

Jigsaw

©Jack Frost & The Hooded Crow



©wyrdjax2007
[Books Online](#)

Chapter 1

Dean Hawthorn was sitting in the staff coffee lounge. He ran his finger round the rim of the plastic cup that contained his nasty looking coffee and sulked. The door opened and Joe Willis' laughter at some joke being told in the corridor, proceeded Joe's entrance. Dean and Joe shared rooms at the hospital where they both worked. In fact they'd shared most things since they were sixteen years old. Schools, collages, medical school, clothes, music, girls. The only parting of the ways had been their choices of medical fields. Joe was a junior neurologist, Dean chose psychiatry.

"Move your clutter." Joe nudged a pile of folders that was on the chair next to Dean. Dean tutted childishly and moved them to another chair. "Who's pissed on your chips?"

"Does it never irritate you how dull people are?" Dean said moodily.

"I take it the nurse from orthopaedics was a bit of a let down." Joe commented.

"And the receptionist from outpatients before her, and Paula from geriatrics, and Mandy from surgical." Dean said irritably. "How can intelligent, professional women be such airheads?"

"I think I know where this is headed." Joe sighed and Dean gave him a swift glance. "She said no again?"

"She did." Dean shrugged. "As politely and as beautifully as she's done for the last six months. What am I doing wrong Joe?"

"Not every woman finds you irresistible, Dean. Don't be so arrogant." Joe preached. Only about ninety five percent of them did, and always had. Joe wasn't a bad catch himself, but Dean had been described as everything from fit, stunning to godly, plus everything in between.

"Bah! I didn't go in ego first Joe. Piss off."

"No, actually you didn't." Joe conceded. "You want to know what I think?"

"Umm ... no."

"I think you just won't accept the refusal." Joe shrugged and Dean heaved a sigh. "No listen. I'm not saying it's your ego, I'm saying you just don't recognise a refusal when you see one."

"Bollocks." Dean smiled.

"Probably." Joe grinned. "Or it's just plain old pissing you off that you can't have that one so it's making you more stubborn."

"I don't know what it is, to be honest with you." Dean said. "I mean, she's a looker, obviously, but it's not that." He frowned. "If it was just that on it's own then the ego would take over. No, it's just ... everything."

"Oh you have it bad, pal." Joe laughed. "I've heard she's a very nice girl actually. Even on neuro they've mentioned how good she is with the patients on your ward."

"Yes she is, she's fantastic." Dean agreed. "During one of our chats I suggested that she get herself the qualifications she needs to get higher. Nursing, maybe med school. She's very intelligent Joe, just doesn't have enough on paper."

"I see it in many of our care assistants. They seem to have a more basic connection to the patients. You know? They don't have the responsibility for their medical welfare so the connection they have is different."

"You know, that's more or less what she said too. She said she just wasn't cut out for responsibility and it's pressures, especially when it involved the welfare of real people." Dean shrugged.

"I've never known you have that type of conversation with anyone you have your eye on, in the fourteen years I've known you." Joe laughed. "Do you ever get round to asking the girl out?"

"Very carefully, yes." Dean nodded. "I'm not daft. If I just swaggered in and said 'Hey fancy going out for a drink?' she'd avoid me like the plague. I've asked her if she wants to go for a coffee, have lunch here in the cafe, mars bar from the vending machine and that's as far as I get." Dean sighed miserably. "She just smiles and tells me no thank you. All sweet and polite too."

"Some shrink you are." Joe sniffed.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You chat away quite happily about how good she is at her job, how good you are at yours, how much so-and-so is improving, how nice the new lights in the day room are. You told me you even talk in medical terms with her." Joe said.

"Yes. Like I said, she's very intelligent." Dean nodded.

"I wouldn't doubt it." Joe agreed. "As soon as you switch to anything more personal, even if it is just a mars bar from the machine, then the guards go up. That's even obvious to me, Dean, hell."

"So she's hiding something?"

"Oh man you are thick! No! Look Dean I've known you for years pal. The defences go up to protect her private life, mate, she obviously doesn't want you in it. I know, go on, call me an arsehole." Joe sighed.

"Yeah I know." Dean said gloomily. "She'd never just come straight out and tell me to clear off either. She wouldn't speak like that to anyone."

"So we get the guard up and a nice no. So nice that you keep going back to talk to her in a professional, friendly way so I'd say she does like you actually." Joe reasoned.

"But she knows where, and at what distance to like me. I get it." Dean nodded moodily. "Well that's shite."

"You seem really keen on her too." Joe said sympathetically. He was quite taken aback by his friend's persistence with this girl, and the despairing mood it was causing him.

