Inspector Barnaby Mystery New Arrivals by Snoopadoop

Summary:

Three new arrivals in the county of Midsomer bring different fortunes to the Barnaby family, and Causton CID.

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Author's Notes:

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Rating M

Triggers; Rape, Murder, Crime, bad jokes.

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

So this started out with the crime, and went in a different direction. There will be a direct sequel, so don’t worry about where it ends.

Hope you enjoy.

SJxxx

The waiting room was far too hot, Ben shifted on the hard plastic seats, his tie and suit jacket abandoned but he was still so hot. He was really uncomfortable, he’d been there for five hours, his body was stiff, and apart from the odd scream and cry the room was deathly quiet. Looking around the room, there were only eight other people here, it was after all 3am on a January night. Simon had crawled off somewhere, whether for a kip or tea Ben couldn’t quite remember. He’d tried to sleep on the little chairs, he’d even tried to kip on the floor, but he got in the nurses way, and he got into the way of the other families, so now he sat on the chairs wondering how long this was going to take.

A large nurse came bustling down the corridor and stuck her head round the door of the waiting room, she looked at him and smiled. “Mr Dixon?” she asked

“er no” Ben smiled, and moved his stiff shoulders “I’m his, I’m erm, I’m his brother-in-law, can I help?”

She smiled brightly “Gone off for a nap has he? Never mind doll, we’re in the final phase now, should be about an hour, maybe less.”

“Do I, do we need to do anything?” Ben asked, wiping sleep out of his eyes

“No love, your girls are doing fine, they were just worried about you.” She winked “Go and find Mr Dixon, make him presentable” she looked him up and down, “and yourself, get ready to meet the little one.”
With a flash of a toothy wide grin she was out of the room and tottering down the corridor. Ben rubbed at his face, unbuttoned another shirt button and stood up. He got a smile from the couple opposite him, grandparents in waiting his assumed, and then he caught sight of himself in the reflected window of the waiting room.

“Ha, do I really look that bad?” He asked the older couple

“They’re not going to notice lad, trust me” the expectant grandfather told him.

Ben wandered down the corridor, stopping in the gents; he splashed his face with water, and mussed his hair slightly. Causton General was, on the face of it his least favourite place, and he briefly wondered why he seemed to spend so much time here. Of course Cully had been the instigator of this trip, insisting Midsomer the best place for her baby to be born, with Tom and Joyce sitting at home a few miles away waiting for news, and her beloved sister as her birthing partner. Simon never had any choice, not that Ben suspected he cared, if they didn’t buy a house in the County he’d be very surprised.

When he finally caught up with Simon, he was dozing in a corridor, his head resting on a water cooler, empty cup in hand. Ben smiled, the man looked worse than he did. Ben assumed that was correct, Simon after all was the prospective father, Ben wondered briefly if that made him the prospective Uncle, Uncle to be, Fiancéé of the prospective aunt. He woke Simon gently and passed on the news, smiling as the man’s face lit up.

“The girls didn’t really need us did they?” Simon asked

“Nope we are utterly superfluous” Ben laughed.

In reality it was two hours before the nurse came back, her smile more radiant before, “Mr Dixon?” she asked Simon, who had for the last half an hour been asleep on Ben’s shoulder

Simon had lurched awake “Is it over?” he asked thickly

“Come and meet your son.”

Ben and Simon walked into the side room where Cully laid sprawled on the bed, a tiny, dark haired child lying on her chest. Standing over her, looking like death itself Josie stood with a beaming smile plastered on her face. She put her fingers to her lips, and moved softly and quietly towards Ben, swapping places with Simon.

“Love you” she whispered placing her head on his shoulder “I’m so tired”

“Love you too” he kissed her forehead “this put you off?”

“Never, can’t wait” she smiled and lowered her voice more “Got to get her back for this”.

Cully woke, as Simon put a gentle kiss to her forehead, “we have a baby” she told him.

“Yes” Simon grinned, “You’re both beautiful.”

“Thomas” Cully said “I’ve called him Thomas”

“Perfect” her husband told her, placing a kiss on the baby’s head “Hullo Thomas.”

The morning brought Tom and Joyce Barnaby to the hospital to visit their first grandchild, but it also brought another new arrival to the County of Midsomer. The large Mercedes loaded with bags and
belongings made its way through the small roads to Badgers Drift. The removals van had arrived at the new house yesterday, hopefully unpacking boxes and belongings, but the man had spent the night in a hotel in Causton. He didn’t really know the area, having chosen the house over the internet, and only visiting once since its purchase. He wasn’t really very impressed, the roads were small and badly maintained, the signs were old and tricky to read, his sat-nav kept cutting out.

The man was Chief Super-Intendant William Morrison; he’d just been promoted from Super-Intendant, and sent to Midsomer from the Met. He’d been having what the Borough Commander had called a Domestic Situation, and the promotion was to get him a new start, far away. He knew what that meant, he’d sent enough younger officers to police forces like Midsomer to know, but he felt he could do a good job here, there was something off about Midsomer, the murder rate was ridiculously high, it was a national joke. Morrison was a big beefy man, he liked to get results through leading the way, hand picking officers to do his bidding, getting things done his way, and he felt he could do big things in a little force like this, if only he could find his bloody house.

In Midsomer Florrie another new arrival to the County was being introduced to her new home, Stirling Silver was an Arab mare, just brought from a stud in Dublin for 85000 Euros. Dr Joyce Rowland, the new owner, stood watching her being unloaded, dressed in jumper and jodhpurs she stood every bit the grown pony girl. The mare was feisty and scared, rearing and crying as she was led into the yard. The young man leading the horse was wearing tight t-shirt and tighter jeans, Joyce licked her lips, she didn’t care if anyone saw, her husband was away on business as usual, and the stable staff knew her tastes, she had after all had most of them.

As the horse was walked, she came up behind the young man, the fact he was 25 years her junior meant nothing to her, she dropped her hand to his taut buttocks and squeezed, he sighed as she did this. He was a young man, and sex was sex but this was his life now, she’d squeeze his arse, and whisper in his ear, and he’d follow his cock all the way to her bedroom. The sex would be fine, he’s happy with what he could get, but she’d role over, and he’d be asked to leave, and he’d feel hollow and dirty. Not a shower, not a run, not even the barmaid of the Fox and Hounds who did amazing things with her tongue could make him feel better. Joyce for her part, was getting slightly tired of him, most of her flings lasted a few months then she’d get bored and move on, but with the economy as it is she couldn’t really afford a replacement groom. So she continued to shag him, and the girl who came and did her spray tan, and sometimes her gardener, who was an older man with a very dirty mind, and sometimes for a bit of variety she’d actually allow her husband to crawl his filthy body over her, and she lie there while he rutted away, and come heavily, and then she’d bring herself off in the mess.

Joyce was a psychologist she knew this wasn’t sex addiction, or a deep rooted problem, this was utter boredom, boredom with this ridiculous County, it’s uninterrupted greenery, it’s boring landscape, it’s boring small minded locals. She had been here for ten years, and it was getting more boring, now her husband was discussing retirement, effectively putting an end to any fun she could possibly have, her young groom David had suggested she divorced the old man, but that wasn’t her style, she had smiled and assured him she had better ways of dealing with her husband. After their last tryst as David put his clothes on and crept from her bedroom, she had carefully fingered her address book, knowing the answer to all her problems lay there.

Ben was quite happy with the week off, not that it was officially a week off for him, but Tom and Josie had taken compassionate leave, to play with baby Thomas, and help Joyce fuss over Cully. This meant that Ben could go to work, finish paperwork, go home, go to the Barnaby’s to pick up his Fiancée, and visit his new nephew. He of course didn’t blame his boss for the murders, but somehow whenever he DCI was working Ben’s case load became an exhausting nightmare. At the moment, he could look at his boss as a future father in law, and proud grandparent, Mrs Barnaby always a sainted woman in Ben’s eyes seemed full of praise for everything, the day, her handsome son’s in law as she called Ben and Simon, her clever girls Cully and Josie and mostly baby Thomas.

When Ben pulled up today after 3 days of this routine, it was to find his Fiancée wrapped in a warm coat
and jumper, gently rocking from side to side, whilst talking to her mother, who herself was rooting around in
the Barnaby’s garage. As Ben got out of the car, he realised she was rocking holding baby Thomas inside
her coat, he walked over slipping his arm around her waist, and kissing her temple before looking down at
the baby.

“He isn’t asleep” Josie told him, “he’s only just started sucking on my jumper though, I think he’s hungry.”

“Where’s Cully?” Ben asked

“Asleep with Simon upstairs, Mum and I are looking for Cully’s pram; apparently she made Dad bring it
from the last house.”

“Haven’t they got their own pram?” Ben asked tickling his nephew’s tiny head

“Mum doesn’t like it.” Josie shrugged, “Dad’s inside, apparently reading the paper, avoiding being dragged
into this.”

Ben risked a look at Mrs Barnaby, and it hadn’t taken his policeman’s brain to realise he was about to be
dragged into the search so, he took Josie’s advise and turned to the house, he kissed Josie again, and made
his excuse.

“Ben?” Josie asked quietly

“Yeah?” he answered, looking at her smile feeling warm and happy.

“I want one” she said rocking the baby towards him

“Well look” he said whispering conspiratorially “nobody’s looking, we could just take this one.” He winked
and disappeared into the house.

Chief Super-Intendant Morrison had spent the last few days going through the senior officers of Midsomer
Constabulary, he’d read their files, interviewed them, and filed them into “his type of people” and “others”.
Some of them like DCI Mark Spellman were going to find their stars rising high, others would find their
careers fairly stunted. Every officer of rank of Inspector or higher had been through his new office, till by
Thursday he only had two left. He picked up the two files, and called his new secretary through to his office.

“Sir?” the girl had asked walking through, noting with discomfort how his eyes roamed down to her chest.

“Gloria? He asked, I seem to have two Officers missing” he told her, getting her name wrong for the fourth
time that day, “DCI Barnaby, and TI Barnaby?”

