Inspector Barnaby Mystery Terror in the Dark by Snoopadoop

Summary: Sergeants Ben Jones and Josephine Barnaby are living in domestic bliss, searching for a new house, and avoiding dinner with her parents. But Josie has a secret she's hiding from Ben, and as the body count rises, and the lights go out, keeping home and work life separate becomes a matter of life and death.
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Chapter 1: Chapter 1
One of the benefits of working a murder case with DCI Tom Barnaby was it was always an education. Sometimes DS Ben Jones learned more in a week with Tom, than he had in all his time at Causton Comprehensive. This week he had learned that when your suspect dives at you by an open first story window, don't try and catch him. It will be fine, because Tom will be there to make sure you don't fall out of the window, but you will get a nasty clout on the head, and a suspect who in the police car all the way back to Causton nick will call you a fascist, kick you, and cry police brutality.

Ben felt rubbish, but due to the complexities of the case, and his DCI being concerned that he needed to see a Doctor, he entered the back doors of Causton nick handcuffed to said suspect black eyed, with a ripped jacket and looking a fright. Dragging said suspect to the desk, he looked up into the eyes of the custody sergeant who, instead of giving him the expected withering and bored look, vaulted the custody desk in a single leap.

"Ben!" Sgt Josephine Barnaby shouted, pulling him close and started examining his eye, much to the merriment of the other watching officers and the prisoner. "What the hell happened to you?"

"The DS tried to jump out of a window" one of the constables supplied

"I didn't try and jump!" Ben protested "he tried to push me" he gestured his still handcuffed hand.

"Did you, Sir, try and push DS Jones out of a window?" She asked in a voice that was made to chill fire.

"Yeah?" The very stupid suspect bragged "it was close, love, nearly got him out of the bloody thing."

Nobody saw or heard what happened next but the suspect ended up crying on the floor with a bruise on his thigh, almost the exact size and shape of a female size 7 police boot. Every one of the officers would have sworn an affidavit to the fact that Sgt Barnaby remained on the correct side of her desk, and the suspect fell to the floor all on his own.
When Ben was finally released and leaned on the desk, the prisoner was heard to ask, "What the fuck was all that about." He asked the constable who locked him in the cell.

"You don't mess with Sgt Barnaby's misses" the constable laughed.

Ben laughed at looked up at Josie, "What time do you finish?" he asked

"About now, are you free to go home?"

"Please" Ben begged, "Can you drive my car?"

"Course" she kissed him on his nose "You look like crap."

"I love you too."

The next afternoon found Ben finishing his paperwork, from the previous evening, whilst carefully applying ointment to his now swollen eye. Tom opposite him, kept looking up and smirking.

"It's not fair Sir, it really hurts" Ben complained

He didn't notice that the wooden door behind him had opened, until he felt the hand gently rest on his shoulder, "You shouldn't try and jump out of windows then should you, sweetie?" Josie told him, handing him a small Tupperware box.

"What is this?" he asked gesturing to the box.

"Lunch" Josie smiled brightly

Ben tried to ignore the hysterical laughing from the other side of the room. "Oh God you've turned into your mother."

"I am afraid all Barnaby women are the same Ben, just ask Simon." Tom told him sadly, gesturing at his own Tupperware box.

"Dad!" Josie yelped

"I'm going to, erm well escape for a bit then" Ben said quickly, diving out of the door as his girlfriend was distracted.

"You did that to get rid of him?" Tom asked her

"Of course" she smiled, and went and sat on his desk. "I need to talk to you."

"Go on love, but I warn you if it's about Ben I've had about enough whining from him about his eye."

"Dad I've put in for promotion, and I think I'm likely to get it, and I need your advice."

"You're going to be an inspector, that's great."

"I haven't told Ben, I'm a bit worried he'll go garretty."

"He knows you passed your exams though? And I can't imagine he'd be upset?" Tom studied her frown "Jose, you have applied for a promotion in Midsomer haven't you? Otherwise I imagine he will be a bit miffed."

"Yeah of course, we're supposed to be looking for a new house, but it's not downstairs."
"Not CID, please not CID"

"Traffic" she shrugged apologetically.

"Have you done something horribly wrong?" He asked laughing

"I know you don't have any respect for Traffic, but it will give me a lift up the ranks, some different experience, and God help me get me out of this station."

"Look I'm not laughing, much, but you do remember who taught you to drive don't you?"

"Gavin?"

"Exactly, do they have a minimum driving qualification"

"Dad!" She swiped at him for a bit "Anyway I like uniform, and I want you to broach it with Ben."

"Oh God no"

"Please, just drop it in to the conversation, and then I can do the rest when we get home?"

About an hour later the CID phone rang, and about 30 minutes after that Ben and Tom were standing in front of rather nasty road traffic incident, there was a rather quiet moment when Tom wondered how Josie had managed manipulate this particular case, but pushed it out of his mind.

"Bloody Hell" Ben swore loudly, "Bloody Traffic, I hate RTA's!"

"Oh they're not so bad" Tom said, "professionals doing a hard job, in difficult circumstances."

"No Sir, they're failed coppers, the worst, pettiest, meanest spirited, KNOW IT ALLS, in the force." Ben spat this rant in the direction of a Constable putting out cones seemingly randomly across the road.

Tom sighed "They're in need of a new Inspector apparently."

Ben looked stricken "Surely you're not suggesting, Sir I'd rather go back to being a PC."

"Really?" Tom asked, "You're that opposed to Traffic Duty?"

"YES!" Ben waved his arms in a slightly panicked way, "Have I done something wrong?"

"Relax Jones, I wasn't actually suggesting you should leave CID, I was just making conversation, but thank you for giving me the ammunition I need next time I need to blackmail you."

"Sir" Ben grumbled

George Bullard arrived at that moment, smiling and waving as he emerged from the bushes across the road from the two men.

"Hullo Tom, this is a bit of a nasty one I'm afraid" The medical examiner greeted cheerily.

"When isn't it?" Ben asked, still grumpy.

"What's up with Ben?" George asked Tom quietly as they crossed the road, "not still the house hunting is it?"

"Hmm, slightly that, slightly a Mrs Barnaby inspired packed lunch" that caused George to snigger, and flash Ben a slightly sympathetic look, "But apparently the Sergeant doesn't like Traffic Police."
"Oh that's a shame" George whispered back "The rumour is he's about to move in with their new Inspector."

"Yes, but she hasn't told him" Tom finished, as Ben caught them up, and George gave him another sympathetic look.

"You told him about the packed lunch didn't you?" Ben asked his boss.

"Oh Ben, we are all sympathetic" George told him, "We've been sympathetic to Tom for years, but you did have some warning what you were getting in to."

"No, no I didn't! I had NO idea she would turn into Mrs Barnaby, it's not fair, I don't need to diet, and do I look like I need to diet?"

"Yes" Chorused some rather naffed off Traffic officers, who had overheard quite a lot of Ben's earlier rant.

"Show us the body, George, before Ben gets lynched" Tom laughed and they stumbled down the bank.

The Skoda Yeti had left the road travelling at an approximate 80 miles per hour, the traffic investigation team would be along tomorrow to put an accurate speed on the incident, but the Traffic Sergeant who was currently acting officer in charge had been fairly convinced of the accuracy of his maths, based on road condition and the skids. The car was strongly constructed, and in a good state of repair, in fact despite the crash the three adult occupants should have survived easily, had it not been for the shot gun blast to each head.

The inside of the car, including the airbags were splattered with blood, rivulets of blood and brain matter ran down the seats and sides of the car, pools of blood oozed from the seals at the bottom of the passenger and drivers doors, where the back seat was a sponge of gore, oozing and bubbling blood as the forensics teams gentle moved about taking their crime scene photos.

"Is it me or is there a lot of blood?" Ben asked, and then clarified for the audience who were looking at him as if he was stupid "I mean we go to a lot of murders, we really do, but there seems to be more blood here than any other scene."

"It's fresher than you normally see Ben." George told him, "This happened about 2hrs ago, and the blood hasn't coagulated very much, also it's a very enclosed space and 27 pints of blood in an enclosed space, always looks more."

"But is there more blood than usual?" Tom asked

"Yes" George nodded, "I think there is a body missing."

"Hah" Ben shouted punching the air, "at least I won one today" he turned around to find the whole crime scene looking at him.

"Come on Jones" Tom shouted, over his shoulder, as he climbed out of the ditch, his Sergeant scrabbling behind him.

Tom sat on the bonnet of his Jag and pulled out his phone, he fiddled with it for a bit, till Ben appeared. "Call the station get a team down here; search the wood for the fourth person."

"Yes Sir" Ben started to call, "you OK Sir?"

"Yes, fine Sergeant, I'm just going to make a call" he waved the phone, and Ben taking the hint, wandered over to one side to phone the station.
After passing on his message, and waiting for it to be understood, Ben looked towards his boss, who'd finished his phone call, and was now staring into the undergrowth intently. "Psst" Ben whispered into the phone "is Sgt Barnaby there?"

"No" came the reply on the end of the phone "She's just left? Do you want to leave her a message?"

"No, it's OK" Ben sighed, looking at his boss and shrugging, "I'll see her later."

