Inspector Barnaby Mystery The River Runs Through by Snoopadoop

Summary: Ben and Josie have moved into their new home, the whole Barnaby family have gathered, and now all Ben wants to do is to propose. Unfortunately this is Midsomer, and soon a 10 year old murder interrupts the party, when another body is found and the investigation becomes more complicated the future starts to look very bleak indeed.

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Rating M

Triggers; Murder, Crime, bad jokes.

I do not own, yadda yadda yadda, only the story is mine.

So this is the third story I've written for Midsomer murders. You don't need to read the other two first, but they are better.

Hope you enjoy.

SJxxx

The body such as it was, was caught under the boat jetty hidden by reeds, the high water in the previous weeks had eroded the bank a few hundred yards upstream, disturbing the shallow grave it had been resting in, and pulling the remains out into the flow of the river. Sections of flesh and hair had been stripped away by animals, fish and birds, and the odd decayed finger had washed carefully downstream. However the main bulk of the corpse now lay crumpled under the gently rotting wooden planks, and there it seemed it was likely to remain.

The young couple coming down to the jetty for a midnight swim in the wide shallow river had no idea of his presence. The stripped of their party clothes, as they had been itching to do all night, behind them the sounds of the end of term prom at the school continued, but they slipped into the black water. Fondling and kissing in the cool water on the hot night, was how they had planned to seal their love, before separate universities and pressures of adulthood tried to drive them apart. Finding that making love for the first time in the swell of a river however was not as easy nor as romantic as they'd first imagined, the boy suggested they might be better on the old jetty after all.

Climbing out of the water first her wet naked body caught in the moonlight she stood in front of him, spinning in all her virginal glory. He was transfixed for a moment; she wasn’t to know that this was it for him, one final shag before he left for the joys of university girls, city girls who knew what they were doing. She thought they were pledging their troth making love for the first time together, and he ducked his head under the water for a moment to hide his sarcastic grin. He opened his eyes and swam underwater for a few
moments closer to the dock. When he got to the ancient wooden boards he pulled his knees upwards to fish leap out of the water, but stopped when his knee hit something hard but loose.

He thought instantly that it was a marker buoy, and being in charge, if only for one more night of the schools rowing club, he thought he’d better rescue it. They’d lost a few in the recent flood, and he was pleased to have found at least one. Pulling and tugging it under the water he was surprised how much force he had to put into it. The girl was teasing him, asking him what he was doing and in his aggression of exertion he snapped at her to be quiet. Finally with one last tug he yanked the buoy free, pleased to note what felt like a length of chain being dragged up with it, without looking he held it above his head, and chucked it at the boards in front of the girls feet, for a moment there was silence, before the most blood curdling scream he’d ever heard. He looked up to see her terror blanched face, and locked eyes on the buoy, confused he pulled himself out of the water, and looked down himself.

What greeted him however was not one of the schools errant plastic buoys, with their distinct Day-Glo pink markings and school crest, nor was the object attached to a short length of reedy chain as he believed. As he looked down, unbelievingly he was greeted to the sight of a half decayed skull, a single gunshot wound running between its empty eye sockets, the remains of flesh and hair covering its head and cheeks around it’s grinning mouth, and running behind it like a gruesome comets tail, a significant length of spinal cord. He looked at it and then the still screaming girl for a moment before his vision flickered and swam, and he fainted backwards.

Three months later at the Black Swan Causton Green a party was taking place. A large table in the restaurant had been reserved, and the sound of chattering and the clinking of glasses filled the usually quiet pub. At the table sat Tom and Joyce Barnaby, their two daughters Cully and Josie, Cully’s husband Simon Dixon, Josie’s Boyfriend Ben Jones, and Tom’s cousin John Barnaby and his wife Sarah who were visiting from Brighton. They were celebrating the first night that Ben and Josie lived officially together in their new house in Causton Green. The Old Mill which sat next to the pub, had been purchased after the second viewing nearly three months previously, but the paperwork had taken time, and even now Ben’s own Maisonette in Causton had still not sold, meaning Josie had bought the house outright without him.

However tonight was a celebration and the couple had more important things on their mind than a petty disagreement about what constituted their house. They had an important announcement, and both itched to tell it to the assembled group, they had decided to wait till after the starters and had told the group this, so as waiters came and claimed they’re plates, Ben started fiddling with small box in his pocket. Finally as the hubbub died down, and Ben went to clear his throat, Cully started to speak.

“I know tonight is about Josie and Ben” she smiled at them, raising her glass, “and I know they have a big announcement of their own, but before they do I wonder if I can step in.”

Ben was not particularly happy, his little speech in his head, was already sounding a bit daft to him and any delay was just making him fret, but to his left his partner squeaked with excitement.

“Oh Cully do go on” she clapped, knowing what the announcement was, and too excited to speak properly.

“Well” Cully said carefully beaming and smiling at Simon “We’re going to have a baby.”

The table erupted with cries of congratulations and more squeals of excitement, Josie who had already been on the edge of her seat, leapt up and dragged her sister into a massive hug, shrieking and bouncing together, only making room for their equally excited mother to join them after a full minute. Tom, John and Ben shook Simon’s hand in a much more sober way, passing on their congratulations, and Sarah gave him a hug and a peck on the cheek asking, when the baby was due.

“End of January” Simon nodded, and then as his wife, mother and sister in law re took their seats, he fished into his wallet and pulled out a scan photo. The squeals returned as the picture was passed around the table, as it came to Josie she clapped again, and passed the photo to Ben with a kiss and a hug.
“Go on then Ben” Joyce told him while he still held the photo, “time for your announcement.”

Ben looked shocked and realised all eyes were once again on him, he mouth went dry and he carefully handed the photo to Sarah, and took a massive gulp of water. Fiddling with the box in his pocket, he started to speak “Well as you know Josie and I have bought the house and we…”

He was interrupted by a youngish waiter who came across to the table, “Excuse me Inspector Barnaby?”

“Yes?” Josie, Tom and John all answered.

The waiter looked stricken “Oh erm” he looked behind him for support and finding none he ploughed on “There is a phone call for an Inspector Barnaby?”

“Which one?” John asked slightly annoyed

“I do not know? They only ask for Inspector Barnaby?”

“Who?” Josie tried “Who is on the phone?”

“Excuse me Miss I didn’t ask” the waiter was now wringing his hands

“Excuse me all” Tom said standing up, “I’m sure it’ll probably be for me, I’ll just go and see, be right back.”

Ben held his head in his hands, every time they tried this, the same thing happened, this was the third time he’d tried to propose, and it was a nightmare.

“Never mind mate” Simon told him “I tried 4 times fifth ones a charm.”

“What’s going on?” John asked confused

“Ben is trying to propose” Joyce supplied, “he wants to do it properly, in front of Tom but every time he’s tried, this has happened”

“This is the third go” Cully explained, gesturing at the stricken Sergeant.

“Oh dear Ben it can’t be that hard surely?” Sarah insisted

But just then Tom came back his face looking grave; “I’m afraid we’re going to have to call it a night” he told the assembled throng “there seems to have been a murder.”

Ben groaned, dropping the box carefully back into his pocket.

“Jones, you ready?” Tom asked

“Ben’s been drinking Dad, as have you and Uncle John” Josie told him. “I’ll drive.”

John got up and kissed Sarah, as Ben and Josie started following Tom out of the pub.

“You’re not going as well are you?” Sarah asked

“Murder love?” He told her in way of explanation leaving the table, and following the other police officers out of the door.

Looking around the table Joyce frowned, Simon and Cully shrugged, and all their gazes rested on Sarah Barnaby, she shrugged, and smiled “Oh it’s OK he does that at home as well.”

Arriving outside a large Medieval pile, Josie parked her marked BMW next to the two marked Focus’
outside the main doors. She had had a moment of glee when realising she could legitimately use her Blues and Two’s with Ben in the car, ever since she’d been given it, she had wanted to show off, but they had never had the chance. She was less impressed when he’d yelped in terror as they bounced through the back roads of Midsomer to the village of Felton’s Cross, and one point grabbing on to DCI John Barnaby’s arm, much to his amusement.

On getting out of the car, he’d come up behind her, as the two DCI’s took the lead.

“That was terrifying!” he told her

“My driving’s not that bad” she told him “I’m a very good driver”

“Bloody Traffic coppers” he’d moaned back.

“Children behave” Tom had scolded

“That’s what they say when we’re together” John had sung under his breath, as he rang the ancient door bell.

An elderly woman came to the door, and opened it wide peering out at them through pince nez, “Hullo Madame” Tom greeted “I am Detective Chief Inspector Barnaby, this is Detective Chief Inspector Barnaby, Inspector Barnaby and Detective Sergeant Jones Causton CID, could we come in please?”

“Oh yes, hello” she said, “some of your younger officers are here already”

“Yes Madam” John said patiently “They called us, could we possibly come in?”

“Oh yes, Lord Huffington is in the library, he’s quite ready for you.”

A glance was shared around the four police officers as they followed into the baronial Hall. Ben always had moments that were uncomfortable in places like this, Josie called it his peasant stock, but really it had more to do with taking her away from her own mansion, and bringing her to live in his tiny one bedroom flat. Even now they lived in a four bedroom converted mill he assumed he’d always feel she could do better than him. Josie for her part hated these big houses, they reminded her of her first marriage, and that would never do. She concentrated on the comforting feeling of Ben close behind, and smiled knowing he had in his pocket an engagement ring that would bring to the end any reference to that horrific first foray into matrimony.