“Compassionate leave sir” The girl, Grace, told him, “DCI Barnaby’s daughter has just had a baby.”

“Would that be TI Barnaby?” Morrison asked

“No, her sister” Grace explained, then at Morrison’s face she added “their quite a close family Sir”.

Morrison read through the files on his desk, picking up the picture on his desk of TI Josephine Barnaby, it
was the same picture that sat on her fireplace, an official photograph in her Inspectors Uniform, she was
smiling happily, and Morrison though she looked ridiculously young. He read her file, just under 32, ex-
Met, her father a DCI, she sounded just his sort of thing. He looked at her photo, and smiled, pretty and very
young for an Inspector, he stomach felt warm at the feeling, definitely his sort of thing.

At the Rowland stables, David ad Joyce had just tumbled out of bed, he did up his jeans in a fluid well
practiced movement. Mr Rowland was due home in a few hours, and Dr Rowland needed to clean and tidy
the bedroom before he did. As he tripped out of the bedroom he noticed a small black book on her side
table. He looked around at her back, as she sat on the edge of the bed, fingering the book he picked it up. Pocking it, and then pulling on his T-shirt and jumper, effectively covering it.

“Have you not gone yet?” Dr Rowland asked, disturbed by his clattering about.

“Yeah, no, yeah” he said, disappearing out of the door, and down the stairs. He got to the kitchen before she called him back.

“David Fuck off this afternoon won’t you, don’t come back, take that little tart you’ve been seeing to the coast or something”.

He didn’t reply, just walked out of the door and down the road, he kicked at the grass, feeling bitter and used. He looked across the grass to the stable yard, the mares and stallions neighed and whinnied at each other from behind their stable doors. David liked the horses, it’s the only real reason he stayed here, the wages were poor, he was treated like a sex slave, but he did genuinely love the work, and who else would give him a chance. Criminal record for Twoc’ing and assault, lived in a grotty flat he shared with a school friend, he wasn’t a catch, he often thought if he wasn’t sexy and muscular from work, he’d having nothing going for him at all.

As he got to the main lane, he turned towards the village, taking Dr Rowland’s advice after a few minutes walking he was passed by a large silver Bentley. Mr Rowland he thought, she’d be surprised he was home early, maybe he’d catch her still tidying up. Probably not he thought, she’d probably have got up and over him as quickly as ever, and was even now working on some psychological stuff at the kitchen table, he watched the Bentley as it went down the road, until it turned a bend out of sight. He stood there for a minute longer, before shrugging and continuing on.

Ben and Josie got home in the dark, as he parked his Focus in their newly roofed garage, he waited for her to get out of the car, and then came round, slipping his hand in hers, and squeezing it. The security lights lit the drive and garden, but she clasped his hand gratefully. As always he had a moment of disbelief that she loved him that this was his life now, and he grinned as they walked hand in hand towards the house. They had eaten with her family and the evening now stretched out with delicious possibilities for him. On a whim he pulled her gently towards him wrapping his arms around her, and making her giggle, pushing his lips against hers and rocking her in the security light.

“Ben!” she giggled pushing him slightly away “What’s got into you?”

“I love you” he kissed her again, and she broke away running to the front door, with him chasing her.

They bounded through the front door laughing and giggling, and tumbled onto the sofa. Kissing each other deeply, hands everywhere as Ben quickly lost his suit jacket and Josie her jumper. Shirts came next kissing and gently scratching skin, and biting each other’s necks as they upturned the cushions and fell heavily onto each other on the rug. Ben had his shirt open, as he pulled Josie’s T-shirt up over her head, unhooking and removing her bra in a fluid practised movement. Skin on skin, he pulled her as close as he could, feeling nipples harden, kissing the swell of her breasts and the hollow of her throat.

She ran her hands down his chest, undoing his belt and fly, as she sat on his lap, he fumbled with the buttons on her jeans, his rising erection starting to block out everything but the desperate need to be inside her. Pulling her jeans and kickers off in one fluid movement, he gazed at her naked body, as she wriathed and blushed under his hands. She in turn reached up and grabbed his belt, pulling his trouser and pants down, leaving him naked above her, rampant erection displayed for her eyes. She swallowed hard as he knelt between her thighs, opening wide for him and lying back.

He locks his eyes with her, the clamps his mouth down on hers, tongue meeting tongue, she moans as he enters her. Wrapping her knees and legs around his back, as he thrusts into her, she closes her eyes, to feel him move, her buttocks and back scratching cross the rug, he cradles her head gently, intertwining his
fingers with her hair. She moans his name, and his kisses her throat and breasts, she in turn runs her hands down his back, scratching and pulling him close. The fast friction bringing them both to the point of no return, she feels him stiffen and pull her closer as he comes deep inside her, calling her name, as he thrusts forward hard resting against her cervix, her body shakes and her muscles clamp as she comes herself screaming his name.

A few moments later they are sat on the floor, still wrapped in each other’s arms, the throw from the sofa covering them. She dozed lightly in his arms as he nuzzled her neck, running his hands across her naked body.

“Ben, when did you know you loved me?” she asked suddenly, her voice full of sleepiness.

He thought for a moment, running his nose and mouth along her neck as she sat facing away from him. “Erm, well I always fancied you” he told her, stroking her, “I’ve thought you were the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen, the moment I set eyes on you, sitting in your Dad’s kitchen.”

“I’d forgotten that’s where we met” she told him, “I think we had met briefly at Causton just after I first started there.”

“Possibly, but as they called you the stone maiden, I was probably too scared even to look at you, in your Dad’s kitchen, gypsy shirt and jeans is how I first think of you, you smiled at me, just a little smile and I thought, WOW.”

“I thought you were in love with Cully” she sighed as he ran a hand over the left nipple. “Everyone else is.”

“Yeah, well I prefer the unobtainable, the dream just out of reach, that was you.”

“But did you love me?”

“No, probably not then, I don’t think I’d have dared, I loved you as a friend, as the daughter of a friend, but I don’t think I was actually in love with you until,” he stopped and squeezed her “until the first time I kissed you.”

“Because I belonged to someone else?” she was still breath indrawn waiting for a reply.

Ben felt the cold shiver run through him he always had when, if he thought of Derrick Keene, the man who’d hurt her so badly. “No, it was before him, and you didn’t anyway, you never belonged to him, you’ll never belong to anyone apart from yourself” he kissed the top of her head, “what about you, when did you know you loved me?”

She wriggled into his arms, stoking his upper arm, “Oh I don’t know it came on so slowly, over such a long time.” She kissed his arm, laying her head on his shoulder, “but the moment I knew, knew for certain I was in love with you was while we were taking the pictures at Cully’s wedding.”

“What?” he looked down at her “Really? You knew you loved me back then?”

“Yes, I looked across and you and Dad and Gavin were talking and I thought there are the three men I love most in the world, it was a conscious thought, and I suddenly realised, Derrick didn’t feature in my mind, just you and Dad and Gavin. And I knew I was in love with you.”

“You didn’t tell me” he laughed but the shock of hurt was genuine, “you didn’t tell me you loved me.”

“Darling” she kissed his arm again, “I was married to someone else, what would you have done, stayed and waited for me forever?” she turned her head to look at him, “moped for the rest of your life because the woman you loved, and loved you was faithful to another man?”
“But you weren’t happy, if I’d have known you weren’t happy.” He protested

“You wouldn’t have done a thing, and you know it, you’re a good man and you were a good friend to me.”

“But I did, the moment the second you told me you weren’t happy, that you needed me I was there.” He kissed on the lips, gathering her close “and I loved you.”

She melted into his kiss murmuring his name, as he ran his hands over her body, and she pulled him closer to her, lying back into his arms letting him do as he would. He said she didn’t belong to anyone, but as she felt his manhood prod between her legs, and she opened her thighs to him again, she felt like she was his. Nobody else had a claim on her body like he did; nobody else had ever laid her out like this, glorying in her flesh. The first vicious time in fear and pain she’d been hunched and scared, and the boy had grabbed her and hurt her, and she knew vaguely she’d fought, but Ben would never know that. Derrick had never wanted her naked beside him, what he’d done to her in the dark was hurried and for himself only. Ben had opened her entirely, bringing her love and safety and enjoyment.

Ben moved slowly and gently inside her, she knew he enjoyed the feeling, he’d told her many times, she knew that he liked to watch her body move as he entered her, so she lay back on the rug, her hands above her head, her body stretched out for him. He watched her move and smile as stroked her body and moved inside her. She was relaxed and happy he knew, and he knew the difference in her between the sobbing scared women he’d kissed on her husband’s sofa 15 months previously. She smiled up at him, as he bobbed his head, taking one nipple then the other between his teeth, biting gently then sucking them, making her moans and squeeze her muscles onto him. Lifting her hips, and legs, he pushed into her at a deeper angle, running his hands under her bum and making her squirm.

“Ben I’m going to come” she panted wriggling desperately

“Good” he panted, holding her tightly he dropped his hips further entering her harder and deeper, feeling the waves as her orgasm broke and she gripped him crying out his name. He ground his groin into her, thrusting harder as he started to come, repeating “I love you” over and over again until he couldn’t move anymore and collapsed over her trembling body.

She lay there under him, her skin prickling, it was an odd feeling like wanting to sob and cry and scream and sing all at once. She wondered if it was the same for everyone, the feeling immediately after orgasm, she knew the French called it Le Petit Mort, but she didn’t feel like she had died, more like she’d flown and landed. She didn’t want to move, she didn’t want Ben to move, she just wanted to lie there safe and happy under him.

“Ben, what does it feel like?” she asked as he moved off her, making himself comfortable lying by her side.

“What does what feel like?” he asked kissing her lips, as she lay her head on his arm.

“Coming?” She giggled into his chest as she imagined the quizzical look he was giving her “When you come, and afterwards what does it feel like?”

“Oh erm, I don’t know really, hot, amazing, wonderful” he shrugged “never really thought about it?” He looked at her “I know I make you come, I can feel it, you must know?”

