contemporary allowed. Following the last student in, Rose was about to shut the door when the ding of the doorbell caught her attention.

Daisy Hardy stood just inside the door looking extremely uncomfortable. Rose smiled, happy Alec's daughter had come by. She hadn't really expected her to, even though dinner had ended well.

"Daisy, what a nice surprise!" Rose turned to her class. "Start your stretches. I'll be there in a mo."

Holding onto the strap of her bag, Daisy walked over to Rose. "Hello."

It was obvious to Rose Daisy had something she wanted to say with the way the young woman was fidgeting. She kept opening and closing her mouth so Rose tried to help her out. "Did you need something or did you wanna come sit in on a class?"

She nodded. "Aye. I do want to check this place out, but I wanted to say sorry... for the way I treated you Sunday night." Daisy stared at her feet. "It's just... I was'na expectin' you to be so young."

Rose pulled Daisy into a hug. "I had an idea what you were doin' and it was sweet. You were tryin' to protect your dad; can't blame a girl for that. But, thank you for apologizin'." Releasing her from the hug, Rose pointed her thumb over her shoulder. "You comin' in or do you need to go? Now that I think about it, where is your dad?"

"He had to go back to the station after he picked me up from school. He was fussin' about a guy
no' returnin' his calls. Him and Miss Ellie are tryin' to find him. From what Dad was sayin' as he drove me over here the guy they're lookin' for is a suspect in the fires. But, he said he'd pick me up when I'm done here."

"Oh, alright. Well, take off your shoes and come on in."

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"I didn'na realize how much I missed dancing! It's not too late to sign up for classes, is it?" Daisy spun around once they were on the sidewalk in front of the studio. Her blonde waves reflected in the light of the setting sun.

Rose smiled at Daisy's enthusiasm. She knew if the former dancer sat in on a class, her passion would return. "Not at all. Just fill out the paperwork I gave you and have your dad come in and register you. But, are you sure? Your dad told me how you had to give it up because of school."

Daisy shook her head. "No, that's what Mum told Dad. She told me I had to give it up so I wouldn't be distracted because I wouldn't get anywhere in life without excellent marks and a top notch education. I never wanted to stop dancing. She told me dance didn't fit into a well-adjusted life and I couldn'na go against what she wanted."

"It's hard when the people you love don't support you. My Mum started out like that, but she came 'round once she saw how much dancin' meant to me. Maybe yours will too."

Daisy shrugged. "Well, I'll see, but I doubt it. Here's Dad."

Sure enough, Alec was parking his car. Rose was excited he was coming in. They hadn't got to see too much of each other during the week, so she was happy to take any time she could get. Her heart melted at the sight of Alec embracing his daughter. Rose thought it was so damn sweet how chuffed he was that Daisy was with him.

"Hello, lass," Alec murmured into Rose's ear as he pulled her tightly to him. She buried her face in his chest while sliding her arms under his jacket and around his waist. He chuckled. "Tryin' to get in my suit, are ye?"

She hummed in contentment. Standing on her tiptoes, Rose spoke quietly into his ear. "More like your pants."

"Ugh!" Daisy's disgruntled voice made the couple break apart. "Dad plus PDA equals nope! I'll be in the car. See you later, Rose."

"Bye, Daisy." Rose wrapped her arms back around Alec and squeezed. "Do you have to go back to work?"

"Nah, I'm done for the night. I'm gonna take Daisy somewhere for dinner. Want us to bring you somethin'?"

"Sure. Where you goin'?"

Alec pressed a kiss to her forehead. "I was gonna let Flower pick. I don't really care where we eat just as long as we eat. Had coffee and a piece of toast for breakfast and worked right through lunch."

Frowning, she pulled on his tie. "Not cool, Detective Inspector. You don't need to be missin' meals."
He pulled free from her hold. "If I have to miss a meal to catch a criminal, so be it. One lunch won't kill me."

Rose quirked an eyebrow, reached up, and tapped the spot where his pacemaker rested. "You sure 'bout that?"

"Don't start with me, Rose," he growled.

She decided not to push him, figuring it was too early in their relationship to start nagging him. She would just have to keep her worry for him to herself. Frustrated, she folded her arms. "Yeah, alright. I gotta go. Class is startin'."

Turning on her heel, Rose jogged back inside, ignoring his call of her name.

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Rose closed and locked the door to the office and was about to head down the hall to the stairs that led to her flat when someone knocked on the front door. She turned and was very surprised to see Alec standing there holding a white paper bag.

She hadn't heard from him after their... she didn't know what to call it. No missed calls, texts... nothing. Rose was fine with that. She wasn't going to apologize for being concerned about him and she didn't want to talk to him. She still didn't, but she wasn't going to ignore him.

He watched her with wide eyes as she walked forward. He looked like a kicked puppy and Rose felt her aggravation start to melt away. She opened the door and leaned against the frame. Staring him down, Rose stayed quiet, waiting for him to speak first.

Alec scratched at his beard, unsure how to go about saying what he wanted to say. Rose's face had the cool look she'd given him the second time she had met him. That look made his stomach twist.

He held up the white bag. "I brought you some chips."

"Ta." She didn't take the bag. She didn't budge. Shite.

Looking at her through his fringe, he pleaded, "Can I talk to you, lass?"

Rose stepped back, held the door open, and motioned with her head for him to enter. Okay, Hardy, don't bollocks this up! He watched her lock the front door and silently head for the stairs. He followed her all the way up to her flat. Once inside, she took the bag from him and pulled out a plate. She didn't say a word as she grabbed two bottles of water and headed to the loveseat.

She picked up a chip, extending her arm towards him. Her voice, when she spoke, was timid. "Want some?"

"Aye," he whispered. Taking his hands off his slim hips, he shed his jacket and tossed it over the rail in what had become its usual place. He took the proffered chip, stuffing it in his mouth as he sat next to her. After downing a few more chips, he took a swig of his water. Letting out a deep breath from his nose, he turned to his lass. "Rose, about earlier... I don't like bein' molly-coddled but I know you're just lookin' out for me and I was wrong to talk to you like that. But I'm a grown man an' I can take care of myself."

"You really are shite at apologizin'," Rose stated nonchalantly as she popped a chip into her mouth.
Alec leaned down, placing his elbows on his knees and raising his head to plead to the Lord above to help him. When no divine intervention came, he gazed at Rose.

"Look at me, lass." He held his breath as he waited for her honey brown eyes to meet his. When she turned her head to him, he cupped her cheek and stared right into her beautiful eyes. "I'm sorry."

Rose sucked in a breath, knowing what a big moment this was for Alec. She knew how hard it was for him to do this and he did it for her. She brought her hand up to cover his.

"Thank you, my darling." His lips twitched into the smallest smile she'd ever seen. "I prolly came off as a naggin' harpy, but you said yourself you got a second chance an' I just wanna make it the best. I don't ever wanna see you ill or hurt. I... I care about you. Very much, Alec."

He leaned in, brushing his lips against hers. "I care for you, too."

They lost themselves in the delicate push and pull of their kisses until time itself interrupted.

"I need to get back home. Daisy is goin' to visit her mum Friday and will be gone 'til Sunday. Spend the weekend with me?"

"Of course."

ARARARARARARARARARAR

"Isn't this in poor taste?" Rose asked Ellie as she finished setting up the table. The town had gathered along the beach on a chilly Friday night to celebrate the founding of Broadchurch. Every year, they lit three massive bonfires in honor of the family that first settled there. "I mean, not the celebration, but the fires. You know, since we've got an arsonist on the loose."

Keep Calm and Dance On had their own table among the line of other vendors out to sell various snacks and handmade crafts. The dance studio had filled small baggies with the ingredients to make s'mores to sell alongside cups of hot chocolate. The money they made would go towards their recital costume fees.

Ellie opened the last box of s'more packs and started to set them up on the table. " Tradition an' all that dictate everything in this town. The town council held meetings specifically to address the issue but most felt it would be best not to give into fear and, well, carry on."

"That makes sense and I get where they're comin' from, but it still seems a bit... off. Oh, good, here come Amy and Rory with the hot water canister."

With the table set up and students there to man the operation, Rose went and sat with Ellie and her boys. Alec had had to take Daisy to the train station and would join them after. Fred has settled himself in Rose's lap and it was difficult to tell who was more excited for Alec to get there: Fred or Rose. Tom kept scouring the crowd, most of who were seated on blankets, looking for a particular person.

"You got your mobile, Tom?" Ellie asked her son.

"Yeah, Mum." Tom's eyes never stopped their search.

"Alright then. Go on and find Janie, but you better answer that phone when I call and don't leave the area!" She had to yell the last part because as soon as she started speaking, Tom had kissed her
cheek and ran off. "Whew, I thought he'd be a bit older before he started thinkin' with his pecker."

"Ellie!" Rose blushed as she covered Fred's ears. The toddler wasn't having it and squirmed from her grip without leaving her lap.

"What? It's what all men think with, innit? It's *that* head that gets them in trouble."

Rose picked up her to-go cup of tea and laughed at Ellie's cheeky grin. "You should meet some of the boys I grew up with. I don't think they even had a head on their shoulders."

The older woman laughed. "What about Hardy? All he does is think. Does he even know how to think with his little head?"

"Ellie! That's your boss!" Rose chided, even as she fought to stifle her laughter. In hushed, eager tones she added, "Alec's a *genius* when he thinks with his little head but, I gotta say, there's nothin' *little* about it."

Ellie's eyes widened in astonishment. "No! You're kidding, right? He's that good?"


They broke out into peals of laughter and only stopped when Fred jumped up.

"Unca Lec!" He took off towards his "uncle" and squealed when Alec picked him up and threw him over his shoulder.

"Fred, ye wee beastie! You bein' good for your Mum and Rose?" He set the boy down after Fred giggled out a 'yes'. Alec folded his long legs and sat next to Rose, kissing her temple. "Hello. What had you ladies in an uproar?"

Rose and Ellie shared a smirk before Ellie smiled at Alec. "Nothin', sir. Just talking about Tom growing up."

Wrapping his arm around Rose's waist, Alec nodded. "He's a good boy. Got a good head, he does."

Ellie snorted and Rose spewed out the tea she had just sipped. The pair dissolved into hysteric, clutching their sides. Alec looked as confused as ever, wondering what he'd said that was so funny. He looked at Fred. "What's this about?"

Fred stopped digging in the sand on the side of the blanket and looked at Alec. He shrugged. "I dunno. Unca Lec, can I ask you somfin?"

"Of course, lad." Alec eyed his still laughing companions before turning his full attention to his nephew.

"What's a bess shag evah?"

Alec stared at Fred in shock while Rose and Ellie fell to their sides laughing.

ARARAR

Alec gripped the headboard with one hand as he pounded into Rose's wet heat. He knew he was going to have small crescents from her nails all over his back. The stinging she was causing only encouraged him to move faster.
"Close! 'M close. Don't sto-" her voice cut off as her orgasm ripped through her.

Her channel became a pulsing vice grip, squeezing him with an unforgiving rhythm. Grunting, he pushed as deep as he could into her body, letting himself go and coming hard.

Rose's limbs fell to the bed, flaccid. "Jesus, Alec. I don't think I can walk."

He stayed inside of her, not wanting to separate from her body yet. Running his fingers through her hair, he whispered, "Don't walk. I'll clean you up."

When he made to get up, Rose managed to lift her arms and throw them around his neck. "Don't. Not now. I wanna stay like this for a bit longer."

"Hmmmmm." He leaned down and drew her bottom lip into his mouth and sucked. Releasing the swollen flesh with a pop, he met her eyes. The tongue-touch grin she gave him caused arousal to start making its presence known, not enough to harden him but enough to know a round two was imminent. "Best shag ever?"

"Damn right, you are."

ARARARARARARARARARARARARARAR

Sunday was cold and rainy. After spending all day and a good portion of the evening on Saturday outside at a wine and cheese festival, the lovers had no qualms about spending the day in. Alec had floored Rose when he’d said he had never seen any of the Harry Potter movies. So, after a quick phone call and visit to Ellie’s house to grab the DVDs, they snuggled up under the same blanket from their first date and started their movie marathon.

Rose was switching to *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* while Alec added another log to the fire when his phone dinged with a text. He reached over to the coffee table to grab his mobile.

"Bloody hell," he grumbled, flopping down onto the couch.

"S'wrong?" Rose asked, walking over to him and straddling his lap.

He ran his hands up her thighs and around to cup her bum. "Nothing's wrong. Daisy just texted to say that her mum is drivin' her back because she wants to see where she's livin'."

"Oh." Rose frowned as she ran a hand through his hair. "Guess I should leave before she gets here then, yeah?"

Alec took the hand that wasn't combing through his locks and kissed the pads of her fingers. "I don't want you to leave, but I understand if you want to. We've only been together a couple months. Is that too soon to meet the ex?"

She chuckled. "Nah. Bring it on. At least, we don't have to worry 'bout runnin' into my ex."

Alec growled. "I'd love nothin' more than to run into that scabby tube. Preferably with my car. How much money did he steal from you, lass?"

Rose ran her finger along the shell of his ear and whispered, "I don't wanna tell you."

He shivered as her finger continued its circuit of his ear. "Why not?"
"You'll just get angry. Besides, it's embarrassin'. I didn't even press charges."

"It's not too late. I can help you with that, if you want."

"Yeah?" He nodded, eyes sincere with his offer. "Thank you, but I think I'd rather just forget him and focus on you."

Alec nodded to the TV. "I thought we were gonna watch more of Henry Potter."

Rose cackled. "Harry Potter! You know you like it. I had hoped we could take a break so I could shag you on the couch since you liked it so much last time, but if you really wanna watch the movie..." She made to get up off of his lap.

"Don't you dare." He secured her to his lap with a firm grip on her hips.

Having decided it was going to be a lazy day, Rose had worn purple yoga pants with a form fitting pink tee with a sports bra underneath. She had even managed to get Alec in the spirit of comfort by getting him to wear some loose sweat pants and a white t-shirt. And it totally worked in her favor.

With only thin barriers in the way, Rose felt Alec spring to life underneath her causing her to grind down on him. She continued to rock her hips, stimulating her clit and bringing herself closer to the edge.

Alec was too impatient for foreplay and rucked her shirt and bra up, baring her breasts. Latching onto her peaked nipple, he began to suckle, bringing moans from deep within her. He felt the wetness soak straight through her clothing. He needed to be inside her and he needed her now.

Quickly, she stood and pushed her pants and knickers down in one go. Alec hadn't even gotten the chance to voice his disappointment over her withdrawal before he caught on to what she was doing. His brain was surprisingly sharp at the moment and he arched his hips to pull his clothes down as she was removing hers.

Rose licked her lips and pounced on him the instant his cock came into view, guiding him into her. She was so worked up from rutting against him and his carnal treatment of her breasts, she came as soon as she fully seated herself, clenching tight around him.

"Jesus Christ, lass." He groaned. Going back to her breast, he took a long, rough pull with the intent to work her up again. Her slick arousal coated his cock and made it so easy to for him to pump into her.

Pulling him from her breast by his hair, Rose rested her forehead against his and undulated her hips, increasing the pressure. Her movements were working in her favor again, her clit rubbing just right against his pelvis. With Alec's hot breaths hitting her face, her pleasure was rising back to a breaking point.

"More, lass. Please. Harder."

The sight of him grinding pleas from between his teeth caused heat to flash through her blood. She was in control, driving him crazy with lust, and she'd never thought him so beautiful as he was when he was consumed by raw bliss. She tightened her inner walls around him and fucked him hard.

His hands were holding her around her hips, no doubt leaving bruises, but she didn't care. He was chanting her name over and over and she knew he was about to come. She bit her lip as he tossed his head back against the couch, mouth open in a wordless shout. She slowed her hips, rocking in
compact circles, to draw out his orgasm, and pushed herself over the edge.

"Couch sex is the best," Alec declared once he was able to catch his breath.

Rose nuzzled her nose into his bearded cheek. "I rather think I did more for the sex than the couch."