"She's different. That's all." Dean shrugged. "You'd think after six months I'd have her weighed up a bit more eh? I tried to get to know her in a completely different way than I usually do with

girlfriends. Even Philipa didn't get this much thought." Philipa had been an enduring relationship of eighteen months. She got it into her jealous head that if girls found Dean attractive, then men were going to find her attractive. They did and Philipa ended up in bed with a football player called Brian. One thing Dean had never done, and would never do, was cheat. He could play the field when he was single, but he'd never betray anyone's feelings like that. Yes he was an arrogant sod at times, but he was a nice, faithful, arrogant sod. It had taken him quite a while to get over Philipa. "You think I should leave it, don't you?"

"Come on Dean, you know I'd never tell you to do anything regarding your own personal life. Maybe this is only as far as it's going to go, is all I'm saying." Joe said.

"Maybe for the best." Dean didn't even convince himself. "We get along just fine as it is. Who knows what would change if it went any further."

"Cut your losses and count your blessings."

"Something like that." Dean sighed heavily. "Still shite though."

"I give up." Joe rolled his eyes. "Anyway, I have a brain tumour removal to watch in an hour."

"And I'm listening to advice from you on a social life?" Dean laughed. "Go away with you. I have research notes on the primitive limbic system to entertain me. Pair of sad sods eh." Joe laughed and left his friend to his notes.

"How do you think you've done on your band G exam?" Dean jumped at the sound of the other voice in the room.

"Dr. Fallon! Marie, I'm sorry, I didn't see you come in." Dean smiled at the senior psychiatrist. "Er excuse any bad language you heard there." Dean cringed and tried to think how foul his mouth had been while talking to Joe.

"Oh don't worry. I can out-cuss the pair of you." Marie Fallon smiled at Dean. Dean was one of Marie's stars, one of her proteges. She saw the marks of an excellent doctor as soon as she'd seen him working. "Think you've passed?"

"Well I'd like to think so." Dean shrugged.

"You damn well know you have. So do I." Marie smiled again. "Tell me to butt out here if I'm out of order, but was that Tilly Marsden you were talking about?" Dean could feel himself going red, which was very uncharacteristic indeed. "I'm a nosey old crow. None of my business. Sorry." Marie said brightly.

"No, that's fine." Dean recovered. "None of my business either, as you'll have gathered."

"She's an exceptional woman." Marie commented.

"Yes, I got that impression too." Dean was quite surprised that the senior head of the department would describe a care assistant as 'exceptional'. Good worker, clever, nice maybe, but exceptional just didn't seem to fit. Not unless ... "You know her personally?"

"Very much so." Marie nodded. "There are a lot of deep layers to Tilly, you'll have got that impression too." Dean just nodded. "She's wonderful, in my opinion." Marie smiled again.

"Er ... yes. You've just confused the hell out of me Marie." Dean laughed and rubbed his temples.

"Of course. I'm a psychiatrist." Marie stood up. "I wouldn't mind reading your opinions on that research there."

"Great!" Dean was very pleased with this praise. "I'll read up a bit now, then I'll take it home with me."

Chapter 2

"So you think those new tablets are helping, yeah?" Dean sat on the edge of Simon Frost's bed. "You do look a hell of a lot better."

"I don't feel too bad." Simon smiled nervously at Dean. "And I managed to sit still for a whole hour this morning." He laughed uncertainly.

"Nice to see you laughing." Dean smiled and stood up. "I'll leave you to your book and catch up with you later." He left the four bed ward and wondered if Dr. Fallon was following him around. She'd been everywhere Dean had all morning.

"He's doing well." Marie referred to Simon.

"He is." Dean agreed. "I'm pleased we stopped the beta blockers, he just didn't need them." Dean looked at his notes and Marie waited for the sigh. "Again?" Dean sighed and looked at his senior. Dean flared his nostrils and hoped Marie wouldn't see it as too unprofessional.

"Want me to go and see him?" Marie did see the nostrils, and understood.

"Where is he?"

"Room Four." Marie nodded up the corridor and Dean headed off in that direction. He scowled when he opened the door and the reek of stale beer and urine hit him. The curtains were drawn and Trevor Park was lying on his back, fully dressed, snoring like a wounded bison. Dean flung the curtains open and opened the window too.

"Assat? Wha'?" Trevor dragged his eyelids open, then groaned as the light hit him.

"Morning Trevor! Good night?" Dean said loudly, looking at Trevor's notes.

"Hellish bad day yesterday, Dr. Hawthorne." Trevor mumbled. "I didn't know if I was coming or going, and the panic!"