The lady stopped them outside a large wooden door, where a Uniformed Constable stood, he gave them an apologetic shrug, when Tom quirked his eyebrows. The Midsomer Constabulary often found themselves dealing with eccentric old aristocrats, every PC knew that.

“Lord Huffington?” the lady called after knocking and the door was opened by another Uniformed PC this one, ushered them in, pointing at a chair in the far corner of the room, which faced a wall of books.

“He’s over there” the PC told Tom “He phoned the nick, confessed to a murder, and then just sat there, waiting?”

“Why didn’t you arrest him?” John asked her

“Let him explain sir” The PC told him, and darted out of the door.

“Ar Hello” The chair spoke, the occupant neither turning nor moving in anyway.

“Lord Huffington” the older lady continued “may I present Detectives Barnaby, Barnaby, Barnaby and Jones?”
“You sound like a group of solicitors” The chair said stuffily “You didn’t have to change your name when you joined CID Mr Jones?”

“No Sir?” Ben replied

“Not compulsory to be a Barnaby then?”

“It helps!” Ben said smiling wistfully.

“Would you mind telling us why we are here sir?” Josie tried, and that did get a reaction, the head bobbed round to show a wizened old face, complete with grey beard, wild grey hair and massive eyebrows.

“You’re a police girly, woman person thing?” he asked

“Police Officer, Sir” she corrected gently, and then as the others had come to some kind of sticking point she moved forward and bent down by his chair, “Why did you call the police out?”

“You see Miss” he told her taking her hand “I’ve murdered my wife”

“OK Sir” she said gently “and where is your wife now?”

“Well I killed her you see, and then I buried her at my old school, by the banks of the river, I thought she’d like that.”

Ben fidgeted for a moment, sending a text quietly.

“And when was this sir?” Josie continued quietly

“You see Miss I can’t quite remember it may have been today, I certainly only remembered today, or it could have been a while ago?”

Bens phoned beeped and he read the text message “Would your old School be Devon Hall, by any chance sir?”

“Why yes” Lord Huffington confirmed “Oh have you found Lavinia’s body?”

“Yes Sir” Ben explained “About three months ago, but she’d been dead for about ten years?”

“Oh” Lord Huffington cried grabbing onto Josie’s wrist suddenly and causing her to yelp in pain “Yes it probably was that long ago”

Josie scrabbled away, but found she was now held painfully against her will, her eyes darted to the three detectives, who for a moment didn’t know quite what to do.

“Constable!” Tom shouted behind him, pleased to see the two uniformed officers hurry into the room “Arrest Lord Huffington, and take him to Causton nick, we’ll be back to interview him later”

There was a brief struggle and in the end John rescued Josie from the man, while the Constables arrested him. Ben explained to Tom he’d remembered the body of a woman being found by the river in some school grounds about three months previously. The name had escaped him, so he’d texted DC Stephens for confirmation. Tom had been pleased with him, and said so as they walked back into the library. John knelt on the floor, examining Josie’s wrist carefully turning it left and right. She looked trustingly into his eyes as he did this, of course she did he was her Uncle, Ben thought stopping the moment of jealousy dead in its tracks. He thought he wouldn’t be jealous if it was Tom kneeling in front of Josie, so why did the green eyed monster roar at John. An odd thought, which was curbed entirely by the secondary thought of “Oh shit she’s actually hurt.”
He barged John out of the way, and scooped Josie into his arms, kissing her head, and eyes and lips before looking at her wrist.

“Sergeant” she scolded

“You’re hurt, Ma’am” he protested

“It’s not bad Ben” John behind him assured “I was just looking, it’s a scratch and a bit of a Chinese burn.”

“Thank you Sir” Ben added with grated teeth.

“You OK Ben?” Josie asked worried “You sound a bit odd?”

“You got hurt?” he protested again

“Not badly, and it was my fault.” She looked up at her father and uncle, “is it always this exciting, I might ask for a transfer.”

“NO!” the three detectives said at once.

Tom and Ben had interviewed Edward Huffington, who had happily admitted to murdering his wife, and assaulting Inspector Barnaby. Finding no other questioning necessary Tom charged him, and sent him to the cells. After the room had emptied the tape removed and entered into evidence, Ben still sat in the interview room.

“You OK Jones?” Tom asked him, a little concerned “You look a bit peaky.”

“Long night sir” Ben explained, unwilling to admit the reason for his peakiness was a new found possessiveness over Josie. He sighed as he got up, and the DCI looked at him, and he waved “Sir, can I ask you something?”

“Go on Jones”

“How do you cope?” seeing Tom’s confused reaction he continued “How do you cope knowing someone you love does our job? Doesn’t it kill you inside?”

“She’s fine Ben, it’s a scratch, the old guy probably didn’t even mean it” He swallowed “And she works in Traffic, the cones don’t fight back?”

“Sir she won’t always be in Traffic.”

“She was joking about CID, you know she loves her uniform” Tom came and sat in front of him “This news, she’s not pregnant?”

“No” Ben smiled “you know I love her though don’t you?”

“Yes Ben I do” Tom patted him on the shoulder, “Now shall we all go home and you can try and propose another night?”

“You know?”

“Of course I know” he smiled “Don’t tell the Barnaby women though, I like winding them up.”

Simon and Cully were spending a few days in Midsomer helping Josie and Ben move into their new home. After returning exhausted, Ben had been surprised to find Cully and Simon were sitting up waiting for them in the large living room, of the house they now called home. Cully had fussed over Josie’s arm, and Simon
had provided Ben with beer. The house had been full of talk about the case for an hour or so followed by Cully dozing off in Simon’s arms and the happy father carried her upstairs to the front guest room. Ben and Josie, curled up on the other sofa looked at each other.

“Are we OK?” she asked him

“hmmm?” Ben nuzzled into her sleepily “Yeah, of course?”

“It’s just you’ve been a bit off with me since Lord Huffington.”

“I was worried is all” he nuzzled her “Come to bed, soon to be Mrs Jones”

She giggled as he led her upstairs to their new master suite, the moment they had looked around this house she had loved it, and because she loved it, he loved it as well. It was light and airy, the whole master end of the house which over looked the river was made of glass, and she could look from their new bed facing south and watch natural light all day, the bedroom had a wooden decking balcony that hung over the river as well, and the sound of running water was soothing. As they went to bed, she lay looking out at the sky, the bubbling of her fish tank, the rushing of the river and the glowing light from the sun tubes which would ensure that even if they had a power cut the light would never go out again. He nuzzled into bed behind her, kissing her neck, feeling her relax into him.

“You could just wear the ring” he whispered but she was already asleep.

A few hours later he woke feeling cold, with an odd sound in the house, he lay there for a moment, then running his hand through his hair smiled realising that the sound was Mr and Mrs Dixon making love at the front of the house. He looked across his empty bed and out onto the balcony, the door was open and he saw lying on the sun lounger on their balcony wrapped in a blanket the woman he loved. He stood up and padded across; dragging their duvet with him, as he went out onto the balcony he bent down, realising Josie was awake.

“Are you alright?” he asked

“Yeah, didn’t want to listen to my sister shagging” she told him

“Is that what woke you or were you already awake?”

“It was the case” she told him, moving aside as he came and laid full length beside her “the case kept playing back in my head.”

“Oh sweetheart, I’m sorry you shouldn’t have been there” he nuzzled her kissing her ears and neck.

“It’s not the arm” she told him “It’s Lord Huffington, why did he suddenly remember? If it was after the body was found sure, but ten years and then months later out of the blue?”

He lay there, stroking her, feeling her body tense and relax as she reacted to him, “he seemed a pretty confused, nasty old guy?” Ben told her feeling himself reacting to her body, and rubbing against her.

“But he phoned Causton nick” she told him pushing back against him, as he wrapped her in the duvet, “he didn’t call 999 or confess it to a third party, out of the blue, tonight” she looked at the sky, “last night, he decided to confess.”

Ben felt her open to him, he liked that she mostly slept nude, and in this position he could feel her dampness against his fingers, and her yearning as she pushed against him. “What triggered it?” Ben asked light dawning.

“What triggered it?” she agreed as he pushed his now erect manhood up and entered her from behind,
dragging his hands across her stomach, pulling her down onto him.

“You know going through a case with you is much more fun than with your Dad” he panted as he thrust into her.

“I should hope so too” she wiggled her hips making him moan “Also you know how he said he killed her?”

“Oh GOD” he moaned “yes yes I do”

“Why wouldn’t you say shot?” she kissed his hands as she gripped them as hard as she could. Feeling the beginnings of her orgasm, and Ben moved inside her.

“Are we actually doing this?” he asked losing the ability to think about much more than starting to come, “Yes I would have expected him to say shot.”

She called his name as her muscles clamped on him, and he thrust one last time inside her coming calling her name into her hair. After a few moments panting gently, snuggling together watching the dawn, she spoke again. “I want him to make a full statement; I want to hear how he thinks he murdered her.”

“Is that an order Ma’am?” Ben asked, running his hands across her body.

“Yes” she kissed him and snuggled into his arms.

“Yes Ma’am” he agreed sleepily...