"Ye cheeky tart." He bit her earlobe. "Let's get cleaned up and watch your magic movie."

She leaned back, cupping his cheeks in her hands. "You know you like it."

ARARARARAR

The sound of a key in the lock made Alec jolt up on the couch, which in turn, woke Rose. "What? What is it?"

"Daisy's home," he said standing. He held out his hand to her. "Come on."

Rose quickly redid her bun as they walked to the foyer, hoping this encounter wouldn't be as bad as she feared it was going to be. Daisy was setting her bag down while a tall woman with light brown hair closed the door.

"Hello, Flower." Alec hugged his daughter. "Have a good visit?"

Daisy gave her father a tight smile. "It was fine." She turned to Rose, embracing her. "Hello, Rose."

Alec turned to his ex-wife. "Tess. You didn't have to drive her back."

Tess was a fierce looking woman. Rose reckoned she probably made an intimidating policewoman. She even allowed that Tess would probably be pretty if she smiled.

Alec's ex took in her surroundings with a shrewd eye, silently judging. When her gaze landed on Rose, she smirked. "She's a little bit young for you, eh, Alec?"

"She is standin' right here." Rose stepped up with her hand outstretched towards Tess. "Hi, I'm Rose Tyler, Alec's girlfriend."

Tess's nostrils flared. She ignored Rose's hand and turned to Alec. "I know I didn't have to drive her back. It's only fair that I check out where my daughter is living."

"Daisy, why don't you show your mother 'round? Rose and I'll start supper."

"Aye, Dad." Daisy sounded like that was the last thing she wanted to do and Rose's heart went out to her.

As soon as Daisy and Tess climbed the stairs, Rose turned to Alec, who was watching Tess with hard eyes.

"I wonder what happened durin' her visit."

Alec sighed and wrapped his arm around her shoulders, leading her into the kitchen. "Probably Tess just bein' herself."

Rose was slicing bell peppers and Alec had the chicken in the pan, fajitas in the making, when Daisy and Tess came back downstairs and into the kitchen.
"Does my home meet your expectations?" Alec drawled, turning off the stove. He leaned up against the island with his arms crossed.

"Honestly?" Tess matched his stance near the door. "It's more than I thought you'd be able to afford. All this from the worst cop in Britain?"

Rose tossed down her knife and walked to Alec's side, fuming at the nerve of this uptight bitch. She knew stepping in was a bad idea, but she just couldn't take Tess belittling Alec when he was the one who took the fall for her. "Excuse me but, if I remember correctly, he was covering for your colossal mistake. Soooo, wouldn't that make you the worst?"

Alec tried to disguise his laugh in a cough. He was very unsuccessful. Tess stood ramrod straight, hatred flowing from her in waves. Rose had never seen someone's face go from red to purple that quickly. **Looks like that vein in her forehead is gonna blow!**

Tess began to advance on Rose when Daisy stepped in front of her mother. "Mum, please don't," she begged softly.

The woman fought an internal war that was visible in her facial features, but ultimately she heeded her daughter's plea.

"Daisy told me you signed her up for dance. I'm not happy about you going behind my back. You know I don't approve of it. School is more important and should come first, not some silly hobby."

Alec looked at Tess like she had grown an extra head. "Do you hear yourself, Tess? Dancin' makes her happy. I don't give a damn about your feelings on the situation."

"You've never given a damn about my feelings, Alec. That's why we are in this situation."

"That may be, but you cheatin' on me didn't help either."

Rose just wanted to hide. She looked over at Daisy. The teenager was crying silently to the side. She had to do something.

"Please stop." Rose stated in a quiet voice.

Alec looked terribly embarrassed. He turned to Daisy with an apologetic smile. "Why don't you help Rose finish chopping the veggies, hm?"

"Aye, Dad."

Rose squeezed Alec's hand as she passed, heading back to her spot at the island. She gave the teen a small smile and tossed her a red bell pepper. Both got to work, trying their best to ignore Daisy's parents.

Tess followed Daisy with her eyes before settling her steely gaze on Alec. "Anyway, Daisy asked if we could go shopping for ballet shoes and I told her you could pay for them. I will not contribute one pound to this waste of time."

Alec breezed past his ex-wife and opened the front door as wide as it could go. "Have a safe trip home, Tess."

Chin held high in an attempt to be intimidating, Tess glared at Alec. His left eyebrow quirked at her show of dominance, not at all threatened by his ex-wife. Her eyes never left Alec. "I'll call you later, Daisy."
"Aye, Mum."

With a dramatic turn, Tess swept out of the house.

Alec walked over to his girls and held them both in his arms, placing a kiss to the top of their heads. Going back to finish cooking the chicken, Alec cleared his throat. "I'll take you to get some ballet shoes after school tomorrow."

Daisy focused on slicing the pepper. "It's alright, Da'. I know you're busy with work."

Alec opened his mouth to argue, but Rose spoke before he could. "I have extra pairs at the studio. You can use mine until you get your own. Sound good?"

The teenager smiled and nodded. "Thanks, Rose."

Rose met Alec's eyes. He mouthed, "Thank you."

She blew him a kiss. He had to know she'd do anything for him and his daughter.

*Anything.*
Interlude: A Priest and An Arsonist

Chapter Summary

It's a short chapter, but it's important for the story line.

TenRoseForeverandever, I am so grateful for everything you do for me!!

Happy New Year everyone!!

I Was Here

Chapter Eleven Interlude: A Priest and An Arsonist

Paul Coates walked among the pews of the sanctuary making sure Bibles and Hymnals were where they were supposed to be. He usually made his rounds in the morning, but he'd been busy with several of his parishioners coming in for Confession. Being there for the lost or troubled souls gave him a purpose he enjoyed. Ever since he was a young lad, he'd wanted to help... just like his twin brother.

The sound of the church doors opening caught his attention. A tall, lanky man with neatly combed black hair walked in dressed in denims, a green polo, and a blue blazer. He ran his eyes around the room as if recalling a memory. Strolling up the central aisle he entered the Confessional booth, not once taking notice of Paul.

Paul set down the few books he held and walked towards his side of the booth, stopping by the pulpit to grab his robe. The man looked very familiar, but he couldn't quite place him. He shook the thought aside and entered the Confessional.

Through the latticed partition, Paul saw the shadow of the man making the Sign of the Cross.

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been many years since my last confession and I just can't avoid it anymore. That sin aside, I don't think I have really sinned, but from an outsider's point of view, it appears I may have."

Paul had heard all types of confessions, but none had started this way. None of the penitents he'd given absolution for had denied the act of sinning. "Tell me what you mean."

"Well, is it a sin if you're doing God's work? 'Cause that's what I'm doing. God needs me. There's evil out there, Father. Pure evil and God has called on me to send the Devil's minions back into Hell." The man's tone had taken on a conviction that properly frightened Paul. He was actually becoming concerned for this man's mental health.

"Where are these minions?"

"They lurk in this town. It's why I came back to Broadchurch. God tells me where I can find the heathens, tells me how to get rid of them."

Paul had a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach; he knew where this confession was going.
"How do you get rid of them?"

"Holy Water and fire."

Paul's hands shook as he tried to calm his anxious breaths. "And are these minions in the buildings of Broadchurch?"

"Not all. But there are some. I have found two of their lairs already and followed God's instructions for their destruction. The demons burned, Father, just as God told me they would."

"So I can be clear of your sins-"

"Supposed sins!" The man slammed his hands down and his enraged shout filled the small space. Paul flinched. God, give me strength. "So I can be clear, you are burning the places these demons reside. Are these lairs real buildings that you are burning?"

"Yes! And it works! Why are you questioning me about this? God has told me that the work I do is making a difference!"

"Yes, but what you are doing is a sin. God would never command His children to sin on His behalf. To be truly forgiven, you must take responsibility for your actions in the ways of our Lord and in the ways of the law."

Paul held his breath; silently praying that the words of God would sway the man into doing the right thing.

When he spoke, the man's voice vibrated with anger. "I didn't come here to ask for forgiveness."

"Then what did you come for?"

"I wanted to talk to someone who hears the voice of God, who understands. The police were questioning me. I tried to put them off because I couldn't tell them what we do when God commands us. They're too stupid to understand. Unworthy souls. God trusts me and I will continue to carry out His work until all evil is gone from Broadchurch."

Paul jumped in fear when the door to the Confessional booth slammed open. He peeked out the door of his side and watched with a racing heart as the delusional man stormed down the central aisle of the church, eventually breaking into a run, and slamming open the vestibule doors.

That was it! Run! Broadchurch High track team. He was three years older than he and Rory, but they were on the team together. Kevin Crane, a shy boy who had won medals in the 100-yard dash, was the arsonist the police had been searching for. And he had unfinished business.
When It Rains It Pours

Chapter Summary

Once scene of fluff and the rest is angst. Pure angst. Sorry. On a another note, I met David Tennant in New Orleans this weekend and he is such a sweetheart!!

TenRoseForeverandever, thank you so much for being an amazing beta!!

I Was Here

Chapter Twelve When It Rains, It Pours

“No, Rose. I’m just here to be the chauffeur. I told you I had no intention of participating.”

Alec plopped down on the wooden bench next to the rink. Daisy had made friends in the month and a half since she’d moved in with him. Some of her closest friends were fellow dancers. Today, he had driven Daisy and two of her friends, Tracy and Matilda, two cities over to Skater’s Paradise. This place had it all: an indoor roller skating rink, an outdoor ice skating rink, an arcade, and a well-stocked concession stand. What it didn’t have was a place he could hide from his girlfriend who was currently trying to drag him out onto the ice rink.

“You’re seriously gonna make me go out there an’ skate by myself?” Rose glanced sideways at him. She was next to him on the bench, lacing up her rented ice skates.

“You won’t be by yourself. Daisy and her friends are out there.” Alec waved his hand in the direction of the teenagers and Rose nodded as she continued to tie her laces. “You won’t even miss me.”

“Yeah, okay.” She stood and started the awkward, straight-ankled stomp to the rink entrance. “See you in a bit.”

Alec tried to pretend he didn’t hear the disappointment in Rose’s voice, but failed. He felt like a right arse. She never asked much of him and the one time she did, he’d told her no. You’re a bastard, Hardy.

Rose glided across the ice and he took a moment to admire her. She was so graceful in everything she did be it dancing, cooking, or making love (though they never called it that). Next to Daisy, she was the greatest gift he’d ever been given.

He smiled at the sight of Rose skating backwards so she could talk to his daughter and her friends. Alec, Rose, and Daisy had spent a lot of time together since Daisy moved in, and his girls’ relationship had grown, especially over their love of dance. They would lock themselves up in Rose’s studio when she didn’t have classes or private lessons, music blaring. Daisy would come out of the studio drenched in sweat and exhausted but positively glowing, Rose following with a smile filled with pride.

Alec was grateful for the happiness he saw in his daughter. Granted, he had missed out on several
years with her, but just talking to her was different. She was more vocal and laughed more freely. Daisy still called Tess often and she would try and tell her mum all about her life in Broadchurch, but she frequently ended the call near tears. Bless his Flower for trying. Alec might not care for his ex-wife, but she was still his child’s mother and Daisy loved her. Alec prayed that Tess came around before she did irreparable damage.

Loud laughter brought his attention back to the present. Tracy and Matilda had stopped to talk to some boys Tracy knew. Daisy was attempting to take a selfie of her and Rose.

Alec found himself moving towards the skate rental desk, not quite sure when he’d make the decision to get up. He just knew he needed to be with his Rose. It had been too long since her hand had been in his.

Lacing his skates didn’t take long, memories of skating with his sister, Alice, surging forward. *Hopefully, the memory of actually skating comes back!*

His first tentative step out onto the rink was shaky, but his stride grew more confident as he made his way over to Rose. She was just ahead of him, weaving throughout the many skaters. She stopped to help a little boy stand back up, and when she rose back up Alec made his move, wrapping his arms around her from behind. She started and, before she could slice him with her skate in self-defense, he squeezed her to his body and breathed against her ear. “Does the offer to skate with the most beautiful woman on the ice still stand?”

Rose spun around in the circle of his arms with the widest grin he’d ever seen plastered on her face. “Alec! You came out here for me?”

He pushed her fringe from her cheek. “I’ve found I’ll do anything to see you smile. I love… I love that smile.”

He had almost slipped up and said it. If Rose noticed his hesitation, she hid her reaction well. He could no longer deny the truth: he was in love with Rose Tyler. Alec wasn’t sure what was keeping him from telling her how he felt. Maybe it was the fact that she’d made no move to declare her feelings, either.

“M glad you do. C’mon, we’re in the way.” Rose pulled on his hand to get them moving. Alec held her hand, but not because he needed to. He appeared to be very confident on the ice. “You’re very steady on your feet.”

“You sound surprised. Did you think I’d be a humblin’ eejit?”

Rose laughed as she turned to skate backwards so she could face him. “Honestly, yeah. But I guess I should’ve known seein’ as you’re a braw bloke.” She smiled with her tongue between her teeth, waiting to see how he would react to her use of a Scottish term. She was not disappointed.

Alec bellowed out a laugh. “So, I’m braw, aye? Though bloke is one of your terms, but I’ll allow it. A braw bloke for a bonnie bird.”

On their second lap, Rose asked, “Where did you learn how to skate?”

“I’ve told you about my younger sister, Alice, aye?” Rose nodded. “She loved to skate, often competing in local competitions. I had to take her back an’ forth to her lessons. There were some lads who were right bawbags, they used to tease her. When they were around, she’d ask me to stay with her, so that meant learnin’ how to stay upright on these things.”

Rose leaned her head against his upper arm. “Such a sweet big brother. Sounds like that’s where Daisy got her talent from, her aunt. I’d love to meet Alice one day. You’re parents, too.”
His heart swelled at the thought of Rose meeting his family. He spoke to his parents about twice a month while he and Alice emailed each other weekly. The last time he had gone to visit them was right after the Latimer and Sandbrook cases had been solved. He was long overdue for a trip to their part of Scotland.

“Next time I take Daisy for a visit, you could come with us.”

“Yeah? I’d like that very much.”

He laid a gentle kiss to her temple and made a mental note to tell his family about his lass. That way they wouldn't be blindsided by the age difference like Daisy had been.

After a long day at Skater’s Paradise, Daisy had been dropped off at Matilda’s house where the girls were having a sleepover, and Rose had invited Alec to stay the night with her. After a quick stop to his house for an overnight bag, they had made their way over to her flat.

Now, they found themselves snuggled naked under several blankets in her bed watching Netflix on Rose's new MacBook Air. Well, watching was a bit of a stretch. It was more like the movie played in the background while they were participating in a snog-and-grope session.

Rose loved their sex life. For the first time since she became active, sex was fun and satisfying. She looked forward to their intimate encounters, whether it was just sex or hardcore fucking. They were open and honest about what they wanted. She found herself wanting to try new things and Alec gave her the courage to share her fantasies with him. She used some of that courage now.

"Alec," she panted, pulling back from their kiss. He rested his forehead against hers, waiting for her to speak. Deep down, she was glad that they both had their eyes closed. She may have found the courage to ask, but it was still nerve-wracking. "Make love to me, please?"

They had never used the term "make love". The significance of the words was not lost on Rose. This was as close as she could get to expressing how she felt about Alec without actually saying the time honored sentence. She heard his breath catch and her heart plummeted; she had said too much.

Rose opened her mouth to try and take the words back, but she was stopped by Alec’s lips covering hers, his warm tongue thrusting deep into her mouth. Snapping out of her initial shock, she met his kiss fervently, hopeful about the meaning behind his passionate reaction.

Alec covered her body with his and pushed into her, all without breaking their kiss. Everything felt different: the kiss, the feel of him bare within her, and the sensual way their hips moved caused a warm pressure in her chest. Tears pricked behind her eyelids when she realized the new sensation was happiness. For the first time in her young life, Rose had found pure joy in something that didn’t have to do with dance. Making love with Alec eclipsed any and all stages she would ever perform on.