"I see." Dean said professionally. "Nurse Bently?" Tanya Bently only winced slightly at the awful smell. "Can you contact reception and have them make an appointment for Mr. Park with his GP, please?" Trevor kept having 'panic lapses' whenever this was suggested in the past. Tanya nodded and gratefully left the room. "Would you like us to call you a taxi, Trevor?"

"Huh? I feel terrible!" Trevor exclaimed.

"Yes, it's a hangover. I had one at the weekend." Dean wrote on Trevor's notes.

"What about the vitamin things?" Trevor objected.

"You don't need them Trevor." Dean sighed. "If your GP thinks you need hospital treatment then he'll refer you to us by the proper channels."

"So you're refusing to treat me?" Trevor said nastily.

"No, that would be illegal." Dean said patiently. "Until I know what I'm treating, if anything, then I can't treat you. Your original referral was three years ago, Trevor. You were treated and discharged. Your GP is your first contact. Without his referral I can't help you."

"Oh I see how it is." Trevor stumbled out of bed, wafting another wave of aroma round the room. "Turning an ill man out on the streets. Call yourself a doctor? You're a quack, you asshole."

"Make sure you keep that appointment Trevor." Dean closed the door after himself. "Tanya give him an hour at the most to get his act together. Don't tackle him yourself if he starts, page me. Oh and that bed's sodden. You shouldn't have to do that, I know."

"It's fine. We'll just let him stew in it until he's ready to wander off. Eleven o'clock opening time isn't it?" Tanya rolled her eyes.

"Do you think he'll go to his GP?" Marie asked.

"If they allow him in drunk, yes." Dean answered. "He needs to know that this isn't a drop-in centre. I'm surprised Stan admitted him again." Dean turned round when he realised he was talking to himself. Marie was standing ten feet behind him, looking at him with her arms folded. "Er ... have I missed something?"

"You planning on taking the Advanced band qualification?" Marie asked suddenly.

"Well I've just taken the G band." Dean answered in confusion. "But yes, I will be. Next year it'll be."

"Case study analysis. I think you can handle a big one." Marie mused.

"Thank you. I'll try not to let you down." Dean was even more bemused.

"Come with me." Marie set off towards the offices that were situated in the centre of the ward.

"Now? I mean, you want me to start a case study now?" Dean asked in surprise.

"You could take a look at it." Marie unlocked the office door. "It's not one I'd usually recommend to G graduates, but you're special. If you think it's going to be too much, then that's fine. We have until next year to find another one." Marie nodded towards a green painted filing cabinet.

"OK." Dean walked over to it. "Which drawer?"

"All of them." Marie answered.

"Eh?" Dean blinked. "But I thought I only needed one if it was a decent sized one?"

"It is only one." Marie smiled at Dean's astonished face. "Discharged completely, four years ago, aged twenty eight. Her treatment lasted over eight years."

"Eight?!" Dean said in shock. "Here?"

"Yes. She spent a total of four years here, on and off." Marie took a folder out of the cabinet. "Seventeen year old Grace Miller had been here for two months while we treated her for depression. It was pretty straight forward and she responded very well. She was discharged and appointed a Community Psychiatric Nurse. Dave Person."

"The one in Administration?" Dean sat at one of the desks and looked over Grace Miller's rather routine file.

"Yes. This was fifteen years ago. There are statements, accounts and reports from many, many directions in here. All relevant." Marie patted the top of the filing cabinet. "You include this in your Advanced presentation and you'll be as well known as this is. It's our prize possession is this cabinet. It's contents have been used all over Europe and I know of four requests to use this lot in works of fiction. Two books, a magazine and a film."

"You're joking!" Dean let the folder in his hands drop into his lap. "There's been books and films made out of it?"

"No." Marie shook her head. "Permission always refused. For some people a price can't be put on their private lives, no matter how high the bid."

"Understandable I suppose." Dean tried to look casual and professional. The news that there'd been a celebrated, psychiatric work of art through the ward had him biting at the bit. "Hasn't anyone else used this for band papers?"

"It wouldn't be worth the risk. Look at it!" Marie laughed and patted the filing cabinet again. "It would be a brave junior who'd tackle this lot when a safer option would be to pull a couple from the top drawer over there." Marie nodded towards one of the other cabinets. "You only get one crack at the Advanced after all."

"So you either have remarkable faith in me, or you're trying to get me demoted out of the hospital." Dean laughed.

"Oh I couldn't be bothered with all this rigmarole if I wanted you out. I'd just sack you." Marie smirked. "Just take a look at it. Obviously it won't be any reflection on you if you decide to pass. I'm not sure I'd have taken this on myself."