The next morning Ben and Simon were sitting on the deck in the garden, below the balcony, sharing a cup of coffee in the peaceful early light. Cully and Josie could be heard somewhere back in the house giggling and chatting, whilst making what Ben feared would be another packed lunch. Ben quite liked Simon, the man was funny and nice and Cully clearly adored him, and he her. At this moment Ben liked Simon most of all, because he’d made coffee and taken Ben on to the deck to avoid the Barnaby sisters.

“She’s really happy, you know?” Simon turned to Ben after a while. “Josie, she’s really happy.”

Ben looked at him, “really? Is that the famous Barnaby sister’s grapevine?” He asked laughing.

“Well partially” Simon admitted, “but mostly you can see it” When Ben gave him an odd look he continued “It’s not a surprise people keep asking if she’s pregnant, she’s radiant, literally glowing with happiness.”

“Well, er that’s great mate, erm don’t know what to say”

“I don’t think I’m explaining myself well, normally she’s really beautiful but she’s all blues and greens, aloof and luminous like stone in the night time. I know why of course” he said answering Ben’s raised eyebrows “I know why she is normally darkness and stillness of course, but since she’s been with you, she’s been getting brighter and more radiant and now Ben, she’s shining.”

Ben sat there mug of coffee half to his lips, “are you trying to say you fancy her?”

“No, no, she beautiful of course but I love Cully, and” Simon looked down and then up smiling. “When I was a kid my sister collected care bears, they were all identical except for the colour and the picture on the picture on their tummies. If you covered their tummies and took black and white photos of them, they were all identical, but you could tell, Grumpy bear from Funshine bear just by some ethereal quality in the bear.” He paused for breath, and looked and Ben, “Josie used to be the blue bear, but now she is Funshine Bear, Radiant!”

“Did you spend a lot of time with those bears?”

“Far too much!” Simon smiled at him as he took another sip of coffee, “just a heads up, but they really do
Ben, who had spat hot coffee out of his nose, was saved from saying anything else by his phone ringing. He
left a few minutes later, kissing Josie as he grabbed his Tupperware lunch box, he studied her. She looked as
beautiful as she had always done to him, she smiled more now, he had to admit, and he knew she’d rounded
a bit since they’d started having sex, she seemed happier but he thought he probably did as well. They were
in love.

Several hours later Josie was travelling the country lanes towards Marsh Wood Primary Cross, as they
entered the village of Felton’s Cross, she immediately looked towards the Manor of Felton Hall high up on
the hill, her now lightly bandaged arm prickling slightly at the thought of the night before.

“You OK Ma’am?” Her constable PC Carlton asked from the driving seat.

“Yeah, that’s where I got this.” She pointed at the house on the hill, and gestured to her arm.

“The exciting life of CID” PC Carlton laughed

“Are you abandoning me already Tim?” she asked him frowning.

“Not at all Ma’am” he said sharply “I’m very grateful to you” he gestured widely encompassing the car and
Josie herself “but I do enjoy the odd fantasy of being a Detective.”

Josie smiled; on her very first day on the job she’d accidentally chosen PC Carlton out of a group of
mingling Constables, to help her. She had requested his transfer, and now he was her chosen gofer, driver
and general dogsbody. Her Dad called him “The Puppy”, it meant he was excused from dogsbody work for
anyone else, he rarely had to do house to houses, and he’d been sent on a series of courses to make him a
better driver. If you get yourself noticed by a more senior officer, and that officer is worth their salt as they
rise you rise, if she hadn’t picked him out of the crowd, he’d have stayed a PC forever, he’s likely to make
Sergeant within two years now.

Josie was about to issue a sarky comment, when they came round the corner, and were faced by a massive
traffic jam.

“Bugger” Josie yelped, as Carlton slammed on the breaks, “Blues and twos please constable, let’s see what
this is all about.”

Pc Carlton lit the cars alarms, and two-tone siren, most of the cars in front of them curled up onto the banks,
or pulled has hard as they could into the undergrowth as the Pursuit BMW weaved its way through.
Eventually they came to a place where the road was blocked by a series of parked police cars, some marked
and some unmarked. Josie recognised Bens Focus, and her Dad’s Jaguar. If the cars had parked on one side
of the road there would have been plenty of room, but coppers usually didn’t hold with this theory, they
usually just dumped their cars where they could be bothered.

“What do you want me to do Ma’am?” PC Carlton asked

“Park this at the far end of the line, park on the bank, far off the road as you can, walk back, make all the
marked cars do the same, or bugger off.” She started to get out of the car.

“What are you going to do Ma’am?” he asked

She pointed at the nearly double parked Focus and Jaguar, “I’m going kill CID.” She said with malice.

She walked through the crowd of milling officers, firmly pushing her hat onto her head, most of the coppers
recognised her, the ones that didn’t recognised the gleam in her eye, and stepped back. She walked into a
large country cottage garden, through a gate in a high hedge, the other side of the gate, two Constables were
talking to a sergeant she vaguely recognised.

“Ma’am” the Sergeant greeted, and then realised his mistake as she rounded on him.

“Go and find DS Jones, tell him Inspector Barnaby wants him to shift his car, NOW!” she highlighted the last word with a menacing growl at the back of her throat, and the Sergeant hurried off, towards the back of the house.

Happily having pulled rank, she marched towards the house, where she could see Forensics gathering and people knelt in the hallway behind the open front door, eyes forward as if she belonged there, she marched straight passed the Uniformed Constable controlling the scene and into the darkened house, at the shadow passing over them DCI Tom Barnaby and George Bullard looked up.

“Hullo Inspector” George greeted waving slightly

“Hi George, Hi Dad, What’ve you got?”

“This chap is Alex Forenzi, professional name the Fonz, shot by a very small round through the forehead, sometime between Midnight and 8am” George told her as she stared at the corpse.

“Professional name?” Josie asked

“Apparently this chap was Felton’s Cross’s very own hypnotist.” Tom explained, standing up “Thanks George, if you want to let us know when you’re ready” He finished by waving vaguely at the body. Then looing Josie in the eye he came towards her “Are you OK love? What are you doing here?”

She gestured at the now honking, moving line of cars “They’ve parked like pricks again” she told him, “Actually yours is one of the best, ashamed of Ben though, his looks like he got out while it was still moving.”

Tom laughed “So you were called out to yell at us?”

“Nope, happy coincidence”

“Are you going to steal my DS for lunch?” he asked her seeing Ben marching across the grass, towards his car.

“Actually I am hoping he thinks you told him to shift his car, and then I’m going to surprise him.”

“You didn’t send the Puppy?”

“No one of yours” Tom laughed again, walking away and leaving her to her fun.

A few minutes later she watched Ben return through the garden gate, and lean against the hedge, taking out his phone and his lunch box, while he was otherwise occupied, she crept up beside him.

“You don’t have to text me, I’m here” she said, kissing his ear.

“That makes more sense” Ben said putting his phone in his pocket, and Kissing her cheek, “I thought it was odd he boss was so bothered about my car?”

“Ben you hadn’t parked, you’d landed!”

“Says my little Traffic Inspector” he teased, slumping on the soft dry grass, and opening his lunch box, he patted the ground beside him, and she sat happily by his side. “Look I’m eating my lunch.” He told her, showing her his box, and letting her take a tomato out.
“Look I’m wearing my ring” she showed him her left hand whilst putting her head on his shoulder.

“Does that mean we’re official?” he asked

“No you’ve still got to do it in front of my Dad.” She told him, “Tim says I’m a lucky girl, it’s a very pretty ring.”

“Tim?” he asked with his mouthful, “The puppy?” she nodded and he scoffed. “What are you doing here anyway? Did someone complain about the cars?”

“No I’m on my way to do the Traffic Talk at Marsh Wood Primary.” She picked at the grass, “apparently that’s mostly my job now, and do you know what we don’t even have the tufty club anymore?”

“No!” Ben shouted in mock horror, “surely not!”

“Yes, they won’t even let me dress Tim up as a Badger!” she threw a daisy in malice, “I’m heartbroken” She pouted and he laughed kissing her.

“I’m not supposed to kiss you on duty Inspector” he told her, stealing another kiss, his stomach fluttering as she smiled and he saw her eyes sparkling.

“I’m actually not allowed to kiss you back, Sergeant” she told him, kissing him, “It’s actually illegal.”

“I’m not going to complain about abuse of power” he kissed her deeply this time, dropping the box, and knocking of her hat.

“Ben” she warned, pushing him backwards “Not at a crime scene” when he pouted slightly, she kissed him chastely and took his hand, “I’ve got to be off in a moment, I love you.”

“I love you too, Josie?” he called her still holding her hand as she got up, “Are you happy?”

She looked down at him, wondering at the weird feeling in her stomach “blissfully” she told him, kissing him on the top of her head, and noting happily that the traffic was still moving.

“Let me know when you get back to Causton” he told her retreating back, unsure if she heard him, as she waved her hat happily, adding, “because I worry about you” under his breath.

George Bullard had the body on the slab before Ben’s phone cheeped with the message “Back” he checked I and pocketed it, returning his mind to the job at hand. The body of the hypnotist had been washed and stripped ready for post mortem; it wasn’t a particularly gruesome murder, so Ben had wondered what the awful nasty sickly smell that filled the clinical mortuary was. George was showing Tom the small calibre bullet wound in the centre of the man’s head, explaining that the bullet was tiny a .22 calibre bullet, and that he as a British Pathologist had only ever seen one bullet wound like it, and which point with a flourish George had whipped the blue sheet off the next steel slab, filling the room with a stronger smell of rot and decay.