Walking towards the car Ben looked where his boss's gaze was, "any thoughts Sir?"

Tom stood up and gestured at the Skoda, "I've done a PNC while you were trying to sneak a moment" Ben looked guiltily upwards but Tom smiled and continued. "The car was stolen from Causton this morning."

"The men?" Ben asked

"Unknown still, but it shouldn't take too long to find them" Tom smiled at him. "We'd better have a poke about Sergeant" And they walked back towards the scene again.

Another half an hour later and a brief timeline had emerged, the Skoda had been travelling from Causton along the Country lane to Midsomer Magma, at least 10 miles over the speed limit, with its four occupants, three of whom were young men aged approximately between 15 and 20. The blood splatters on the steering wheel suggested that the Driver had been shot through the open driver's window, causing the crash, the other two occupants at least had been shot whilst trying to leave the car, and their seatbelts had been worn during the crash, but released soon afterwards. George Bullard believed that the fourth occupant had been shot but not killed, and either dragged away or dragged themselves away to die elsewhere.

The sound of sirens filled the woodland, and Ben who was now soaking wet, and bored looked up to see a series of marked police cars pull up. He walked back to his boss, as the uniformed officers started to gather in front of the DCI at the edge of the road. Ben got there in time to hear him sending some officers off into Causton to interview the car owner; he sent another group off to see the uniformed Sergeant, to start searching the woods, till finally standing in front of the DCI was the last uniformed Sergeant.

"Arr Ben" Tom smiled turning to the younger man "We've got an assistant for the afternoon; I assume I don't have to introduce Sergeant Barnaby?"

Ben drove back to Causton with DCI Barnaby in the passenger seat, and Josie in the back. As the countryside flashed passed, he seethed silently, you win one, you lose the rest seemed to be his day. He didn't mind working with Josie, not really but she was the more senior Sergeant, and while he had no problem with that in general terms, having to call your girlfriend Ma'am was always a tricky one. Also since they started their relationship, the news that he was sleeping with his bosses daughter had spread around the relatively small town of Causton, leading to a series of mild jibes in his direction. They were almost entirely good natured, certainly within the station people were pleased for them, but when you're already in a bad mood, the last things you need are jokes at your expense.

The car was stolen from the large supermarket car-park in the centre of the town, and Tom told Ben to drive them there. Josie read through the hurriedly scribbled case notes, such as they were, and Tom stared out of the window. As Ben slowed to enter the Town limits he looked at the other Sergeant in the rear-view mirror.

"To what do we owe this pleasure, Ma'am?" he asked, putting a sarcastic hint to the last word.

Tom shot him a startled look, "Sergeant Barnaby has been doing a study of the exit roads around Causton." He supplied, "I thought her specialist knowledge would be useful."

"Have you?" Ben asked, nearly swinging his head round to look at her, until he remembered where he was, "I didn't know that?"
"I don't tell you everything Ben" she chided "Anyway, it's nice to have a trip out now and again, I get bored in the custody suite all day."

"So what do you think?" Tom asked

"This doesn't make any sense." She supplied, then reacting to the scoff from Ben she added, "Oh not your murder, that's just a case of finding a motive, but this road takes them directly on to the main road, and deeper into Midsomer. If you're going to TWOC a car, you would normally try and head out of the area, using small un-patrolled roads?"

"First timers?" Ben asked

"Not with a brand new car, first timers rarely successfully nick brand new cars, too much equipment on them." Josie explained

"Why wouldn't they be joyriders?" Tom asked

"In a Skoda Yeti?" Ben the petrol head remarked "Unlikely sir."

"Much more likely stolen to order, I can make a call see how many have been taken in the area in the recent past, see if there is a system. Do we know how it was stolen?"

"Keys were in the ignition" Ben supplied

"Not much of a system that then?" Tom commented as they pulled into the supermarket car park. "You two go and see if they have CCTV of the car park, I'm going" he waved vaguely in the direction of the Red Lion opposite.

After a tricky negotiation over who was going to take the lead, and a rather unprofessional glaring contest, Ben and Josie stood inside the Managers office looking at the CCTV tape of the car park. In the dark quiet room Ben carefully put his hand on Josie's arm, careful to avoid the Manager and the Assistant Manager noticing. He knew she hated small quiet dark rooms; they were her only fear, he could feel her trembling despite her concentration on the task in hand. This of course was why house hunting had become a problem, she liked big open airy modern homes, all glass and white walls, and he preferred a traditional Midsomer cottage, small low rooms and cosy fires.

She had stepped closer to Ben, their sides now touching, and he had just thought he could slip his arm around her without anybody actually noticing when from the top right corner of the screen the Yeti pulled into the car park. Josie stepped away from him, her eyes wide as she watched the owner get out, and distinctly lock the car.

"Stop the VT!" she yelped "Did you see that?" She asked the room.

"Ma'am?" Ben asked

"She locked it, SERGEANT, she locked it" she turned to him her eyes burning in the gloom, "So where did they get the keys?"

"Bag snatch?" Ben queried

"She hasn't reported it? Odd that considering she reported the car stolen immediately after it had been. Why wouldn't she mention that someone had also stolen her bag?"

They watched for a few more moments and then 4 figures ran from the bottom left of the screen, the figure in front was wearing a suit and tie, he pointed his hand in front of him, and the car unlocked, the suited man climbed into the front driver's seat, the other three climbing in through the other doors, the car then pulled
fast backwards, and to the top of the screen, just before the went out of view the screen flashed bright white.

"What was that?" Ben asked the manager

"I don't know" the manager said "I've never seen it do that before?"

"Go back" Josie ordered, leaning further from Ben, and leaning towards the Assistant Manager working the tape.

They watched again, but Josie kept an eye on the time log running at the bottom of the screen, milliseconds before the flash she shouted "stop!" Pointing to the top left hand corner of the screen she ran her fingers over the figure standing under the porchway of the store.

"Someone took a photo?" Ben asked

"Do you know who this man is?" Josie asked the manager, then after the store staff replied in the negative she asked "Sergeant? You know nearly every scally in this town, do you recognise him?"

Ben looked closely, "No Ma'am. But for the record I don't know "nearly" every scally in Causton."

"I apologise Sergeant, Every Scally in Causton?"

"Thank you Ma'am, that's much better".

Walking out of the Supermarket, clutching a copy of the tape, Josie and Ben walked to the man's vantage point on the tape. Agreeing that whoever the mystery photographer was would have seen the whole theft, the men's faces, them leaving the car park.

"They're having an affair you know?" Josie told him "You could see how they were desperate not to touch each other."

"So are we, and I was touching you" Ben told her.

"We aren't having an affair Ben" she shrieked "and I did notice"

He turned to her slightly; stepping back further into the shadow of the supermarket "Is something wrong Josie? Have I done something to upset you? If it's the salad, I ate it, I really did, I liked the way you put layer of salami in the bottom."

She pushed into him slightly, kissing him on the lips "Ben I've got to tell you something and you're going to freak out"

"Oh God, are you pregnant?" He asked, "I mean great, brilliant if you are and everything but, Oh God your Dad is going to actually kill me, and he'll get away with it, 'cos he knows what he's doing by now, and will you marry me?"

"I'm not pregnant" she laughed "Good to know that's your standard reaction though, makes me feel really comfortable about the future." The sarcasm in her voice was slightly missed by the huge sigh of relief from Ben, "and yes of course I'll marry you, I said I would, but not yet, we need to find a house first."

"Then what's wrong?" Ben asked

At that moment a marked police car pulled into the car park, and Josie pushed him gently away. She walked away, meaning he had to follow her, she walked up to the car, and Ben missed all that the Constable in the car said, apart from "Ma'am" as he walked up behind her, she handed him the tape.

"Go and meet the DCI in the pub, Sergeant" she told him, and went back to talking to the constable.
Thus dismissed Ben, whose sense of self sympathy was reaching epic proportions, marched off without a backwards glance at his girlfriend or the police car. On entering the pub Ben saw his boss, sinking a pint, and watched as he ordered another one, walking further into the bar, he smiled slightly, it was warm in here, and smelt nice, and whatever was going on when he’d asked her to marry him, his girlfriend had said "of course."

"Ben" Tom called, "Pint?"

"I think I might need one Sir, if I'm allowed" He asked

"Has she told you then?" Tom asked

"No" Ben frowned "What you know? How comes you know if I don't?"

"Privileges of rank" Tom smirked, "Anyway if she hasn't told you yet, you can buy the beer."

Ben frowned if anything slightly further but dug into his pocket and paid for two pints of bitter. Which they shared while Ben caught him up on the mysterious photographer and the locked Skoda conundrum. When they got to leaving the supermarket Ben skimmed over his conversation with Josie, and instead went to the marked police car, and his dismissal.

"Are you OK Sergeant?" Tom asked as Ben for the hundredth time sighed looked around and sighed again.

"Is she leaving me?" Ben asked "I mean I know we are supposed to be working, but Sir, please this is driving me mad."

"Not as far as I know, Ben what has she told you?" Tom asked lowering his voice and being serious.

"She had something important to tell me, and I was going to be freaked out." Ben shrugged "Then we were interrupted, and then she sent me away."