"Thanks Marie. I see what a huge plus this would be. Thanks for the opportunity." Dean said seriously.

"Oh one more thing. You can't take any of this out of that door. Security stuff." Marie informed him.

"Yes no worries." Dean said, eyeing up the filing cabinet. Marie left him to it and Dean was in a dilemma. He was itching to get stuck into all this, but it was also time for Tilly Marsden's shift to start. Trevor Park soon decided the situation for him when he started swearing and yelling in the corridor outside. Dean could hear Tanya Bentley trying to calm him down and knew he'd have to go and intervene. "You bloody nuisance, Park." Dean muttered, re-locking the office door.

"Ah! Here he is!" Trevor pointed at Dean. "This bitch has robbed me." He pointed at Tanya. "And I don't know what this cow has to do with it." Tilly was standing with Tanya.

"Mr. Park claims he's had money stolen." Tanya heaved. She didn't have to add the word 'again'.

"Claim?! I bloody well know!" Trevor wiped his head with his hand, obviously still horribly hungover. "So if it wasn't you, then it must have been this tart here otherwise she wouldn't be here with her nose in it."

"Oh pack it in Trevor." Dean said irritably and took the admission sheet from Tanya. "And less of the abuse to my staff." Trevor snorted. "Dr. Wood and Nurse O'Connor were here last night when you were admitted, not these two ladies. You passed out before they had chance to ask you if you had any valuables and the only belongings you had were the clothes you were wearing, slept in, and are still wearing. Now unless you're suggesting that either Nurse Bently or Miss Marsden could physically roll you around to go through your pockets while you were asleep, I think you may be mistaken, Trevor." Dean said calmly.

"I had twenty quid on me last night." Trevor said stubbornly.

"Ok have it your way." Dean shrugged. "Come with me and we'll notify the police. Where were you before you came here last night? They'll want to know so they can check that you haven't mislaid your money anywhere." He bluffed. Trevor stood and tried to think about this. "Well?"

"Queen's Arms. But I didn't lose it, it's been nicked."

"If you insist. I'm sure Big Billy will know how much you spent in there." Dean started to walk up the corridor. "Trevor?"

"Look just forget it. I can't be bothered going through all that crap!" Trevor snapped. "You're an arsehole you are, mate." Trevor barged off towards the doors.

"He'll have a tick slate a mile long with Billy." Dean rolled his eyes and the two women laughed. "If he had any money in that pub last night, then I'm Cleopatra."

"Ugh. Imagine going through his pockets the state he was in." Tanya grimaced towards the foul room four.

"I'll give you a hand." Tilly said.

"No need. You could go start the coffee trolley though, if you would?" Tanya took a deep breath and went to tackle Trevor's residue.

"You OK?" Dean asked Tilly. "You look a bit shook up. Trevor has a nasty mouth."

"I'm fine." Tilly answered as they walked towards the kitchen. "I'm not too sure about drunks, it's a thing of mine." She smiled. "I don't drink so I get to see the changes in others quite lucidly."

"Not all of them nice, are they?" Dean unlocked the kitchen door for Tilly and gave himself a mental pat on the back for not having asked her out for a drink.

"Ah not all of them bad either." Tilly laughed and began filling the big urns with milk. "Do you think alcoholics should be treated in places like this? Or are you not supposed to give opinions like that?"

"No, that's fine. I think alcoholics need help, yes. No amount of offers of help will do a thing though if the person concerned won't help too. As for them being treated here, I'm not sure. I think there's a difference between substance abuse related illnesses and the other illnesses we see here. This is a hospital, a psychiatric ward, we aren't really geared to treat alcoholics or drug addicts because there are so many other patients too. It's often used more as a lock-away for a few weeks in the hopes they'll break the habit. Like I said, if the person isn't prepared to input, then it's all for nothing." Dean accepted a cup of tea from Tilly. Why couldn't they have this conversation somewhere else, away from work? He watched her getting cups and saucers out of the cupboard and tried to pinpoint

what it was about her that was driving him nuts, because that's exactly where it was getting to on Dean's part. She was pretty enough, but not as stunningly glamorous as some of the girls Dean had known. She had ordinary dark hair that hung to her shoulders and ordinary dark eyes to go with it. She had a little nose and little ears that could be described as cute and a figure that could be described as trim and tidy. Joe had been right when he'd said Tilly was a nice girl. She was very nice and she liked everyone. In turn, everyone liked Tilly. She was the type of person who radiated kindness, intelligence, dignity but at the same time she was shy and her confidence levels were definitely towards the lower end of the scale. Was that it? Was it because she was such a bundle of contrasts? Maybe that was why Dean just couldn't weigh Tilly up at all, despite being able to weigh other people up in minutes. "So what do you think?" He helped her load the cups onto the wonky trolley that was obligatory on every hospital ward in the world. "About alcoholics, I mean."