“Gentlemen I give you the late Lady Lavinia Huffington.” He said in the manner of a stage magician

“She was shot with the same weapon?” Tom asked

“As far as we can tell” George told him “I’ve sent the details down to the Met’s ballistics, but in my opinion, same weapon killed both victims.”

“Oh she was bloody right” Ben said, and then covered his mouth as the other two men looked at him, “Josie, last night she couldn’t sleep” he waved vaguely to cover the look in their eyes, “not like that, Lord Huffington was playing on her mind, she kept saying it didn’t make any sense, why wait 10 years, only for
the body to be found, then wait another three months?"

"What if he didn’t?" Tom followed his Sergeants thinking, “what if he’d committed a second murder last night and he’s got confused?"

By the time Ben finally got back to his desk it was very late, there was a little handwritten note on his desk that said, “come home soon, I love you.” He smiled and pocketed it. “I’m going home Sir” he called across the desk to Tom, who himself seemed to be ready for shift end

"Really?" The DCI asked surprised “Have you got a better offer?"

"Actually Sir, sorry but I do” he smiled

“Give my love to both my daughters Sergeant” Tom told him smiling as his DS ran out of the door, and skipped down the steps.

When he got home, the place he had to keep reminding himself was now, home. He found contrary to the way he’d left it that morning, a fully furnished and lived in house. His pictures, New York’s Skyline, a 1967 Ferrari 330, a view of Snowdon, and a picture of himself in uniform now graced the walls of the living room. His sofa and chair sat at the far end, in front of a bookshelves lined with books. Where the New furniture they’d bought, made up the bulk of the lounge room.

As he took in the scene, Cully and Simon stepped out of the kitchen, both opening their arms wide and shouted “SURPRISE”!!!

“You unpacked?” Ben asked

“Course we did” Simon patted him on the shoulder.

“We couldn’t leave it to you two” Cully explained, patting her stomach, “this one would have been at University by the time that happened.”

“Where’s Josie?” Ben asked, looking around

“Having a shower” Simon said waving vaguely towards the back of the house, “I think she thought you’d be a bit longer.”

“I should have been” Ben shrugged

Cully went off to find her sister, leaving Simon and Ben standing in the living room looking round.

“Thanks for all this.” Ben told him, “It’s really sweet of you both.”

“Nonsense” Simon insisted, “You’re family”

A wave of happiness hit Ben, he liked being part of this family, it was safe and nice, like a Sunday Evening in front of the telly. He obviously smiled, because Simon laughed at him, taking a seat on one of the two huge new sofas.

“Where’s Josie’s stuff?” Ben asked looking around the living room. Simon gave him an odd look, “There’s loads of my bits, but all I see of hers is her Order of Bath, and this weird rug thing.” He kicked at the brightly coloured rag rug Josie and Mrs Barnaby had made a few months earlier, it had an oddly shaped badger on it, but Josie loved it.

“That was it, some books, her fish tank, clothes and these.” Simon shrugged, “she has the whole house though.”
Bens eyes shot up to the man, it was true Josie owned the house, but that comment seemed a bit below the belt. “What does that mean?” he asked voice full of malice.

Simon looked at him steadily, “Don’t you understand what you’ve bought here?” Simon asked waving at the house, when Ben just stared he continued, “The house, it’s an allegory for Josie, Josie is the house.”

Ben was really confused “I really don’t understand.”

“The house, it’s an old mill, it’s beautiful and Georgian built, but it’s looks are a result of its dark past. The long thin shape, the sloping floors all built for a darker purpose. It has all these tiny windows, that wouldn’t have let in any real light, and it runs down to the river, so it should be cold and dark and damp. However the developer has taken the end off, opened the whole building to the light, painted it white and added these light sources, filling it with light. They’ve stripped away it’s dark interior, all the badness has been pulled out, all that horrid dark history washed away, and replaced with this light airy space. The only hint of the darkness it once contained is the beautiful façade.”

Ben thought for a moment “So where do I fit I all this?”

There was a squeal of “BEN!” from behind them, and running down the open wooden steps from the Mezzanine of Bedrooms, dressed only in a fairly transparent robe was Josie. Apparently ignorant of her Brother in Law she leapt into Ben’s arms where he sat, “You’re home, early!”

“Yep” he kissed her “you’re pleased to see me?”

“Always” she said kissing him back.

Cully coughed amused “Simon and I are going for a walk, you’re welcome to come, but if you want to be alone, we’ll be back in about an hour?”

Ben and Josie didn’t say a word as they cuddled and kissed

“we’ll make it two hours then” Simon added smiling, gently pushing Cully out of the door, he stopped in the doorway, “Ben?” he called, happy when the Sergeant looked up slightly doe eyed, “You’re the heart.”

“I think we’re alone now” Ben whispered a few minutes later.

“There doesn’t seem to be anyone around” she started to sing back, she moved cross his lap, letting her robe open, revealing her naked damp body underneath.

“You really are pleased to see me then?” he whispered breathing in the scent of her fruity shower gel, and the smell that was just her.

She didn’t need to answer, placing her knees either side of his thighs she knelt facing him, kissing him deeply whilst running her hand down his chest, every shirt button she came two she undid slowly. His mind started to relax, as his body responded to her slow machinations. As she reached the final button her tongue explored the inside of his mouth, and his eyes closed. Feeling her body with his hands he pulled her robe from her, she shivered and pulled against him slightly, which was exactly what he wanted. She was now naked sat on his lap facing him, while he was all but fully dressed, just his shirt unbuttoned. This had started with her in control, but somehow the roles were becoming just slightly reversed. She took his belt and carefully unbuckled it, he pushed at her tongue with his own, and she withdrew hers as he claimed her mouth, running his hands across her back, and cupped her bottom squeezing it and making her giggle.

She started unbuttoning his fly and then zipper, palming his erection through his boxer shorts, he opens his eyes as she pulls away from the kiss. He wants her to consent to what he’s going to do next, he wants to see the gentle nod and smile. When he sees it, it takes his hands from her bottom, and puts them to her shoulders, opening his thighs unsteadies her and he pushes her firmly to the rug. She knows how this goes,
he’ll feel guilty in a few seconds so she looks up at him, and she winks. He’d been holding his breath without realising it, and as she does this he exhales. She takes hold of his flies, and buttoning his boxer shorts underneath, releases his cock. Shuffling herself about she kneels between his knees, resting her head slightly on his knee she arches her back so he can gaze on her back and bottom whilst sitting back and enjoying this.

She can feel her own arousal heightening, her body vibrating rhythmically just with the action and thoughts of what she’s doing. He sometimes talks dirty to her, at first this made her giggle, but now it turns her on more than she can understand. He runs a gentle hand through her hair, the idea that he might ever be the source of her hurt or fear, makes him run cold so even like this, naked in front of him while he is dressed and in control, he wants her to feel loved. It makes her smile, she wants him to feel control, she is his to do as he wishes, not his superior. He gently, pulls her forward, and she engulfs his now rampant erection into her hot mouth. Her right hand brushed his ball, cupping them inside the hot material of his boxers, he moaned, feeling her squeeze and need his balls, her tongue busily swirling around the head of his penis. He dropped his hands from her head and ran them along her shoulders and down to her breasts, cupping them and kneading them between his hands making her moan and envelope his manhood more.

She moans again through her nose as he tweaks her nipples, and she feels herself bubble with wetness, a pain of longing deep within her womb, a stirring she knows he’ll finish, an itch only he can scratch. Her clitoris swells at the thought, and she licks up the length of his shaft, butterfly licks making his breath hitch. She licks around the head with long fluid movement, and he starts to fidget, then she holds his shaft in her other hand still playing with his balls with the other, she is now out balanced. Masturbating him gently into her mouth, she runs her teeth over the cock head and he squirms again. She squeezes him and pulls on his balls, making him start to thrust, engulfing his whole cock again, she relaxes the back of her throat, placing the head between her tonsils, sucking him deeper into her mouth and breathing through her nose.

She swirls her tongue around her mouth, it aches slightly, making her cheeks and throat and the root of her tongue burn, but he is sweating and thrusting and moaning. Humming using the back of her throat she lets go of his balls, and darting her eyes up she sees he is eyes are closed, she removes both her hands and places them under his knees, rustling the material of his suit trousers, making him look down, he understands the subtle movement, taking his hands from her breasts he strokes her hair again, tickling the soft flesh under her ears before he grabs her head, and as gently as he can manage considering the state he’s in, begins to fuck her mouth. She moans as he twists his hand into her hair, and sucks as hard as she can moving her head in time with each ragged thrust he makes, suddenly she feels his body go rigid, and she sucks again as her mouth fills with hot salty come. Slurping and moans as he thrusts into her mouth, moaning her name as he pumps his spunk into her mouth.

His cock stilling he lets go of her head, and drops his hands back to her breasts, twisting her nipples as she licks his cock clean. She moans again, and he looks down at her naked body, smiling, it’s all his he thinks, she belongs to him. Pulling her up from the floor he stands her between his thighs, putting his hand to the back of her head, he forces her bend over painfully, so he can kiss her full on the mouth. He loves the taste of himself in her mouth, the way she always looks a little bit disgusted and very horny when he does it. He snakes his free hand around her back, and strokes her bottom, as she moans he opens her cheeks slightly causing her to shiver and moan.

“Please” she begs moving her head back and panting.