"hmmm" Tom said into his pint, "Look Ben, and I am doing this because I like you" he dug into his pocket and took out his phone, fiddling with it for a moment he sent Ben a text message, "That's Simon's mobile number, Cully and Josie, literally share everything, every little secret, if you're going to survive this relationship, you need someone on your side."

"Thank you sir" Ben said genuinely touched at the thought.

"Just don't remind him who slept with his Cousin" Tom glared, "and stop asking me!"

The door of the pub opened, and Josie walked in trailing a PC, she smiled and waved, and walked over to their table.

"Is this what happens then, it gets to six o'clock and you two duck out and go to the pub?" she waved her hand at the pub in frustration, "No wonder Mum never gets you home for dinner!"

"Have you found anything new out?" Ben asked

"There have been 8 stolen Yeti’s in Midsomer in the last 2 months, all but this one have disappeared without a trace. We've spoken to the owners, and gone over the statements, each one says the vehicle was locked, they could all provide keys when asked, including today's owner. They were all taken from large public car parks during daylight hours." Josie smiled, "Also we have a positive ID on the three men, Jason Hughes, Daniel Casey and John Hopkins. All from the Moorfields estate, all have form but mostly possession and Hopkins for affray. I'm surprised DS Jones didn't recognise them, he tells me he knows all the rogues in Causton?"
"Very thorough Sergeant" Tom told her, "but it doesn't get us any closer to finding why they were killed does it?"

"No Sir." She confirmed "I don't have any news on that front Sir, other than they were Moorfield's scallies." She flashed Ben an annoyed look.

"We?" Ben asked "You've only been out there about 20 minutes."

"What can I say?" she gave him a huffy look again, "My Team is thorough!"

"Right yes enough of that Sergeant's." Tom said standing up, tossing Josie the keys to his car.

She caught them, with a single back handed catch, "Oooohhh am I driving the Jag?"

A few minutes later they started to leave the car park, but just as they pulled under the metal barrier and Josie started to indicate, Tom shouted for her to stop, squealing the brakes, Ben in the back was thrown forward sharply. "Hey!" he shouted.

"Sorry Jones" Tom called

"Look if this is some sort of test Dad, it's OK I've done my advanced driving, I am passed to drive a pursuit car" Josie yelped

Ben in the back looked confused but ignored the conversation rubbing his leg and arm.

"No, it's not a test, look what you're doing" Tom told her, when she looked down "where are you going?"

"Back towards the murder scene?"

"And why are you going this way?" He asked

"Because it's the quickest way to Midsomer Magma?"

"Exactly" Tom looked smug and sat back

"Why aren't they going to the estate?" Ben asked, light dawning.

"Because that wasn't where they were going?" Josie was curious "We know that already, that's the mystery?"

Ben and Tom shared a look, usually kept for stupid people. "They ran from the estate side of town, they nicked a car, they drove off at speed in the opposite direction…" Ben said very slowly.

"…and they were killed?" Josie added. "Oh"

They had abandoned the idea of the crime scene, after all Tom had proved his point, and what were phones for if not to connect crime scenes and their investigating officers. Instead they had returned to the station, it was nearly 7pm by the time they had returned, Ben had answered calls and written his notes up to the computer, Tom had carefully avoided anyone more senior or nosier coming to find him, and Josie had gone to clock herself off. DC Gail Stephens had neatly started work on the board, and when Josie returned upstairs the two men were carefully studying it.

George hadn't yet finished work on the three men, the fourth was still missing, Forensics had only had the car for about 6 hours, and they wouldn't finish with it for days. The pen pushers as Ben and Tom referred to them never really understood that although Crime didn't take a holiday, there was often very little to do at 7pm on a weekday night, when you had no leads and you were exhausted. Tom had suggested they go
home, and Ben who was all for that suggestion had just grabbed his coat when the DCI's phone rang.

"Yes, yes, we're just leaving now" Tom said into the phone

"Mum" Josie mouthed to Ben

"Yes, both of them"

"Invite to dinner?" Ben whispered

"OK I'll tell them"

"Definitely, or a lecture on some charity" Josie whispered back

"See you soon, Byeeeee"

"We're not coming" Josie and Ben said in unison and Tom hung up

"But it was your dearest mother inviting you for dinner?" Tom urged

"We gathered, please Sir, can we just go home and have a shower and go to…um" Ben finished his statement far too late.

"Oh God she blackmailed you didn't she, run Ben save yourself, it's too late for me, but you could actually escape, jump the window…GO!" Josie half pushed him laughing.

20 minutes later Josie pulled up outside the Barnaby's house in Tom's Jaguar, Ben firmly secured in the back, by weight of peer pressure and new love. Joyce Barnaby opened the door to them as if it was a complete surprise to find three of the Midsomer Constabulary on her doorstep. After the obligatory hug, she ushered Tom into the kitchen closing the door gently, whilst Josie went upstairs to change out of her uniform. When she went to do this Ben had a moment of genuine confusion till he remembered that despite all obvious signs to the contrary, he and Josie didn't actually live together. This was her official residence, she had moved back in a few months before, and the point of them looking for a house together was to remedy this. He took a seat in the Barnaby living room, gazing distractedly at the pictures on the mantelpiece of Cully and Josie as children, of Tom and Joyce in their younger days, of a dog that he'd always meant to ask about, and tried to ignore the frantic whisperings from the kitchen.

"She hasn't told him?" Joyce asked

"No, apparently she hasn't found the right time" Tom whispered back

"But surely he'll notice? Well eventually?"

"I thought he'd sussed earlier in the pub" Tom began

"The pub?" Joyce scolded, louder than before, and Jones got up to listen quietly at the door.

"It was only a pint, and Josie was driving, did you know she'd done the Pursuit Driving course?"

"Yes of course I did, look Tom what about this house thing? Does this affect them living together?"

"It's rude to listen at doorways" Josie had crept up behind Ben making him jump; he turned to find her dressed in a long spaghetti strapped summer dress, but with bare feet. For a moment his libido piqued and he wondered if he could perhaps convince her to show him her room while her parents argued.

"You look amazing" he told her, worry temporarily forgotten, and "is that for my benefit?"
"Of course" she kissed him on the nose, "dinner with Mum and Dad, then we can either walk back to yours or I could whine till Mum lets you stay?"

"Come home with me" Ben whispered "there are quite a lot of things I want to do to you I don't want your Dad hearing."

There was a commotion from the kitchen, and Ben and Josie leapt back from the door guiltily. Tom came out, giving Ben the evil boyfriend eye, kissing Josie on the top of her head, he went to get changed himself, while Joyce fussed around the table.

After a dinner of what Joyce assured them was Moroccan lamb tagine, and a barring of any discussion whatsoever of the case, the conversation came round to the house hunt again. Ben groaned as a map of Midsomer was laid on the now empty dinner table, and even the sight of his girlfriend leaning low over it, exposing her rather ample bosom to his eyes only didn't pick up his interest.

When they had started this it had seemed simple, they loved each other, and wanted to live together, at first he'd assumed she would just move into his Maisonette in the middle of Causton. However Josie had come from a 30 bedroom Georgian Mansion of her own, and however much she claimed to love Ben's home, it was clear that there wasn't enough room for her treasured belongings. Even her luminous Fish tank, which had helped her sleep since Tom and Joyce had bought it for her aged 11, currently sat precariously on the edge of the only chest of drawers in their bedroom. There was also the issue of room to expand, although not spoken about in graphic terms, they both wanted and looked forward to having children, sometimes one or the other would slip out the line "when we have kids" and they'd both agree without thinking.

They had got the idea to buy a house together, Josie had been left a wealthy woman after the death of her husband/father/Grandfather, and although after selling the estate she had set aside money for her 19 year old brother/nephew/step-grandson when and if he ever left prison, she was more than financially independent to buy almost any house in Midsomer. Ben however had wanted to buy a house together as equal partners so a budget was agreed upon based on twice the market value of his home. This was still very generous for two police Sergeants, but did limit their choices. Josie had fallen for the idea of buying one of the new eco-homes at Causton Cross, whereas Ben had liked the romance of the Midsomer villages. So every time they'd discussed looking seriously, it had ended in a good tempered but stoic row.

After eliciting the double promise that they would text when they got safely home, and that they would, regardless of work commitments go to an estate agent tomorrow, Joyce let them start the nearly 3 miles walk home. On a pleasant summers evening hand in hand, it wasn't too bad. Ben who had drunk more beer than he should have, in an attempt to stop himself lusting after Josie, was singing happily to her and himself, any discomfort from earlier forgotten, meanwhile Josie who now wore her police boots under her dress gripped his hand tightly both nervous of the dark, and terrified of the news she was going to have to give him. She had always outranked him, coming to Causton as a Sergeant when he was still a PC, and now as a senior station sergeant she not only got paid a significant amount more than him, but still outranked him. As an Inspector she would not only outrank him verbally, but be paid a great deal more, not only that he hated Traffic Inspectors with a passion he normally kept for vegetarians.

About half a mile from home, Josie stopped and pulled on his hand. Stopping him dead, she also effectively pulled him close enough she could look into his eyes.

"Ben I love you" she told him

"I know I love you too, and if we can just get home I'll show you."