"Oh ... well I don't like them much. The ones who won't help themselves I mean, like you were saying." Tilly shrugged.

"You think they should be able to break the addiction at will?" Dean asked.

"Yes. Yes I do. Or at least I think they should take more responsibility for themselves." Tilly filled the sugar bowls.

"Well some of them do and they're perfectly OK afterwards." Dean began to steer the trolley out of the kitchen door.

"I suppose that makes it OK then." Tilly caught him up and dropped three packets of biscuits on the trolley.

"You don't sound very convinced." Dean smiled.

"I'm not." Tilly shrugged. "I'm not shallow enough to shove everyone in the same box, obviously people are alcoholics for different reasons. What about the ones who hurt others because of it? I don't know anything about Trevor, I'm just exemplifying, but can you imagine a wife or a child handling that all day every day? What about the violent ones? Does the fact that they're OK one day make it all right for the others that were involved?"

"That's where the after-care and counselling comes into play." Dean said.

"So it's not OK is it?" Tilly smiled and opened the door of the day-room.

"It has a lot to answer for at the end of the day, doesn't it?" Dean sighed.

"Destroyed a lot of lives. Hiya Carol. Tea? Coffee? G & T?" Tilly began serving drinks to the patients in the day room. Dean stood for a while in the doorway and watched her. Definitely anti-booze. It was about the only personal thing he'd ever found out about Tilly and even that was no big deal. Seeing some of the drink soaked wrecks that sailed through here was enough to make anyone have a rethink. Dean smiled as he watched Tilly roaring with laughter as one of the patients shared a joke with her. The basic connection that Joe had mentioned was almost tangible. "Eeep! Jackie!" Tilly darted over to a middle aged man with the shakes who was attempting to light the most alarming excuse for a roll-up that Dean had ever seen. He'd obviously tried to make it himself, shakes and all, and it looked like a firework. Dean had no doubt it would have lit like one too. "Haha! What's this?" Tilly sniggered and Jackie laughed too. "You'll have your hair alight! Here give it here." Tilly took the cigarette and dismantled it before re-rolling it perfectly without even thinking. "I'll roll you half a dozen, OK? I think Martin Olsen's in with Dr. Fallon just now but he

rolls his own. If you run out, ask him. Bloody hell you'll have no backy left if you carry on rolling them like tree trunks!" Tilly and Jackie both laughed.

If anyone else, Dean included, had tried to get Jackie to accept that, he'd have gone 'off on one'. Jackie was well aware of his shakes, and well aware that they hindered him at times. Actually the shakes were a side effect of his medication but they were still a 'bloody nuisance', to use Jackie's own words, to the otherwise very independent mechanic. Tilly had quite naturally managed to help Jackie without drawing attention to what he saw as a huge fault in himself, and thus causing him no embarrassment.

"Want one?" Jackie help out one of Tilly's roll-ups to her.

"No thanks Jackie, I don't smoke." Tilly put the lid on Jackie's tobacco tin.

"You must be a reformed one eh? Rolling them like that." Jackie said what Dean was thinking.

"Reformed or deformed?" Tilly sniggered. "Nah I've never smoked, Jackie. Can't afford to! You mechanics must be on a good thing." She got up and went back over to the tea trolley. "Refill Sue? You want another one Dr. Hawthorne?"

"No thanks Tilly. Dean, OK? This lot call me Dean so you do too." Dean smiled. "What time's your lunch break? I've got one of the other doctor's vending card. Shame to waste it."

"Oh I'll just grab a sandwich from the lunch trolley." Tilly answered with a smile.

"You sure? It's only valid today, it'll only go to waste." Dean tried. Tilly nodded and began stacking saucers. Dean could almost taste the awkwardness. Joe had been right about that too.

"I'll come!" Carol saved the day. Carol who was due to be discharged after months recovering from a breakdown after the death of her mother. "Just let me go change my smalls!" Everyone burst out laughing, Carol the loudest. She was at least eighteen stones in weight and nothing could be small regarding Carol. Oh well. Dean thought as he wandered back up to the wards. Nothing gained, but nothing lost.

Chapter 3

COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING SERVICES

Home Visit.

Grace Miller.

112 Camp Street.

Patient not seen.

Dean found six of these stapled together. They covered a time span of six weeks and they were signed by David Pearson. There was also David's corresponding handwritten reports.

Jan 5th

Grace not at home. Sister Lynne was unaware that Grace had a home appointment. Left an appointment for Jan 12th with Lynne to deliver to Grace.