“Please what?” he asks smiling,

“Please Sir” she looks down, naked and debauched

He kisses her again, keeping in her mind this is role play nothing more, stroking her cheek and chin reminding her she’s loved, and can stop this if she wants. When she makes no move he pulls up his trousers and zips them, pushing her down on the sofa, kneeling high her head resting on her arms on the back of the sofa she opens her legs so his vision is of her back, her bum stuck out showing her pink puckered arsehole
and dark waxed puffy and aroused vaginal lips below. He runs his hand down her back and she shivers, unable to stay in character he places kisses on her spine and bottom, causing her to moan and squirm.

“Please Sir?” she begs again.

He smiles, fondling her and then slaps her arse with the flat of his hand, the noise is massive in the quiet room, she lets out a yelp and then a moan. He smiles and brings his hand down again; she bites her arm to stop the yelp.

“Scream if you want” he tells her, turned on again, voice deep and raspy.

“Yes Sir” she yelps as he spanks her again.

And moans as she gently presses his fingers to her sex, she is dripping wet and squirms, bringing his hand back, he slaps her again, harder this time, making her bottom read, and now she’s panting hard. Fidgeting on the sofa, she tries to stay still, pushing out her bottom and wiggling it gently he brings his hand down again much harder and she screams. For a moment he is unsure, but now she’s mewling, and he lays quick kisses on her hot red bottom. Finally feeling the heat rise, despite the bare chest he brings his hand down one last time as hard as he can, and she screams his name, her body rigid and coming, clutching and the sofa panting hard.

Ben can’t actually take anymore, ripping at his flies and boxers he drops them too his ankles, shuffling forwards against her, he pushes his hardness into her still coming dripping sex, making her scream. He pushes his face in to her hair, breathing deeply in to stop himself just thrusting wildly. She squeezes down onto him, and he moans into her hair as she thrusts backwards, she is shivering and panting, as he pushes into her, dragging his hands around her he grabs her breasts, pulling her down onto him, then pushing her upwards into the sofa.

“Ben stop thinking” she pants “do what you want”

“I’ll hurt you” he moans back, kissing her hair, squeezing his eyes shut to stop the tears of erotic desire he wants to shed.

“Don’t care” she pants back, “Please Sir”

Those words blank out reason for him, and he thrusts wildly pushing her head down into the sofa, he needs to come, he needs to come hard and fast, and she feels him lose control, as her body is moved and pushed, it’s the most erotic desperate think she’s ever felt, her knees hurt as she scrabbles for friction, trying to keep upwards she pushes forward, she tightens her muscles and he grunts in frustration pushing her harder, in turn the friction causes her to start to come again, and as his hands dig painfully into her, she screams his name. He thrusts as hard as he can, thumping her head forward into the back of her sofa and her world goes black, she can feel him start to climax and her own orgasm burst, but then she slumps forward, as he comes hard and fast deep inside her.

She wakes up in their bed, a cold flannel on her head, feeling sore and sticky like their first time together, she tries to open her eyes but his hurts and she tastes blood in her mouth.

“Ben?” she asks, her voice sounds thick and she’s confused.

“Shush” he whispers “I’m so so sorry” he sounds wrong and she reaches out feeling for his hand.

“What, why?” she asks

“I knocked you out” he was full of remorse his voice is full of sadness, “Oh God I didn’t mean too, I’m so sorry, I don’t know what to do?”
She opened her eyes, and saw him pale and shaking sitting at the edge of the bed. “Ben it’s not your fault, it was a stupid accident.”

He looked at her and then down at the bed “I love you, I’m supposed to keep you safe, Oh God, are you Okay?” he asked finally picking up her hand as it lies across the bed towards him.

“I hurt a bit” she says squeezing his hand “How bad does it look?”

“Like I should be up against charges” he laughs without comedy, “I wouldn’t blame you.”

“Don’t be ridiculous I love you, it wasn’t deliberate” she laughed and felt slightly better “How long have I been out?”

“About 10 minutes” he said sadly

“I shouldn’t need an ambulance then, do I make sense?” she shuffled towards him

“Yes, if you hadn’t woken in the next few minutes I’d have called one” he said swinging his legs onto the bed, “You’re Dad is going to kill me isn’t her?”

“Cully might?”

“Oh fuck” Ben rubbed his head with his hands “Am I a wife beater?”

“No sweetheart you’re a horny little fucker” she giggled and curled into him “I love you”

“I love you too, I am so very sorry.” He kissed her lightly on the head, “if you are OK for a bit, I’m going to tidy our lounge up a bit”

“Ben!” she called and when he looked alarmed, “change your clothes”

He looked down, sperm, girl juice, blood and saliva covered him, he laughed. He changed quickly into PJ trousers and a t-shirt; quickly travelling downstairs he looked at their sofa and living room. If he’d walked into that as a murder scene he’d have arrested the boyfriend, it didn’t look good, blood on the sofa, cushions dragged off where he’d picked her up in a hurry, the rucked up rug where they’d scrabbled. He knew what had happened; he’d been there but couldn’t help thinking it looked like a sexual assault. Role play he thought was fine but he was cold thinking maybe he’d taken it too far. The forensically minded police officer took over, he rearranged the rug and cushions, placed cold water and salt on the sofa soaking up the worse blood spot, knowing there would still be tiny forensic evidence spots of blood and semen.

When the living room looked clean and tidy he got a glass of water and some painkillers from the kitchen, and went up the stairs. He got back on the bed, gently shaking Josie, watching her eyes flutter, and focus. He pulled her up slightly, giving her the painkillers and the water he leant against him.

“Tell me what happened” He asked her

“We had sex, it was amazing, but as we came I banged my head and knocked myself out” she said smiling, cuddling into him.

“Love you” he kissed her “but you sound like you’re giving a false witness statement.”

“You wanted to know if I could remember, if I had a concussion, I haven’t’” she told him, “and before you ask my friend, you are sleeping right here next to me, where you belong.”

An hour later Ben heard Simon and Cully letting themselves in, letting Josie sleep he crept downstairs to make sure they were OK, Cully looked at him and immediately asked what was wrong, on telling her
briefly, she ran upstairs to check on her beloved sister, while Simon patted him on the back, and made him a cup of tea.

“You didn’t mean it, it’s an accident these things happen” Simon soothed, “we know you wouldn’t hurt her, and we know you love her”

“I feel so bloody guilty” he said rubbing his head again.

“BEN BLOODY JONES” Cully yelled from upstairs, coming down the steps Ben actually shivered “Are you working on a case about Felton’s Cross?”

“Erm, what? Yes?” he stuttered

“And you haven’t interviewed the suspect?”

“No, Cully what are you talking about.”

“Apparently there is a suspect in two murders; sitting on remand somewhere and despite my sister telling you twice you haven’t interviewed him?”

“I’m sorry, you run upstairs because I’ve knocked your sister out and you come down telling me I’m not doing my job properly?”

“Well she’s not worried about anything else?” Cully said huffily, going to Simon for a cuddle, “Interview your suspect Ben” she told him

Standing in the middle of the living room having watched the retreating backs of Simon and Cully having no idea what had just happened.

The next morning Ben found himself warm and safe and happily snuggled in bed next to Josie, he smiled, when he realised she was wrapped around him. He kissed her and she moaned rolling into him, her hand moving down his body, his pelvis and feeling his dick through his pyjama pants. He moaned at the feeling and felt himself harden under her hand. He leant back pulling her close, closing his eyes as she planted kisses all over him. He felt her naked body, and pulled her up so she sat astride him, she freed his now hard cock from his pants and ass she settled herself onto him, she moaned, the sound was odd and he opened his eyes. Looking at her bruised face, he frowned.

“Are you OK?” he asked her, pulling himself up onto his elbows and looking at her.

“I’m sore?” she said, looking confused.

Ben sat up sharply, and pulled her into a hug, planning little kisses all over her face, “Oh God I love you, I’m so so sorry”

“Ben, it’s fine” she said smiling rolling her hips, making him groan “I love you” she said, kissing him deeply and leaning into him. Remembering their first time, when Ben tried to teach her how to make him come, she rolled her hips again, ad moved gently towards him, pushing down against him, he moaned again, and wrapped her arms about him.

“Are you sure you’re OK?” he panted his hips thrusting upwards.

She kissed him again as they moved faster “I love you”, she cried as she started to come, and he moaned and started to come with her, dragging her nails down his back, he arched into her, whispering “I love you too.”

Wrapping her back into his arms, he ran a finger over her bruised face, he didn’t want to get up, he didn’t want to face the morning, he didn’t want to explain why the Inspector was sporting a bruised face and split
lip, he didn’t want to move, he wanted to stay cuddling her forever, he was glorying in her relaxing towards him, falling back into sleep when she sat bolt upright again.

“That man Lord Huffington, you didn’t interview him properly?”

“No?”

“Nobody’s asked for a full statement yet?”

“No?”

“Does he know about the new murder?”

“Not yet we’ll bring him back to the station and charge him this morning.”

“Don’t tell him, get him to go through Lavinia’s murder first, get him to go into details, don’t lead him. And then ask him if he knows the Hypnotist.”

“You really don’t think he did it?”

“I would stake everything on it” she told him.