"Ben you mean it when you say you want to marry me don't you?"

"Of course, and don't worry about the house, we'll find something we both like, I promise." He kissed her, pulling her close and running his hands down her back, cupping her bum through her loose sun dress. She
started kissing him back, letting herself be drawn into the eroticism of the late night, the warm breeze and her thin dress. He pushed her backwards gently till her back hit a brick wall, lit by a street light, she could see his pupils start to dilate as he became aroused, pressing his leg between hers, she felt his burgeoning erection pressing against her. Wrapping her arms around him she let him press her harder against the wall as she deepened his kiss. Using one hand to cup her head gently his free hand ran down her leg and lifted the hem of her dress. "By the way I am a detective" he whispered "I had noticed you weren't wearing any underwear".

"If we get caught there will be hell to pay" she panted as he gently stroked between her naked thighs. He chuckled deeply and kissed her cleavage as it started to fall from her dress. She carefully moved her hands so one undid the fly of his trousers, and the other held his belt, effectively pushing him closer to her. "Have you ever done this before Ben?" she asked urgently. "Outside, fully dressed against a shop in the dead of night under a streetlight?"

"No" he moaned slightly, as she pulled his cock out, "but we seem to be doing OK don't we?" She lifted her leg wrapping it carefully around him, allowing him to lift her dress higher, and then as it was rucked between them he used his now free hand to lift her slightly upwards and onto his straining cock.

The feeling of being filled, outside in plain site was so dirty, she squealed and bit hard onto his neck to stop herself screaming, he pushed her head up to meet his, whilst thrusting hard into her, his normal gentle lovemaking transformed into a rushed and desperate need, making him pant into her mouth as their tongues met. She gripped him as hard as possible, as he repeatedly thrust into her, roughly slamming her into the wall, his angle perfectly stimulating her, her nails bit into his now exposed back, and she felt her whole body start to quake as her orgasm hit, seconds before his body went rigid with its own climax. She bit him again to stop herself screaming out, and he in turn bit back, both too high to notice any pain. For a few moments they stayed like that, quite unable to move panting into each other's sticky skin. Then all of a sudden the street lights sparked and went out, plunging Causton into the blackness of night.

There was a moment when neither of them breathed, followed by a slightly longer moment, where Ben gathering his senses pulled away from Josie and carefully zipped his flies, knowing what was coming next he was ready for the moment. They had lived together for nearly six months regardless of what the paperwork said, and he had spent almost every night in a room which either had the light left on, or the fish tank sat bubbling in the corner. Although nobody had of course warned him, if they were at home at this moment his bedside drawer contained two Maglite's, and there was a small oil lantern on the window sill. So he carefully pulled Josie as close as he could and prepared himself for the utter guttural scream of terror that came a moment later.

It took him early 30mins to carry the sobbing trembling girl back to his house, in the pitch black. Not a streetlight, house light, traffic light or street sign was lit. Occasionally they'd walk through a pool of light caused by a candle in an upstairs window, but apart from that it was just darkness. The night had been cloudy and warm so no moon or stars penetrated the darkness either. He was quite glad he recognised his own white washed home, with its blue front door in the dark, there were a number of similar residences in this part of Causton but he had a coppers feel for the street, and knew that this was his. A few weeks earlier he'd been in the hardware shop on the corner and seen luminous house numbers, he supposed this was why you bought them. Gently letting Josie down on to her own feet, making sure she leant between him and the brick work he fumbled for his keys.

On opening the door he left Josie on the step for a moment, grabbing his raincoat from its hook he reached inside the pocket and picked out a small pink pig. It was a wind up torch someone had decided was just right for him in the previous Station Secret Santa. You span the little tail, and clicked the nose and it produced quite a powerful bluish light, he wound it and handed it to the girl. She clutched at it like a dying man, and for the first time since the lights had gone off he saw her frightened face, garish and blue it reminded him of where she'd come from, and why she was scared of the dark.
"It's OK Josie it's just a power cut, you're safe."

"I don't feel safe" she mewed

"I know, go upstairs, there's some candles in the kitchen and a lamp in our bedroom, matches in almost every drawer, and torches. Light what you want I'll lock the door, and come straight up."

He watched her stumble up the stairs, and turn to enter the living room, before fishing out his mobile phone. He sent a quick text message to Tom that just said "Home" and then sat on the stairs and composed a longer message to Simon.

"It's Ben there is a power cut, she is a bit manic, any advice?"

He waited in the dark, hearing Josie moving about upstairs, his thoughts running to the darkness of the hole she'd lived in for the first ten years of her life, her barely concealed claustrophobia and terror of the dark. He didn't care, he loved her, but sometimes he thought about her professional career. Psychologically she wasn't particularly sound, a badly healed trauma like hers certainly wasn't healthy, and ignoring it as they had studiously done for the last sixth months hadn't helped. The Police Federation had sent her to a councillor, the councillor used to victims of crime, and officers hurt in the line of duty had nothing for being the product of inter-generational incest, being locked in a dungeon with your dying siblings for ten years, and then being kidnapped to try and start a new generation. They had parted by mutual consent after two sessions. Ben had idly wondered if there was a suitable psychologist for that, and whether it would help anyway, when his phone chirruped, looking at the screen he smiled as he read "Simon"

"Hi Ben candles and torches as much light as you can find she won't sleep though. Keep her talking about anything rubbish or cases or something. Good luck and if you need us call us. Cully xxx"

He smirked, not the greatest advice in the world, but it would do for the minute. He pocketed his phone and climbed the stairs, when he reached the top; he bolted the door between his stairway and living room behind him. Turning into the room he could see the door to his bedroom picked out brightly, spilling light into the rest of the room. In the kitchen a single candle lantern burnt in the sink, giving all the light you'd need in the tiny room. He went into the bedroom, noting the saucer with a tea light on sat on top of the fish tank, the now burning oil lamp and both Maglite's facing out from each bedside table. Josie sat hunched in the bed, on the side he would usually sleep on, with the duvet pulled up to her chin.

"Are you OK, Love?" he asked her, as he quickly undressed.

"Are you coming to bed?" she asked him back her voice small and reedy.

"I just need the bathroom, and I will" he told her noting her gentle nod of the head. In the bathroom another tea light and saucer arrangement sat on the soap dish holder, he quickly used the toilet, washed, and brushed his teeth. Blowing out the light as he left, and re-entering the bedroom. Before he slipped between the sheets he felt the saucer on the fish tank, it was cold and he noticed she'd put a pool of water in it to stop the tea light overheating and causing a fire. Not her first power cut, Ben thought. After their dalliance earlier he'd abandoned his boxer shorts as well as the rest of his clothes, and as he climbed into bed he realised Josie was naked as well. "Do you want me to get dressed?" he asked her feeling her cold trembling body, "I've got some pyjamas somewhere?"

She looked at him, her eyes as big as saucers her skin still eerily luminous "Why?" she asked.

"Because you're scared, and I love you." He told her as if it was the simplest thing in the world, which cursing himself he realised, it wasn't for her. "I'm sorry I was trying to make you comfortable."

She cuddled into him and he lay back, feeling her nestle into his chest and still trembling run her hands across his stomach. "I'm not scared of you" she told him her voice stronger now "I told you once before I
feel safer in your arms than anywhere else.”

"You didn't earlier" he pointed out, picking up her hand, where it lay just above his pubic bone, and bringing it to his lips. Kissing each tiny finger and knuckle in order, he relished her little sighs "earlier I was carrying you, and you were terrified."

"It was dark then, I don't like the darkness." She turned so she lay on top of him, "I love you as well you know?" she asked, and then gently pulling her hand away kissed him on the lips, she pushed her tongue into his mouth, and he softened into a deep slow kiss. Running her now free hand down his body she stroked his manhood and he groaned slightly.

"I know you love me, we don't have to do this if you don't want." He told her, "we could talk or read, or you could try and sleep."

"Have you gone off me Ben?" she asked playfully squeezing his now erect cock, "you were up for doing very dirty things to me an hour ago."

He ran his hands over her buttocks and lower back, lifting her higher up onto his body so he could kiss her more easily. "Never" he moaned again as her inner thigh brushed his penis. "But I'm not going to hold you to what we said an hour ago." He kissed her, and pulled her up high so she had to move her thighs and effectively sit astride him.

"Not like this though" she said urgently "I'd rather you were on top." She rolled off him, pulling him with her so the duvet wrapped them together, her thighs still either side of his.

He fought quickly with the duvet, and knelt up away from her, "Really are you sure?" Ben asked his heart hammering in his chest, "I don't want it to feel like I'm for….

She cut him off by pulling him down to her lips again, and wrapping her legs behind his back, "stop don't say another word, it never feels like that, not ever, I know and trust you Ben. I might have been naive in the past, but I know what I want now. If I was unsure I'd tell you."

"You've never said no to me" he told her, "not once"

"I've never wanted to" she said simply kissing him again he let himself be pulled this time, feeling her slick labial lips with his fingers, pulling them apart he slid two fingers easily into her, she moaned his name, and arched her back. Pushing his fingers into her, he elicited little moans and squeaks that meant she liked what he was doing, and her eyes for a brief moment fluttered closed. "I love you" she moaned and he removed his fingers, licking the taste of her of them as he moved closer.