Needing to breathe, Rose pressed her nose into his neck, inhaling her lover’s scent and relishing the burn of his coarse hair against her skin. She held him close, one hand between his shoulder blades, the other fisted in his hair as he took, not just her body, but her heart.

Afterwards, when they lay sated and spooned together, Rose let a few tears escape in an attempt to vent her overwhelming love for Alec Hardy.

Now, if she could only find a way to tell him.
Alec grumbled at the offending noise shattering his sleep. Maybe if he ignored it, it would stop and he wouldn’t have to move from the most comfortable pillow he’d ever lain on… Rose Tyler’s breasts.

The annoying ringing ceased and Alec sighed, tightening his arms around his lass. He had just started to doze back off when that bloody phone started up again. Growling, he shifted, reaching over for his mobile. He squinted at the screen and his stomach dropped out his feet. The Broadchurch fire chief was calling.

“Hardy.”

“DI Hardy, I hate to bother you, lad, but—”

“Where?” Alec asked impatiently as he searched for his pants.

“The old movie theater out on Morrison.”

Alec ended the call, cursing that he was going to have to turn on a light to find the rest of his clothing. He switched on the bedside lamp and, as he figured she would, Rose stirred. “Wha’ s’wrong?”

“Another fire.” He finished buttoning his denims and pulled his navy jumper on. Leaning on the bed, he ran his fingers through Rose’s hair. “Go back to sleep, sweetheart. I’ll be in touch.”

She sat up to cup his cheek and pulled him down for a chaste kiss. “Be careful.”

He gave her one more peck before striding out her flat into the cold night air, mobile at his ear, calling Miller.

Seeing the theater burn broke Ellie’s heart; this place was home to so many memories. Her mum had taken her here when they did a special anniversary screening of The Wizard of Oz when she was eight. Her first after-school job had been working the concession stand, and she had realized she was in love with Joe Miller as he’d kissed her under the marquee.

When Brian nudged her, she snapped back from that nostalgic rainy June night. “Look at wha’ the cat dragged in. Detective Inspector, what are you wearin’?”

Ellie turned to see Alec putting on his police windbreaker over street clothes. She couldn’t deny she was shocked to see him dressed so casually at a crime scene, but the unusual occurrence made her happy for her boss. She gave him a smile.

“Clothes, Brian. What do you see in him, Miller?”

And the smile was gone. God, he could be such a wanker. “I could ask Rose the same thing about you, sir.”

He scratched the back of his head. “Too right. What’ve we got?”
Ellie turned back to the fire that was starting to decrease in size. “Chief Gilmore said they got a call at half midnight from the lighthouse. The keeper had seen the fire when he was up doing his bulb check. Trucks arrived twelve minutes later, fastest response time I’m told, and started working to control the fire. Like with the other fires, it was burning too hot too fast and he called us out. They’ve been fighting it for little over an hour now.”

About three hours later, the first hints of the sun were showing and Alec surveyed the surrounding scene. He focused on the bystanders (as he had all night) and noticed the majority of the people he and Miller had spoken to hadn’t shown their face at this fire. But Alec wasn’t interested in them. He had one particular face he was looking for.

Shouts from the charred remains reverberated through the early morning and Alec was turning to seek out the fire chief when he saw him: Kevin Crane.

The man had been evasive in his interview, once he decided to show up. He’d provided no solid alibi, emphatically stating he’d been at home with his mother. Unfortunately for Mr. Crane, his mother couldn’t be reached to corroborate his story leaving him prime suspect number one.

The shifty man stood across the street behind an older couple, staring at the smoking building while his lips moved minutely. He made the sign of the cross as he inadvertently met the DI’s gaze. Alec saw, as quick as it was, the panic that flashed in Crane’s eyes. His fear was evident when he started to back up as Alec stalked toward him.

“DI Hardy!”

Alec swore when he heard Chief Gilmore call his name. “Can this wait?” But it didn’t matter, Crane was gone.

“’Fraid not. Come on.”

He walked toward the chief, Miller joining him halfway. Now, they stood in front of the dilapidated entrance.

“Here you are, sir,” said a young fireman, handing Gilmore three white protective coveralls.

“Well, thank you, Matthew.” Gilmore handed Alec and Ellie each a coverall. “Suit up. My men discovered something you need to see. We’ve mapped out a safe path, so follow me and step only where I do.”

Alec gestured for Miller to follow the chief so he could watch over her. He didn’t want any falling debris to hurt his DS. Not that he’d ever tell her that.

Heat was still seeping from the remaining structure. Pieces of metal, wood, and concrete creaked and crumbled around them. They came upon one of the theaters and Gilmore stumbled as part of the floor collapsed. He caught himself on the wall which knocked a piece of the doorframe down. Alec gripped the back of Ellie’s coverall and yanked her back causing her to tumble back into him. Everyone stayed stock still, waiting for everything to settle.

Pale-faced, Ellie turned to Alec. “Thank you, sir.”

Feeling a brotherly affection coarse through him, he squeezed her shoulders and mumbled, “Anytime, Miller.”

“We all good?” Gilmore asked. Both detectives nodded. “Alright. Just through here, now.”

They treaded carefully down the sloping ground, looking to where Brian was squatting. Upon
seeing the detectives, Brian stood.

“No!” Ellie cried mournfully.

Curl up in the corner lay the charred body of a human being.

“We often get complaints of homeless people squatting here. I wonder…” Ellie’s words trailed off.

Deep anger churned in Alec’s blood; anger he hadn’t felt since he had first come to this seaside town. He had been able to cope (somewhat) with the lack of progress in the arsonist case. It still drove him mad, but no one had ever been hurt in the other two fires. Now… now… someone’s life had been taken. This could have been prevented, if only he’d worked harder, if only he’d… if only…

“FUCK!” Alec roared as he turned and kicked what was left of a theater seat. He ran his hands through his hair before dragging them down his face. He looked over at Miller. “This ends now. Come on, Miller.”

“But…”

“COME ON!”

Ellie hurried to catch up with him, trying to maneuver safely through the burnt structure. “Sir, where’re we goin’?”

“To see Kevin Crane and his mother.”

Sundays in Broadchurch were usually quiet but now the town was dead silent. Breakfast and lunch had come and gone by the time Alec and Ellie had returned from their search for Kevin Crane. No one was home at the listed address. None of the neighbors had anything to say about him and all of them denied ever seeing an older woman living with him.

Alec knew it was this man. His gut was screaming it at him. He’d been suspicious of him since the interview, but seeing him at the scene of this fire cemented his involvement in Alec’s eyes. Where could the bastard have gone? Where did he work? Hang out?

“Miller,” he called, gesturing her into his office. “Any luck?”

“I just got off the phone with his last known place of employment. A pharmaceutical company in London and HR said that he left due to personal issues at home. Said it was all quite odd.”

Alec leaned against his desk with his arms folded. “Odd how?”

“Around the time he left, several cases of supplies went missing. The paper trail said it had been an order error.”

“But they don’t believe it.”

“No, sir. An investigation is currently being done to determine because of the nature of the supplies missing.”

He unfolded his arms and gripped the edge of his desk. “What sort of supplies?”

“I asked. They’re going to fax me a list.”
Alec picked up the photograph they had of the suspect. “This guy went to Broadchurch High School. You don’t recognize him?”

“No, I was two years ahead of him.”

“Someone in this town has to remember him. Does the library keep an archive of yearbooks?”


Alec grabbed his windbreaker, wishing he had the comfort of being in his suit. “Let’s go find out.”

ARARARARAR

“Here, sir. Found him. Broadchurch track team. There he is, third row.”

Alec looked down at the grainy black and white photo, mumbling when his wire-framed glasses slid down his nose. There was no mistaking the young Kevin Crane; he looked the same as he did now. He scanned the photo looking for a familiar face. His eyebrows shot up when he recognized a man he knew. He pointed his finger to a young man in the first row. “There! Is that Paul or his brother?”

Ellie pushed his finger out of her way and read through the names under the picture. “That’s Paul.”

“Let’s pay the priest a visit, shall we?”

Walking into the church unsettled Alec. He hadn’t been in here since Danny Latimer’s funeral. His parents had raised him in a Presbyterian led home; he had a healthy respect for religion, but this particular church held very disconcerting memories for him.

He held the door to the sanctuary open for Ellie and entered after her. Paul Coates was kneeling at the alter in the very front, hands clasped and head down. The detectives travelled slowly down the main aisle, giving the man time to finish whatever he was doing. Not even a minute later, Paul made the sign of the cross and stood, eyes slightly red-rimmed.

“What can I do for you today, detectives?” Paul held his hands together in front of him.

“Do you recognize this man?” Alec asked as Ellie handed Paul the current photo of Kevin Crane. Neither Alec nor Ellie missed how the color drained from the priest’s face.

Paul cleared his throat. “I do. That’s Kevin Crane. We were on the high school track team together. What is this about?”

“We believe he may be connected with the arsons. Have you seen him recently?” Ellie asked, taking the photo back.

Paul nodded. “Ye-yeah. Earlier in the week. Um, Wednesday, I believe.”

Alec furrowed his brows and placed his hands on his hips. Wednesday had been the day they had finally gotten Crane in for questioning. “What time Wednesday?”

Paul shook his head. “I don’t know. Right before lunch? He came in for confession.”

Alec and Miller shared a look. Alec opened his mouth but Paul cut him off.
“You know I can’t share anything said in confessional.”

“If you know somethin’ and don’t come forward, Paul—”

“I’m protected under Canon Law, DI Hardy, and you know this,” Paul stated defensively.

“You’re protected? What about the dead body we found in last night’s fire?” Paul paled further and grabbed onto the nearest pew to steady himself. “You know something and I’m bettin’ it’s something that could’ve helped protect an innocent life. But, you know what, it’s alright because you’re protected.”

Alec’s face was red with rage. Tears began to fall from Paul’s eyes as he sunk down onto the pew, but Alec felt no mercy for his man. At this moment in time all he felt was white-hot fury.

Ellie spoke in a soft, pleading voice. “Paul…”

Paul shook his head, looking at her with eyes full of regret and whispered, “I can’t.”

Ellie nodded, wishing this was not happening. What she wouldn’t give to be anywhere but here, escaping this incredibly fucked up situation. Beside her, Alec was visibly working to control his temper. She needed to get him out of here before he did something he’d regret, like assaulting a member of the clergy.

“Alright, Paul. If anything comes to light, you know where to find us.”

Alec turned and stormed out of the church without another word. Walking to the car, he tossed Ellie the keys. “You drive.”

Once they were on the road to the station, Ellie spoke. “As a priest he has a duty to his flock.”

Alec shifted in his seat, staring dumbstruck at his DS. “As police officers we have a duty to protect the innocent. He knows, Miller, and he’s refusing to say anything.”

“We don’t know that he knows anything.” Ellie hated playing devil’s advocate, but they needed to keep a clear head.

“Don’t be stupid, Miller. You saw his behavior, heard his words. ‘I can’t’ he said. His reaction was that of a guilty man.”

“That implies that he had something to do with it.”

“Implies? Miller, wha—” Alec turned to lookout the front windshield. Yelling at Miller wouldn’t solve anything, but he was so angry. “If it were anyone else they would be arrested for obstruction of justice.”

Ellie threw a hand in the air. “I know alright! I know. I’m tryin’ to talk us down because I want to turn around and wring his white-collared neck.”

Silence filled the cab of the car, both detectives brooding over the lack of developments in the case. The more he thought about it, the angrier Alec got and, by the time they had entered the department, he was absolutely livid. Not even the sight of Rose standing in his office doorway could calm him down.

Seeing the expression on Alec’s face coupled with the fact that he just breezed past her, she chose to speak with Ellie first. “Hope you don’t mind, I brought the kids pizza. Even left some on your
desk. Daisy's there with them. I can take her home with me if it's an issue."

"She’s fine there. She can help Tom look after Fred." Ellie looked longingly over at the paper bag lying on her desk and turned back to Rose. “Ta for dinner. The boys would eat pizza for the rest of their lives if I let them. I’m gonna go make some tea. Want some?”

Rose didn’t want to impose. She knew they were busy; she’d just wanted to bring them dinner. “No, thank you. I won’t be stayin’ long.”

She waited until Ellie disappeared into the break room before turning to Alec. He was sitting at his desk, eyes closed, and leaning on his elbows while massaging his forehead. She approached him like one would a frightened animal. “Headache?”

“Aye.” He didn’t look up.

“I’m sorry. I brought you some dinner. It’s not much, just some cheese pizza but I bet it’ll help with your headache.”

He grunted. “Daisy’s at Miller’s?”

“Yeah. Daisy didn’t know when you’d be home so she had Matilda’s mum drop her off there so she could hang out with them. I sent you a text to let you know.”

“I’ve been a bit busy,” he snarked.

Rose took a deep breath and counted to ten. He was tired and frustrated with the case, not with her. “I know. That’s why I came. I figured you and Ellie hadn’t eaten all day and I didn’t want you to get sick.”

Alec bolted up from his chair. “I’m fine. I’ve enough to deal with without you interferin’.”

Counting to ten wasn’t going to work this time. Rose stood tall with her hand clenched into tight fists at her side. “I didn’t come here to interfere with anythin’. I was worried about you and just wanted to make sure you’re alright. I want to help you.”

Standing with his hands on his hips, Alec rolled his eyes. “Jesus Christ, Rose. Right now, I’m dealin’ with things you can’t even comprehend. Leave me alone. I don’t need babysittin’ by someone who just stopped needin’ one herself.”

Rose knew she should leave, that they both needed to cool off. But Rose couldn’t move because she was so upset she was shaking. “A dig at my age? Really? I didn’t realize it still bothered you. Why are you even with me then if I’m too young?”

“Aiden. Rose. Midlife crisis? It was either you or a sports car and you were cheaper.”

Time stopped.

Rose felt like she had been physically slapped across the face. She was finding it difficult to breathe and all she could hear was the blood rushing through her ears. Numb. She was numb.

Alec took a hasty step towards her and instinct took over. The sound of her hand hitting his cheek echoed in the office. He stood frozen in front of her as she stared, wide-eyed, with her stinging hand over her mouth. For what seemed like an eternity but in reality was only seconds, they stared at each other, both unsure what was going to happen next.

He blinked a couple of times and took a step towards her. “Rose, I-“
“Don’t!” She shook her head, taking a step back. “Just…”

Turning without any of the grace of a trained dancer, she bolted from his office, speeding past a shocked Ellie.

“Rose? What…”

She didn’t stop, didn’t wait for the lift. Out. She needed to get out. Once outside the wind whipped her hair into her face. She swiped at the strands, wiping tears away in the process. When did I start crying? Rose’s mind was a maelstrom. Another gust of wind almost knocked her over and she realized she needed to get home.

She set up a brisk pace, bordering on a jog; Alec’s words playing on a loop in her head. Midlife crisis. Is that all she was to him? You were cheaper. At least now she knew what she was worth to him. It would make it easier to walk away.

Who was she kidding? She was in love with him and she, gormless girl she was, thought he loved her too. Even if he had never declared his feelings for her. You didn’t either and thank God for that. She was humiliated enough as it was. She let out a sob. Maybe she wasn’t meant to love or be loved.

With Mickey she had been a fuck buddy. They hadn’t wanted more with one another, both content to take pleasure from each other (even though he had trouble giving) while remaining best mates. With Jimmy she had been a warm body and an address. For a while she’d thought she had found love. Love at first sight, they’d both said. She now knew it had just been an infatuation on her part and Jimmy… no one could talk to someone like he did to her and be capable of love.

With Alec she couldn’t wait to talk to him. Everyone had always commented on how she lit up whenever he was in her sight. She’d seen herself having an actual future with him.

She felt so stupid.

Her ringing mobile snapped her out of her fog. Reaching for her phone in her back pocket, she took in her surroundings. She was almost to the studio and hadn’t even been aware.

She looked at the phone, wishing it was Alec but also wishing he’d fall off the nearest cliff. As much as he had hurt her, she had to admit she was disappointed when she saw Donna’s smiling face staring back at her, instead of his grumpy one.