Jan 12th

Grace not home. Unable to get a reply from 112 Camp Street. Posted appointment through door for Jan 19th

Jan 19th

Sister Lynne apologised for not delivering appointment to Grace. She'd been away on business for 10 days and not seen Grace. Grace visiting opticians today so left appointment with Lynne for Jan 26th.

Jan 26th

Grace not home again. Her sister Rosemary informed me that Grace had a job interview and was due home within the hour. Waited for 90 minutes, on Rosemary's invitation, in the home. Grace didn't return and I had to leave for another appointment. Refer to Dr. Fallon on return to the hospital.

Jan 29th

On Dr. Fallon's advice, called Grace at home on the phone. Grace sounded very happy and very bright and was looking forward to her next home visit on Feb 2nd.

Feb 2nd

No reply from 112 Camp Street. A younger brother spoke to me from inside a greenhouse where he was working. Ben Miller told me his sisters were out and didn't know when they'd return. Referral again to Dr. Fallon.

Feb 5th

Called 112 Camp Street on the phone. Another brother called Mark became quite aggressive and abusive and started to use foul language. He was most insistent that I left his family alone and that he'd take care of them just fine.

"Whoa!" Dean put the files back into the folder. "Weird family." That was the first thing that struck Dean. It was very unusual in this day and age for five adult siblings to be living in the same house. No wonder one of them got stressed out. Marie's signature caught his eye and he pulled out a typed report dated Feb 12th.

GRACE MILLER

Due to concerns raised by Community Psychiatric Nurse David Pearson I arranged a home visit by myself and CPN Pearson. Grace answered the door, much to the relief of us both. Grace looked well, if a little tired. She was dressed casually in jeans and a sweater and was in the middle of cleaning the house.

NOTE: 112 Camp Street is a huge, Gothic building, occupying a corner location on Camp Street and Lock Road, but the house itself is completely detached. It consists of a cellar floor. Ground floor contains two sitting rooms, a study, a kitchen and a utility room. First floor holds three bedrooms, a bathroom and a shower room. Second floor contains a further four bedrooms and a W.C. The attic floor has been converted to four rooms that are used for storage. There are also four very sizeable, well maintained gardens and two greenhouses, plus two well-ordered outbuildings. The place is huge. Dave mentioned the size of the house and the sibling's shared responsibility of it's upkeep. Grace told her that she was the only one home right now but the workload was shared amicably. Grace told us that her brothers and sisters all looked after their own rooms and the rest of the chores were shared fairly. Grace seemed very proud to show us around her beautiful home.

The cellar and attic rooms were neat and tidy and organised. Boxes were all clearly labelled, Rosemary's Books, Mark's Bits etc.

Grace's room. Demure, bordering on drab. Natural, beige walls and decor. Single bed, wardrobe, drawers, plain curtained window. Comfortable but practical.

Lynne's room. Largest bedroom in the house. Tasteful blush and pearl walls, double bed, mirrored dresser. Not monstrously extravagant but still quite luxurious compared to Grace's room.

Rosemary's room. As modern as Lynne's is luxurious. Blue decor, steel framed furniture. Wall shelves and wall cupboards rather than wardrobe and dresser. The only room in the house with a computer, plus all the paraphernalia that goes with it.

Ben's room. Backs up Dave's assumption that Ben is the youngest sibling. Black walls and ceiling, rock posters on the walls, books and comics on the floor. Reminded me of my own teenage son's lair, complete with dirty socks and knee-less jeans thrown into the corner.

Mark's room. Dominant. White decor, dark wood furnishings. Solid wooden furniture. Set of dumbbells in one corner. Signed rugby kit in a frame on the wall. Box under the bed with the words 'Piss Off Ben or you're dead' written on it, containing a few adult magazines, nothing outrageously pornographic.

Gardens kept in order by the Miller brothers, majority of the housework done by the sisters.

All in all a normally balanced house, typical to a household like the Millers.

Dean re-read the report a few times. It was important enough for Marie Fallon to include all this, so it was important to him, and his understanding.