Tom was confused when Ben came in and asked to interview the suspect, asking for details of the crime, but he let his Sergeant have his head, Lord Huffington and his solicitor sat in the interview room, and Tom let Ben take over the questioning. First he started out slowly, asking him the dates of Lavinia’s murder, which Lord Huffington didn’t know, why he killed her, he wasn’t really sure anymore, finally Ben asked how he’d killed Lavinia, Lord Huffington had told him in quite some detail how he’d strangled her. Tom looked at his Sergeant and saw the confidence there, so asking final question Ben asked how Lord Huffington knew Alex Forenzi, Lord Huffington looked up genuinely confused and said he’d never heard of the man. At which point, Tom stopped the interview and he and Be left the room, as they closed the door behind them Ben punched the air.

“Do you mind explaining that to me Sergeant?” Tom asked

“She said he didn’t do it, she knew he hadn’t done it, two nights she’s been on at me, and she’s bloody right.” Ben told him

“I don’t understand?” Tom admitted

“You’re daughter, you’re beautiful gorgeous sexy, wonderful copper of a daughter, said Lord Huffington didn’t kill anyone, someone’s framing him!”

“Then what has been going on?”

“I have no bloody idea” Ben looked at his boss, “Can we go and ask her?”

“Inspector Barnaby?” Tom asked

“Yeah, I’m out of my depth, I have no idea what she’s seen that we haven’t” Ben shrugged “And I’d like to ask her?”

Pulling into the car park of the traffic HQ, Ben realised he had never got out of the car here before, it sat on the A Road just outside Causton, but Josie didn’t really like it here, although technically where she was now based, and so he’d never had to pick her up, or drop her off. He wondered why she was here today; he’d discovered she was via Midsomer Control, and come straight down. Tom who was equally interested in the secret workings of the Traffic Control, was out of the car and walking to the office while Ben suddenly
realised what was about to happen.

He trotted after his boss, and walked through the odd petrol smelling building, being given vague directions to Josie’s office by the bored PC on the desk. Hallway down the single corridor he spotted PC Carlton, although Ben’s casual wave was met with an odd glare and sharp greeting, which Ben realised didn’t bode well.

“Thought you got on well with the puppy?” Tom asked

“Yeah” Ben said.

The got to the door Marked Insp JE Barnaby, and Tom knocked and walked in. Josie was sat behind her computer in the darkness of her room.

“Hi Dad, Ben, I’ve just got to save this and I’ll be with you”, she gestured at the computer, typing a bit more. Then hitting a button and looking up. Ben grimaced, but Tom’s inhale of breath was impressive.

“What the hell happened to you?” Tom demanded, marching over to her, looking at her eye, lip and forehead in the light of the computer screen, glaring behind him “Ben?”

“If I said I tripped and hit my head on the doorway would you believe me?” Josie laughed, fighting her Dad off. “It’s OK, it was a stupid accident, Ben looked after me, I’m fine no concussion.”

“You didn’t tell me?” Tom rounded on Ben sounding hurt “You didn’t tell me my daughter was hurt?

Ben’s face fell full of guilt, “I wouldn’t, I didn’t mean, it was a stupid accident, with the stupid new furniture.” He kicked his shoes.

“Prat” Tom told him, “Right Lord Huffington is innocent, why?”

“you interviewed him?” Josie asked and when both men confirmed her suspicions she sat back leaning heavily on her chair, “The second body was a hypnotist shot the same way as the first with the same weapon?”

“Yes” they both confirmed

“Same killer then” she told them, “So Lavinia Huffington is killed, someone pays a hypnotist to tell Lord Huffington he did it. Then the body is found, the hypnotist goes to the murderer asks for money, the murderer kills the hypnotist and urges Lord Huffington to confess?”

“That’s supposition” Tom told her.

“That’s why you need to find evidence” she reminded him, “who last saw the hypnotist, when was the last at the house, did the hypnotist have any evidence stashed around the house?” She looked at Ben, “Off you go Sergeant.”

“Yes Ma’am” Ben said turning an leaving the office phone already in hand.

“Are you really OK, did Ben hit you?” Tom asked, not quite believing his own words.

“Of course he didn’t, I’m fine it really was one of those things, looks worse than it is. Anyway I’ve got Tim fussing without adding you as well.”

“You’d tell me?”

She looked at him, honestly no, but she smiled “of course Dad.”
“Do you want a job in CID? You could run rings around him you know?”

“Maybe” she smiled at the quirk in his eyebrows “A/DCI Barnaby, sounds alright doesn’t it?”

“You want my job?”

“Dad I want the chief constables job.”

Tom and Ben returned to Felton’s Cross Hall to interview the housekeeper, the uniformed constables had done a decent job, facts figures and impressions were all carefully noted down, and they had both read the file carefully. Their interview with the housekeeper, Angela Alderley would coincide of a second fully forensic search of Alex Forenzi’s home. John and Sarah Barnaby were still in Causton, and while Sarah, Cully and Joyce had gone to Blenheim Palace for the day, John and Simon had agreed to cut Ben and Josie’s lawn, tidy the new garden a little bit, or in other words go down to Causton Library and dig anything they could on Forenzi and the Huffington’s.

Josie and PC Carlton ran PNC’s and car records, looking for cars in the area, looking for times and dates where Angela Alderley, Alex Forenzi and the Huffington’s may have met. This was paperwork, this was the less glamorous side of police work, this was files and computer images and number plate recognition. This was why a fast tracked, intelligent young copper like Josie went to Traffic, make your name, make it fast and move on. She’d stayed too long a desk Sergeant with her private life falling apart, and now she was up and running again. Her name would be all over this case, for a moment she felt bad for Ben personally, but professionally she needed to eclipse him, and she would.

Mrs Alderley had known Lavinia Huffington only though her marriage a brash American, the acetic Lavina had made a poor impression on the whole community of Felton’s Cross. A marriage of convenience she brought money and new blood to the old family producing an heir, Andrew currently serving with the Blues and Royals, and a spare Juliette who was married to a Canadian and living in Toronto. There had clearly been no love lost between the two women at Felton’s Cross and when it came to Lavinia’s, never reported disappearance, she’s smiled. Lord and Lady Huffington had had an argument, Mrs Alderley hinted Lavinia was having an affair, Lavinia had stormed out, never to be seen again, her last words a shout of “Go to hell.

When pushed on why Lavinia hadn’t been reported missing, why nobody in ten years had thought to report her missing, that when Lavinia’s body was found and enquiries were made to try and find who the then mystery woman was, nobody had thought to mention the missing peeress. Mrs Alderley had shrugged, explaining that Lord Huffington’s mind had gone a little bit wonky with his wife leaving him, and with the children away from home, nobody had thought it pertinent.

John and Simon had found some articles regarding the Huffington’s marriage, regarding the birth of the children, some money given to Lord Huffington’s old school, the school where Lavinia’s body had been found. John with a coppers eye on the micro phish, trawled through, while Simon the Music Manager, dealt with the details.

“You sure you don’t fancy being a copper Simon?” John asked him, after getting him to write some dates down.

“Definitely not, Sir” Simon said laughing as he wrote another number and date, he stared at the notepad in front of him, “What was the date of Lady Huffington’s death?”

“Sometime in early 2001, why?”

“Cos someone wrote to Causton Advertiser in her name in August 2002, September 2006, January 2009 and most recently March 2011.”

John had phoned Ben, but his message service had just gone to the answering service. Shrugging at the
unpredictability of contacting a Police Detective, he went back to the task at hand.

Josie and PC Carlton had found a similar set of records, to the PNC Lavinia Huffington had been receiving parking tickets and speeding fines, as well as buying, registering and legally keeping are car on the road for the whole of the period she had been slowly rotting in the river bank. Josie’s body had felt chilled by this; something in her brain had nagged more than the thought that somebody had obviously stolen Lavinia’s identity. This was something else, someone had been Lavinia.

She had tried Ben and her Dad but to no avail, leaving a voicemail she’d phoned her Uncle John. He had come to the same conclusion, this wasn’t a husband keeping his wife alive to keep away suspicion this was darker.

Phoning Causton Station Josie asked for her Dad only to be told he’d gone to Felton’s Cross, she reported that she couldn’t’ get hold of him, nor Ben, but the new desk sergeant wasn’t that interested. She wondered idly if she would have been in the same position, she thought she would have been, but then that’s why she was now an Inspector.

On a whim she phoned George Bullard, after a few missed calls where she got hold of other Forensics officers, and once someone who was apparently a temp she finally got through to the Causton Pathologist. He explained he’d been trying to get hold of DCI Barnaby himself, but had utterly failed, but he did have some interesting information if she wanted to come down to the lab herself.

Looking around her office and the piles of random paperwork, she readily agreed to meet George an hour or so later. Calling for PC Carlton, she eased herself out of the chair, grabbing her now filled folder of information, she moaned as she stood.

“Are you OK Ma’am?” PC Carlton asked concerned

“Yeah” she shook herself slightly, “Tim something is really, really wrong and I don’t know what’s going to happen, but when you get that feeling that something wrong, and you’re a copper it usually means something is really, really wrong.”

“Is this about DS Jones?” he asked carefully, “cos I know what you said, but…”

She put a hand gently to his arm, “You’re very sweet Tim, but no, it’s about the case, ever since I went to the house it’s been off and I hate it, I really hate it, so come with me to Causton, we’ll meet my Uncle John and George Bullard and we’ll see what we’ve got.”

“Ma’am.”

Josie had phoned her Uncle John from the car, telling him to meet them at the mortuary; PC Carlton parked her BMW, just as John and Simon got out of the DCI’s Volvo. She waved, and they walked towards them. As she got out of the car Simon waved again, but John just stood there, a few metres away and stared.