Why was Donna calling her now? Last week she’d told Rose about the engagement party she had planned for a family from old money. The commission alone would pay off her car. She should be at the celebration this very moment. Something must be wrong.

“Hello?” Nothing. “Donna?”

“Rose,” her cousin sobbed out. “It’s Granddad.”
Clusterfuck

Chapter Summary

We find out about Wilf and more on the investigation. TRIGGER for a gruesome crime scene, non-explicit.

TenRoseForeverandever is amazing! I couldn't do it without her!!

I Was Here

Chapter Thirteen Clusterfuck

“Don’t!”

Alec watched, his long legs frozen, as a distraught Rose ran from his office. What had he done? Why had he said that? Rose was not a midlife crisis. He loved her! Thirteen years difference... doesn’t fucking matter! She’s the love of my life, for Christ’s sake!

“FUCK!” Picking up an empty mug from his desk, he hurled it against the wall. The shattering fragments rained down around him. Realizing he could finally move, he started to go after her but was stopped when Miller entered his office.

“What is it? What happened?”

“Not now.” Alec paced his office, surprised at how close to tears he felt at the moment.

“Is Rose alright? She was crying.”

“Shut up! I don’t have time for your noise right now, Miller!”

“Oi! If you talked to Rose like that no wonder she took off like she did.” She ignored the murderous glare her boss gave her. “Brian said it would be a while before DNA came back on our victim but I found this fax on my desk. It’s the list of missing supplies from the pharmaceutical company.”

Alec took a deep breath and let it out slowly through his nose. Right, the case. Unfortunately, he couldn’t go after Rose because finding this scummy pyromaniac was priority one. “What’s it say?”

Ellie looked over the list. “It looks like a bunch of chemicals were taken. Can’t pronounce half of ‘em.” Her eyes lit up. “But I do recognize this one. Isopropyl alcohol.”

“The suspected accelerant.” Alec stopped before he got his hopes up. “Think the judge would get us a search warrant for the Crane residence based on reasonable suspicion?”

Ellie gave a one shoulder shrug. “Only one way to find out.”

ARARARARARARARARARARARAR
“What happened?” Rose asked. When all she heard was Donna’s sobs, she pleaded, “Donna, what happened to Granddad?”

She heard some shuffling over the phone and a male voice spoke. “Hi, Rose. M-m-my name’s Lee. M-mister Wilf h-h-had a… heart attack.”

Rose was trying her damnedest to be patient, knowing the man had a stutter but she needed answers faster than she was getting. “Is he okay?”

“Alive! S-s-s-s-sorry. He’s alive.”

Rose sank to the ground in relief, not caring she was on an empty pavement at night. There was more shuffling and Rose was trying not to scream in frustration.

“I’m back,” Donna sniffled. “Sorry, I lost it when I heard your voice. He had a heart attack. He’s in surgery right now. We’re at Royal Hope. Can you come?”

She nodded, forgetting Donna couldn’t see her. “Yeah. Let me pack a bag and see if the busses are still runnin’. If not, I’ll call a cab.”

“Rose, that’ll cost a fortune. Alec can’t bring you?”

“He’s working a case right now and, besides, the price is worth it if it gets me to you and Granddad. I’ll see you soon, but call me with any updates you get.” Rose took off at a jog towards her flat.

“Will do. Love you, Blondie.”

“Love you too, cousin.”

Rose needed to make some phone calls, but decided to get to her flat first. Drying her tears, she launched into a run. She didn’t have time to fall apart now. Later. She would have to do that later.

As she ran, her stomach churned. Alec. Granddad. Midlife crisis. Heart attack. She fought to stay on her feet, the thoughts racing in her head making her dizzy. Her hurt over Alec's words and her fear and worry over Granddad festered as she climbed the stairs to her flat. Bile was burning its way up her throat as she burst through the door. Using the last amount of adrenaline-fueled energy, she made it to the bathroom just in time to empty her stomach.

Sitting up against the loo wall, she worked to calm herself, taking deep breaths. Focus, Rose. What do you need to do? She made a mental list: call Amy; pack; call the bus station or a cab willing to take her to London; call Al- no. She would text Daisy to let her know she wouldn’t be available in case she needed anything, but she would not call the girl’s father.

She stood and rinsed her mouth out. Shoving all thoughts of Alec out of her mind, she called Amy as she started packing, focusing on getting to her Granddad.

ARARARARARARARARARAR

Alec and Miller walked up the front walkway to Kevin Crane’s front door. A team of officers surrounded the property and SOCO was standing out by their van. He had been surprised by the ease of obtaining the search warrant but, like everyone else in town, the judge wanted the arsehole responsible caught. At this time, any lead was acceptable to the court.

Alec felt wretched. He still hadn’t eaten, but he doubted that had anything to do with his lack of food. All he wanted to do was go to Rose. He didn’t know how he was going to fix this. He had
crossed a line and he was deathly afraid there wasn’t a way back.

He doubted Crane was home but knocked anyway, making sure to do things by the book. He didn’t want anything coming back to bite them on the arse. He knocked once more before motioning for the breaching team to come up with the battering ram. He and Miller stepped aside while the men forced the door open. The men moved and Alec stepped forward, calling out ‘police’ but immediately coughed after being overwhelmed with a foul stench.

“Oh, God. What is that?” Ellie gagged as she searched her small handbag that crossed her chest for a tissue.

“Something’s gone off. Thanks,” he said when Brian came up with masks and gloves held out for him and Miller. Once they were protected (sort of) from the smell, the detectives began their search. The home was a modest size and scarcely furnished. A card table with two chairs was centered in the living room. There was no telly, no photos, and hardly any food in the fridge.

Alec led the way down the hall, opening the first door on the left. The hall bath had a pile of wet towels on the floor, the smell more chemical than the offensive one permeating the rest of the home. The bath was empty and the opaque stand up shower door was closed.

“Back up some, Miller.” Alec waited until she was clear before opening the shower door. For the first time, he perked up. “Look at this.”

Ellie squeezed into the bathroom and peeked in the shower stall. Several bottles labeled isopropyl alcohol were sitting on the floor. “Alright, there’s that. But what is that smell?”

“Let’s keep looking, shall we?”

The next door opened was a spare room that had four boxes filled with men’s and women’s clothing. A preliminary search confirmed the boxes held just clothes. The closet had an ironing board and iron but nothing else. The smell grew worse the closer they got to the last door.

“Do you have any lotion in your bag?”

Ellie nodded and dug out her coconut hand lotion and held it out to her boss. She watched as he placed a drop on his pinky. Pulling down his mask, he dabbed the lotion on his upper lip close to his nose. He handed it back. “I’d do the same if I were you. The smell’s just gonna be worse when we open the door. Brian? Can you hand us some extra gloves?”

With new gloves on and a scent barrier in place, Alec opened the door. The odor was like a punch to the gut. Alec’s eyes watered as he took in the scene. In the far corner was a twin size mattress on the floor with a lamp next to it. A note pad and pen lay on the mattress. Ellie walked over to it and squatted down to read what was written.

“What’s it say?”

“It says ‘Dr. Manson’s office. Mother took me for shots’. There’s a drawin’ of the buildin’. The insurance company that burned used to be Dr. Manson’s office. I remember.”

Alec came to stand by Miller but without his glasses he couldn’t read what was written. “What else?”

“Another sketch, this one says ‘Butcher’s shop. Mother laughed as butcher locked me in meat locker. They fucked against the door then let me out’. Sir, I don’t think we’re dealing with a garden-variety arsonist.”
“No, doesn’t seem that way.” Alec walked over to the closet. Empty. Ellie called his name,
distress clear in her voice. He rushed back to her side. “What is it?”

“He has here that his mother left him at the movie theater overnight once. But the last thing he has
written was how his mum loved the owner of the old appliance store more than him.”

“What building is that?” Eyebrows furrowed, he wracked his brain for the answer.

When she spoke, Ellie's voice was shaky. “Keep Calm and Dance On.”

Panic coursed through his blood. Rose! “Walden! Get on the phone to Amy Pond and send
officers over to her dance studio and secure it!” He turned to Miller, pulling out his phone. “I’ve
gotta call Rose... Fuck! It went straight to voicemail.”

“Sir, let’s finish up here. The arsonist hasn’t started a fire this early in the evening before and we
have people on their way over there. She’ll be fine.”

He looked down at his phone, silently willing Rose to call him back, but he knew the call
wouldn’t come. Frustrated beyond belief, Alec let out a breath and nodded. “You’re right,
Miller.”

He surveyed the rest of the room and noticed the closed door to what had to be the en suite. The
source of the foul odor had to be coming from in there. Trying to push all thoughts of Rose aside
(and being only moderately successful), he stepped cautiously to the door and grabbed the
doorknob. He turned to Miller, who had joined him. “Stand back a bit.”

He waited until she stepped back a few feet before taking a deep breath and opening the door.
Even with masks on, the detectives immediately started gagging as chemical vapors and the smell
of rotting meat assaulted them. Holding his breath, Alec looked around.

“Jesus Christ!”

Bottles almost identical to the ones found earlier were strewn all over the floor. The garden tub
was filled with what had to be the chemicals... among other things. But what had shocked
Detective Inspector Alec Hardy were the partially decomposed remains of a human woman.

“What is it?” Ellie asked after she finished dry heaving. Alec heard her coming and tried to shield
her from the grotesque sight, but she wasn’t having it and pushed past him. “Lemme see.”

He quickly jumped out of her way as she ran back out holding her mask over her mouth. He
spared one last glance at the dead woman before following his DS. Brian came jogging up to him
when he stepped out onto the front walk.

“Ellie’s sickin’ it up by the van. Wha’s happenin’?”

“Dead body in the master bath. You’re gonna need back-up.”

Brian cast a puzzled look towards the DI as he yelled at his colleague to call the others out.

As Alec walked towards Miller, he tried Rose’s cell again. This time it rang but she didn’t answer.
Walden jogged over. “DI Hardy, I got in touch with Miss Pond. She’s on her way over to the
studio and we have officers stationed around it and one of the fire trucks staged there as well.”

Relief washed through Alec. “Good. Rose Tyler lives in the flat on the second floor. Has she been evacuaded?”
“Miss Pond assured us that Miss Tyler was safe.”

“Thank you, Walden.”

The young man nodded, astonished that the DI had thanked him, and went back to assisting the other officers on scene. Alec checked on Ellie, finding her a bottle of water in the back of a squad car.

“Who do you think is in the tub?” Miller asked after she washed her mouth out.

Taking a sip of his own water, Alec turned to her. “My guess? It’s the mother.”

“Seriously?” She thought a moment. “Have you ever seen anything like this before?”

He shook his head, lapsing into silence.

It took around twenty minutes for the other crime scene investigators to arrive. He and Ellie watched as the men and women wheeled in a stretcher with a large bag on top for the body and other supplies needed for evidence collection. While they waited, Alec sent a text to Daisy telling her to stay put at Miller’s house and letting her know he’d call as soon as he could. He had opened Rose’s text feed but couldn’t bring himself to send anything. They needed to talk in person.

“Sir?” Ellie’s hesitant voice brought him back to the present.

“Miller?” He drawled.

She rolled her eyes at his sarcastic tone. “What happened earlier with Rose? She was cryin’ and you destroyed your mug so don’t tell me nothin’.”

Alec stared down at his chucks and smiled at the memory of Rose laughing about his shoes. “I was an arse and said something that I didn’t mean. I was just so angry and I took it out on her.” He replayed their argument and he winced at his harsh words. “And now… now I don’t know what to do. There’s no way she’ll ever forgive me. I’ve lost her, Miller.”

“Maybe not. She knows how charming you can be. Remember your first meeting? You apologized and she forgave you. See what happens when you apologize? You get the girl.”

He couldn’t meet her eyes so he folded his arms and continued to memorize the stitching pattern of his shoes. “I called our relationship a midlife crisis.” He paused a moment, burying his face in his hands. "Actually, it's worse than that... I called her a midlife crisis."

When Miller didn’t reply, he chanced a glance at her. Wide-eyed, he backed up, quite certain she was going to hit him. The fury in her features was properly frightening. She pushed up from her perch on the car and her hands latched onto her hips.

“You are un-fucking-believable! She’s the best thing that’s ever happened to you, you stupid shite!”

“I know!” He roared. “I know I fucked up! How do I fix this?”

Ellie stared, hip cocked and arms still crossed. “You really didn’t mean it?”
“I love her. Please,” he pleaded. “What do I do?”

She shook her head, completely at a loss of what to say, but before she could start talking it out with him, a shout drew their attention.

“What the hell’s goin’ on here? You people have no right to be here!” Kevin Crane was rushing up his driveway in a black jogging suit, covered in sweat, and observing the scene in hysterics.

Alec growled as he stormed over to the interloper, grabbing cuffs from a constable’s duty belt as he passed. “Kevin Crane, you are under arrest for arson and first-degree murder.”

Crane tried to out maneuver the DI, but he was not aware of the determination fueling Alec’s movements. Crane didn’t stand a chance. Alec wrestled the man into the handcuffs, feeling slight satisfaction at being the one to subdue him.

“You can’t do this! I’ve done nothing wrong! I’ll have your badge!” Crane yelled over his shoulder as Alec read him his rights. He continued to struggle as Alec led him to a squad car, one hand on the cuffs and the other on the shouting man’s shoulder. “You’ll hang for this, Detective Inspector. You are making a huge mistake.”

Alec pulled Crane back by his shoulder, speaking close to his ear. “The dead woman in your tub says otherwise.”

Crane froze, then starting screaming. “Don’t touch her! You leave my mother alone!” Two other officers came to assist Alec in getting the man in the car. “Do you hear me? Leave her alone!”

Miller walked over and slammed the door in the bastard’s face. Everyone could still hear Crane’s muffled shouts. She turned to Alec. “You were right.”

Alec turned to see Brian and his team bringing the stretcher out, black body bag on top. “Unfortunately.”

ARARARARARARARARARARARAR

Rose walked into the waiting room and was immediately engulfed in a blur of red hair. Donna squeezed her so tight and all Rose could do was return the tight embrace. Both were content to hold onto one another for a moment. Someone sneezed in the waiting room, causing Donna to look up.

“Bless you, Lee.” Donna let go of Rose and walked over to a tall, handsome man. “Rose Tyler, I’d like you to meet my boyfriend, Lee McAvoy.”

“I-I-I’ve h-heard so much a-about you.” Lee smiled and surprised Rose by taking her hand and placing a kiss on the back of it.

Rose offered a small smile. “Same here. Nice to finally meet you.” She blew out a breath and turned to Donna. “Any word yet?”

Donna walked back over to where she and Lee had been sitting and plopped down. Lee followed, and Rose sat on the cushioned bench seat diagonally from them.

“I haven’t spoken to the doctor yet, but the nurse called to let us know he was out of surgery and in the recovery room.” Donna wiped at a tear making its way down her cheek. “Oh, Rose, I was so scared. I had just gotten home to shower and change before the party. Granddad was in the kitchen making his tea and I went in there to see if he wanted me to bring him home a box of food because I was using the catering company he liked and he just collapsed right in front of me!”
Donna broke down in tears and Lee put a comforting arm around her. Rose’s heart broke at the sight for many reasons: her Granddad’s situation, Donna’s distress, and knowing Alec would never be here to offer her comfort.

They looked up when the double doors opened up and, for the first time, Rose realized they were the only people in the waiting room. *Probably because they normally don't do surgery at eleven at night.*

“Mr. Mott’s family I take it?” A beautiful young woman wearing light green scrubs walked over to them. “Hi, I’m Dr. Martha Jones. Mr. Mott is doing fine.” Rose, Donna, and Lee let out a collective sigh. “We had to perform a coronary artery bypass graft, grafting veins we removed from his legs onto the damaged arteries in his heart. It could have been so much worse but his condition is still serious. Coming in when he did, no doubt, saved his life. Lucky you were there Ms. Noble. Still, the first forty-eight hours are critical, but we will be monitoring him closely.”