So ... What do we have? Grace seemed to be the quieter one, personality-wise; very simple tastes and probably anything for a quiet life. Did the dissatisfaction and pressure of doing her bit for her exclusively adult family contribute to her illness? Lynne was the jet-setter, the professional; mildly extravagant but only within her means, which also demonstrated her intelligence. Lynne could probably dish a few orders out and expect them done. Rosemary was the computer boffin, the technical wizard; out and out academic. She'd probably have solitary hobbies like reading, writing and, obviously, the computer. Rosemary would be quiet of nature but in a different way to Grace. Grace's was more of a hollow complacency whereas Rosemary's was a satisfied contentment with her own company. Ben the attitudinal teen; the stereotypical brooding bundle of hormones sprang to Dean's mind. Ben Miller could probably look after himself quite well with his mood alone and anything he couldn't handle would be deferred to big brother, Mark. Mark obviously saw himself as the head of the household. Whether or not his sisters, especially Lynne, agreed with him was another matter. His aggressive and abusive language towards Dave Pearson suggested that he wanted to stamp authority on authority and he certainly didn't like his ability to look after his family challenged. Alpha male, right down to the muscle building and porn mags.

Dean jotted down his notes on his summary of the family structure, outlining a flexible pecking order. Mark, Lynne, Rosemary (based on Rosemary being older than Ben), Ben (based on Ben's probable influence from the only other male, Mark), Grace. He also noted that overall, this this seemed to be working, Grace's illness seemed to be the only disruption.

Dean re-read his notes with satisfaction. It was a very constructive start. He glanced at the clock on the wall and realised he'd been there for an hour and a half. Stay or go? Millers or poker with Joe? Dean picked up the phone and called the nurses office on the ward. It was standard procedure to let the on duty staff know who exactly was on the ward. Dean carefully put away his own notes, then took another folder off the desk.

OUTPATIENTS DEPARTMENT. WARD CLINIC.

Grace Miller.

Dr. Marie Fallon. CPN David Pearson. Staff Nurse Cassandra Evans. Staff Psychiatric Nurse Alan Toms.

Overall Appearance: Bright. Slightly tired. Talkative. Friendly. Dress: Tidy black jeans, boots, bright striped T shirt. Clean well groomed.

The most obvious issue that had been thrown up since Grace's discharge was the discovery that Grace's family actually lived with her. Grace had mentioned her siblings during her stay in hospital but it was with the assumption that they were all independent adults living away from each other.

Note: One of the first observations made on Grace after her admission was loneliness. Grace asserted that her family loved her very much, enough to notice she was ill when Grace herself hadn't. She couldn't recall which sister had urged her to go to her GP.

Grace was asked why none of her family had been to visit her during her stay in hospital. Grace was genuinely baffled as to why such an odd question had been asked. She pointed out that the others trusted the doctors completely to treat her, so why would they need to come and see for themselves? Grace also pointed out that they were all busy adults and weren't always available.

Grace was asked if she'd mind us calling her family at home. It was explained to her that family support was important, and that staff support to families was a big link in the chain. Grace agreed readily but told us that there was very little chance of any of the others coming to the hospital.

Overall, Grace seemed cheerful, quite confident, and pleased with her own recovery. From a staff point of view, we're more than pleased with her recovery, it's quite remarkable. The Millers' family structure is not the traditional, modern day 'norm' but it's working for Grace.

Dean mused over the report. He understood the staff concern. Obviously a person's domestic set-up was an important factor to their health, mental or physical. He retrieved Grace's original file from the cabinet and read it through. It was a textbook treatment for a textbook depression. Grace had given the impression that she was a completely independent adult, and an intelligent one too. Dean noticed that Marie had made side notes in the margins to the effect of how pleased she was with Grace's improvement and of her understanding of herself, that and a few choice words regarding requests for Grace's medical notes to be forwarded to the hospital here, from the City hospital. Nothing out of the ordinary, and Dean made notes for himself to that effect. The next folder Dean picked up was titled 'Meeting The Millers'. It contained a series of transcripts of telephone calls between Marie Fallon and David Pearson and the Miller family, as well as the corresponding written staff reports.

Feb 4.

Telephone conversation between Dr. Marie Fallon and Grace Miller in the presence of CPN David Pearson.

"Grace! It's Marie Fallon."

"Dr. Fallon! It's nice to hear from you. Is everything OK?" Grace sounded very bright and cheerful.

"Everything's fine. You feeling OK today?"

"I feel great, thanks. I slept really well last night. In fact I missed most of the morning too." Grace laughed.

"The rest's good for you. You remembering to take those pills?"

"Yep! I use that mini alarm that Dr. Cochrane gave me. How's his retirement going?"

"Very well, I've been told."

"Aww. Well if he gets in touch, say hello from me. He was very patient with me while I was ill, you all were." Grace said sincerely.

"You were a model patient, Grace. Maybe one of the others could come with you for your next appointment?" There was a short pause.

"I don't know. They're busy somewhere."

"Somewhere? Is there no one with you now?"

"Just me. I never know where they are."

"Are you sure you're OK?"

"I'm fine. I wrote down my appointment so I wouldn't forget."

"Good idea. So I'll see you then."