"I love you too" he told her, dropping his hips and entering her deeply, she was dripping wet and he went in easily to the hilt, wrapping her legs around him she squeezed her muscles making him squirm and moan, "who taught you that?" he chuckled into her neck as he withdrew and thrust forward again.

"Oh I don't know" she panted pulling her hands over her head, so he would grab her wrists there, "some Copper or other?" With her body stretched out before him Ben could feast his eyes on her as they moved together. Her rounded pert breasts, which he had ravished earlier and bore the signs of gentle teeth marks, thin frame and hollow of her ribs, the large scar to the left under the ribs where she received the injury that ended her Met career. The slight swell of her stomach that hadn't been there 6 months before, happiness and regular sex her gynaecologist had told her, nothing unhealthy at all, certainly not fat she was repeatedly told she was underweight during her ME's. And the breadth of her rounded hips, Ben would happily admit if asked it was the largest female pelvis he'd ever had the pleasure to know, when he'd taken her to meet his mother she'd commented on her good child bearing hips. Sometimes he'd fantasized about her pregnant, carrying his child, and those hips. He knew she was embarrassed by her shape, but he thought her transcendentally beautiful. If he looked down her could see where they were now joined, and feel her outer
lips gripping him as he thrust in and out, looking up he realised she was watching him. "Are you alright? She panted she brought her hands down and cupped her face.

"I was just thinking how beautiful you are and how lucky I am" he smiled kissing her, and holding her tightly. For a while neither of them said anything, there was nothing to be said. It was as gentle and unhurried as their lovemaking usually was, he moved her legs and arms about as he saw fit, and she in turn would kiss and reach for him, moving her muscles or body as directed or as she felt. Waves of pleasure ran through them both sometimes stillling them both entirely for a few moments. Josie was so sensitive to him, Ben could sometimes make her come over and over before he himself climaxed, glorying in her crying out or calling his name, finally after an age of unhurried gentle movement Ben felt himself so close he couldn't hold back any longer, he locked his lips to hers and she pulled him closer, letting him thrust as hard as he needed or wanted too. The friction becoming too much for her she screamed his name as she came as hard as she had ever done, while she clamped her muscles and thrust upwards towards him arching her back his balls rolled and he came deeply and hard inside her, groaning her name over and over.

Ben became aware as he surfaced from the blankness of his orgasm that she was wriggling and fighting below him, he immediately with drew, and rolled off her. Gathering her into his arms, he felt hot tears splash silently onto his arms.

"Josie, Josie what's the matter did I hurt you?" he cried gently rocking her as she sobbed.

"No, oh Ben I've done something really stupid." She looked at him, and his stomach went cold.

"What, what's the matter?" He asked more urgently.

"I took a sedative before I came to bed" she told him sobbing

He looked stricken "Did I do something you didn't want?" he asked her terrified of the answer

"I forgot I should have reminded you, about the pill and the sedatives" she told him "sometimes they counteract and I'm supposed to tell you, so we don't so I don't"

Light dawned and Ben realised what she was saying "are you worried I might have made you pregnant?" she nodded and then looked stricken as he laughed. "Really, are you that worried?"

"You don't want children yet, and you think Dad would kill you and I'm sorry I should have reminded you."

"Josie I love you more than anything in the world" he told her kissing her on the lips, "if we've just made a baby, then brilliant, wonderful I'm the happiest man alive." He pulled away from her lying her on her back he kissed the swell of her stomach that held her vital organs. "Hullo little Jones" he said making her giggle, "I'm going to be your Dad, and I'm going to love you just as much as I love your Mum and nothing not even your Granddad is going to make me regret your existence." He wriggled up and kissed her "is that OK?"

"Yes" she smiled and kissed him

"Are you worried because of your career?" he asked her seriously "because there are things we can do tomorrow if you want?" he hated the idea but he'd never question her right to choose her own life and body.

"Ben if I became the mother of your child tonight" she giggled at the thought and ran her hand over her stomach, "then I'm delighted and my career can go hang."

A few hours later he was dozing spooning Josie as she stared wide awake at the lamp on the window sill, both their hands clasped resting on her stomach, her bum wriggled into his lap and his semi erect penis resting between the outer petals of her vagina. She had been listening to him snore gently and heard the hitch I his breath as he became slightly awake.
"Are you OK?" he asked nuzzling the back of her neck "I can move if you're comfy"

"No I'm very comfy if you are" she told him, wriggling her bum so she opened slightly more onto him "I was just thinking I don't want to call our child Causton." She gasped slightly as he pushed into her making her open slightly more "I mean Cully is named after the place she was conceived."

"In which case I think I should be called Porthcawl?" he told her making her giggle

"It does beat, "the wall to one side of Quick Pix in the high street", she told him.

"Maybe we can call her QP for short?" He laughed pulling into her, and pushing his now erect penis all the way in "You can sleep, you're safe" he whispered moving his hand and gently massaging her clitoris. "Nobody will ever hurt you while I'm here".

She smiled as they started to move together "I know they won't but it doesn't mean I'm not a little insecure." She moaned and he smiled and kissed the back of her neck, as she started to come gently, "you'll wear yourself out if we keep doing this" she panted clutching the hand of his arm she lay on.

"No I keep falling asleep" he told her sleepily, as her muscles went rigid, and he thrust into her, "any way I could phone in sick, tell the boss I've been awake all night making love to his daughter." He came quite gently as she moaned and writhed under him, "any way I could phone in sick, tell the boss I've been awake all night making love to his daughter." He came quite gently as she moaned and writhed under him, and odd feeling like coming in your sleep, made him cuddle in closer. She in turn became aware that he'd fallen asleep again, this time deeply inside her. She smiled, tired to the point of exhaustion but unable to close her eyes she concentrated on the little oil lamp, and the feeling of being surrounded entirely by love.

An hour or so later he birds in Causton started singing, and as she watched the open window where the oil lamp was perched she saw the fingers of dawn creeping around the edges of the cloud, as she watched the window got lighter and she felt a weight lifting off her, something in her must have physically relaxed because Ben woke again.

"Is everything OK?" he asked, not really noticing he was still clamped inside her, but kissing her neck gently.

"Yes" she reached behind running her hand down his side and thigh "I feel safe again now" she said.

They had made love one more time in the very early dawn and had fallen asleep together wrapped around each other. By 8am Ben awoke to see that the electric still wasn't on but the light outside negated the need for torches or oil lamps. Carefully and with slight regret he extricated himself from the bed, and padded to the bathroom, extinguishing all the lights on the way. Looking at himself in the mirror he couldn't help but smile, he needed to shave, his hair was a mess he was approaching 40 at the speed of light, but he'd just spent the night making love to a woman who thought he was amazing, who was gorgeous and sexy and all his. And she was currently calling his name.

"Are you OK?" he shouted her, "I've got to get up and go to work, are you coming with me?"

"Hmmm" she called "Yes, your mobiles going and I can't find it?"

He swore and hurried out to the living room where he'd left his phone the previous night, as he passed through their bedroom he noticed she was getting dressed, standing in front of the open window. He got to his phone as it rung off; checking the missed call it was Tom.

"It's your Dad, he'll probably try yours in a…" he was cut off by the sound of her phone ringing.

"Is that the Godfather?" He shouted referring to the ring tone

"Yep, it's Dad; it's in the kitchen if you want to grab it?"
"You're phone rings the Godfather when you're Dad rings? How am I only just learning this?" He yelled before picking up the phone "Hello Sir."

"Jones where are you?"

"At home sir, we've had a power cut, and I seem to have lost my phone."

"The whole of Causton has had a power cut Jones, I need you to get down to the Causton Electricity Substation, and bring Josie."

"Sir" Ben finished as his boss hung up, he put the phone down on the counter and turned to see his fully dressed girlfriend descending on him.

"I've put on weight" she said pulling at her uniform trousers "I've had to order a new uniform"

"Well that can't be from last night" Ben told her, looking down and realising he was still butt naked; he kissed her and shuffled past towards the bedroom.

"You've got a cute arse" she called and under breath added "and my new uniform has pips."

When they arrived at the electricity substation in Ben's Ford Focus it looked like all the coppers in Midsomer had arrived, to get through they ran a gauntlet of no fewer than 3 PC's and a Sergeant. Its bad enough turning up late for work, but when you turn up late and they all know why it's excruciating. When they finally got through to the crime scene Tom walked up to them, Ben's skin crawled as he looked them both up and down.

"Nice of you both to make it" he managed sarcastically, and then gestured above his head, where the remains of a man's corpse hung from the electricity pylon.

"Is that why the electric is off?" Josie asked staring at the suited body as it swung in the gentle summer breeze.

"No" a gruff man wearing a hi-viz orange suit told her, as he came from behind Tom "That'll be because some little bastard has shot all the bloody insulators, it'll take hours to get this lot sorted." Then he waved at corpse "and that's only when that pricks been removed!"

"Did you know the man?" Ben asked confused

"No!" the gruff man explained "but he's ruined my day, so I say he's a bloody prick!" with that he marched off.