“Can we see him?” Donna asked hopefully.

“I’m sorry, no. We are still getting him settled, but visiting hours start at eight a.m.”

Rose rubbed Donna’s back, comforting her cousin who was visibly upset at not getting to see Wilf. “But what if something happens?”

“I’ll have one of the nurses come out and get your contact information and we will call if anything changes.”

Donna nodded. “But he’ll be by himself?”

“I’ll stay.” Rose looked at Dr. Jones. “I can stay in the waiting room, right? Sleep on the little couch over there?”

The doctor smiled sympathetically. “Yes, you sure can. Do you have any questions?”

Donna ran her hand through her ginger hair and blew out a breath. “I have a million but my brain has just short-circuited. I… I… He’s my Granddad.”

“Miss Noble, I will be here all night with him as well.” Dr. Jones nodded before she disappeared back behind the doors.

“I’ll be here Donna. Let Lee take you home and try to get some rest. I’ll call if anything changes, alright?”

Lee wrapped his arm around Donna’s waist. “C’come on, l-l-love.”

It hadn’t taken much more convincing to get Donna to go with Lee, which told Rose how upset her cousin really was. Donna was more stubborn than Alec. *No, don’t go there.* She couldn’t think about him right now or the missed call from him on her phone.

She got as comfortable as she could on the tiny couch, using her rucksack as a pillow, saying a prayer for her Granddad.
Alec and Rose see each other again. Will Rose hear what he has to say?

I want to give a huge shoutout to TenRoseForeverandever. Without her this chapter would not exist. She helped me through it when I basically gave up and tried to take the easy way out. Thank you, my friend. And thank you for all your wonderful ideas and additions that I used in this chapter!

I Was Here

Chapter Fourteen   Recognition

Alec plopped down in his desk chair, absolutely exhausted. After SOCO had loaded up the body, he and Miller had piled in his car and headed back to the station. He put his head in his hands. It had been over twenty-four hours since he’d slept and he’d been wearing his clothes even longer. He checked his phone: almost midnight. No calls or texts from Rose. Daisy had sent him one an hour ago.

[DH]: Call me when u can. Don’t care what time.

He immediately pressed the call icon. She answered after two rings.

“Hey, Da’.”

“Hello, Flower.” Despite everything that was happening, Alec smiled at the sound of his daughter’s voice. “Is everything alright over there?”

“Oh, yeah. Tom and Fred are sleepin’. I wanted to talk to you first, before I went to bed.”

“What’s on your mind?”

“What am I gonna do about school tomorrow?”

“Just stay there. I’ll talk to your teacher and get the work you’ll miss.” He picked up a pen, making a note to do just that.

“Aye. Thank you, Da’. I also wanted to ask about Rose’s granddad. Did she tell you how he is? I didn’t want to bother her.”

Alec sat up straight at the sound of Rose’s name. Daisy didn’t know how he had fucked up and now was not the time to tell her. Obviously something had happened after their fight.

“I don’t know anythin’ about her granddad. What happened?”

“Oh, well she texted me earlier sayin’ she had to go to London ‘cause her granddad had a heart attack.”
“Shit!” He looked at his watch. “What time was that?”

“Lemme check… Five thirty-eight. You gonna go to London?”

He couldn’t imagine how worried she was, and he had just dumped all of his shit on her too. He should be there to hold her hand, and help her through this, but he’d fucked up. Of course he would go to London. Even if she wouldn’t speak to him, she’d know he was there for her. Maybe he could show her how important she was to him. That he would do anything for her. That he loved her.

“Aye, I am.” His mind began whirling with everything he needed to do. “I guess I should call your mum to come get you.”

“No, Da’. Please ask Ms. Ellie if I can stay here. I don’t want to go to Mum’s.”

“Alright, I’ll ask. I’m lettin’ you stay home tomorrow but you’ve got to go to school on Tuesday, you hear?”

“I will. Give Rose a hug for me.”

“Of course. I love you, Flower.”

“Love you, too. Let me know what’s goin’ on.”

They rang off and Alec leaped out of his seat. He needed to find Miller. They almost collided when he bolted out of his office.

“Whoa, sir! Sorry. Are you ready to interview Kevin Crane?”

“No. Look, Miller, I’m turnin’ over the interrogation to you.”

Ellie’s eyes widened in surprise. “What? Why? I-I mean thank you, sir. But what’s this all about?”

“Rose’s granddad had a heart attack and she went to London. I’m goin’ to go there to be with her. Is it alright if Daisy stays at yours for a couple of nights?”

She looked up at her boss, stunned. The Alec Hardy she had met a few years ago would never have even considered handing over the interrogation of a prime suspect to her or anyone else. Nothing would have come between him and his work. Now, Miller was seeing how much Rose had changed Alec. She’d softened his rough edges, opened his eyes to those around him, and brought out the gentler aspects of his character he rarely ever revealed to anyone. “Sure she can. I was gonna let the boys stay home tomorrow.”

“Yeah, I told Daisy the same. I’m goin’ to go home, shower, and change. I’ll have my phone on me and I’ll check in.”

“Do you want me to hold off on the interrogation?”

“Nah, I have all the faith of the world in you, Miller. You’ll be brilliant. Still call if you have questions or need anything, but I have a feelin’ you won’t be callin’. Thanks for this, Miller.”

Ellie smiled. “She is so good for you, sir. You’re doin’ the right thing.”

“I hope she thinks so.”
It had just turned four in the morning when Alec pulled into a parking space at Royal Hope. The
shower he’d taken at home had woken him up some, but he still had to slam back three coffees on
the drive there. He got out, adjusted the red jumper he wore, and donned his brown leather jacket.
Deciding to leave his overnight bag in the boot, he strode inside.

He had no qualms about using his title to get information and it wasn’t long before he was at the
door to the ICU waiting room. The sight before him melted his heart.

Rose had squeezed herself onto a too small couch, her head resting on her bag. She had her arms
folded against her chest, obviously cold. He slid his jacket off and carefully draped it over her
slumbering form. He crouched down in front of her to move the strands of hair lying across her
face. She was so beautiful. He hoped and prayed she would forgive him. Placing a feather-light
kiss on her temple, he sat in the chair near her feet so he could watch over her.

After sending Daisy and Miller texts to let them know he had arrived safely, he placed a hand
protectively on Rose’s calf and closed his eyes to rest for just a moment.

Whispering voices wormed their way into Rose’s consciousness. She had a crick in her neck but
she was so toasty warm, she didn’t want to move. Fingers combed their way through her hair and
she leaned into the touch. Someone was saying her name, sounding quite like Alec. That was
impossible. He couldn’t be here. He didn’t want her.

"Rose..." The voice registered as Alec's and cut through the haze as she surfaced from sleep.
"Rose, sweetheart, it's time to wake up."

"Just a little longer," she murmured, allowing the warmth of his voice and touch to pull her under
again.

Alec!

NO!

In an instant she was wide awake, her memories of her last encounter with Alec surging to the
front of her mind. She jerked away from him, feeling the sudden chill as his jacket dropped from
her shoulders. How dare he call her sweetheart after what he’d said? Wait... what's goin' on?

She sat up, completely disoriented, squinting in the bright light. She looked around her, finding
Donna’s worried gaze. Right... Granddad. She turned to Alec, anger evident in her features.
"What the hell're you doin' here?"

Crouching in front of her, he reached a tentative hand toward her, withdrawing it as she flinched
away from him. "Daisy told me what happened and I came as soon as I could."

"Why? You don't have to pretend to care about me anymore." She didn't try to hide her emotions,
and from the corner of her eye, she could see Donna shooting her startled looks. "Besides don't
you have an investigation goin' on?"

"Look, Rose... we can talk about all of that later. I want to talk to you if you'll let me." She could
read the sincerity in his chocolate eyes, but she'd been fooled by blokes before, and wasn't going
to allow Alec to hurt her ever again. After a short pause he continued to speak. "But Donna said
visiting hours are startin' soon, and I'm sure you must be desperate to see your granddad."
Rose was so emotionally overwhelmed and needed a minute to collect herself. "I'm gonna go to the loo. Freshen up an' all that. Be right back."

Grabbing her rucksack, she rushed out of the room.

Emptying her bladder had been a must. Now she washed her face in the sink, rinsing away what was left of her old make-up. She'd cried most of it off last night on her way to London. After drying her face, she dug out her hairbrush, and brushed out the tangles. As she pulled her hair into a bun, she fought to get over the shock of Alec showing up at the hospital.

What was his purpose in showing up? Did he really think she would want him here after telling her she was just a midlife crisis and a cheap one at that? Did he want forgiveness? He'd said he wanted to talk. She didn't know what to do. Alec's words had cut her to the quick. Could she forgive him for belittling how she felt about him and everything they'd shared between them? Against her better judgment, she'd let herself trust a man, gave him her all by falling in love with him, and was then left to feel like she was nothing. She felt herself tearing up.

*One thing at a time.* Granddad was her main priority right now. Taking a deep breath, she willed her tears away and headed back to the waiting room.

Upon entering, she caught Alec and Donna talking.

"None of us expected anything like this to happen. Granddad has always seemed invincible. He just loves to prove us wrong, but he's a strong one and will overcome this. I know he will." Donna took a sip of her tea. "What time did you get in?"

"Around four. I would've been here sooner, but I had to make arrangements for my daughter and tie up some things for the investigation I'm workin'."

"I'm just glad you're here for Rose. I have no idea what's going on between the two of you, but the fact that you came shows how much you care for her."

Rose furrowed her brows as she absorbed what her cousin had just said. She shook her head as if shaking the thought from her mind, not wanting to examine it further.

When she came fully into the room, Alec took a step toward her. Rose avoided meeting his eye and stepped towards Donna and Lee. Donna was opening her mouth to say something when the double doors opened.

Dr. Jones stepped out and, knowing it was what the family wanted, got straight to the point. "He did great overnight. No complications. He's awake right now but only two of you can come back."

Donna stepped forward, eager to go back. "That'll be me and Rose here. Thank you, Dr. Jones."

"You're very welcome. Follow me."

"I'll take that for you." Alec reached out for Rose's rucksack. Hesitantly, she handed it over. "I'll be right here, Rose."

She nodded, unable to say anything at the moment, before disappearing behind the doors with Donna.

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Alec checked his watch. Visitation would be over in ten minutes. He didn't mind sitting here with
Lee, he was just anxious to talk to his lass. Who was he kidding? Anxious didn't even begin to cover how he felt. Rose was obviously not happy to see him and he couldn't blame her. Would she even let him try to explain why he'd said what he did? Hell, he wasn't even sure what to say. He just knew he needed Rose in his life and would do all he could to show her that.

*What if she tells you to take a hike? What'll you do then? You know you deserve it.* The snarky voice in his head sounded like his ex-wife. He prayed Rose didn't tell him to piss off.

“You alright, m-mate?”

He looked up to see Lee offering him a cup of crap the hospital called coffee. “Thanks.” He took a tentative sip. *Better than nothing.* Lee sat down next to him and Alec remembered Lee had asked him a question. “Just got a lot on my mind.”

“Oh, yeah, the case. R-rose said you were elbows d-deep in one.”

“It’s almost wrapped up now.” Alec ran his hand down his face. “My DS is closing it up.”

Lee nodded and the men finished their drinks in silence. Both jumped up when the automatic doors swung open. Donna was a sobbing, ginger whirlwind, catapulting herself into Lee's arms.

Rose trailed and Alec's heart broke at the sight of her tear-streaked face. Making eye contact with her, he held out his hand to her, wanting to comfort her, to love her. When she shook her head and wrapped her arms around her waist, his breath left his body. She was going to leave him. He had fucked up too much to be forgiven but, by God, he was still going to try.

Alec turned to Donna and Lee while fighting back tears of his own. "What are your plans now?"

Donna blew out a breath. "Lee and I are going to stay here. Blondie's gonna go back to my house and get some sleep. What about you? Do you have a place to stay?"

"Oh." Alec frowned. "I didn't think about that. I just wanted to get here. I can find a room somewhere."

"Nonsense." Donna waved her hand to brush off his idea of staying at a hotel. "You can stay at my house. Got plenty of space... don't give me that look, Rose. It's obvious you two need to talk, but you're both dead on your feet. Go, get some sleep then talk. You can come back once you've rested up."

Rose stared at her shoes and Alec stared at her. "Thank you, Donna, for the offer but it's up to Rose on what I do next."

Rose's head snapped up, eyes full of fire. "I'm not your boss. I can't tell you what to do. 'M too young to know any better, yeah. I'll just call an uber."

Alec crossed the room over to her. "Let me drive you to Donna's. Please, Rose. I don't have to stay there. I'll gladly get a hotel, but we need to talk. Please."

He could tell she was vacillating, so he took her fingertips in his and gave them a gentle squeeze. "Please?"

She met his gaze full on, searching for something. Alec had no clue what, but she must have seen what she needed to because she nodded. "Alright."

The word was whispered, but it was as loud as a gunshot in the quiet room. Warmth and hope flowed through his body. He tried to tamp down the positivity, not wanting to get too confident,
but he couldn't help but feel that he maybe won a little bit of her back.

He grabbed her rucksack and stood by the door while she hugged Donna and Lee. When she was back at his side, they made their way to his car. As they exited out into the parking lot he turned to her. "I was thinkin' we could pick up some breakfast on the way back to Donna's."

She answered without looking at him. "Yeah, alright. Don't even remember when the last time I ate was."

Once settled in his car, Rose put Donna's address into her phone's GPS app. A nerve-wracking silence descended. Rose was pressed against the window, ignoring him, her withdrawal from him making the silence louder. Following the prompts of the GPS, he made his way through town.

After ten long minutes he thought the tension would make him snap. He needed to hear the sound of her voice. Even if she was yelling at him, he wanted to hear it. "How was Wilf when you saw him?"

Rose startled when he spoke. Never taking her gaze from the window, she answered. "He was smilin', makin' jokes, yeah, but he..." Rose began to cry softly. "He didn't look like himself at all. It was hard seein' him like that."

Alec couldn't help himself and reached over to lay a hand on her shoulder. "I understand. I felt the same way seein' my mum after she had a stroke. She made a full recovery, but seein' someone who's always been so strong at their weakest is tough.

He could feel her eyes on him now, but he had spotted a bakery and pulled in the closest parking spot.

"Want anything in particular?"

Rose scrunched up her nose in thought. "I can't decide. 'M so hungry I could probably eat everything they have."

Alec laughed. "I'll get a variety. How about that, love?" They both froze. "Shit! She's probably not ready to hear that! "I'll, uh, I'll be right back."

Rose watched as Alec rushed into the bakery. He'd called her 'love'. She was so confused by his behavior. He seemed so concerned and caring, doting on her and calling her sweet names. But she was still so angry with him. What he had said was cruel and unforgiveable. Could she ever feel the same about him after that? Did that one argument outweigh their entire relationship?

Alec returned and they spent the rest of the ride in silence as she thought back to a conversation she'd had with her mum one night after watching her parents have a row and her dad had stormed out of the flat.

"Mum? Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure, sweetheart. Come sit with me." A ten-year-old Rose hopped onto the couch with her mum and snuggled up to her side. "What's on that pretty little mind of yours?"

"Are you and Daddy gonna get a divorce like Shareen's parents?"

Jackie looked down at her daughter, shocked. "No, Rose! What would make you think that?"

"I heard you two yelling at each other and you were cryin'. I asked Shareen an' she said that's what her parents did before they split up."
“Oh, sweetheart. Your father and I aren’t splittin’ up. I love that man to pieces. It’s just sometimes people argue because they’re upset or angry and all you can focus on is a way to hurt the other person so they can feel as bad as you do. It’s not the best way to handle things, but no one’s perfect.”

“Yeah, alright, but why did Daddy leave? Is he comin’ back?”