“What the hell happened to you?” The DCI asked

“Cones fought back” she laughed, hugging him. “I’m really worried.” She whispered as she did so, just low enough Simon and PC Carlton couldn’t hear.

“Coppers nose?” he asked quietly raising an eyebrow, and when she nodded he added “Yep I agree.”

George welcomed Simon and the three coppers into his lab, Simon retched slightly at the smell, but covered it well, much to Josie’s secret delight. He drew out both bodies as he had for Ben and Tom, and explained his findings, Josie watched John carefully observe the bodies himself, and wondered out loud what she should be looking for.
“Marks on the sin is usual, scratches, bruises, or marks you’ve seen before” John told her.

“Most of your pathologists will talk you through this, but after you’ve seen a few you start seeing stuff yourself.” George explained, “You’re face for instance, you hit a hard heavy object at an odd angle, I would guess face down you’ve only hit the right side of your face, so the object was fairly thin, but heavy and solid”. He came closer and looked at her; she had a moment when she thought what it would be like to be a corpse. “The bruise that runs from the temple is at an important juncture, so I’m guessing you were knocked out, you’ve split you’re lip, so your mouth was open at the time. Your eye is closed, but you’ve not split your cheek bone.”

The room was silent, as he ran a gloved finger across her face, “You were knocked out?” John and PC Carlton asked.

“Yeah about ten minutes” Josie whispered, the odd feeling of a man who wasn’t Ben touching her so softly and intimately.

“You should have gone to hospital” George told her, “You smacked you’re head on the back of a chair whilst having sex with Ben?”

She blushed furiously and Simon coughed “Mr Bullard that was amazing” Cully’s husband told him, “so what can you tell us about these murders?”

“Joining CID yourself Simon?” Mr Bullard asked, and then continued “the gun was the same, a very small round, and we’ve been doing some digging, we’ve never had a murder like it in Midsomer, but there was a series of similar murders in Thames Valley about 30 years ago, so we did some checking, they found the weapon, and the perpetrator brought to justice.”

“So no links?” John asked

“No, but the gun, was interesting” George explained, “a Philadelphia Derringer”

“The gun that killed Lincoln?” PC Carlton asked, causing the others to turn and look at him.

“Correct, young man”

“It must be worth 30k” the young constable whistled.

“So not a common weapon?” Josie asked, “so where’s it come from?”

“It was very popular in the states at the turn of the century, Ma’am” The Constable explained, “They are concealed small calibre weapons, you don’t know someone’s pointed a gun at you till it’s too late.”

“Wasn’t Lady Huffington American?” Simon asked “The gun could be hers?”

“She was also shot with it” Josie said.

“Where are Tom and Ben?” John suddenly asked the room

“I don’t know” George admitted, “I’ve been trying to tell them this for hours.”

Josie suddenly felt very weak, the room began to swim and she retched, the floor came up to meet her as her body went cold and she shook, she heard her Uncle swear as she fell, but the rushing in her ears blocked everything out suddenly, with the sound of a river pouring through her head, she felt the floor finally reach her, and her last thought was for Ben.

While Josie was taken to hospital, with her brother in law as her chaperone, John and PC Carlton went to
discover what SOCO had found at Alex Forenzi’s house. Pulling up outside John was aware he now had very little jurisdiction in this case, DCI and DS MIA, Inspector in hospital with concussion, and however senior he was his Brighton Warrant Badge meant nothing in Midsomer, and dragging PC Carlton around was his foot in the door.

Not that Midsomer seemed to hold with any of that, and while stammering his explanations to the officer in charge, John found himself drawn into the case and treated as officer in charge. The SOCO happily explained that Alex Forenzi’s house was fairly clean. There were no unusual prints, signs of struggle or anything unusual, in fact they thought DS Jones had sent them on a wild goose chase. While they were chatting, and John was being bored, PC Carlton started wandering about unaccompanied, John ignored him until he suddenly shouted.

“Sir, sir come and look at this.” The constable called, John looked over to find the younger man leaning over a book.

“What is it Constable?”

“I think sir it’s an appointment registry, for his hypnotisms.” He pointed at the ledger, “Look sir, first of every month.”

“Edward H?”

“Lord Edward Huffington?”

John slapped the young Constable on the back, “Well done lad.”

From her hospital bed Josie was silently fuming, she knew she was alright, she knew Ben had looked after her, but now they were holding her, against her will she kept calling loudly, having required a WPC to question her about her injuries. They also kept telling her she had concussion, which she refused to believe. The case kept coming back to her, and after Simon had returned from calling the Barnaby women, and updating them on her unscheduled stop in Causton General she kept running through what she knew with him.

Simon asked her to stop and try to calm down, tried to tell her that he was sure Ben and Tom were OK. He begged of her to stop upsetting herself, and when the WPC arrived, he told her not to upset herself. The questions asked were standard and formulaic she could answer them without the WPC reading them, Ben didn’t harm her, and she knew this was only the hospital ticking boxes. But as she informed the WPC and Simon, she’d done her time in the Met as a WPC she had seen real wife beatings, things poor Ben would never even imagine.

As the WPC got up to leave, whether convinced or not of the Inspectors arguments, certainly humbled by Josie’s knowledge of the law. The other Barnaby women poured through the door of the small side room, Cully cuddled Josie up into her arms, Joyce fussied, while Sarah stood in the corner looking vaguely uncomfortable. Simon pushed against the wall by the weight of the women in the room, felt very uncomfortable, asked Sarah if she’d heard from John.

“No, why?” Sarah Barnaby asked

“I need to find Ben” Josie told them suddenly

“It’s OK sweetie” Cully told the agitated Josie “he’s working.”

“No” Josie cried fighting her sister slightly. “They’ve gone to Felton’s Cross, and nobody heard from them since.”

“What?” Joyce said suddenly turning to her daughters, “when did you last hear from them?”
“What time is it?” Josie asked

“What about 5pm?” Simon supplied

“Six hours ago”

“They haven’t phoned in 6 hours?” Joyce asked

“No”

“Sarah phone John, ask where they are?”

Sarah fell out of the room, grabbing her phone and rushing down the corridor, whilst Cully and Joyce shared a look, how do you cope when the ones you love have a dangerous job? Ben might not know, but the Barnaby women were experts.

John answered his phone with a smile, he was supposed that by now Sarah had gained the whole story, and this was his phone call telling him off.

“Hello Darling” he answered

“John, have you heard from Tom and Ben yet?” Sarah’s worried voice came out of the speaker.

“No, but you’ll be unhappy to hear, that I am out investigating with a nice young PC, and some lovely Sergeants with SOCO.”

“John, this is serious”

“I know”

“They’ve not checked in with anyone for 6 hours, what do we do?”

“Well you sit tight, and PC Carlton and I will find them, that’s our job.” John looked through the book again “Would you ask Josie who she thinks AA is?”

“AA?”

“There are a few entries, including from the night the hypnotists died in his diary, that say AA, I’ve checked it’s not Alcoholics Anonymous, or the motoring organisation.”

There was a scuffling and shuffling noise on the end of the phone, followed by the question being asked, and a reply given, then some more scuffling “Angela Alderley, the housekeeper?”

John swore mildly, and then issued a swift goodbye to his wife, turning to PC Carlton, he asked the lad to phone the station, he wanted police lots of police and an ambulance and an armed response unit.

“Why?” The Constable asked, fiddling with his radio.

“Because I have a horrid feeling I know exactly what is going on here.”

Tom and Ben had arrived at the hall, ad at first their interview of Angela Alderley had gone well, Mrs Alderley explaining that people had disliked Lavinia, that her loss was no great shame, that Lord Huffington had coped with her leaving him badly, and had gone downhill into an almost catatonic state, only moving from his library to attend village events or events at the school. In the years to come, secretly the two men would blame themselves individually for what happened next, Ben believed he was the catalyst, and the guilt Tom felt over the next event, followed him the rest of his life.
Ben had walked towards a large picture above the fireplace in the drawing room they’d been sat in; it was the school with the river in front. Ben hadn’t recognised it, and had asked Mrs Alderley what the picture was of.

“It’s Lord Huffington’s old school” the house keeper had explained “that’s the view from the river up to the great hall.”

“Do you know it well?” Ben asked surprised

“Oh no” then she fidgeted oddly catching both detectives attention, “I’ve only been once”

“When was that?” Tom had asked gently and she’d turned at him with haunted eyes.

“Did you speak to that man?” she asked, bitterly

“That man?” Ben had asked turning to see the older lady stand up, rubbing her hands together, “which man was that?”

He was totally taken by surprise then when the woman shrieked “That fucking hypnotist” and ran at the sergeant, Ben had stepped back falling heavily and cracking his head on the fireplace, knocking himself out entirely.

Tom had stood immediately grabbing his phone, only to be faced just a quickly with a gun pointed at the centre of his forehead. “Put the gun down Mrs Alderley” Tom had warned, his eyes darting between the tiny lethal weapon, and his prone and bleeding Sergeant.

“Why?” she’d asked, and when Tom was flummoxed she’d continued “I’d much rather kill you, and leave.”

Tom swallowed “you really don’t want to do that Madame” he started, his brain running on possible escape scenarios. “You’ve already killed two people, and you don’t want to add two policemen to that list, I assure you.”