"That was Terence Fielding" Tom explained "The site manager"

"Pleasant" Josie managed smiling

"Hmmm yes" Ben concurred "Is he our fourth man then?" he asked

"We suspect so Jones, we suspect so" Tom gestured at the debris of copper wire and porcelain scattered around them, "and you'll be ever so pleased to know the shot gun cartridges from both crime scenes match."

"So?" Ben asked

"So you are going to ask some questions about who has keys, who may have gained access to the site last night etc." Tom waved him off "and Ms Barnaby and I are going to have a little discussion about the amount of uniform hanging about."
When Ben was clearly out of ear shot Tom asked her "Have you told him yet?"

"No" she shuffled her feet guiltily "we didn't really get the chance"

Tom looked up in surprise, and then glanced at the pylon "Are you okay?" he asked quietly.

"Yeah I'm fine" when he still stared intently at her she added "really, really fine. Look don't tell Ben about his bite mark will you, he hasn't noticed and you know how he'll be when he does."

Tom laughed "I won't but it won't long before somebody does, anyway Inspector, you have a vast amount of officers milling about and about 40 press vans etc. waiting outside the perimeter, I would suggest you borrow a high vis jacket and pull rank."

"I assume they are all here because the press came with a butty van and the canteen has no power?"

"I would as well" Tom nodded at the cue forming by the burger van "Oh and go and give the usual statement to the press will you, Inspector" he added again.

As she went to turn away she stopped "its official?"

"As of this morning Inspector Barnaby" he smiled and then whispered "You're Mum's really proud".

He watched for a moment as she skipped off, then stole a high vis jacket off the first constable she found, and dragged the boy after her into the melee of waiting press and hungry coppers. She'll be fine he thought, born for the job, ordering subservient men about like confused animals. He had a moment when he forgot she wasn't actually biologically speaking his, and then amended his thoughts accordingly, maybe not born; maybe it's just Joyce's influence.

Josie sent a group of coppers off to do house to house on the Moorfield estate, some grumbled, some got on with it, and some asked if they were celebrating her promotion in the pub that night. She sent another group who had eaten breakfast back to the station to do whatever it was they were actually supposed to be doing. Her own division she sent away, basic traffic duty, drive around till you see something interesting, with the added caveat that if they were to see any Skoda Yeti's they were to PNC, stop and search.

First day on the job, not so bad, her uniform was wrong, she hadn't got her own car, her boyfriend didn't know she had a promotion and she'd turned up late because she'd been up all night shagging, but hey you had worse first days.

Smiling she walked over to the press, and introduced herself to the guy she vaguely recognised from the BBC News.

"Inspector Barnaby, Midsomer Constabulary, I think you have some questions for me?" she asked him.

A hasty press conference of sorts was formed around her, and as she was miked up by a small red headed woman an older gentleman stepped from the crowd and shook her hand.

"Inspector Barnaby is it? No relation of the other Inspector Barnaby surely?" he asked

Oh God here it starts, Josie thought until I make Super this is going to be my life, and "I didn't quite catch your name sir?" she asked back

"Adrian Jeff's Midsomer Chronicle" he smiled a smarmy nasty little smile "So what relation, go on?"

"He's my father" she said, always unsure how to phrase the relationship formally.

"Oh keeping it in the family then?" he smiled "Good" he turned to her and whispered in a voice he
obviously thought was conspiratorial. "Been with Causton nick long?"

"My experience is of public record" she answered swiftly, "But as it happens I am the Inspector for Midsomer Constabulary Traffic Division, it just happens I am senior officer on duty this morning." She shuddered slightly thinking she really didn't want that appearing in the local chip wrapper before she got chance to tell Ben.

"Ok Inspector, ready when you are" the red head told her stepping out of shot.

Josie looked around at the assembled throng seeing Mr Jeff's slip to one side watching her intently, her little stolen Constable standing off to the other side gave her double thumbs up and she smiled in thanks. "Ladies and Gentlemen" she began following the standard police we have no information at this time other than the facts speech. Finishing by introducing Mr Fielding, who was then himself bombarded with questions about getting the electricity back in order. She carefully unhooked herself, and slipped to the back of the stage, catching the Constable by the arm she dragged him to one-side.

"What's your name?" She asked him

"Ern Carlton, Constable Carlton Ma'am" he stuttered

"You have been brilliant constable" she told him and he beamed, "look do us a favour, let nobody without a police badge or Mr Fielding back into the site." The boy nodded obviously buoyant at being given responsibility, "and one last thing constable?"

"Ma'am?"

"You see DS Jones over there?" the boy nodded "Don't under any circumstances let him find out I'm an Inspector."

The boy looked puzzled "Does he not know Ma'am?"

"Nope and hopefully he won't find out till I can tell him myself."

"Can I ask a question Ma'am, if it's not too private, did you give him the hickie?"

"Yes, and don't let him find out about that either!"

While Josie had been talking to the press, Ben had been chatting to George Bullard about the latest murder. Some of the younger fitter forensic officers had been shimmying up and down the ladder taking photos and samples, but George had stayed with his feet firmly on the ground.

"I won't know till I've got him on the slab, but I suspect he was shot in the car, tortured for a bit, brought out here, hanged by the neck, and used for target practice." The pathologist explained.

"That's a bit, OTT isn't it?" Ben asked

"You tell me Sergeant?" George told him shrugging "it's certainly a bit nasty."

"Tortured?" Ben asked

"His knee caps have been shot" George shuddered "classic torture that, you should ask Tom, it's an old intelligence trick from Northern Ireland."

Ben shivered and looked across automatically to try and spot Josie, he had started automatically glossing over the nastier aspects of their work, it was silly of course, she was a copper herself she knew what happened, but the part of his brain that thought she was sweet and innocent and needed protecting, often
overruled that thought. He spotted her in front of the press, and watched as she was asked questions, and repeated back the practised lines. He couldn't of course hear what was going on, but he understood it.

"The Boss has thrown her to the wolves?" he commented to George, pointing at the gates, "I wonder why he's done that."

"Second senior ranking officer" George commented, and then shut his mouth quickly, unsure whether Ben knew yet or not.

"She's not CID though" Ben protested, "does that count for nothing?"

"Probably a bit more in reality" George added sagely "you probably don't want to get too involved."

Ben nodded and the spotting chunks of porcelain on the floor he bent over "What's this?" he asked

"Bits of the pylon apparently, it's all over the site" George explain

"Yeah but the other bits are brown" Ben picked up a piece with a page from his notebook. "These are white?"

After George had carefully bagged the white porcelain and the body had been carried down, and taken away in the waiting coroner's ambulance. Ben went to find Tom, who in turn was chatting to Josie about what her teams had found on the Moorfield estate.

"Nice Jacket" Ben commented, pointing to her High Vis, "Very conspicuous"

"I borrowed it from PC Carlton" she told him tartly, wondering vaguely if she could make him jealous. And was mildly miffed when Ben just shrugged.

"Bodies gone Sir, forensics say they're just about finished, can we get the power back on?"

"Josie?" Tom asked

"Yes Sir, no reason why not, Mr Fielding is a bit of an arse though, so if you want to do it really, really slowly with loads of snarkiness, that'd be great Sergeant." Ben looked between the two, shrugged and wandered off again, "Oh and Sergeant send PC Carlton up to me will you?"

"Having fun?" Tom asked

"Yes Sir" she smiled

"Found yourself a puppy?" he asked pointing at the PC by the gate,

"Well you've got Ben, I wanted one"

"They need feeding, and walks and they don't come cheap" Tom warned, "and then when you really get fond of them they leave."

"Or seduce your daughter?" she laughed.

"Tell him" Tom said quietly and seriously "Tell him now before someone else does."

"Yes Sir" she groaned "after I've been to Moorfields"

Ben watched her driven off in the marked Focus driven by PC Carlton, and decided he didn't like the lad. It was illogical he knew, and born from base jealousy, but he just didn't like him.
"Where are they off too Sir?" Ben asked waving at the disappearing police car.

"Moorfields Estate Jones" Tom told him, "Unholiest of places."

"Why?"

"A lead on Yeti's Apparently"

"Shouldn't that be a Traffic job?"

"Indeed Jones indeed".

Josie's team had discovered a garage full of Skoda parts on the Moorfield estate, the first few reg numbers certainly linked with the stolen cars, and the garage also contained a stack of fake number plates. The car ringing operation would have been worth a fair whack, certainly enough to fund a tool for overriding car security. It was quite common in the states to have a gang who would have a tool for breaking through one type of cars security, but in the UK almost unheard of, somewhere like Causton it was a first, and her team were all ecstatic.

The garage belonged to a John Nettles, a known drinker and gambler who lived sporadically between his sisters flat on the estate and various cells, bail hostels and remand centres. His whereabouts were currently unknown, but on investigation his sister had seen him about 3 weeks earlier, pissed as a newt with about a grand in cash. He'd told her he'd sold some property and was going on holiday, she hadn't heard from him since, but that was nothing unusual. It was quickly established that the only property Nettles had any claim too was the garage, and working on the assumption it was that which had given John his windfall, the line of enquiry was dropped.