“He’ll be back. He couldn’t last a day without us.” Jackie sighed. “I said some mean things to your father when it was really just my insecurities talkin’. I’ll apologize, don’t worry. Me and your dad, we have this rule: always talk it out and never go to bed angry. It’s one Grandma Prentice taught me.” Jackie furrowed her brows. “You tell that friend of yours that Pete and Jackie Tyler will be together to the very end. Her parents didn’t know how to communicate, that’s all.” She looked down at her little girl. “Don’t tell her that part.”

Rose giggled. “I won’t, Mum. Thanks for tellin’ me the truth.”

“Anytime, sweetheart. You need to learn these things. Remember that rule and you’ll have a very successful relationship. Mark my words.”

Rose turned and looked at Alec, her mother's words resonating in her mind. He had come to London to be with her and Rose needed to talk to him, to hear what he had to say.

ARARARARAR

They sat at the breakfast table with their tea and pastries, Rose with her chocolate-covered sprinkled donuts and Alec with a blueberry scone. The lack of conversation was starting to get to her, so she offered an olive branch.

“So…” she licked some chocolate from her thumb, “the old movie theater burned down?”

Alec washed down his bite of scone with a swig of tea and nodded. “Yeah. Look, Rose, I,” he sighed. “I’m not supposed to talk about the investigation with you, but I can’t explain why I acted the way I did without it.”

She stuffed her hands beneath her thighs and searched his face. “I won’t say a word. I promise.”

“I know. I’m not worried about that. I just don’t want to upset you with the details.”

“Go ahead, Alec. I can take it.”

He finished off his tea and rested his forearms on the table. “Right. Well, Miller and I used your story about the boy you knew growing up and how he got caught starting the fires. We narrowed it down to one person of interest. We never could confirm his alibi and he was just, he was just shady. He was at the theater fire, but ran before I could get to him.”

Rose watched as he paused, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath. She didn’t press him; he’d tell her in his own time.

“The fire marshal called Miller and me over. There had been someone in the building when it went up.”

Rose gasped, her hand flying to her mouth. “Oh my God! Who was it?”

“No positive ID has been made but we are thinking it’s a squatter. I got angry, Rose. So angry. If only I’d worked harder or had done something different-"
“Stop.” Her hands trembled as she reluctantly took his hands in hers. Despite her anger, she couldn’t fight the impulse to comfort him, unable to bear seeing him suffer guilt over something that he had no control over. “Look at me, Alec. It was not your fault. You hear me? Not. Your. Fault.”

She could tell he wanted to disagree by the downtrodden shake of his head but, thankfully, he didn’t.

“Well... thank you.” The corner of his mouth tried to hitch up into a smile, however the rest of the tale needed to be told. “To make a long story short, we went after the guy we suspected. We had to do some research but we finally found someone who’d known him in high school. I’m not goin’ to say his name. I know you’ll figure it out though.”

“Okay,” she whispered.

“Ellie and I went to see the man to try an’ get any information on the arsonist. It turns out the suspect had confided in this man but, due to a certain type of law, he couldn’t tell us what was said. This person knows, Rose, and won’t tell us.” Rose jumped when he slammed both palms down on the table, his anger starting to get the better of him again. "He says he can’t but that’s a load of shite."

Rose smirked. “I can only begin to imagine how that made you feel.”

He gave a mirthless chuckle. “There’s no words, lass. If this… eejit would’ve come forward, we might not have a bloody dead body in our morgue.”

Opening and closing her mouth, Rose tried to offer comfort or reassurances but nothing came. Instead, she watched as all the anger left him. His shoulders slumped, the fight leaving his voice only to be replaced with remorse.

“I’m so sorry, lass. I was angry and I took out all my frustration on you. After the Sandbrook case, I was forced to see the department psychiatrist. He told me I had a habit of belittling people as a means to control them. That I lose my temper easily when I’m stressed and hurling insults is my defense mechanism, helping me feel like I have a sense of control over things. I did that... to you, lass. You didn’t deserve that.” He looked her straight in the eye, causing her to shiver at the intense emotion displayed.

“Your light, your joy makes me look forward to waking up everyday. You make me so happy. And just because I was angry at someone else I said the most hurtful words I could think of.” When tears started to slide down his scruffy cheeks, her eyes watered as well. “You are not a bloody midlife crisis. You... you’re the love of my life.”

Her heart was beating out a samba as she absorbed his words. The love of his life? He loved her? Hold on, Rose. Don’t get ahead of yourself.

“Alec, I’m sorry you went through all that, I am, but how do I know you’re not just sayin’ this? How do I know that you won’t do this again? Because let me tell you, mister, your defense mechanism isn’t gonna cut it with me.”

“Rose Tyler, I’m sure I’ll mess up again but, if you’ll let me, I’ll spend the rest of my life proving to you how in love with you I am. How do you know I’m tellin’ the truth? I love you, Rose. And you know me. Is that somethin’ I’d just say?”

She shook her head, knowing he was right. Alec Hardy would not give those three words out to anyone unless he truly meant it. “You love me?”
Rose was crying in earnest now. Alec stood and came around the table to kneel down in front of her. “Aye, I do. And I’m so sorry that it took me being a complete arse to get the courage to say it.”

"Before... I thought I loved you. It felt so real, like nothin' I've ever felt before."

He brushed her tears away with his thumbs. "Do you think that you'd be willin' to try again? See if you could still feel that way about me?"

"I think... I think I'd like to try."

Tears began to fall unheeded down his cheeks and he was unashamed. "Aye? Truly?"

"Yeah." Rose couldn't stop the jaw-splitting yawn, making Alec chuckle. "I'm totally knackered."

"Me too, lass."

She looked down at Alec. She wanted him to hold her so badly, but she wasn't ready for that. She still needed some time to think things through, but she didn't want him to leave. "There's a spare bedroom next to mine. You could stay there, if you want."

"Aye, I want. I'll go get my bag."

As he got to his feet, Rose stood, too, and began cleaning up their mess. He was drawn to her. Slowly, giving her a way out if she wanted it, he pulled her into a loose embrace and pressed a reverent kiss onto her forehead before striding out the door to his car.

She'd said she wanted to try but he just felt the need to hold her and give her one last kiss in case she decided he wasn't worth the effort and left for good.

This was his last chance and he was going to make it count.
To Make You Feel My Love

Chapter Summary

Hey, y'all! After this chapter I just have the epilogue left! Here we find out if Rose and Alec's relationship survives (spoilers: end is NSFW).

TenRoseForeverandevever, I love you and you are amazing!!

I Was Here

Chapter 15 To Make You Feel My Love

Alec rolled over in the too small daybed for the millionth time. When he had returned from retrieving his bag, Rose had shown him the room and loo he would be using then bade him goodnight. He could only watch as she shut herself into her room, wishing he could hold her. Understanding that might not ever happen again, he’d taken his shower and had gone to bed. But he couldn’t sleep, his mind unable to shut down thoughts of Rose leaving him. Rose said she’d like to try to give their relationship a chance, and he prayed he wouldn’t let her down. He wanted to be the man she deserved. Alec wished there was some grand gesture or magic words that could fix this, but he knew it was just going to take time. And if being patient was the way to win back his Rose, he’d do it. Even if it killed him.

It probably will, Miller’s voice chuckled in his mind.

He rolled over again, trying to find a nonexistent comfortable spot in the springy mattress when he heard someone moving about. As far as he knew, only he and Rose were here. He climbed out of the bed and pulled a t-shirt over his bare chest and ventured out into the house.

Walking over to Rose’s door, he knocked lightly. “Rose?” Slowly, he opened the door and found her bed rumpled but empty. Where is she? He heard the noise again, coming from downstairs.

Dishes clinking caught his attention when he reached the bottom of the stairs and he went to investigate. Once he was standing in the doorway of the kitchen, he braced himself against the frame, watching Rose scrub the dishes quite manically, guilt slamming into his gut because of his role in her current state. Her hair was pulled up into the messiest bun he’d ever seen and her oversized night shirt hung off one shoulder. She wasn’t wearing any sleep bottoms, but she had on a pair of rainbow striped knee socks. If she hadn’t looked so upset, he would have called her adorable.

She turned to put up a silver pot, almost dropping it when she saw Alec. “Jesus, Alec!” Her tone was harsh after being startled. “Why aren’t you sleepin’?”

Pushing off the door frame, he sauntered over to her and stood with his hips against the counter, arms crossed over his chest. “Why aren’t you?”

She frowned. “I asked you first.”
“Fair enough.” Alec ran a hand through his dark hair. “Couldn’t sleep. That bed isn’t the coziest.”

Rose nodded. “Right.” She turned back to the sink, picking up the freshly cleaned silverware. He watched her as she stiffly restocked the utensil drawer.

He grabbed her hand as she reached for a fork, heart sad when she wouldn’t meet his gaze. “Why are you still up, Rose?”

She stared down at their joined hands. For a minute, he didn’t think she was going to answer, but she surprised him when she took a shaky breath. “I… I tried, but I just couldn’t. There’s so much to be done around here and I just kept thinking about Granddad an’-an’ you.” She looked up at him when she said that, her brows furrowed. “All I want is for you to hold me an’ tell me everything’ll be alright, but, honestly, I still wanna punch you in the face. ‘M sure that feelin’ll go away once I get some sleep but, fuck, ‘m just a mess right now.”

As she spoke the last few words, Alec pulled her to his chest and let her soak his shirt with her tears. “I’m so sorry, Rose.”

She pulled back, but Alec refused to relinquish his hold on her. She wiped her nose with her sleeve. “I know you’re sorry. You don’t have to keep sayin’ it.”

He pushed her wild hair behind her ear. “Alright. Punch me.”

She laughed as she sniffed. “What?”

“If it’ll make you feel better then punch me.” He meant it. He was willing to do whatever he could to make her happy.

She slammed her fists onto his chest, lips pulled down into a tiny frown. “Hurtin’ you would never make me feel better. ‘M just so tired.”

“Come with me.” He took a hold of her hand, leading her to the stairs. It was a slow trek. He had a plan to help his Rose sleep, but he knew she might not be receptive to it, and Alec was trying to soak up every minute with her that he could. Even with their lazy pace, they were at her bedroom door in a blink. He nudged her towards the bed. “Go on. Get in, lass.”

She crawled in, curling up on her side. Alec made sure she was snug under the covers before he climbed onto the bed beside her over the duvet, not wanting her to feel he was pressuring her. Using his foot, he hooked the afghan at the bottom of the bed and draped it across himself. He spooned up behind her, folding himself around her.

“I’m just gonna stay until you fall asleep. Get some rest, love.”

He grinned into her hair when she burrowed back into his arms, but what she said next had him closing his eyes in pure joy.

“You don’t have to go. You can stay an’ sleep, too.”

“Thank you, Rose.” He kissed the sensitive spot behind her ear and closed his eyes. Both were asleep within seconds.

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Bright sunlight shone on Rose’s face, causing her to squint open an eye and glare at the offending window. She rolled over to an empty bed. Alec wasn’t next to her.
Rose sighed and ran her hand over the spot he had occupied. He was really trying; she knew it. The fate of their relationship was down to her. Before she could even consider them being together again she needed to ask herself a couple questions.

*Do you believe that he is truly sorry for what he said?* She ran her teeth over her bottom lip. Some people say a person doesn’t say something they don’t really mean, that there is truth *somewhere* in those words. Alec had made no secret of his concern over their age difference and, the more she thought about it, part of her believed he was projecting his insecurities onto her. The other part, albeit a smaller one, knew her hurt stemmed from her own feelings of being too young for this brilliant man. But did that mean he regretted saying it?

If she was being completely honest with herself, she knew he had regretted his outburst the moment the words came out of his mouth. She had seen it in his face when he’d stepped towards her. She just hadn’t wanted to acknowledge it.

When she had started seeing Jimmy, Wilf and Donna had let her know their dislike for the man. Rose had defended Jimmy, telling them about his love and all the promises he’d made to her. Wilf had only had one thing to say before he’d dropped the matter for good (unlike Donna).

*“Darling, all he’s doing is talking. Has he made any attempt to make these promises come true? Actions speak louder than words, Rose.”*

Wilf had been right. Rose smiled to herself. Wilf was *always* right. Alec had come to London for her, had dropped everything just so she wouldn’t be alone in her time of need. Rose was well aware of how much he had going on and he had decided she was more important. So, yes, she believed he was sorry.

*Is he worth a second chance?* Rose sat up against the headboard and worked to tame her blonde locks into two French braided pigtails. She thought of what her life would be like if she left Alec. She imagined passing him in the grocery store, not saying a word to him; making a breakthrough with a student and not being able to tell him about it; seeing him out with Daisy, laughing and having a good time, knowing she would never be apart of it.

Her stomach clenched and flew up into her chest. She wanted to be with him, to have a life with him. Damn it, she *loved* him. She loved Daisy, too. They were her family and she didn’t want to let them go.

She glanced at the clock: three-thirty. Visiting hours were at five. She could go see Granddad then she’d drag Donna out to eat dinner. Dressed in some skinny jeans, a long-sleeved teal t-shirt, and a navy cardigan, Rose headed downstairs in search of Alec.

She found him sitting at the island in the kitchen, drinking tea and talking on his mobile.

*“Well done, Miller … SOCO have an ID on the body yet? ... Fine, just call me when you get the report. I’m not sure how much longer I’ll be here … I did, so keep your violent tendencies to yourself … Yes, yes, I’ll tell her. Tell Daisy I’ll call her later.”* He pulled the phone back and checked the screen. *“Miller, I’ve got another call comin’ in.”*

Rose snickered quietly as he hung up on Miller. He was still her rude detective then. She was surprised when he put the call on speakerphone.

*“Hello?”*

*“Hello, Alec. You’re no’ busy are ye?”*

*“No’ at the moment, Mother.”*
Rose raised her eyebrows in surprise. She didn’t want to eavesdrop on a call between him and his mum so she walked in, running her hand along his shoulder as she went to the kettle. He raised his head at her touch and met her gaze. He was so handsome with his gentle gaze and soft grin her heart ached. Giving him a shy smile, she worked on making her cuppa.

“Alrigh’. I wanted to tell yeh tha’ your grannie will be here for Hogmanay an’ I’m sure she’d like to see yeh and her great-granddaughter. Think yeh both can come?’

Rose turned around and leaned back up against the counter, blowing on her tea. Alec watched her, brows furrowed. He seemed to be hesitating, on what she didn’t know.

“I’ll talk to Daisy abou’ it. Tess wanted her to spend the holidays with her but Flower hasna wanted to spend much time with Tess as of late.”

“I don’ blame her. Tha’ woman is a right cow.”

Rose hid her giggle behind her hand.

“Mum!” Alec rolled his eyes but had a rueful smile on his face. “I’ll talk to her.” He stared at Rose head on. “Would it be alrigh’ if I brought someone else with me?”

Rose pointed to herself and mouthed ‘me?’

“Are yeh talkin’ abou’ your lass? Rose is it?”

Rose felt a warm flutter throughout her body at the thought of Alec talking to his mum about her. Alec’s eyes never left hers. “Aye. I’d love for you an’ Da’ to meet her. If she’s willin’ to come tha’ is. But I feel like I need to warn yeh. She’s a wee bit younger than me. Thirteen years to be exact.”

Rose stared down at her rainbow socks and the warm feeling died. The age thing again. Did it still bother him that much?

“So?” His mother’s voice sounded incredulous. “Do yeh love her, son?”

“Aye, I do.” The intensity of his reply made Rose raise her head. Tears began to pool in her eyes. Alec went on, “She may no’ want to come. I’ve been a bit of a glaikit bastard an’ said some things I shouldn’a.”

The elder Hardy woman sighed. “When are yeh gonna learn to shut yer geggie? If she puts up with yeh and yer temper, she’s a saint. But, son, age is jus’ a number.”

“Aye. I jus’ didna want you and Da’ to be surprised by it like Daisy was.”

Rose thought back to her very first encounter with Alec’s daughter, smiling to herself as she remembered the teen’s determination to protect her dad.

“I’m sure she’s a fine lass. Truth be told a sick, mangy heilan’ coo would make a better mate than Tess. No’ sayin’ yer lass is one. We’d be happy to have her. Granny Daisy would love to meet her as well, ’m sure.”