“I wondered if it was always the same, if I feel the same as you, if it feels different with me than it has with other girls.” She nuzzled into his side.

“It’s very different than with anyone else” he told her kissing her head “It feels like part of loving you, not something I want from you, or something I’m doing because I’m horny, it’s part of being in love.” He tucked her into his side “Do you want to go to bed? I’m getting chilly.”

They’d gone to bed naked, and curled into each other’s arms, she’d been dozing off, happy with a smile on
her face, the light in the room playing over her blonde hair. He’d wanted to sleep but he found himself watching her, her closed eyes, knowing she felt safe in his arms.

“Go to sleep Ben” she’d told him sleepily, “I love you.”

“I’d have waited for you forever” he told her kissing her on the forehead, and slipping down the bed beside her, “I’d have waited eternity for this.”

CS-I Morrison had plans, plans for Midsomer, plans for his next promotion, he was going right to the top. This slight sideways step was nothing in his great plan. He tutted however irritably whenever the name Barnaby crossed his desk, apparently Barnaby Senior had avoided all attempts to bring him into line with modern police practices. He was opposed to team building, role play; he even avoided department head meetings. Morrison was also desperate to meet the younger Barnaby, she’d been in his dreams the night before, and now she invaded his waking moments as well. He called for his secretary.

“TI Barnaby, she doesn’t live at home does she?” He asked

“No, she and Ben live in Causton Green.” Grace told him.

“Ben?” He asked

“DS Benjamin Jones, CID.” Grace told him.

“She’s in some sort of relationship with a junior officer?” Morrison blustered

“Yeah, it was all a bit of a scandal a year or so ago, but they’re getting married in July.”

“Scandal?” Morrison asked, rubbing his hand across the desk

“Oh yeah, she was married, and they’d been seeing each other secretly and then her husband was murdered.” Grace warmed to her theme, “apparently her Dad went to arrest Ben for the murder, and they’d been shagging all afternoon.”

“Really?” Morrison leant forward “What happened?”

“Well it was all a bit of a shock, the lads downstairs called her The Ice Maiden, nobody thought she had it in her, she was all cold and professional.” Grace laughed, “Then they came back from their suspension and internal affairs, the sweetest couple, he’d offered to resign for her. He’s a bit of a romantic, and she just sort of melted, she’s a lovely girl, the station’s really proud of her, she gets on with all the lads.”

Morrison hadn’t really listened to the tale, the idea that this pretty ambitious girl was a bit of a tart, was just what he wanted to hear. “She does as she’s told does she?” he asked Grace, “ticks boxes, thinks our way?”

“She’s very modern” Grace shrugged “Done wonders with Traffic”

“Brilliant” he looked at her file, “I’m going to order her to come in tomorrow.”

The night brought the sounds of arguments from the Rowland Stables, the horses whinnied, the lights flashed, scream and bangs and clatters and threats filled the night. David stood and listened smirking, Joyce Rowland, screamed and Mr Rowland blustered. David glugging vodka from a bottle laughed slightly maniacally. The main door of the house opened wide and the figure of Mr Rowland ran out towards the stables, the houses kicked and bucked, making a racket as the man ran towards the stables. David watched him for a moment before dropping his head back on the grass.

The next morning found Ben and Josie outside Causton registry office, Ben in a smart suit, Josie in her uniform, both bouncing up and down waiting for it to open. Josie had run up and down the steps twice
before Ben had caught her hand, telling her to calm down.

“Not too late to back out Sergeant Jones” she said, kissing him.

“Not in a million years” he told her, the cheque in his wallet already written out, his passport in his breast pocket beside his warrant card.

“Oh” she said suddenly holding his hands, “she’s going to ask us what each other’s full names are.”

Ben nodded “You know my middle name” he told her “I haven’t any others secreted away.”

“Yeah” she shuffled “After, erm well when I changed my name back to Barnaby I gave myself a middle name” she told him.

“Oh OK really?” He asked “You didn’t tell me?”

“Yeah” she smiled “It’s Eve.”

He looked at her, smiled sadly and kissed her, “You wanted something from your birth parents?”

“I’m not sure, everything else was given to me, my first name came from the Nurse on duty at Causton General the night Dad found me, my surname given to me because he’s the copper who found me, I wanted something that had been mine, really and truly mine, Josephine Eve Barnaby.” She smirked and laughed.

“I love you” he told her kissing her forehead. “I don’t mind marrying JE Barnaby, as long as she will have BD Jones?”

“Gladly” she smiled and gripped his hand, as the door opened behind them.

“Mr Jones and Ms Barnaby?” An older lady stuck her head round the door, when they both turned and nodded she smiled “Come on up loves, the registrar is waiting for you.”

When they came out 40 minutes later, the smiles could have lit Causton, holding each other’s hands, in 12 days’ time they could pick up their blue form, and then they could legally marry. Their plan was to leave it at Causton Registry Office though, a proper Coppers Wedding. Registry Office Ceremony followed by a reception at Malham Hall Hotel. So different from the last time, so individual exactly what they wanted.

Their phones rang almost identical times, they looked at each other, and then turning away slightly they answered. Ben answered his phone to PC Angel on the desk at Causton nick; Josie answered the phone to Grace CS-I Morrison’s secretary. Their conversations were brief and hurried, and they turned back to each other smiling.

“I’m going to work” Ben told her

“Me too” She told him kissing him on the nose “I’ve got to go and see our new Chief Super, any chance of a lift?”

“I’ve got a body in Midsomer Florrie, but yeah, I think I can give you a lift up the road.”

They parted with a chaste kiss on the steps outside Causton Police station, Josie watched him drive off, waving till he turned the corner. Thinking herself a fool, she loved him dearly but it wasn’t very professional, however in the last few months she’d realised how dangerous his job was, and he hated the idea of him going off to do without knowing how much she loved him.

Josie knocked on the door of the new CS-I’s office having signed herself into the building, and checked up on some old friends. She’d been up here a few times in the past, she got on quiet well with Super-Intendant
Cotton, even if everyone else thought he was a prat, she thought him sweet, a little misguided, but harmless. The rest of the station had seen her as the Yuppie Whisperer. She hoped his new boss would be better, she knew he’d come from the Met, although she didn’t know him personally, she had him in her mind’s eye. The door was opened by a tall thin woman; Josie vaguely recognised her being called Grace, and having worked for Jack Cotton at one time.

“Hullo Grace, I’ve been asked to see our new Chief.” She said friendliest smile pasted on her face.

“Yes Inspector he’s been expecting you, if you want to wait in here he’ll call you though in a moment.” Grace smiled.

Josie was shown into a waiting room; there were three little chairs and a sofa in front of a large desk where Grace sat. At the far end of the room there was a door with a nameplate CS-I W Morrison tacked to it. Josie’s mind ran through other offices she’d seen, when it was her time, she thought, less wood, more white evidence boards.

After a long ten minutes the door opened and the fore mentioned CS-I walked out, he was older than she’d expected, she briefly estimated age, older than Tom perhaps, maybe just older looking. Certainly not as fit, not as handsome as her father, this man wouldn’t turn the heads of the ladies of Midsomer. Even Jack Cotton was cute, as her mother often pointed out. She smiled anyway, she was taught flirting by Cully Barnaby and Gavin Troy, when the cause was justified she could flirt with the best.

“Grace, if you want to go and visit your sister, I’m not going to complain” the man told his secretary, she looked shocked, but thanked him grabbing her coat and leaving straight away, Josie looked quizzical, but Morrison smiled, “Grace’s sister is going through a tricky divorce it’s only 11am and she’s already been moping all morning, letting her go seems the best course of option” he smiled, a nasty yellow grin.

“That’s very kind Sir” she told him,

“TI Barnaby?” he asked

“Yes Sir, you did ask me to come down?”

“Yes, yes, he shook her hand, go and take a seat in my office” he told her she stood up and did as asked, following his orders to the letter, he smiled, and carefully turning to the outer office door, he locked it and followed her inside. “I’ve been interviewing all the department heads in Midsomer; I was surprised to find you headed up Traffic?”

“Yes Sir” Josie was used to this half question, “They lost their Chief Inspector just over a year ago, Sergeant Johnson had been covering as SIO for a while, but I requested the Inspector role, and was lucky enough to receive it. The department has been in a bad way, a bit of a joke for a long while, Sir. I’m hoping to turn it round.” She finished with a smile.

“You want to be the TCI?” he asked matter of factly

“Of course Sir” she said “but I realise I’m young for that”

“It should be a matter of course though; age should be nothing to do with it.” He smiled

“No sir”

“Is that your ambition? Chief Inspector, like your father?”

“Oh no sir, I intend to go as far as possible” she smiled “I’m only 31; I have years ahead of me.”

“You left the Met; if you’d stayed you’d have been more than a parochial TI by now” he told her leaning
forward, “Why did you do that?”

“It will be in my file, Sir” she said, leaning back, the smile gone.

“You were shot” he told her, “you received a medal for bravery, because you were shot, Inspector.” He stroked his chin, seemingly unaware of the stiffness in her body as he spoke, “you didn’t need to leave the Met, you would have moved stations, got a desk job, stayed a high flyer, but you scurried home, why that was?”

“I didn’t want to remain behind a desk forever Sir” she said, her hand automatically running to the scar under her ribs.

He laughed “So you got a job as a desk Sergeant in Midsomer?”

“I was brought up here Sir, in this town, my family are here, and it was coming home while I got better.”

“How is your sister?” he asked

“Doing well” she smiled again genuinely thinking of Cully and baby Thomas, “she and the baby are really well.”

“I’d like to speak to your father as well” she laughed literally laughed

“Sir with all due respect, every CS-I Midsomers had since 1991 has wanted to speak to my father, it’s not really happened, Dad doesn’t like authority.”

“Is that why he’s still a DCI?”

“He likes being a DCI” she clarified.

“You like Detectives Josephine?” he asked

“Sir?” she didn’t like his tone

“You slept with one, your father is one” he cracked his knuckles, and leant further forward “Do you want to be CID yourself?”