The families of Casey, Hughes and Hopkins all claimed their boys were angels, never putting a step wrong, any convictions where pure misunderstandings and their deaths mistaken identity. When pushed on the fourth man all three families clammed up, claiming he must have been a car thief who led them astray. Josie discovered that PC Carlton knew nothing of Midsomer having transferred only a few weeks before from Cumbria where life was somewhat less hectic. She was surprised therefore that he had the grasp of life at Causton so quickly, especially the relationship between herself and Ben. On questioning she discovered that instead of finding out through the normal lines of police communication, himself being an outsider, he had in fact just observed the couples interaction. She filed it away for later perusal.

One of her constables however was more observant even than PC Carlton, spotting the Landlord of the estates only pub, the greyhound sweeping the yard of broken glass he went to investigate. On questioning the man he'd found out they'd had a break in just after last orders nothing stolen apart from some kitchen equipment. The Landlord was annoyed because it was only a short time after they'd had another set of equipment stolen, it wasn't expensive the landlord had explained, it was just bloody annoying. When Josie asked what sort of equipment the PC had handed her a list bowls, glass condiment jars and a whole stack of dinner plates. Apparently the landlord had wanted to provide quality food, but with the break in's was probably going to have to reconsider. He hadn't wanted to report the break in, very few people reported anything on the estate, but when the Constable had insisted the man had given way, and Josie agreed to allow a Forensics team down to do some dusting.

She was just looking around the estate, thanking the higher powers for all that she had, when she got a picture text from Ben, smiling as she opened it wondering if it was going to be a bad thing, she saw the face of the dead man, his lips blue and eyes blow but otherwise fairly clean and peaceful considering his ordeal, the text underneath read, "see if anyone recognises him."

She smirked and typed back, "No need meet me in Causton High Street for lunch ASAP".

In George Bullard's mortuary, Ben read the text message and smiled. He put it the phone into his pocket and
tried to concentrate on the body, as George went through it for the second time. He was almost completely away with the fairies until George said.

"Unlike the marks on young Ben here's neck"

Ben looked at him and put his hand to his neck feeling a nasty raised edge just forward of his jugular, when he pressed his fingers to this it hurt, and he looked confused.

"What?" he stammered, but George continued

"Unlike Ms Barnaby, this fellow has straight almost flat teeth, demonstrating a good healthy mixed diet, a healthy lifestyle during early development, and a private dentist."

Ben looked more confused "I don't understand"

"You have what is known in certain circles as a hickie, Ben" Tom told him gently.

"Quite a nasty one at that" George told him "Due to Josie's medical history she has very sharp canines, and flattened incisors, and her jaw is slightly misaligned. The only other person who could give you a bite like that would be Dracula."

"But this guy has good teeth?" Ben asked a little put out that he'd been walking around all morning and nobody had commented, not even Josie.

"Not good teeth" George explained "Josie has good teeth, otherwise she wouldn't have been able to give you that bite, this man's foetal and early development was excellent, by the book. This man was not brought up on the Moorfield estate."

"Anything else George?" Tom asked as Ben turned to leave, hand still at his neck.

"There was a lot of cocaine in his system" George shrugged "several hours old at death, but still a lot."

Ben went to Causton to meet Josie, conscious of the bite on his throat, he saw the police car parked outside the Midsomer County Estate Agents and he groaned the day was once again turning out rubbish for him. He walked over to the car where Josie and PC Carlton sat, and knocked on the passenger window.

"Ben" she smiled stepping out of the car, she put her arms around him but looking into his face she asked "what's wrong?"

"This" he said showing her the mark on his neck "according to George Bullard, you are a coffin and cloak away from being Count Dracula."

She giggled "I'm sorry Ben, I didn't mean to hurt you" she smiled and he noticed what George had meant, her canines did push forward slightly, giving her a slightly demonic look, he shivered knowing it was another symptom of incest and imprisonment.

He smiled, and looking round seeing only PC Carlton even vaguely glancing in their direction he kissed her, "you are forgiven, if you tell me why we are at the estate agents during a case?"

"The hanging man, the guy in the suit I recognised him" she waved her phone at the estate agency, "he was working here last week when I went in and got the details of the houses at Causton Cross."

"That makes sense" Ben told her about George's findings "he's a middle class drugs boy."

"Shall we go in and ask?" she nodded at the shop

"What about the PC?" Ben asked
"I gave him a tenner, and told him to buy himself some lunch; he's listening to PM apparently."

Ben shrugged, and followed her into the shop.

"Hi" he said to the girl behind the desk, "Causton CID, I wondered if we could ask you a few questions?"

Flashing their ID's they stood side by side and the girl smiled.

"Of course"

Josie handed the phone over and asked if she recognised the man in the photo.

"Yes, that's Bryan, Bryan Truman he works, worked here, and Oh God what's happened?"

"We have reason to believe Bryan was murdered" Josie told her gently

"Could you tell us about Bryan?" Ben asked, "did he have any enemies or hobbies, where he lived anything helpful?"

She told them everything and a lot more besides, she and Bryan had been going out, he'd started working there few months before, he had a flat in Causton and she had a key, he had gone to Causton Comp, but had been to Deveril school before his parents had divorced. She didn't think he had any enemies, but he had known some of the lads of the estate and she really didn't like them. They used to go out and she thought it had something to do with drugs because sometimes he drunk text her but it wasn't quite like drunk texting. Ben had asked the girl what car he drove, and when she said a big Skoda, they'd both smiled brightly. By the time they had finished she was sobbing, and had asked if they had needed anything else.

"Actually yes" Josie had said, "this might be the wrong time, but do you have any 4 bed detached properties in Causton Green?"

"I can't actually believe you did that?" Ben told her as they walked outside.

"Why not?" she asked waving the particulars of the Old Mill Causton Green, "we both like the area, it's not far from Mum and Dad, or work, and we can go and look at it on Friday."

"It's a murder investigation?" Ben said "You are investigating that poor girl's boyfriend's murder?"

"So?"

"I love you but sometimes I wonder" Ben told her.

"Wonder what?"

"Wonder if I'm just marrying your Dad"

"Unless we find a house Sgt Jones, you're not marrying anyone."

Tom had been sitting eating lunch at his desk, when Ben had called, to keep him up to date; he looked up at the board and read it quite clearly. An unknown person had twice broken into The Greyhound Pub, and had also paid John Nettles a lot of money for a garage. In that garage somebody was stripping Skoda's which had been stolen around Midsomer, Bryan Truman who drove one of these Skoda's and was a drug addict, somehow got hold of the tool that opened them magically, he and his three friends were running away from this person unknown, the stole the Skoda, drove away from the Estate, and some point Truman and Hopkins had swapped driving seats, then as they drove towards Midsomer Magma, person unknown had caught up with them, killing Hopkins and causing the crash, hey had then killed Casey and Hughes in quick succession, dragging the injured Truman away, torturing him, before hanging him from the electricity pylon
and shooting him.

Tom picked up his phone and dialled Josie

"Don't care how you do it, I need to find where Hopkins and Truman swapped seats" he told her before hanging up, he knew she and Ben were having lunch together but with a little bit of malicious humour he phone Ben's phone next. "Don't care how you do it, but find out who's been using The Greyhounds plates as clay pigeons?" Another couple of hour's peace so arranged, he went back to solving the murder.

Josie and PC Carlton drove slowly along the road to Midsomer Magma, investigating every pull in and field gate for signs of a struggle or just a hurried stop, about a mile from the crash site she yelled at him to stop, with the cars lights flashing, she stepped out of the car carefully, there was a wide field gate the mud in which had been disturbed and was spread out onto the road. Footprints decorated the mud inside the gateway, and she knew she'd found the spot. PC Carlton phoned it in, requesting forensic back up, while Josie carefully stepped on the grass around the mud, while she stood there, she spotted a black plastic box pushed into the mud, the shape of a tiny mobile phone, but with a key ring on the end. She went back to the car, and rummaging in the boot found a long thin measuring stick. Walking back to her place she started fishing for the ring, PC Carlton got out of the car and gave her an odd look.

"When my sister and I were little I used to excel and hook a duck" she explained digging the stick in and pulling out the object with a flick of triumph. Pulling a handkerchief from her pocket she wrapped the object, and went back to the car.

"What is it Ma'am?" the young PC asked

"It's a very expensive tool for breaking into cars"

"Why would you drop it in the mud then?"

"Because Constable" she waved it at him, "I think Mr Truman knew he wouldn't need it again."

Ben walked through the Moorfields estate wishing he wasn't alone. He'd been to school with kids of this estate and joking aside he knew what hell this estate could be. Now occasionally he'd see a friendly face, someone who didn't mind him, he was at heart just Ben Jones, cleverish kid from Mr Burnside's class who joined the local police. However more often than not what he found was curtain twitching, or scowls. They knew him as a police Sergeant, and although he worked with DCI Barnaby who was known to be tough but fair, there was hardly a family without a member of it currently serving a stretch somewhere. He was walking towards the play park at the back of the estate where the worst of Causton ended and the countryside of Midsomer began, here you could see the hill up to the new eco-houses at Causton Cross, and his mind wandered slightly. The benefit of Causton Green over Causton Cross was its distance from this estate, he didn't want his children brought up thinking this was the norm as he had.