Mother and son rang off and Rose poured Alec and herself some more tea. “Your accent was thicker than I’ve ever heard it.”

“That tends to happen when I talk to my family or I’m in Scotland.”
“Your mother sounds wonderful. I can’t wait to meet her.”

Alec’s hand stopped, his cup halfway to his mouth, eyes wide. “Does…” he set his cup down and stood, walking until he was by Rose. “Does tha’ mean wha’ I think it does?”

Setting down her cup, Rose took his hands in hers. “I told you I’d like to try and I mean it. I don’t want to give up on us. That bein’ said...” she poked him in the chest with her index finger and he winced when the tip of the nail dug into him. “...if you ever talk to me again like you did the other day, I’ll walk away an’ never look back. I won’t tolerate bein’ brought down like that ever again.”

He grabbed hold of her hand at his chest. He pressed on her hand until her palm rested over his heart. “Never again, Rose. I’ll be better. I’ll get help, talk to someone. I promise.”

Rose focused on the lub-dub of his heart pulsing underneath her hand. “Don’t make me promises, just be better. You can do it and you don’t even need professional help. Talk to me. You know when you’re in a dangerous mood, yeah? Just tell me, but in a way that won’t make me want to kill you.”

Alec chuckled. He wrapped one arm around her waist and cradled the hand that was still over his heart. He began swaying them side to side, content to dance to the music only he could hear. She was giving him another chance. Closing his eyes, he touched his forehead to hers. When he spoke, his voice was low and gravelly.

“Maybe… maybe we can have a code word, aye? Or a sentence that one of us can say when we know each other is one of those dangerous moods, as you call it.”

Running her free hand along his back, she hummed. “Each other? Are you sayin’ I get into dangerous moods?”

He slowly spun his love in a circle, enjoying their quiet banter. He laid a gentle kiss to the top of her head. “Well, you are a woman.”

“Piss off, Hardy,” she whispered before pulling him down by the back of his neck, pressing her plump lips to his. He kept the kiss chaste, not wanting to push his luck.

He hadn’t lost her, his lass. He hadn’t missed that she’d never said she loved him, but he had hope. And that was a lot more than he’d had even a few hours ago.

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Alec stepped out the courthouse doors, grateful the rain hadn’t started yet. He prayed it would hold off until after he picked up his love from the train station. Rose was due back today since Wilf had been discharged home yesterday. He’d stayed two nights in London with her but, ultimately, needed to come back for Daisy and to prepare for court. It had been a week since he’d seen Rose.

They’d talked every night and had sent texts throughout their days. Being apart had helped their communication, with no physical distractions to get in their way. They had been able to air out all their grievances and insecurities, supporting each other with sweet words and reassurances.

Alec had told Rose he loved her several times and, even though she still hadn’t said it back, he knew she would in her own time. Their conversations over the past week had shown him that.
“Good job, sir.”

Miller’s voice startled him as she came out of the courthouse. He waited until his DS was by his side at the end of the steps to speak. “Couldn’t’ve done it without you, Miller.”

“Of course you couldn’t!” she said cheerfully.

He rolled his eyes at her. “I’m glad his plea of insanity didn’t work out like he hoped it would. The prosecution did an outstanding job.”

Ellie bumped her shoulder against his. “Look at you, complimentin’ everyone. Rose must be comin’ home today.”

Scowling, he turned to Ellie. “I’m just happy when justice is served. Now, the Ryans family have closure.”

Drew Ryans was the young man who had perished in the movie theater fire. According to his family, Drew had graduated uni earlier in the year and decided to backpack his way across England, trying to live off the land. His parents had understood that his death was unintentional, but felt better knowing that the bastard who’d aided in the death of their son was being sent to prison and, therefore, unable to hurt anyone else.

Besides Drew Ryans, Kevin Crane had taken the life of his mother. The coroner had ruled the cause of death for Helena Crane to be asphyxiation by strangulation.

Crane had tried to claim insanity but, upon being evaluated by several psychiatrists, he had not met the criteria for the plea to be valid. He was going away for life.

Checking his watch, he swore under his breath. “I’ve gotta go get Rose.”

“Are you still takin’ a personal day tomorrow?”

“Aye. We’ll see you Sunday for dinner, Miller. Daisy’s making apple cobbler for dessert.”

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Alec jogged onto the empty train platform, looking left and right for Rose. He was a few minutes late but she should still be waiting for him. He turned to head into the lobby when he saw her.

She was coming out of the lobby doors, rucksack on her back. She was absolutely beautiful and he once again thanked every deity there was that she hadn’t left him.

Giving her his tongue-touched smile, she dropped her rucksack and ran to him. His heart nearly beat from his chest as she jumped into his outstretched arms, wrapping her legs around his waist.

Alec kissed her, completely uncaring they were in public, overjoyed when she returned his kiss just as enthusiastically. Their tongues parried and stroked each other, slowing as Alec and Rose needed to breathe. He still held her in his arms when their lips parted and rested his forehead against hers.

He was opening his mouth to cheekily ask her if she missed him when she spoke first.

“Alec… I love you.”

He sucked in a sharp breath, his head jerking up. He studied the emotions plainly visible in her glossy eyes. The love he saw there threatened his ability to stay upright, but fear of dropping his
Rose gave him the strength to stand. She loved him! Part of him still couldn’t fathom it.

“Aye? Truly?”

She ran a tender hand through his hair, pressing a lingering peck to his lips. “I do. ‘M sorry it took me so long to say it. I just wanted to be sure, you know? But, I do love you very much, Alec Hardy. My Detective Inspector.”

He squeezed her tight to his body, slowly rocking them side-to-side. A few seconds later, Rose unwrapped herself from around his body causing Alec to let out a grunt of disappointment. She laughed.

“Don’t do that, you big baby. I need to get home.”

He picked up her rucksack and led the way to his car. “Daisy is goin’ to Matilda’s house after school to study for a big final. Cynthia said Daisy could stay and she’d take the girls to school in the morning.”

“Who’s Cynthia again?” Rose asked as she got into the car.

Alec climbed into the driver’s seat and started the engine. “Matilda’s stepmom.”

“Ah. So we have your house all to ourselves tonight?” Rose asked coyly.

“We sure do. Have anything in particular in mind, lass?” Alec turned his dark eyes to her when he stopped at a traffic light.

Rose reached over and ran her hand along the inside of Alec’s thigh. “I do. I want a nice… long… hot…” she leaned over until her lips touched his ear, “bath.”

She laughed at Alec’s scowling glare the rest of the way to her flat.

ARARARARAR

After Rose had replenished her rucksack with fresh clothes, they’d stopped for Italian takeaway. Now, they sat around Alec’s coffee table in the living room like they had done so long ago on their first date.

Rose was pouring them a glass of wine when her phone rang. Setting the bottle down, she picked up her mobile. “Hello, Granddad.”

“Hello, young lady. I don’t recall getting a call letting me know you made it home safely.”

“I texted Donna. It’s not my fault she didn’t tell you. How’re you feelin’?”

“Tired, darling, but as I said yesterday: I’m so happy to be home.”

“I’m so happy you’re alive. How’s Harriet treating you?”

Harriet Jones was an older woman who lived across the street from Donna and Wilf. When she had found out about Wilf’s heart attack and subsequent surgery, she’d burst into the hospital like a squall. Within an hour, Harriet had set up a schedule for when Wilf was discharged. Rest, meals, light exercise, bathroom trips… You name it, she’d scheduled it.

Donna and Rose had been discussing a plan that had one of them being with Wilf so he wouldn’t be alone, but Harriet wouldn’t hear any of it.
She’d said, “Both you ladies work. Since I’m retired, I can stay with him and I will.”

And that was the end of it.

Wilf hefted a long-suffering sigh. “The only good thing about that woman is she manages to make a bland diet delicious.”

“Now, Granddad, be nice. She’s workin’ hard takin’ care’a you. Things would be so much easier if the two of you would just admit you’re sweet on each other.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Rose Marion Tyler. Will you be coming up next weekend?”

“Yes, sir. I’ll be on the train after my private lessons. But if you need me beforehand, just call.”

Rose set her mobile down after she said goodbye. She gave Alec an apologetic smile. “Sorry, love. I forgot to call when I made it home.”

When Alec didn’t say anything she looked up to see him gazing softly at her. That’s when Rose realized what she’d called him. She gave him a sly smile before spearing a piece of ravioli with her fork.

Once everything from dinner was cleaned up, Rose got her bath and instead of a rubber ducky to share her bath with, she had a tall, Scottish Detective Inspector. They sat on opposite ends of the large claw foot tub with Alec massaging Rose’s right foot.

“Hmmm, Alec that feels amazin’. Don’t ever stop, okay?”

He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the pad of her big toe. “Remember the first time I gave you a foot massage?”

Her eyes darkened as she thought back to that late night in her flat. Arousal flared through her body and she ran her hands up to cup her breasts. “Vividly.”

She gasped when Alec bit her toe. “I love it when you bite.”

In the deepest, knicker-scorching burr ever uttered, Alec growled, “I know.”

Using quick movements, he grasped Rose’s arms and pulled her onto his lap, water splashing over the lip of the tub. She wrapped her arms around his neck and both of them moaned at the sensation of her slit sliding along his erection. Rose rocked her hips, rutting along his length and shuddering when his tip came into contact with her bundle of nerves. It had been so long since they’d been intimate with each other, she was starved for contact. Unable to help herself, she began undulating her hips faster, chasing her long-awaited release.

Alec nipped her chin and Rose became aware of how selfishly she was behaving. She stilled her body, but was unable to stop her panting breaths. “Sorry. Got carried away.”

She felt a fresh wave of wetness in her core when Alec leaned up to whisper in her ear. “Don’t apologize. By all means, carry on.”
Already close to coming, Rose resumed a frantic rhythm. She didn’t want to draw things out, she wanted to come fast and hard. With each rock forward, the hot tingling sensation shot down her legs and up to her nipples, which were made more sensitive by rubbing against his chest. Every muscle in her body was tightening. Alec exposed her throat with another rough pull of her hair and bit down on the join of her neck and shoulder. That sting of pain was the last erotic stimulus she needed, keening out a cry as her sex spasmed.

He laved his tongue over the dark red love bite as she came down from her orgasm. Opening her eyes, she was met with his moist brown ones. She carded her fingers through his damp hair. “What’s wrong?”

“I was watching you come apart an’ I…” His breath caught. “I almost lost you.”

Rose’s heart broke for him as the tears started to spill down his face. It was true. He had almost lost her but she knew now, more than anything, he was sorry. She wrapped her arms tighter around his neck and pulled until his scruffy cheek rested on her chest.

“I’m here, Alec. I’m here and we’re better than ever, alrigh’?”

He nodded then kissed her sternum. “Aye, lass. We are. Let’s get out and move somewhere a wee bit more comfortable.”

"But I haven’t taken care of you," whispered Rose.

"Well, my little emotional outburst kinda put that on hold, but don't worry..." He ran his nose along her collarbones. "I intend to collect."

Rose smiled, bestowed him an Eskimo kiss, and climbed off his now calmed lap. The second her foot touched the tile, she started to slip, and if it wasn’t for Alec’s quick reflexes, she would have face planted it. Once they stopped laughing, Alec wrapped a towel around her. “Go on and get dressed, love. I’m gonna clean up someone’s mess.”

Rose paused in the doorway. “Oi! That mess is your fault. Bein’ a DI, I thought you’d’ve figured that out.”

He made to snap the towel at her. She shrieked and jumped out of the way.

“Cheeky tart!” He called.

She laughed as she made her way into his room. Digging through her bag, she picked a pair of black lace boy shorts. She was too cold for the matching tank so she improvised. She pulled Alec’s red jumper out of his closet and slid the soft material over her skin. She knew Alec loved it when she wore his clothes and hoped this would rekindle their lustful mood. Looking in the mirror, she smiled. Oh, yes, Alec will appreciate this. Taking the clip from her hair, she fluffed out her wavy mane. Perfect.

“Perfect.”

She froze at the echo of her thoughts. She turned to see Alec standing just outside the bathroom, towel around his slim hips. “What?”

He stalked towards her, grabbing her hips. “I said perfect. You are, y’know.”

Gently, he began to knead the soft flesh of her bum, drawing a low moan from her throat. Greetin’ like a bairn had deflated more than just his ego. But seeing his Rose wearing his red jumper sent every drop of blood south. He walked her backward...
until her legs hit the edge of the bed. “Sit.” He watched with satisfaction as Rose’s eyes turned black. She followed his command, exhaling breaths shaky with anticipation.

Alec towered over her and, not taking his eyes from hers, he unwrapped the towel, exposing himself to his lover. Her eyes raked down his body, giving him the impression of being the most gorgeous man in existence. Only his Rose could give him this kind of confidence. He felt he could do anything and would do anything for her.

She reached for his erection, but he stopped her. “No, lass. Not yet.”

He dropped to his knees in front of her and pushed on her inner thighs, spreading her wide before him. Looking up, he saw his Rose leaning back on her hands, her breasts moving enticingly under his jumper with her gasping breaths. Not able to wait any longer, Alec pulled the crotch of her knickers aside and began lapping at her wet sex. He shivered as her nails from one hand scraped his scalp.

“God, Alec. Unghhh…”

Alec’s cock was making its impatience known, the throbbing boarding on painful. He was ready to take her. He moved his lips up to suck her clit into his mouth, causing her hips to arch off the bed.

Standing, he stroked himself, staring as Rose writhed on the bed in front of him. He released his cock to grab her behind the knees, yanking her closer to the edge of the bed. Moving her knickers again and lining himself up, he pushed in deep.

Rose arched her back, crying out. Alec held still inside of her, relishing the sensation of her inner muscles squeezing him tight. Needing to see his love bared to him, he tugged the hem of his jumper up until her breasts were exposed, watching hungrily as her dusky buds pebbled in the cool air.

“See? Perfect.”

Alec began to pump his hips slowly, giving Rose the chance to feel every inch of him filling and stretching her. The sound of her moans reverberated in his bedroom, igniting a fire in his blood. Hooking one arm under her leg, he plunged faster into her warm, willing body.

Rose threw her arms above her head, gripping the duvet tight in her fingers. Her mouth hung open and her naked skin was flushed red, almost matching the color of his jumper. Her breasts bounced vigorously as his thrusts grew more frantic, the hot ball of tension beginning to burn at the base of his spine.

He needed to feel more of her. He released her leg and leaned down over her body. Pulling her hands from the covers, he laced their fingers together and pressed his forehead against hers. His pelvis was pummeling her clit with every drive of his hips, bringing her closer to her peak.

Rose wrapped her legs around his waist intensifying the friction between them. A few pumps later, she was coming hard around him. The clenching muscles of her sex stripped him of all control and he found himself spilling violently into her, semen overflowing onto his bed.

Alec collapsed on top of her, knowing she loved the feel of his weight pressing into her. They both worked to calm their breathing, but after the mind-blowing orgasms and the feel of being one with each other, their minds were not particularly focused on breathing. Once there was no fear of them passing out from lack of oxygen, he raised up on his elbows. “Do you wanna get in bed for the night?”
Rose craned her neck to check the clock. “Oh, yeah. Didn’t realize it was so late.”

He shivered when Rose began trailing her nails lightly along his spine. “The time doesna matter. I took the day off tomorrow to spend with my love.”

Her signature smile made his heart swell with happiness. “You did? Really?”

“Aye.”

“Well, then. Why don’t we get cleaned up and watch a movie.”

Alec reluctantly pulled his softening member from her and bent down to retrieve his towel. Before he had a chance to put the cloth to his bits, Rose slid off the bed to her knees and took him into her mouth, cleaning him of their combined fluids. He cried out, plunging his hand into her hair, desire rekindling in his veins.

Rose released him with a pop and licked her lips. “On second thought, cleaning up and watching a movie can wait. After all… We’ll have all day tomorrow.”

“Sounds like a great idea, lass.” He pulled his jumper the rest of the way off her. “Let’s save my jumper for you to wear tomorrow, shall we?”