“Sir, I don’t think that’s quite appropriate, Ben and I are engaged.” She defended herself, without quite realising she was doing it. He stood up and walked beside her, perching on the desk.

“I know about girls like you Josephine” he said, pressing his leg against her “You like playing coppers, and with coppers, you go from one to another, and you skip up the ladder, I don’t want to stop you, I think I can help you.”

She moved slightly further away “Sir, this is very inappropriate” she told him, her voice icy “I do understand what you think you’re suggesting, and I would be grateful if you’d forget it.”

He put a hand on her shoulder and she flinched “I know you, one relationship after another, popular with all the boys in the station, I’ll make you a DCI tomorrow, you’d be a super-intendant by the end of the year, if you’d come and play with me”.

She stillled and tried to stand; only to find him now pushing her down on the chair “You really need to let me stand and leave Sir, this really is very inappropriate, and I am very uncomfortable...” she told him.

“The Ice Maiden” he whispered in her ear “That’s what they call you downstairs, but you fucked you’re little DS, left you’re husband ‘cos you couldn’t leave policeman alone, you like it don’t you?”
“With respect Sir, you know nothing about it, and you have to let me go.” She wiggled and stood back, knocking the man from his perch.

“Don’t be like that” he told her “You and I are the same, you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours” his voice sickly he came towards her, and she backed out of the room, “don’t run from me, we could be friends.”

Her heart was hammering, she was terrified, and her brain was fighting her urge to scream and run, this man might be horrendous, he might be scaring her, but she liked her job, and decking the new boss was a bad idea. “Sir I am going to leave, and seriously we can forget this, but you really need to let me leave.” She walked towards the door, desperate to get out into the corridor, wondering silently why he wasn’t following her.

He watched as she tried the door, and laughed “It’s locked” he told her “the key isn’t easy to find” he giggled. He came towards her, pulling her towards him, enjoying the gasp as he touched her. “I’m going to have a little bit of fun, you’re going to give me that fun, and then you’re going to get a nice promotion, and we’ll be best of friends.”

Her brain ran through everything she’d ever been taught, she could scream, she could fight, she could probably knock this guy out but it would be her word against his and her career would be in tatters, if she could talk him down, it would be better, but her heart was hammering she was terrified, and she kept forgetting everything. “Sir please, I’m happy and faithful and really not interested and I think you should let me go.”

He grabbed her harder by the hair and pushed her towards the sofa, she was caught unawares, and lifted off the floor, this guy wasn’t fit, but he was bigger than her, a lot bigger. He turned her round clamping he mouth on hers, her mouth opened in shock her eyes wide, she thought of Ben, she thought of the University boy, she thought of Derrick Keene, she shook, and started fighting, for the first time she started hitting him, as his tongue entered her mouth she tried to bite, only to find he was pushing on the condyle heads of her TMJ’s, painfully holding her mouth open. Held off the floor by her chin, pain coursing through her body, tears prickling her eyes, she was stunned as he dropped her on the sofa, his other hand, reaching for her uniform blouse, ripping a button as fondled her breasts. She started fighting and twisting again, scratching out at him, kicking her legs trying to scream. He moved his hand across her face and she breathed in, trying to form a cogent argument, he slapped her hard.

“Shut the fuck up bitch” he shouted

She put her hand to her face, shock etched on it, and he took the opportunity to grasp her hand, pushing it into his loose trousers, making her feel his hardness. He pushed his mouth against hers again, rubbing her face against his hardness, moaning into her mouth. She slapped him with her other hand, he ignored her pushing his thighs between hers, he reached down ripping at her uniform trousers he pressed his hand down the back, feeling the edge of her lacy knickers, she wiggled as his hand went down the back as he rubbed his cock with her hand, making her scream, and added his other fingers to her hole opening them ripping at her, tearing at her, she felt his body hitch as he started to come, feeling it on her hand, as he pushed hard into her body, biting her lips he moaned as he came, and slumped over her.

Her breath ragged, her body aching with pain she started to scream and scream, only to find his hand removed from her trousers and clamped over her mouth. “You little bitch you will shut the fuck up, you will
go home, and tell nobody, and you’ll see how good I can be to you, but if you tell a soul, another living soul, I will see your Dad and your precious Benjamin fall so fast and so hard.” He left the threat there, lifting himself off her, and handing her the office key “run along now” he said slapping her bottom hard, knowing how much pain she’d be in.

Ben had got to the scene of the murder just after George Bullard, smiling and waving, as he was shown across the stable yard.

“Hullo Ben” the Pathologist had called, “you look happy”

“Been to the registrar” Ben smiled “it’s all getting a bit official”

“Good for you, Tom still on leave?”

“Yes, what have we got?” Ben asked, looking around the stable block.

“Roger Rowland, 54, owner of the stables, stabbed multiple times, I suspect with a screwdriver, but we haven’t found a weapon.” George told him.

“Time of death?” Ben asked

“Oh we can be positive of that” a deep female voice told him “He left the house at 11pm; he was dead before mucking out a 5am.”

Ben turned to see a middle aged woman dressed in Jodhpurs and a jumper, “And you are madam?” he asked

“Dr Joyce Rowland” she answered, smiling and licking her lips “wife of the deceased, Detective”

Ben blushed “Erm I’m sorry for your loss Madam, may I ask?”

“No Detective I’m not particularly sad, my husband and I weren’t close.” She smiled “Are you married Detective?” she asked stepping closer licking her lips again.

“Erm no madam, I’m, I’m engaged” Ben smiled “I’m DS Ben Jones; I will need to ask you some further questions.”

“Oh yes of course DS Ben Jones” she said “It’s a shame you are taken, I quite like a man who can pull off a suit” holding his hand for a fraction longer than necessary she winked at him and turned away.

“Oh God George” Ben whispered

“What is it Ben?” The Pathologist asked

“I wish the Boss was here” he shrugged “Horny old women” he shrugged with a smile.

Ben had discovered Dr Rowland’s penchant for younger men, interviewed the stable girls and discovered David Farmer’s affair. He’d gone to the younger man’s flat only to find he hadn’t returned that night, and the flatmate had no idea where he was. He’d been to see the on off girlfriend at her pub job, but she hadn’t seen him for days.

Ben had called an APV on David Farmer, happy with his suspect he’d one back to Causton nick, to write up his notes, with his day complete. He had gone home to find the house empty, and no sign of Josie. The house felt empty without her, so he’d made a sandwich, grabbed a beer and watched some telly.

Josie had walked back to Ben’s Maisonette crying her eyes out, she thanked the gods above that the tiny flat hadn’t sold on the open market, and she had the key as it was often easier for her to dip out of work for an hour to show people around. She let herself in to the flat, stripping her clothes off she ran the shower.
Making it as hot as she could she stepped under the powering water, blood and filth swirling down the drain, crying and crying she knew she should be reporting the assault, the part of her brain that was a policewoman knew that, but the part of her that was woman, a girl in pain wanted to wash it away. She didn’t know how long she’d stayed under the water, she heard the boiler struggling though, felt the skin on her feet blister, her hair which she scrubbed and scrubbed coming out in huge lumps, she felt like she’d cried for ever, scrubbing at her skin with her nails, willing the feel of him off her, and as she did the feel of the University boy came back, the smell of Derrick Keene, and she screamed and howled.

Finally sore and bleeding she left the shower, and lay on the futon that now served as the flats only bed. They’d taken Ben’s double bed to be their spare bed, and replaced it with the Futon from her Tepee in the Maples. Somehow it seemed right as she lay there, she thought maybe if she lay there still for long enough she’d die, like she nearly did before. Standing again she went to the kitchen, there was limited food or drink in the building, but she found a large IKEA tumbler, a bottle of Brandy under the sink, and a flask of mediocre Vodka on the cabinet in the living room. Pouring half and half she gulped the mixture down, lying back on the mattress, she sobbed naked. She tried to think of Ben, but every thought came back to the other men who’d touched her, she couldn’t think of Ben at all. The vodka and Brandy mix made her sleepy, and she closed her eyes. Her last conscious thought being the hope she wouldn’t wake up, would never remember the feeling she had now.

David Farmer woke up covered in sticky red blood, he ached all over, and his head pounded. He tried to remember the night before, or the night before that. The last thing he could clearly remember was Joyce throwing him out of bed, and walking towards the village. He thought he must have got there because the remains of a vodka bottle lay beside him, along with a screwdriver and Joyce’s little black book. Looking round he vaguely recognised where he lay, it was the hay loft above the tack room at the stables. Lifting his head the pounding increased, he dropped it back onto the straw, he wondered why he couldn’t remember what had happened, and he wondered about the blood, the smell was acrid. Dried blood, sweat, vodka, and himself mingled in his nostrils. Crawling to the edge of the platform, he looked over the side and down into the tack room, his breath hitched to see a tall WPC standing there, hands on her hips looking bored. Through the open door he could see the stable yard, and fluttering blue police tape.

“This is bad” he thought to himself, “really bad.” Hiding the Vodka bottle, screwdriver and book deep under the hay. He crawled to the far end of the loft, a small window their looked out onto the fields behind Midsomer Florrie, and up to the copse on the main road. Carefully he opened the window, sliding his body out, and onto the outstepped roof of the stable below. Padding across the corrugated roof, he edged to the side. Looking down he saw the roof of the Stables Land-Rover. He lay flat onto his stomach, swinging his legs round and off the roof. His boots connected with the vehicles roof and he turned slowly. Getting ready to jump down from the vehicle, he felt giddy, his head pounding, and he leant to far forward, and he scrabbled as his feet slipped from under him, but his momentum brought him crashing forward, head first into the grass below.

Ben woke in an empty cold bed to the sound of his mobile ringing; looking over at the big bedroom windows he could see it was still quite early in the morning. He reached across to the bedside table and picked up the phone.