Josie and Cully had both gone to Causton Girls School; their view of the world was more genteel than his. He had never wanted, never dreamed of suggesting he lived off Josie's wealth, and she in turn was happy to live of their joint salary it was one of the earliest discussions they'd had about the future, but his objections ended with his children's schooling. They wouldn't attend Causton Comp, they wouldn't hang about on this estate, in fact if he could avoid not child of his would ever come onto this site at all. As he walked across the playground he spotted white porcelain fragments, he bent down poking them with his finger.

"Hullo Mr Jones" a cheery voice behind him called, he turned to see an elderly woman pulling a small shopping trolley. "Terrible isn't it, you going to do something about it?"

"About what Mrs Hodges?" Ben asked, putting a name to the face.

"Them playing clay pigeons out here at all hours, kids can't play you know?"
"Someone's been firing a shotgun at plates?" Jones asked

"Oh yeah, you need to ask Phil about that, terrible thing he's right upset," she gave him a cheery wave and wandered on her way.

Ben found himself a few minutes later standing outside Philip Dakers workshop, the self-styled only decent criminal on the estate. When he knocked, Ben was greeted to a cheery greeting voice calling him inside.

"Hullo Jonesy?" Phil called, as Ben stepped through the door, "How things going?"

"Fine Phil, fine, and you?"

"Mustn't grumble?" Phil wiped his hands on his overall trousers, and then carefully covered the engine he was working on with a blanket and tarp, shielding it from Ben's view entirely. "How's Ms Barnaby? Saw her on the estate earlier, bit of a twinkle in her eye, you doing your job well lad?"

"She's fine thanks Phil" Ben smiled for a moment wondering if he really might have got her pregnant, "I was just talking to Mrs Hodges."

"This about the plate shooting?" Phil interrupted, "Nasty thing that, don't like it on my patch, if they want to do that, they should take it up onto the fields, it's not safe for the kiddies."

"I don't supposed you'd like to enlighten me as too whom would be doing it?"

Phil made a noise through his broken teeth, "Now Jonesy you now I'm no grass" he looked around and pulled out a tin from a high shelf, "tell you what though, if you were to have found these empty cartridges" he opened the lid to show Ben the tin was stuffed with them, "up at the playground, and you were to perhaps run them through that clever little machine of yours at Causton, you might get some nice prints of them, mightn't you?"

"Thanks Phil" Ben smiled, taking the tin, "Just a friendly note of warning, that's not the engine from a Skoda is it?"

"No?" Phil looked genuinely confused, "but thanks for that Jones, I'll avoid one if it comes near"

"Glad to hear it Phil." Ben turned to leave and was on the step out as he was called

"Oh and Jonesy, tell Ms Barnaby we're all really chuffed for her, about bloody time, she'll be utterly great!"

Ben flapped for a moment, smiled and then said "Thanks Phil?"

Back at Causton Ben and Josie met at the tech department, each carrying their retrospective piece of evidence, they kissed briefly whilst waiting, and got a round of whoops and hollers for their pains.

Having handed and logged the evidence, they went out into the corridor, both unwilling to go and do some paperwork; they both leant on the wall, arm slightly in arm.

"Just been up to Moorfields" Ben explained "You're right about Causton Green, I like Causton Green"

"Good" she told him, intertwining her fingers with his "I really like the Old Mill"

"We haven't seen it yet" he reminded her

"I've driven passed it about four times today" she explained, "it looks lovely, and I've been reading the specs I the car"

"Have you spoken to Phil Daker?" he asked suddenly
"No he waved earlier when I was up there, but not spoken why?"

"He said something odd, said you had a twinkle in your eye, and I must have done my job right."

She laughed, and blushed and elbowed him slightly, "he's got about 15 kids he probably knows if a girls been serviced correctly" she kissed him on the nose.

"Tell me what's up" he said suddenly, "what is it I need to know"

She stopped smiling and opened her mouth to speak when one of the techs rushed out; he looked at them both and smiled.

"You working on the same case?" he asked

"Yes?" they said in unison

"Good 'cos you've got a match, prints on the gadget match prints on the cartridges." The tech explained, waving a piece of paper

"Do you have a name?" Ben asked.

"Sally Nettles" Ben and Josie panted out at the same time, having rushed through the building racing to be first to tell Tom.

"She's got previous for affray and intent to supply" Ben explained

"Her brother John has done time for firearms offenses" Josie added.

"Very good, call them in" Tom told them.

"Can we go?" Ben asked, "Can we go with uniform and make the arrest?"

"Yes but you will be back for shift end won't you?" Tom asked them sternly.

"Of course" they'd promised.

In the end Sally Nettles had come quietly, she'd been running a small drugs operation from the flat when Bryan Truman had got into trouble, unable to service his drug debts. He told her he had a mate who could get him a gadget from the states which would open any car, as long as you had the same model key. They could nick cars, ring them, and sell them on for a tidy sum. The downside of this was that they could only nick Skoda Yeti's because that was the car key they had programmed the gadget too. Truman and his mates had come to Sally to explain their mistake that they wanted to get another gadget but it would cost money. As they hadn't even remotely serviced their debt, she had become angry and they'd made a run for it.

She'd sent her somewhat feeble minded brother after them, who had caught them up in the car-park and taken a photo of the car, with its number plate, so he could find it later. Apparently this was what made him such a bad gambler, he had no head for figures and without photographic evidence he'd have forgotten everything about the car as soon as it was out of sight. He'd caught up with them however quite quickly they'd had some kind of argument and had been driving really slowly, so John had come up behind them as they pulled out of a farmer's field, somewhere on the road to Midsomer Magma. He had chased them for a bit, and after a while come up close enough he could shoot the driver through the head, causing the Skoda to crash. He'd dispatched Hughes and Casey quickly enough, but knew that his sister would want to talk to Truman herself, so dragged him back to the estate bleeding.

They'd tortured him, and he'd begged, but Sally who was thunderously angry, had got John to hang him. While he was kicking and being throttled, she let her brother take pot shots at him, and even threw some of
the plates they’d stolen from the greyhound, until John had started hitting the pylon instead and the whole of Causton was plunged into darkness. When pressed on the whereabouts of her brother, Sally admitted she didn't have a clue; he'd dropped her back at the estate late the previous night and driven away till the heat died down.

Ben issued a description of John Nettles, but the chances of him ever being caught were probably still quite slim. Sally was charged with 4 murders, supplying, possession and car ringing, as well as a range of other offences, and Ben went back to CID, to officially write his notes. He was surprised that Tom wasn't still there, but looked at his watch it was now nearly 7pm, and Mrs Barnaby had probably called him home. Ben and Josie had agreed to see each other later, and so he sat back taking his time with his notes, happy with the quiet calm of the office and a good, if not complete collar.

About 30minutes after he'd arrived in the office there was a knock on the door, and the now civilian dressed PC Carlton popped his head around the door. "Hullo Sir" he greeted happily, "we're all off down the pub and wondered if you were coming, apparently Inspector Barnaby has put a rather generous tab behind the bar."

Ben looked at the lad, then back at his completed notes, and shrugged, he wondered about his boss's odd generosity, but the call of the pub, and knowing Josie would probably be there, overrode those thoughts, grabbing his jacket, he turned off his screen and followed the PC down the steps, out of the building and across the road.

When he entered the pub it was packed, a typical end of shift, end of case raucous was going on, some officers in barely removed uniform, some in plain clothes some in full Civvies all mingled and cheered and chatted. As he entered he was greeted with a clap and indistinct cheer, which he acknowledged, looking around for Josie he spotted her sans jacket and hat but otherwise still dressed in uniform chatting to a tall man in uniform but sporting a sweatshirt.

"Ben" she called and waved "Ben this is Chief Inspector Giles Coring" they shook hands "Giles this is Detective Sergeant Ben Jones"

"Hullo son" the man clapped Ben on the back with a large beefy hand "You're DCI Barnaby's puppy then" He took a swig from his glass, "good show, heard a lot of good things about you, if you ever fancy swapping roles with this young lady" he pointed with his glass to somewhere vaguely between Josie's breasts, "must be off, got to see a pig about a poke".

"Nice man?” Ben smirked, accepting a kiss and hug from Josie "where's your Dad? I wondered what was going on.” He looked across the bar and pub.

"I don't think he's here” she told him "Mum's still on her eastern cooking; I think it's another tagine tonight?"

"But, he's put a tab behind the bar?” Ben asked even more confused.

"No, I have” she clarified

"But PC whathisname said Inspector Barnaby?"

"Yes" she agreed, and then looked at him

"But" he stopped and looked at her "You made inspector?" his face split into a massive grin and he picked her up, "You made inspector, that's wonderful"

"Yes" she squealed as he threw her slightly and caught her "Yes, yes I did"

"Why didn't you tell me?” he asked her his eyes still sparkling with pride.
"Ben, it's not quite that simple" she said soberly, and he looked slightly stricken.

"Not CID? Please not CID?" he begged he couldn't handle that

"No not CID"

"It is in Midsomer isn't it? You're not telling me you're leaving?"

"No, no nothing like that" she smiled at the relief that washed over his face "It's….Traffic?" she told him apologetically.

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