Later, when it was Rose’s turn to collapse on his chest, he squeezed her to him. “I love you, Rose. I’ll forever be grateful for you giving me second chances. Once to be my friend and another to be my everything. I’ll never need another, I promise. I’ll do right by you, love.”

She captured his pouty bottom lip between hers. “We’ll do right by each other.”

He pulled her back to him and covered them with the duvet. They remained intimately connected as they began to drift off to sleep.

Rose pressed a kiss to his chest the nuzzled her cheek against the rough hair. “Love you.”

Detective Inspector Alec Hardy fell asleep smiling, happier than he’d ever thought he could be.
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

Ten months later...

Chapter Notes

If anyone is interested in the song that the girls are dancing to, here's the link.

I Was Here- Beyonce

TenRoseForeverandever, thank you for your brilliant beta and writing skills and for being an amazing friend!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I Was Here

Epilogue

Rose searched backstage for Daisy, wanting to make sure everything was alright with her costume for the opening number. She finally found the teenager peering out the side of the curtain concealing the stage.

“There you are! I’ve been lookin’ for you everywhere. I need to do a final costume and hair check.”

Daisy turned and tried her hardest to hide her tears. “She’s not here.”

“Oh, my darling girl. C’mere.” Rose held her arms open for Daisy and held her tight as she cried. Blind fury boiled in Rose’s veins. Daisy had invited her mum to the dance recital and, apparently, Tess had decided not to show.

“I’m so sorry, Daisy. I really am.” She nudged Daisy and encouraged her to stand straight. Rose pulled a tissue from the slanted line of her lavender, one-shouldered costume. Dabbing the young dancer’s eyes, Rose attempted to soothe her. “I know it’s hard, but try to put the fact that she’s not here outta your mind and focus on who is here.

Daisy sniffed and smiled. “Aye, my Da’.”

“Yeah and Ellie, and your grandparents. They came from Scotland to watch you own the stage, so that’s what you’re gonna do. Alright?” The teenager nodded. “Good. Now, let’s go fix your
make-up and get ready. Show’s about to start!”

They squee’d in sync and headed back to the dressing room assigned for the older dancers.

The Broadchurch Harbor Centre had been so kind as to let Amy hold her first recital there for a minimal fee. Amy, Clara, and Rose had worked tirelessly over the past two weeks on programs, costume repairs, and showing parents how to create the perfect hairstyle and stage make-up.

Now, it was time for the students to shine. This was Rose’s favorite part. So many of the girls had overcome shyness or anxiety and were now excited to dance for their family and friends.

Amy came and put an arm around Rose’s shoulders. “You ready?”

Rose smiled at her longtime friend. “Yeah, I am. Thank you for this, Amy. I’ll never stop owing you for givin’ me all this.”

Amy squeezed Rose in a one armed hug. “You did the work. All I did was offer you a job. Now, come on. Let’s line up.”

The opening number included the teachers and student teachers (Daisy was Clara’s assistant). All of them were wearing the same lavender one-shouldered body suits. Sheer lavender silk started just under the bust line and flowed down with an uneven hemline to their knees. Clara suggested styling their hair half up with flowing waves to match the costume. Overall, the effect was breathtaking.

The lights dimmed in the auditorium and the curtain parted. Rose peeked back at Daisy, winked and mouthed "show time".

ARARARARAR

Alec looked at the empty seat his ex-wife was supposed to be occupying and scowled. He had tried again, for his daughter’s sake, to talk to Tess about the way she had been treating Daisy, but she wouldn’t hear anything about it. She had made her opinion known when Daisy had chosen to spend the holidays with him and Rose.

“Your daughter has made it perfectly clear how she feels about me. I’ll talk to her once she apologizes for hurting me.”

“She has nothin’ to apologize for, Tess. She’s tired of you constantly puttin’ her down. She doesn’t need someone harping on her every move or thought. She needs her mother to encourage her and love her.”

“Pushing her to be the woman she should be even though it’s tough is loving her. I’m through with this conversation. When she’s ready to apologize, I’ll listen.”

Ever since, Daisy had tried to speak to Tess, but had never said what her mum had wanted to hear. Daisy would call once a week and the call had always lasted less than one minute. Sending her mum an invitation to the recital with a handwritten note had been another way Daisy had tried to reach out.

Mum,

I know we haven’t been getting along but we can still try. I miss you and I love you very much. Please come to my recital.

Love, Daisy
Alec had read the note at Daisy’s request and thought it perfect.

Tess’s empty seat spoke volumes.

The lights dimmed and Alec pushed the thoughts of his ex out of his mind. The curtain opened. A low-lit spotlight shone on stage left, violins, strumming low, poured over the sound system, and Amy stepped barefoot into the light.

She sashayed gracefully across the floor as an acoustic guitar’s strings were plucked. When the vocals and piano started simultaneously, the lights came up slightly and the ginger woman executed a gentle running leap landing into a roll. She continued her flowing movements alone on the stage until the second verse started. She was then joined by Clara who began her own choreographed twirls.

When the chorus started, his Rose danced out on her tiptoes.

*I was here*

*I lived, I loved*

*I was here*

*I did, I’ve done*

*Everything that I wanted*

*And it was more than I thought it would be*

*I will leave my mark so everyone will know*

*I was here*

To Alec, there was no one else on the stage but Rose. She was so graceful in her leaps and turns. She sank to the ground, limbs swaying fluently. She positively glowed, her smile beaming to the crowd. The music overwhelmed him. He felt a tear leak from the corner of his eye and couldn’t even be embarrassed about it.

When Rose stood, the three teachers’ movements synced and they turned towards the left. The first beat of percussion ushered the student assistants onto the stage, spinning out diagonally from the back corner of the stage.

Alec’s breath caught when Daisy appeared. His little Flower was beautiful, but he could no longer call her little. He was finally seeing her as the young woman she was becoming.

Watching her glide across the stage made him think of his sister, Alice. Daisy had definitely gotten her talent from her aunt. He chanced a quick glance at his parents and his heart swelled with how proud they looked.

Rose guided Daisy in a flip and Alec did not miss the affectionate smile she gave his daughter once she straightened. His breath caught and, at that moment, he knew his plan for later in the evening was meant to happen. He touched the left side of his suit over the inner pocket where a small velvet pouch rested, and smiled.

The bridge of the song was winding down as the three teachers formed a line behind the five young girls. The vocals stopped for a beat and when the singing restarted, the dancers executed triple spins, all perfectly synchronized.
Everyone in the audience disregarded the ‘do not clap until the end of the number’ rule and broke out into loud cheers at the impressive showmanship, but it was Alec who had started it. *And I'd do it again in a pacemaker-assisted heartbeat.*

His girls. His incredible girls.

The ladies on stage broke apart after the spins and each proceeded to perform their own personal routine. To Alec’s amazement, the eight dancer’s moves complemented each other and flowed seamlessly together. He switched back and forth between Rose and Daisy, admiring the way their personalities spoke through their movements; Daisy a young woman slowly gaining her confidence, and Rose, a woman who finally knew exactly where she belonged.

After the final chorus, Rose and two of the student teachers Alec didn’t recognize, took center stage performing gravity-defying acrobats, wowing the audience.

The music began its decrescendo and, by the last line, the dancers had all come together to form a pose that any Greek sculptor would die to create.

The lights went dark as the final note played. Since the curtains closed immediately after, the dancers missed the standing ovation they received that was, once again, started by Alec.

**ARARARARAR**

The second Alec spotted Daisy walking out of the back stage door, he scooped her up in a hug that lifted her off the ground, unmindful of the two bouquets he was holding.

“Da’!”

“Oh, my Flower, I am so proud of you! You looked so beautiful up there.” Alec squeezed her tighter as she laughed.

“Thanks, Da’.” Daisy buried her face in his neck like she used to do when she was little. “I love you. ‘M so happy I have you.”

He set her on her feet and brushed her hair off her shoulders. He spoke through the lump in his throat. “I love you too, Daisy, and as long as there’s breath in my body, I’ll be here for you.”

She smiled and nodded.

“Here.” he thrust one of the bouquets at her, a dozen daisies. “For you.”

“My favorite flower! Thanks!” She leaned up on her tip toes and kissed his cheek.

“Quit hoggin’ mah gran’dau’her!” Craig Hardy exclaimed. Alec rolled his eyes at his dad but released Daisy.

Ellie sidled up to Alec. “You look like you’re about to burst with pride, sir.” Alec nodded. “She really is amazing. Rose too. I mean, I knew she could dance, but she just blew me away.”

“Aye. She’s definitely meant to be on stage. Thanks for comin’, Miller.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t’ve missed it. That’s what friends do, you lump. They support each other.”

Alec sighed. “Go away, Miller.” The words were said with a slight smile. Ellie bumped him with her hip before joining in on congratulating Daisy.
Alec turned towards the door to wait for Rose. He knew she had to help Amy and Clara make sure all the students made it safely to the care of their parents and then clear the place of all the costume bins and props they had brought. It was a surprise when she came out with her garment bag slung over her arm as soon as she did. He'd expected her to take much longer picking up.

She smiled when she spotted him holding a dozen red roses. “Are those for me?”

Alec walked over, holding the flowers out to her. “Aye.”

Rose took the bouquet, immediately bringing the flowers to her nose, inhaling the fragrance. “Thank you, Alec.”

He leaned down and pressed a kiss to her cheek.

“You’re welcome. The show was fantastic, but you were bloody brilliant.” It was dark and Rose was wearing stage make-up, but nothing could hide the reddening of her cheeks. “Come on, love. Let’s go eat.”

ARARARARARAR

Rose removed the hair dryer she kept at Alec’s house from the cabinet under the sink and turned it on. She had taken a shower while Alec was visiting with his family before bed. Now, free of the entire can of hairspray she had used on her hair and the two inches of make-up she’d caked on, Rose could relax and reflect on the recital.

It had gone off without a hitch. They had been prepared for every possible contingency. She, Amy, and Clara had hugged it out at the end, all commenting on how perfectly the night had gone.

Rose was so proud of all the students. As always, she’d had to talk a few girls down when their stage fright had started to get the better of them. Those incidents aside, Rose had been in her element. Helping with costume changes, fixing hair and make-up, hugging the dancers as they came off the stage, and seeing how happy they all had been with their performance reminded her of why she’d chosen this as a profession.

Dancing with Daisy had been a joy. Rose was so proud of the way the teenager was transforming herself. She was confident, and knew her body and its limits. Daisy was going to go far in life and be amazing in anything she decided to do.

As for herself, being on stage had been a thrill. The music and bright lights were like a drug to her, making her feel a high she’d hadn’t realized she’d missed. And the applause… before meeting Alec, she would’ve said the applause was right up there with having a satisfying sexual experience, but now it was second. Nothing could feel as amazing as being with Alec, whether being intimate with him or not.

Being around Alec and his family, Rose could easily see what it must have been like growing up in the Hardy house. His parents had regaled her with childhood stories that had Alec blushing down to his toes. His family had accepted her with open arms and she'd been reluctant to leave their company, but she had been in desperate need of a shower. Hair now dry, she put the hair dryer up and tightened the towel around her.

Walking into the bedroom, she found her love lying on his bed in nothing but his snug, black boxer briefs, ankles crossed and hands behind his head. He was the epitome of a sexy, scruffy Scot. And the sexiest part about it all was that Alec didn’t believe it, being as humble as he was. About his looks anyway. He’s not so humble about his detecting skills.
She walked over to the dresser where she had a few drawers of her own. They’d been together almost ten months now and Alec had wanted her to feel welcome in his house. She grabbed a pair of blue cotton knickers and one of Alec’s old Beatles t-shirts and headed back into the bathroom.

“Everyone in for the night?” she called as she dressed.

“Aye. Daisy was positively knackered. Mother and Father were settlin’ in for the night. Mother loves the guest room duvet. I told her you picked it out. She said I finally found a ‘good one’.” Rose laughed as she hung up her towel on the warming rack. “‘M glad.”

“Me too. Come here, lass.”

His voice was low, sending shivers down her spine. Exiting the bathroom, she saw he had sat up against the headboard in the middle of the bed. She climbed onto the bed and straddled his lap, draping her arms over his shoulders. Alec laced his fingers just above her bum.

“What’s up, my darling DI?”

Alec took her lips in a gentle kiss. “You were so beautiful up on that stage tonight.”

Rose tucked her chin to her shoulder, blushing for the millionth time tonight. “Thank you.”

“And Daisy… I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to thank you enough for all the time and encouragement you’ve given her. She loves you, you know.”

“She’s a wonderful girl and I love her dearly, Alec. I feel like I should thank you for letting me be a part of her life.”

He ran his hands up her back, pulling her down for a deep, languid kiss. Needing to breathe, Rose sat back, closing her eyes in contentment as Alec started carding his fingers through her hair.

“Rose, I wanna ask you a question.”

Forcing her eyes open, Rose met her lover’s chocolate brown eyes. He was studying her and she couldn’t figure out why. She was quite concerned. “Alec, what is it?”

He didn’t speak; his eyes just searched her face. Only when her brow furrowed did he give her a soft smile. Still not speaking, he put his left hand on her waist and reached his right hand to pluck something off of his nightstand. Rose tried to see what he’d picked up, but it was hidden in his large hand, so she rested her hands over his heart and waited.

Alec stared down at whatever was resting in his hand. “From the moment I met you, I knew you were different. I was incredibly rude to you an’ you didn’t stand for it. An’ that night I went home and couldn’t stop thinkin’ about you an’ how you told me to ‘piss off’. I wanted to get to know you more, but I figured you’d not want me around, but you gave me that second chance I’m still thankful for to this day.”

He began fidgeting with the mysterious object, still keeping it obscured, but finally meeting her eyes. “You have made… such a difference in my life. You’ve made me better. Ask anyone an’ I guarantee they’ll tell you the same.”

Rose couldn’t help but giggle at that. A boyish smile graced his features, looking so handsome that she couldn’t help but place a kiss to the crinkles by his left eye.

“I know you want to make a difference in the world an’ you’ve made the biggest difference in
Moving his hands, Rose saw what he’d been holding in his hand. It was a red velvet pouch. Reaching inside with long, slender fingers, Alec pulled out a simple white gold band that was topped with the biggest rectangular diamond she’d ever seen. Her mouth dropped open in shock, tears springing to her eyes. Alec held the ring up between them with one hand as his other brushed away the tears that had started to fall from her eyes. “I love you so much, lass, an’ don’t ever want to be without you. Be my wife, please?”

Wife? Alec wanted to marry her! Rose didn’t hesitate.

“Yes!” She shouted before remembering there were other people in the house trying to sleep and lowered her voice. “Yes, Alec. Nothin’ would make me happier than to be your wife.”

If his smile was anything to go by, Alec’s uncertainty morphed into unbridled happiness. Rose was smiling so wide, her cheeks hurt. The pair giggled like teenagers as their teeth clashed in a snog, tears mixing on each other’s skin.

Alec was the first to pull back. “Give me your hand, love.”

Rose held her shaking left hand out to him, holding her breath as he slipped the ring on her fourth finger. She raised her hand to admire the symbol of Alec’s love for her.

“‘S gorgeous.” She cupped his face in her hands. “You’re gorgeous. I love you.”

Alec chose that moment to take her breath away with his mouth covering hers. She felt her body light up with desire as his tongue caressed every warm inch it could. After he had shifted and laid her down beneath him, he released her just long enough to shuck the shirt she wore. Clothing melted away swiftly, both ready to become one. Alec knew he needed to be quiet, but he was unable to hold back his groan of pure bliss as he slid into his fiancée’s welcoming body.

Rose and Alec spent the night whispering their love to one another and dreaming about the future that was stretched out endlessly before them, ready to begin the journey of their lives together, and to never look back.

The next morning, the entire town of Broadchurch heard the squeals of joy coming from one ecstatic teenager.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who read, kudos, and commented. I’m sad to see this end but I plan to revisit them with looks into their lives together! Prompts are welcome :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!