“Jones?” he croaked, PC Angel on the other end of the line informed him that his suspect in the Rowland case had just thrown himself head first from the stables, and was now in Causton General in ICU. Ben smiled, that seemed like a decent result without hours of paperwork and chasing, it was rare in Midsomer for a Murder suspect to come quietly, so one just plunging off a roof in front of your officers seemed like an improvement to the norm.

Promising he’d be in to fill out paperwork later on, Ben hung up and turned over. The bed beside him hadn’t been slept in. Slightly concerned he got up and walked out onto the mezzanine calling for Josie, his plate
and beer bottle where still out from the night before. He checked the other bedrooms, but quickly realised Josie hadn’t been home, he went back to the bedroom and checked his messages, not one from her, so he dialled her number. The phone rang and rang, and eventually went to voicemail.

A little concerned he phoned the Barnaby’s home telephone number, after a few rings he boss answered.

“Hullo Sir, is Josie there?” Ben asked

“No, no she’s not Ben, I haven’t seen her for a couple of days, is everything ok?” Tom asked concerned

“She didn’t come home last night, and she’s not answering her phone, I assumed she would be with you?”

Ben heard Tom move the phone about, “I’ll ask Cully, but I’d phone the Station, she was probably working late and crashed in her office.” Ben heard the doubt in his boss’s voice but decided to ignore it.

“Yeah you’re probably right; I’ll let you know when I find her.” He hung up, and immediately called the Traffic HQ. Nobody had seen or heard from her yesterday, although the girl Ben spoke to promised to get her to call him if she came in. They also promised that when Tim Carlton came in they’d let him know Ben was looking for her.

Josie woke lying on her stomach, every part of her body hurt and her head pounded, her mouth tasted salty and her eyes were gritty. She lay there for a moment unsure what was going on, and then like a freight train her head was hit with memories, tears rolled again, and she reached for the Vodka and Brandy again, mixing another half and half glass, she went to the bathroom, refusing to look herself in the mirror she opened the cabinet, taking a box of ibuprofen from the shelf, she emptied a packet, 12 capsules into the glass and stirred it with the end of a toothbrush. She watched the capsules dissolve in the mixture, and started to drink heavily from the glass.

Lying on the edge of the Futon, gulping from the glass she couldn’t believe the memories wouldn’t stop, it was like watching her whole life on fast forward through a net curtain, every now and again a painful bit would break through in glorious Technicolor and she howl with pain. Her heart was racing, she wanted it to slow down, wanted everything to slow down but her heart was racing, and her breath panting to keep up, the pounding in her head was like a thousand feet rushing through an echoing corridor, if she squeezed her eyes shut she could blank some of the noise out, but the pain was still there. Every few moments her body would wrack with a really painful memory, the feeling of being shot, the university boy, the slap from Morrison, Derrick Keene’s face, and she’d grab her chest, rolling with the physical pain.

She was aware she was speaking, but she didn’t know what she was saying, her mouth was working of its own accord. She felt like she was tumbling, the room was spinning throwing her up into the air, and letting her tumble and fall back to the ground, all the time the pain of her body on the mattress was a constant companion. Her phone kept ringing somewhere in the darkness her phone rang and rang, but she could no more stand to answer that, than she could stand to open her eyes. She was alone in the darkness and the water was round her ankles, and the smell and feel of the others in the dark was making her fight upwards, up the stairs, up to the safety of the closed metal door, but she knew the door was locked, and the cold water would over power her soon and she would fall and drown like the last one had and she’d die in the dark and the cold. Nothing would ever be soft or warm or safe again, her last moments would be cold and dark and wet, and she couldn’t fight anymore because she was weak and tired and the light had gone out.

Ben had gone to work, putting his statement in the David Farmer file, and then sending a copy off to the PCC, there would be an investigation he was sure, someone would come asking questions, and as far as he was concerned case closed. Early in the afternoon, a uniformed officer searching the hayloft found Farmer’s little nest, the bloody screwdriver and vodka bottle had been taken away and added to the evidence. Leaving Ben to wonder about his missing Fiancée, Cully hadn’t heard from her, PC Carlton hadn’t heard from her, she hadn’t been seen since Ben dropped her off at the nick the day before. On a whim he’d climbed to the top floor, knocking on the CS-T’s door, he’d been greeted by Grace.
“Did TI Barnaby get up here yesterday?” Ben asked the secretary

“Yes Sergeant” Grace replied, “is everything ok?”

“Yeah, um, when did she leave?” Ben asked

“Oh I don’t know I wasn’t here when she did, I left soon after she got here, I’ll ask the boss tomorrow when he comes in if you’d like.”

“Is he off today?” Ben asked looking round

“Yes phoned in with a cold or something, 24 hour bug this morning.” She explained, “hope your girls not got it?”

Ben laughed humourlessly “Yeah me too”.

He walked down the stairs and tried her phone again, this time when it went to answer machine it clicked off without him being able to leave a message. He’d filled her voice mail, and so she hadn’t been picking up or screening his messages. He thought maybe she’d just lost her phone, but then why hadn’t she been in touch, she could walk into any police station anywhere and demand to be put through to Causton, to him, so why hadn’t she? She called it “coppers nose” when you know something is wrong, but you can’t quite tell what it is. Something was definitely wrong, but he had no idea what he was supposed to do about it.

Ben didn’t go back to the office asking Gail to phone him if Josie got I touch, he’d gone to his car and driven to the Barnaby’s. Cully had opened the door to him, carrying Baby Thomas her face was grave, as she showed him through to the kitchen.

“You haven’t heard from her since when?” Tom asked, putting a cup of tea in front of his distressed Sergeant.

“Yesterday morning, I dropped her off at Causton, she watched me round the corner at the end of the street waving, and I’ve not seen or heard from her since.”

“And she went to her meeting?” Joyce asked

“Yeah apparently, but after that nobody has seen her, nobody even saw her leave the station?” Ben explained

“And she’s definitely not there?” Simon tried “She’s not locked herself in a cell by accident?”

Cully ignored the comment “Had you had an argument?” she tried gently.

“No, no we’d come back from the registrar, I had this murder and she had to meet the Chief Super”

“What does Morrison have to say?” Tom asked

“Oh nothing, he’s off sick today, and his secretary wasn’t there yesterday when Josie left”

“You know she texts me every day?” Cully asked the room, “two days I’ve been missing a text now.”

“Sir?” Ben asked Tom “Do you think I should report her missing? I mean I know it’s only been a day, but she is a copper, she must have enemies? Even if it’s only car-ringers?”

Tom thought for a moment, “Phone her old boss at the Met, see if anyone from there has been released, I doubt anyone from Midsomer would harm her, but you never know, and then Simon and I will come and help you look for her.”
Josie awoke again, and the world seemed slightly clearer she had to leave Midsomer, she had to do it now, and she had to do it quietly. She phoned a taxi, asked it to meet her on the corner by the park. She took all the clothes she’d been wearing, and piled them into the wood burning stove and lit them. Then she dressed in the only clothes left in the built in wardrobe, one of Ben’s t-shirts and a skirt she hated. Grabbing nothing but her cash card, she left the house she walked hunched from pain, and feeling sick, barefooted huddling the wall in the cold darkening January evening. She stopped at a cash machine, and took out £500 from the machine, it was the maximum allowed. Then, shoving the cash and card into the side pocket of the dreadful long skirt she walked to the park, happy to find the taxi waiting. She banged on the window.

“This the taxi in the name Jones?” she asked

“Yes” the lad in the driver’s seat nodded “you OK love?”

“No, do you know how to get to Oxford?” she asked

“Yeah but it’s gonna cost you” The lad returned, looking at her dirty matted hair, lack of makeup and shoeless feet.

“I don’t care; I’ll give you £300 if you’ll do it now, and never say a word to anyone?” She showed him the notes in her pocket and he nodded readily agreeing. She got into the cab, happy at the speed of the young lad’s uptake, he drove off fast and without asking questions, as they passed Ben’s flat she noted the chimney now blazed happily, she smiled and thought of the wonders the remains of a bottle of Vodka and a bottle of brandy would do to a wood burner.

Ben had got the phone as he left the Barnaby’s, to say his house was on fire, strangely he’d thought of the flat in Causton, before he’d thought of the old mill, something in the way the man had said house rather than home perhaps. Tom had driven him to the centre of Causton, where the fire brigade were putting out Ben’s chimney. Both men flashed their ID’s and walked to the SFO.

“Hullo sir, I’m DCI Barnaby and this is DS Jones, Causton CID. Do you mind telling us what’s happened here?”

“You DS Jones that lives here?” The fire officer asked

“Yes Sir” Ben answered and then clarified “well I own it anyway?”

“Well you’re bloody lucky the whole place didn’t go up.”

“You know what caused the fire then?” Tom asked quickly

“Yeah” The SFO told them “Some fuckwit decided to burn their police uniform in the bloody wood burner, added quite a large amount of alcohol just to get it to burn as well.” He gave Ben a nasty look.

“Hey don’t look at me” Ben shouted lifting his hands “I don’t wear a uniform”

“No” Tom said, “But Josie does” Ben looked at him, and swallowed back a million questions, “There was nobody home I assume?” Tom asked

“No, had to break the door down, the neighbour reported sparks from the chimney and called 999.”

“Can we go in?” Ben asked already starting to walk towards the door.

“Yeah it’s safe enough; just don’t start any bloody fires!”

When Tom and Ben got into the living room, the charred remains of the fire were being raked through by fire officers, Tom bent down beside them as they raked buttons from the fire, he nodded as he saw shirt
epaulets, those of a police inspector, he had assumed as much. Ben had gone into the kitchen, and he came out looking grim.

“She was definitely here” Ben told him, “her mobile phone is on the counter”.

“What else Jones?” Tom asked

“The vodka and brandy are both gone, and one of the IKEA tumblers.”

“Yes I believe the remains of those, along with her uniform are responsible for the fire”

Ben went and checked in the bedroom while Tom went into the kitchen for himself,

“SIR!” Ben cried from the other room, the tone made Tom hurry. He found his DS standing in the middle of the bedroom staring at the low bed in the middle of the room, the tumbler spilled across the floor, but most noticeably the blood and vomit on the mattress.