“The bitch deserved it, and that hypnotist, he fucking screwed me.” She swore fluidly, and her accent became harder.

“What happened?” Tom asked “Why did you kill him?”

“I’d paid him from the bitches bank accounts for years, paying him to keep Edward believing he killed Lavinia, but he must forget about it, double remembering the prick called it, then they found the body, and he knew, so he started to blackmail me, more money, threatened me with the police.”

“So you killed him?”

“No” she pouted “ Fucking stupid copper, he screwed me. I paid him, what else could I do, and then he reminded” she spat the word, “Edward of the murder, not that I killed her, of course, just didn’t remind him to forget it, so the whole fucking thing came out.”

“But you hadn’t told Alex Forenzi how you’d killed her had you?”

“No” she smiled “never knew I might have wanted to kill him one day.”

“with this gun?”

“It was hers, her Daddy gave it to her when she came to England, it’s some kind of concealed thing.” She waved it slightly “works though dunnit?”
“What do you want to do now, you haven’t killed me have you, so you’re unsure?” Tom played his voice calmly and gently, his eyes drawn to the pool of blood now around Bens head. “You could put the gun down, you could come down the station, I could get someone to look at my Sergeant, it could be OK.”

“Fuck off copper, the only reason I haven’t shot you, is ‘cos if I keep you here, I’ve got hours to leave the country, and if I shoot you I’ve got less.”

Tom swallowed hard “OK, what do you want me to do?”

“You both got phones, put them on the table”

Tom put his own phone down, and then slowly and carefully walked towards Ben, the younger man was still breathing, and as Tom removed his phone from his suit pocket he gently patted his arm. After he put it on the table next to his he looked up at the women, “he’s really badly hurt.”

“Not my problem, pick him up”

Tom looked unsure, but she waved the gun again, so he carefully lifted Ben, careful of his head. “What do you want me to do?”

“Out the door, right down the corridor, first door on the left down the stairs.” She waved the gun and Tom followed the instructions, feeling the small weapon at the back of his neck. As he found his way down the steps, the door was roughly slammed leaving him in the dark.

He carefully made his way down the steps, and finding a flat area at the bottom he carefully put Ben down, and marched around the room, marking the edges in his mind, looking for an escape, and hoping someone would come looking for them.

Josie’s phone buzzed and she stretched for it, Cully helping her. The text message was brief;

“Will you sign off on ARU?” It came from the new desk sergeant at Causton, and she was already dialling the number and fighting the bed and Cully before it quite sunk in.

The phone rang three times and she had already managed to wrestle her boots from her sister, when it rang four times she had her tie half round her neck, by 8 she had worked out which way round her stab vest went, by ring 10 she just had to tie her bootlaces, and find her hat, but the phone picked up.

“Inspector Barnaby, why did you text me?”

“You are the most senior Officer on the Felton’s Cross investigation.” The young man said “Will you sign off?” he spoke as if she should know, she should of course know.

“Of course I bloody will, where too?” she asked urgently

“Felton Hall” she hung up viciously and dialled Ben’s phone, it just rang.

She stood up, and Cully looking into her eyes, stood backwards. “What do you need?”

“My car keys” she gasped as the room started to spin

“You can’t drive honey” Joyce told her “Simon will drive won’t you dear?”

Simon nodded, and then stopped “The Police car? Am I allowed?”

“I used to” Joyce told him, “When Tom was in uniform I used to drive his car, nobody is going to care.”

“Mum!” Cully and Josie shrieked
Josie discharged herself, irritably and by pulling out her badge and yelling. Sending the other Barnaby women home, she had dragged Simon to the car, placing the keys firmly in his hand.

“Don’t speed, don’t chase anyone down, just drive it normally” she told him as they got in, “I’m going to put the blues and twos on, and when we get there stay in the car.”

Simon nodded starting the car, driving it like it contained a bomb, “How bad is this going to get?” he asked thinking of his unborn child and it’s mother

“Bad” she told him in one word, and smiled when he put his foot down.

When they got to Felton Hall it was an epic crime scene, ambulances, marked cars, SOCO, ARU, and both John and Tom Barnaby’s cars.

“Do you want me to come with you?” Simon asked quickly, pulling up beside some other marked cars.

“Yes” she whispered feeling ill again.

Ben woke in the dark and cold, he was shivering, and the person beside him wasn’t warm enough to stop him being freezing. Moving his head he groaned, the darkness in front of his eyes split with a lightning of pain. Tom realised the younger man was awake; breathing out he thanked any gods that were listening for that.

“Ben” Tom whispered “How are you feeling?”

“Awful” he tried to move and found his body was too heavy “What the hell is happening?”

“We’re locked in a cellar in Felton Hall, you’ve got a nasty whack on your head, and I’m not sure how long you’ve been out, but it’s been far too long.”

Ben tried to nod and discovered he couldn’t “Sir?”

“Ben we’ll get out of this and it’ll be fine.” Tom patted his shoulder. “Glad you’re awake, I was bored.”

“Sir are you cuddling me?” Ben asked suddenly

“I was trying to stop you bleeding out” Tom explained, “also I’m freezing”

“I keep thinking about Josie” Ben said, moving his stiff limbs.

“I wasn’t cuddling you”

“No” Ben laughed realising his boss was joking “the dark and the cold, and I’m scared and I keep thinking about living like this for ten years.”

“It’s horrid isn’t it” Tom looked about “Does she remember anything, now, now she knows?”

“God I hope not” Ben said fervently “she doesn’t tell me if she does, but the idea of that being in her head, all the time, it’s horrible.” He shivered “Simon says she’s glowing, like she’s burning with light, that’s got to be good right?”

“I think so” Tom thought for a moment “Does she have nightmares?”

“Sometimes” Ben shrugged “The fish tank helps”

“Then I think she probably remembers then” Ben shifted and Tom thought he’d better clarify, “As a child,
she didn’t cry, never had nightmares or terrors like other children, never cried out, nothing, without the fish tank she’d just lie there awake, catatonic, unable to move till the light came back.”

“No screaming?” Ben asked “Or fighting?”

“Nope”

“She remembers, oh God, she remembers.”

“And she’s happier than she’s ever been; imagine how happy you must make her.”

Outside nothing was happening, the ARU were waiting for movement, Uniform was waiting for the ARU to make a decision, and a meeting was happening.

“You think the gunman is still in there?” CARO asked John.

“I really don’t know” he looked around, “what are we waiting for?”

“Orders from on high” The CARO said

“Can I order you to go in?” Josie asked gravely

“Yes Ma’am” The CARO told her

“Go in” she ordered, the two men looked at her “It’s an order, go in.”

John and PC Carlton stood on the edge of line of uniform listening for the all clear, listening for anything, the buzz of adrenaline making them both slightly vibrate.

Josie stood behind them, listening to the radio, biting her lip, realising this would not only make or break her career, but her Dad and Ben were in there. She didn’t quite realise it, but since the first shout from the ARU she’d been gripping Simon’s hand.

Ben heard the noise, but didn’t know what was happening. Tom stood up, and walked away, leaving him in the pitch black, unable to understand what was going on. After a few minutes of listening to banging and scrabbling, the shouts of all clear, Tom started banging on some unseen door, shouting and screaming loudly, making Ben’s head spin.

Suddenly the door burst open, before his eyes shut automatically Ben saw his boss bathed in light, as he was manhandled down the steps towards him. Ben breathed in the fresher air, gulping it, not realising that he’d been missing it. A tall figure, armed with a rifle walked up to him, shining a torch at Ben he tutted, and screamed “MEDICS”.

At the scream of Medics, Josie had nearly broken Simons hand, she called over the radio, and received the reply the house was safe and secure but they had an officer down.

She ran across the grass, PC Carlton automatically following her, SOCO wanted to go in, the needed the house, they needed to get after Angela Alderley, but she needed to see.

She reached the door as her father came up the stairs, covered in blood, Ben being dragged by him.

“BEN!” she shrieked and was roughly pulled backwards by PC Carlton.

At her shout the DS looked up and gave her a half smile, the ambulance men came forward, and she went with them, meeting her Dad on the grass in front of the house, reaching out she touched his face, and he fell to his knees.
“Ben get up” Tom ordered but his DS wasn’t listening, the Ambulance service rushed to him, but he waved vaguely grabbing Josie’s hand.

“Josephine Barnaby, will you marry me?” he asked

They looked at him incredulously, but she burst into tears.

“Yes, of course yes” she sobbed, falling down beside him, pulling him into a hug.

“I love you” he whispered

“I love you too, you foolish man” she sniffed “but Ben you need to go to hospital.”

“Yes Ma’am.”

Angela Alderley was caught at Heathrow trying to leave the country, when pressed she admitted to the murders, and assaulting Ben, and locking them in a cellar. She’d admitted to stealing Lavinia Huffington’s identity, and a multitude of other identity crimes associated.

Ben and Josie were given 2 weeks leave; safe and happy they were able to relax into their new home. Spending their days arranging their house, walking to the local pub, carefully walking around the house avoiding knocking each other, while their injuries heeled. The nights though they spent on their balcony watching the river churn passed, wrapped in blankets and sometimes each other, and talking about the future.

The night before their return to work, they had made love on the balcony and lay naked under a woollen blanket watching the river.

“Do you want to talk about it Ben?” she asked him, kissing his forehead gently

“Not really, do you?” he asked

“I remember” she told him

“I know”.

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