“Phone it in, Ben” Tom told him, hand on the younger man’s arm, “get Forensics down here, I want to know what’s happened”.

Several hours later DI Gavin Troy was sitting in his boss’s office, explaining the preceding events to the older man.

“So she’s just vanished?” DCI William Mobberley asked his young DI

“Apparently Sir” Troy nodded, and shrugged all at once, “I mean I wouldn’t normally ask, but”

“She’s like a sister too you and you think you’re more likely to find her than this DS of hers?”

“Yes Sir” Gavin nodded

“Well look, I’m not going to stop you going, it’s obviously important to you” The DCI rubbed the bridge of his nose, “but she torches the house, and her belongings, takes £500 cash out of her account and vanishes, I don’t know, are you sure you want to find her?”

“Sir if she’s in trouble” Troy swallowed and shook his head “I’ve known her since she was 12; she can’t be in more trouble than I can get her out of.”

“Wouldn’t be so sure about that Gavin” the older man said, and then patted his hand kindly “just let us know when you’re coming back lad.”

“Thanks guv”

Gavin walked back to his desk, pocketing his phone and picking up his car keys, he was about to turn and leave when a pretty young WPC stuck her head round the door.

“DI Troy, there’s a phone call for you” she said

“Who is it?”

“Thames Valley Police.”

Troy picked up the phone hesitantly “Troy” he called down the line

“Inspector Gavin Troy?” the voice at the end of the line called, when Gavin confirmed the voice continued
“Sgt Sharon Kaur, Thames Valley police, sorry to disturb you Sir, but we’ve got an odd one here. Young woman at the John Radcliffe Hospital, no ID but clear signs of serious sexual assault, she signed herself in under the mental health act, section 1. When they came to interview her she said she’d only speak to you?”

“To me?” Gavin asked

“Yes sir, but we’ve PNC’d it it’s not coming up in any combination, Eve Keene.”

Gavin felt his blood go cold, well he was right he could find her quicker than anyone else, but she clearly wanted him to find her. “Can you put her on the phone?”

“No sir, I’m afraid not, she’s not really in a fit state, and they’ve had to sedate her. Do you know her then?”

“Yes, look can you keep her guarded, and her presence there secret for about 4 hours, and I will be straight down.”

“Yes Sir?” Sgt Kaur told him “May I ask sir, are you family, or is this a police matter?”

“It’s both Sergeant” Troy told her “Sadly it’s both.”

Ben had slept in a spare room at the Barnaby’s, he hadn’t wanted too, he’d wanted to kick in the doors of every prick on the Moorfields estate, knock up every family of every crim Josie had put away, he’d been up for visiting HMP Styal to break the legs of Josie’s biological mother, but in the end, he’d heeded advice, and stayed with Tom, Joyce, Cully, Simon and baby Thomas. He needed family around, Cully had told him, and sending him back to Midsomer Parva to stay with his Granny had seemed cruel.

So he felt unusually guilty when his phone rang at midnight, his first thought was Josie, and he had the phone flipped open and to his ear before he realised it wasn’t going to be. “Jones” he croaked.

“Sorry to disturb you Sergeant, I know it’s a bit of a tricky time but do you remember the evidence from the Rowland case?” the soft female voice at the other end of the line said quickly and very quietly.

“Yes of course, who is this?” Ben asked

“Look I work at Causton nick, it's been washed.”

“Washed?” Ben asked sitting up

“Yeah washed, properly washed, I was finishing notes earlier, tagging everything away, and I was making a note of the blood spatters on the bottle, and the marks of the weapon, so I went to the back, and they’re clean, washed.”

“Sorry who is this, what are you saying?” Ben asked trying to get his head around it

“Look I’m sorry Sergeant, I can’t confirm my suspicions but you need to come down and see this, I’ve left it out in the evidence room.” The line went dead.

Ben looked around the room and sighed, he was sleeping in Josie’s room, her choice of dark blue walls, and dark green carpet, the bed she’d slept in before her first marriage, the room she’d come to after she left the Met, there was something comfortingly her about it, that she would know this room if he could project the vision of it to her, wherever she was. He couldn’t believe she’d run from him, whatever was happening he
just wanted to help; he cursed their job, as he got dressed. In any other profession they could have normal holidays, normal days off together, work in a similar job and be free to discuss all aspects of it. He didn’t know what was going on in her life half the time and he made sure she didn’t know about his. The blood the vomit, the signs of deliberate OD had terrified him out of his mind that she wanted to destroy her uniform, destroy evidence of what was going on made him desperate for her safety.

He crept out of the house to his car; having left a note for the Barnaby’s informing them he’d been called to work. As he drove towards the station his mind wandered to the SOCO report, blood, vomit saliva, hair all hers, evidence of self-harm in the shower and the bathroom, she’d been crying and bleeding and he had no idea why. She’d ignored her phone, lying in the dark bleeding and drinking and crying, and he’d been where? Dealing with a pathetic jealousy based murder case somewhere when he’d been needed. He felt sick, he retched slightly at the thought, and as he pulled outside the Causton Police head Quarters, he remembered bitterly the interview he’d had 12 months previously with internal affairs, when he’d offered to resign so he and Josie could be a couple. He’d have done it happily, the job he’d been doing since he was 19 meant nothing if she couldn’t have her beside him.

Two hours into his journey Gavin texted Cully, he wouldn’t have betrayed Josie’s trust to anyone but her sister. He didn’t know if Cully would understand, but he pulled onto the hard shoulder, and quickly sent the text.

“I know where J is, on way to John Radcliffe Oxford, if you leave now we will get there same time”

He checked it had sent, and pulled out, causing a car to swerve into the middle lane, he didn’t care less. For nearly 20 years he’d looked after those girls, if they couldn’t rely on him, it was a very poor state of affairs.

Cully heard the phone beep once softly, reading it she looked across at Simon, fast asleep. She carefully and quietly dressed, picking up baby Thomas, she crept down the stairs. She briefly read Ben’s note, and smiled, one less copper in the house to hear her car pulling out of the drive. She carefully strapped the baby into the back seat, and got into the driver’s seat. She was sore the stitches holding fine but not up for midnight; she corrected 1am jaunts across the English countryside. She stretched and made herself comfortable; starting the car as quietly as possible she slipped off the drive and into the night, only putting her lights on as she reached the corner of the road.

Ben found his evidence bag, as suggested, clean as a whistle where the caller had told him, Ben was a good copper and at the moment he was a careful one, so on entering the station he’d brought two PC’s down with him to witness what he found there.

“Do you think it was someone at the station?” one of the PC’s asked

“I think it has to be?” Ben told the lad

“Does this mean the Farmer guy is innocent?” the other PC asked

“No” Ben clarified “it just means there’s more to this case than I originally thought.”

He logged the complaint, and handed over the evidence to the Station Sergeant. He was just finishing up when the CS-I walked through the back door of the station, he had a bandage wrapped over his left hand, and the coppers milling in the concourse just stared.

“Morning Sir” The station sergeant called, as the CS-I signed in, “What’s happened to your hand?”

“Oh some bloody bitch dog bit my fingers” he said grumpily waving his hand.

The others watched as he marched silently upstairs.
“Pleasant fellow?” Ben asked

“Oh you wouldn’t believe Jonesy, just over a week he’s been here, I hate him already.”

Gavin sat in the waiting room with baby Thomas on his lap, Cully was dozing her head tucked under his arm, and the baby was gurgling gently. Gavin couldn’t believe how tiny he was, when Cully had handed him the baby he’d tried to hand it back straight away but she’d been insistent, Thomas would be fine with “Uncle Gavin” and so as they waited for Josie to wake up he held both baby and mother.

“DI Troy” a soft female voice asked, and he looked up to see a young Uniformed Sergeant standing over them.

“Sgt Kaur?” he asked

“Yes sir” she looked at the baby and the sleeping Cully

“This is your patients sister and nephew” Gavin explained, “I asked them to meet me here, can you tell me what you know?”

“Not a lot Sir” Sgt Kaur told him, “she walked through the door at about 10pm, told the triage nurse; she’d tried to kill herself. She’s lost a lot of hair, and her bruises made the nurse think she was a VSA. She asked her name, which she gave as Eve Keene, she asked to be section one’d. The nurse called the station and I came down, she said she’d be happy to answer any questions and even make a formal complaint, but she’d only talk to you sir, the rest you know.”

Gavin swallowed hard, jiggling baby Thomas “Can I see her now?”

“She’s awake” Sgt Kaur told him.

Gavin had woken Cully gently, explaining that he would go and see Josie, and then come back for them. He followed Sgt Kaur down the corridor, and through into a side room. She pushed open the door, and Gavin walked in. The figure on the bed was almost unrecognizable, in fact had her unusual blue eyes not been wide open, he wouldn’t have recognized the girl he knew at all. He switched the light on, and she blinked.

“Did she not tell you she has Nyctohylophobia?” he asked the Sergeant

“I have no idea what that is?” The sergeant told him.

“Fear of forests or woodland in nigh time” a soft quiet haunted voice told them from the corner of the room, “Gavin?”

“Yes munchkin it’s me” Gavin turned smiling. “You called me and I came.”

“Super Gavin” she said, the same listless voice.

“At your service” he sat down beside the bed, staring at her, bruised face, ripped out matted hair, pale skin. “Sgt Kaur wants to ask you some questions, but apparently you won’t talk to her, so will you talk to me instead?”

“Is Ben with you?” she asked “I don’t want Ben to see me, I don’t want Be to know.”

“No, but Cully is” Gavin said, “do you want me to get her?”

“No, let me, ask me, before I see Cully, she’ll be so angry.”
“What happened Josie?” Gavin asked, “Ben and Tom are desperate, you’ve been missing for days, tell me what happened.” He rubbed his forehead, “did someone rape you?”

She nodded, and then shook her head “technically” she said “Gavin I’m scared.”

He took her hand “Josie we can see what’s happened, and sweetie you don’t have to tell me in detail, but you have to tell me who did this.” Her eyes darted up to him “Josie you trust me, I’m super-Gavin, and I’ve never let you down, trust me again now.”

“He’ll hurt Ben” she said “He’ll tell Ben I was unfaithful, and he’ll hurt Dad and Ben, and I don’t know what to do, and I want to die.” She sobbed.

“Ben loves you, he would not, EVER, think you’d been unfaithful. This man he’s a policeman?” Gavin asked, and when she nodded he clenched his fists, “From Midsomer?” She nodded again “That’s why you wanted me to come down” Gavin thought of the senior officers of the Midsomer force, looking for a name or face, “Who?”

She looked stricken, but he squeezed her hand and she whispered “The new chief super” she burst into tears, and Gavin grabbed her.

“Did you get that Sgt?” he asked behind him

“Yes sir” Sgt Kaur said quietly

“Send it to Causton CID, attention of DCI Spellman.”

“NO!” Josie screamed beating at him. “He’ll hurt Ben, let me die Gavin let me go, let me die, please don’t let him hurt Ben, Gavin please please please”

“Josie, he will not get away with this, I won’t let him get away with this, he won’t touch Ben, or Tom, I promise but you have to calm down.” He kissed her head, as she continued to fight him, “Josie it’s me, it’s Gavin, trust me, please trust me.” She fell into racking sobs.

“Sir?” Sgt Kaur asked “super-Gavin?”

He laughed bitterly “When she was a teenager, she and her sister I worked for their Dad, and I used to get them out of scrapes, her sister used to call me Super-Gavin, I’d sweep in and make everything better again.”

“Are you going to do it again Super-Gavin?” she asked him half-seriously.

“I’m going to try Sergeant, I’m going to try.”

Tom Barnaby received the call on his mobile, for a moment he was puzzled, and then he realized it wasn’t going to be good news.

“Hullo George, I guess this isn’t a social call” he hailed the pathologist on the end of the line.

“Hi, Tom, no I’m afraid it’s not. I’ve just had the guys from forensics on the phone.” He paused and Tom swallowed, “they’ve had the DNA samples back, there are traces of Ben and Josie and a third person.”

“Someone else was in the flat?”

“Probably not, look Tom the DNA samples came from her phone, keys and the remains of her clothing.”
“George are you telling me what I think you are?”

“Yes Tom, do you want to tell Ben?”

The rest of their phone call was brief, and perfunctory. Ending with George promising to let Tom know the moment they had a match for the DNA. It meant that, Tom ended his call and immediately went to find Ben. He found him sitting in front of his computer, Tom thought his tired DS looked ridiculously young, staring at the screen in the still darkened office.

“Ben, there is something I need to tell you.” He started gently, pulling up a chair.

Ben’s head shot up at the tone “Is she? Have you found her?” he started.

“No” Tom said sadly “Look Ben, George called me earlier, they’ve found DNA on her belongings, it’s not yours but it’s definitely a man’s.”

Ben looked quizzical for a moment, then he went slightly green, “She was cheating on me?” he asked eyes wide with disbelief “I don’t believe that.”

“No Jones, neither do I, and neither do the boys in Forensics’.” He touched Ben on the shoulder, “I’m really very sorry, you have no idea how sorry, but there is significant evidence of sexual assault.”

Ben nodded “I saw the bed, I saw the clothing, do you think?” he swallowed shook his head and tried to think like a copper, “do you think she’s, gone?” he asked not wanting to hear the answer, “do you think she succeeded doing what she started?”

“I don’t know, God I hope not, but you know her, you know what her mind is like.”

“Who did this? They must be looking for a match?” Ben suddenly pulled at his hair frantically, “where the hell is she?”

“Calm down Jones, look I’ve got someone checking at The Maples” Bens eyes widened, “I don’t think there is any involvement, but I want to be sure is there anyone she might go to, anywhere she might hide?”

“Have you asked DI Troy?” Ben asked “I mean if I was going to be jealous of anyone, not that I am, or would be.”

“You’d start with Gavin?” tom asked

“Yeah of course” Ben told him, “I think Simon would as well, both she and Cully adore him.” Ben laughed “I mean he’s a nice guy, and everything, but she tells him stuff she doesn’t tell me, and they speak all the time.”

“I’ve asked Troy to come down, he hadn’t heard from her in days, nobody else?”

“No sir, she, we, we’re very open” he coughed “I wouldn’t believe she’d ever run from me, or hide, there is nothing in the world I could imagine would stop her coming to me?”

“What if she was trying to protect you?”

“What from?”

“I don’t know, Jones, I don’t know?”

Ben’s phone started to ring, he answered it to a harassed WPC at Causton General hospital, David Farmer was awake, and loudly protesting his innocence. He wanted to speak to the Officer in charge, and so Ben
was required to attend. Tom didn’t want him going alone, the man looked ragged and destroyed, and although he wouldn’t take the investigation from him, tom felt he probably needed some moral support at least.

At the same time ben and Tom were leaving for Causton general Cully, nursing baby Thomas was trying to phone her husband Simon. After 5 rings he finally picked up, and greeted her with a sleepy voice.

“Hi Darling” she said, “did I wake you?”

“Cully?” Simon said thickly “where are you?”

“Simon, don’t freak out but Thomas and I are in Oxford.” He made a small strangled noise, so when continued “Gavin found Josie.”

“Is she OK?” Simon asked sitting up “I mean, is she, is she?”

“She’s alive, but she’s not in a good way, she doesn’t want Dad or Ben knowing where she is yet?” Cully explained “I promised her I wouldn’t tell a soul, so you have to keep my confidence.”

“Of course, do you want me to come down?” he asked

“I’ve taken the car, look I’m with Gavin, and Thomas is fine, get some sleep I’ll be back tonight, I love you.”

“I love you too, look after yourselves.” He said as she hung, snuggling back under the duvet he didn’t want to think about spending the day lying to the police, so he thought sleep was definitely the answer.

Ben cradled his head in his hands; David Farmer was driving him to distraction. The man was obviously in pain, and some sympathy had to be given, but whenever there conversation ran back to Mr Rowland and his murder, David would deny the murder, and would claim he’d woken up in the barn with no memory.

“So what about the bottle and the screwdriver?” Ben asked

“The bottle and the book, yeah they’re mine, but the screwdriver, I don’t know anything about.” David told him

“The book?” Tom asked

“Yeah well the book, I took it from Dr Rowland, but yeah I’ll admit to that, but I didn’t murder the old man?”

“Which book?” Ben asked

“Well you found the screwdriver, and the Vodka didn’t you? I hid the book with them?”

Tom stood up and grabbed his phone “I’ll call uniform Jones; you try and get some more sense out of this chap?”

It took only a half an hour for a uniformed constable to search the hay loft and find the small black leather book, when it was returned to the station, fingerprints had been taken and then the now dusted book was placed carefully on Ben’s desk.

“What is it?” Tom asked as Ben flipped through it.

“It’s an address book.” Ben said, then chuckled to himself “Obviously Dr Rowland’s, they’re all blokes.”

“Anyone we know?” Tom asked interested, then looked up when the DS made an odd noise. “Ben?”
“Yes sir, there is someone?” he looked up eyes wide “Chief Super-Intendant William Morrison.”

Tom had gone to see the Chief Constable, leaving Ben with the paperwork. Someone within the station had tampered with evidence, and then someone within the station’s name had come up in the investigation. That was far too coincidental, but Tom needed to go higher than the man himself, anyway he actually got on alright with the Chief Constable.

“Tom” The Chief Constable greeted “Look I’m glad you’ve come to me, the thing is, and we’ve got a problem with our New Chief Super.”

“Sir?” Tom asked

“Look Barnaby I know you have this murder thing going on and I think you’re probably on the right track with that as well, but I’ve received a complaint, from Thames Valley Police.” He swallowed “Do you want a drink?”

“Sir am I going to need one?”

“Thames Valley Police had a Jane Doe walked in off the streets, got herself sectioned, signs of serious sexual assault, she made a complaint to an officer from another force, and a Thames Valley Female Victim of Crime Support Officer, against CSI Morrison.” He stopped as Tom interrupted

“It’s Josie isn’t it?”

“I’m afraid it is Tom.” He smiled “do you want to know who the other Officer was?”

“DI Gavin Troy” Tom said “I knew he’d find her.” He thought for a moment, “Did Morrison threaten Ben? DS Jones?”

“Apparently that was TI Barnaby’s main complaint.”

“Really?” Tom asked

“Well no, the psych report is a bit disturbing, and I’m not going to make you read it, but it’s certainly her main concern. She is currently in a secure ward at The John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.” He looked up at the DCI’s face “I haven’t informed Mr Morrison of any of this.”

“Sir” Tom started “I am a great believer in “give a man enough rope” but this is Josie’s life and a murder investigation, couldn’t we just arrest him?”

“You see it’s all a matter of procedure Tom, I have Bullard running DNA from TI Barnaby’s phone and clothing that should be enough for charges, if not a conviction but I think we really want to tie him to the Rowland murder.”

“Sir” Tom swallowed rubbing his hand across his brow “With all drew respect she’s my daughter, and DS Jones Fiancée. I’m not sure I can let him continue with this investigation, I’m not sure I should continue with this, knowing where it’s leading.”

“Oh but that’s just the point Tom, he won’t suspect a thing, just don’t tell young Jones just yet.”

“Can I tell him his Fiancée is alive?” Tom asked sharply.

“You can say you’ve heard from her that should keep him happy for a bit.”

An hour or so later, Cully and Gavin sat either side of Josie’s hospital bed, she was much more coherent now “So Dad knows, and he knows where I am?” she asked
“Yes lovely but it’ll be OK” Cully told her, rubbing her hand

“Tom has told Ben I found you, and you’ll come home soon.” Gavin told her

“I can’t go back” she said suddenly panicked, “what about Ben, he’ll be so angry and I can’t go back, and” her breathing became faster paced and her eyes darted.

“Ben won’t be angry, he loves you, and he’ll want you back.” Cully told her “You love him as well don’t you?”

“Of course, but he won’t love me will he? Why would anyone love me? Oh God Cully I’m such a mess, my whole life is such a mess, I’m just like my”

“Stop that right now” Cully snapped, while Gavin and Josie stared she picked up the sleeping baby Thomas “Who is this?” she asked, rocking the baby “who is this too you?”

“Thomas?” Josie asked

“Who are you too Thomas?” cully prompted

“I’m his Aunt?” Josie said

“Exactly, you are his aunt, you’re my sister, we are family, and yes that includes you Gavin, and Ben. We love you, we all love you, even Thomas loves you.” She smelled the baby smiling “what happened isn’t your fault and nothing to do with life before you came to us.”

“Gavin?” Josie asked the DI who was staring at Cully, “Do I still have a job? Could I go back to Causton?”

“Of course” he said, running a hand over the back of hers “they’ll arrest the bastard and you can go back.”

“But I know, I know what happens when women in the force cry rape.” She sniffed “it ends their careers.”

“Jose, this isn’t crying rape, this is being raped, and I swear to you, when this gets out, which sadly it’s going to, that bastard is the only one who will have anything to fear from Causton nick.”

William Morrison’s hand hurt, a lot, he’d been bitten before, that Met bitch had bitten him, but there was something about the bite from the little Barnaby scrag that hurt even more. He’d wrapped it neatly, but it was uneven and ragged. Anyway if the rumours were true the stupid little bitch had topped herself, bit of an overreaction. He’d got away with that ghastly Rowland business as well, washed the evidence, the Barnaby family would be ruined, and he could settle down with the people who were more his type.

He was fairly annoyed when he discovered DCI Barnaby and DS Jones were on their way up to him. He was a good actor, he knew he could front this out, but his hand hurt and he didn’t like being put on the spot.

“Sorry for the intrusion Sir” Tom told him when sitting down, “but we have some questions regarding Dr Joyce Rowland.”

“You knew her?” Ben asked

“Erm no no I’m afraid not, I haven’t lived in the area very long Barnaby” Morrison explained “don’t know anything about them, apart from the case notes.”

“And the evidence of course?” Ben asked

When he didn’t reply Tom changed tack “What’s happened to your hand, Sir?” he asked
Morrison unwrapped it and showed it “Dog bite” he said.

Tom felt Ben stiffen beside him “that’s a nasty bite Sir” Tom said “but I’ve seen it somewhere before, in fact we both have” he looked at Ben making sure the younger man was still with him “shoulder the most recent Jones?”

Ben looked between the CSI and this DCI and then at the mark on Morrison’s hand “Thigh the most recent Sir” he whispered

“I don’t understand?” Morrison laughed, seemingly unaware of the frostiness that had descended in the room, “Does this bitch bite often?”

“Sir, can I ask you a question?” Ben asked him his voice dangerously quiet “before you decided to rape my Fiancée did you read her file, did you read anything about her, and did you research my amazing, beautiful, clever girl before you forced yourself onto her?”

“Steady on Sergeant that’s a powerful allegation you’re making against me, do you have any proof?”

“Actually Sir we do” Tom told him, allowing Ben to read out the charge and handcuff the CSI

“What the hell is you’re proof Barnaby?” Morrison shouted as Ben painfully pressed handcuffs into his thick fleshy wrists.

“The bite on your hand Sir, it’s famous in Midsomer, because my Fiancée is known as the stone woman, the ice maiden, and SIR, the vampire.”

William Morrison had cracked under the interrogation by DCI Spellman and DC Stevens. He had been called by Dr Rowland to rid her of her husband, she blackmailed him into using his forensic and police training to kill him. Framing David Farmer in his drunken stupor unaware that the boy had a book that would render his name. He would not however own to the sexual assault of TF Josephine Barnaby. Which meant that the horrified and angry men of Causton Police station, had a vicious choice they could either let a nasty man go down for murder but get away with hurting one of their own, or they had to build evidence against him and put a well-loved but delicate girl through the rig moral of a trial.

Josie left the John Radcliffe in Troy’s car 2 days after Morrison’s arrest, Joyce and Simon and Cully had visited her, but she couldn’t face Tom, and she really couldn’t face Ben. She cried at the thought of seeing Ben, and her Doctors had suggested she be given time. He thought himself banished from her, and had moved his belongings out of their house and back to his maisonette, telling the estate agent to take it off the market. He had the house cleaned, and then sadly moved his belongings back into their lonely positions. He went to work, he came home, he ate toast, he checked his phone, but he no longer lived his life.

Josie spent that first night sleeping in her own room at the Barnaby’s, Simon, Cully and baby Thomas in Cully’s old room and Gavin in the spare room. They had given her diazepam, and she slept like the dead, no dreams disturbed her, she awoke 1 hours after taking her dose exactly where she had lain. As she opened her eyes she felt safe, and warm and happy, although she couldn’t understand the feeling, because she knew she shouldn’t. She felt empty but happy, cold but warm, loved but unloved. Knowing it was the drugs she lay there staring up at the ceiling thinking of nothing, occasionally her mind would wander to Ben, but that part of her brain was somehow cut off, whenever she tried to think of him, her brain would swim. She lay there and dozed, and woke and lay and dozed but made no effort to move.

Late in the evening she heard Joyce calling the family to dinner, she knew they wouldn’t disturb her, so she carefully got up from the bed. Cully had put a bag in her room, some belonging and her house keys. She crept down the stairs and out of the front door, closing in gently behind her, she walked down the street and into the town. She turned away from the high street and walked the mile out of the town to Causton Green. Her own house was in darkness, and she let herself in. It was quiet and empty, she looked around and
realised Ben had moved out, the house was heartless. She nodded sadly to herself, of course he wouldn’t want her, and a trial would end her career, and if he was involved certainly damage his. He couldn’t possibly want to stay here, stay with her, why would he, now that even her face would remind him of William Morrison.

She went and lay on the bed in what had been their bedroom, she supposed it was now her bedroom. She stared out of the window and lay there wondering why she had come. Tom and Joyce would let her stay with them forever, but she had thought to come back, to come home, now she knew that Ben wasn’t here, it wasn’t home anymore. She was cold and empty as was the house. Tom had given her a new phone, and she placed it on the bedside table, she thought maybe he’d call, maybe Ben would call maybe he’d forgive her.

Two weeks later Josie returned to work, Tim her ever present puppy, drove her around, carefully guarded her, if anything needed to go to Causton Tim would take it. Every night he’d drive her home to her big empty house, and every morning he’d collect her. She went through the motions of her life, empty, cold and heartless. Ben equally cold, couldn’t really do anything, he was quiet and dull on cases, and Tom asked him questions to find no reply. Nearly a month passed, and Ben shopping in the local supermarket saw the back of her head, her arm resting on Tim Carlton’s. He hadn’t seen her since the day he’d dropped her off at Causton, she was skeletal and fragile, and leaning heavily on the constable. He’d known her for 6 years, and he recognised her even as she was. She went to the car and Tim paid the cashier, Ben called the Constable.

“Constable, how is she?” he asked

“heartbroken” he answered simply, “I don’t understand how you could leave her? You’ve made many enemies, SIR, for that.”

“I didn’t leave her, she didn’t want me anymore?”

“Sir, she came home from hospital to find an empty cold house, and you gone, you left her.”

“Tim, does she love me?”

“Look at her sir, of course she does?”

“I adore her, I love her, and I want her” Ben told him “tell her”.

The night came, and found Ben lying on the sofa watching crap on telly feeling rubbish, had he really left her in her hour of need? She hadn’t wanted him, she’d run to Gavin, to Simon even to Tim rather than him. He drank from a bottle of scotch, it wasn’t his fault, he loved her to distraction, but she didn’t want him. He must have dozed off, because he was woken startled by the door banging. Crawling off the sofa, he realised he hadn’t even bothered to get changed, he assumed it would be his boss another gruesome murder, he wondered if he could tell him to fuck off.

He opened the door and swallowed the insult, it was pouring with rain, and the girl on his doorstep was almost blue, he realised a second to late his mouth was open, and he shut it. She was wearing a long raincoat and her hair was wet and plastered to her skin.

“Hullo Ben” Josie bit her lip “erm can I come in?”

“I love you” he said in a rush, “Sorry I mean yes”

“You love me?” she asked “Ben can I come in?”

He moved out of her way and gestured her up the stairs, he followed her and stood in the doorway of the living room as she looked around.
“Josie, it’s late why are you here?”

“You left me” her voice filled with pain

“You didn’t want me” he reminded her

She turned sharply, and he noticed her hair didn’t bounce like it used to, it was shorter and straighter and it no longer sparkled in the light, like everything else it looked dull, as if something was missing. She walked towards him, and pressed her lips experimentally against his. “Ben” she murmured.

“Josie, you shouldn’t be here” he told her trying to avoid the feeling in the pit of his stomach, pushing her away gently.

She kissed him again, looking into his eyes “Do you want me to go?”

He breathed out, placing his forehead on hers “No” he breathed in her scent “but this can’t end well.”

“Why not?” she asked kissing his lips again “don’t you want me?”

“It hurts, when you leave it’ll hurt” he told her, trying to step away.

“Why am I going to leave?” she asked, running her hand down his chest, and kissing him again.

“Because you don’t need me, you don’t want me, and I can’t live like that.” Ben told her grabbing her hand. “I wanted to marry you, I wanted to be with you forever, but you didn’t want me.”

“I love you Ben, I want you to come home, and I want to go back” she kissed him again, and he stopped fighting and kissed her back wrapping his arms around her.

“Where is this going to end?” he asked “Because Josie I’ve been drinking and I don’t want this to go further than you want.” She smiled and kissed him stepping back.

She opened her raincoat to reveal her naked body below, he swallowed hard. Not quite believing what he was seeing. “As far as you want Ben” she whispered smiling.

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