"Thanks for calling, Dr. Fallon."

"You're welcome, Grace. 'Bye."

Notes: Grace sounded chirpy enough and quite pleased to hear from me. She seemed to get a bit distracted when I mentioned her brothers and sisters. She doesn't seem to understand why I'm mentioning them and it confuses her.

Feb 7.

Telephone conversation between Dr. Marie Fallon and Ben Miller made in the presence of CPN David Pearson.

"Yeah?"

"Oh I'm sorry, I was expecting Grace to answer. It's Dr. Fallon from the hospital."

"Grace? Umm ... don't think she's in."

"Ah I see. Is this Ben?" The chewing gum popping in the background gave it away. "Grace has told me about her family."

"What if it is?"

"Actually I'm pleased it is." Loud music in the background too. "How's Grace doing now she's home?"

"OK I suppose. She doesn't say a lot, 'specially not to me."

"How old are you Ben? You don't sound that old and Grace never told me your ages."

"Old enough. I gotta go, lady. Shit to do."

"OK. Will you tell Grace I phoned please?"

"Yeah. Later."

Notes: Typical teen. Judging by Ben's voice, I'd put him at around fifteen. I doubt there'll be much chance of getting Ben's opinion on his sister's health, purely because of his teen age.

Feb 12.

Phone conversation between CPN David Pearson and Lynne Miller in the presence of Staff Nurse Cassandra Evans.

"No, this is Lynne, not Grace." Lynne sounded rather irritated at me mistaking her for her sister.

"I beg your pardon. We've met before actually, about a month ago. I visited the house."

"Oh yes! That's right. Dopey Grace forgot her appointment or something, wasn't it?"

"She did, yes. How's she managing at home?"

"Just fine. She still spends a lot of time holed up out of sight, but she is a very private person." Lynne sighed. "Actually I found some of my clothes in her room and I'm ashamed to say I got a tad vexed with her. She's scarpered out of my way before she gets an earful." Lynne laughed.

"I thought sisters shared clothes and stuff?" I laughed too.

"Oh you jest? Grace is always nice and tidy but damn, she needs a makeover."

"You're speaking to a male remember?" Another laugh. "Lynne, Grace and I were talking about how bizarre it was that all of you were unable to visit her in hospital."

"Well personally, I was in Spain on business. Or maybe France. No matter. She couldn't stay here Mr. Pearson. Even with all of us here, she was still sick. I more or less forced her to go and see the doctor. I was in the taxi when she came home, if you remember?"

"Where you?" I hadn't taken note.

"Yes! Bless her, it was lovely to have her back. I was so very reassured to know that she was in good hands while we were apart like that." Lynne said seriously. "Really, we owe you so much. Don't think that because we weren't there in person that we didn't care."

"Well it's good to know she's well supported at home, Miss Miller. Dr. Fallon spoke to Ben a few days ago, but I think giving you our contact number would be a wiser move." Another laugh regarding irresponsible teens.

"Oh I hear you! Good kick in the pants is what he wants. OK go ahead."

"ward number given here."

"OK got that. Look, I really must scoot. I have an appointment at the hair salon in twenty minutes. I'll tell Grace you called, and thank you."

Notes: Big sister with a much stronger personality than Grace. Lynne seems quite protective over her siblings yet still maintains a sensible and mature jocularly.

Feb 19.

Telephone conversation between CPN Dave Pearson and Mark Miller in the presence of Dr. Marie Fallon.

"Millers' residence."

"Ben?"

"Out somewhere."

"Oh I'm sorry, I thought you were Ben. It's quite hard to tell through that cough you have there. I'm Dave Pearson from the hospital."

"Oh right, I remember you." Another coughing fit. "Pissing cigarettes."

"I was hoping you could come with Grace for her next appointment, Mark."

"No chance. I hate hospitals." Mark wheezed and coughed. Too many ciggies!!

"Ah I see. I did wonder why you hadn't been to visit her." I spoke very lightly, mindful of the last tirade I'd received.

"Ah well I had to hold this place together. Someone had to keep it going for her coming back."

"You must have been quite worried about her."

"Worried sick." Lighting another ciggy. I heard the match! "Not used with not being able to fix it, you know?" Cough cough cough cough cough! "We were all worried. Poor Grace." Mark wheezed seriously.

"Is she around?"

"No just gone into town, I think. Left her jacket here on the chair so I hope the frigging rain holds off."

"She doing OK at home then?"

"Fantastic. She knows we're all here for her. That's what's important, us being together."

"Very important. Will you tell her I called? Dave Pearson."

"No worries. She is OK here you know, here with the rest of us."

"I wouldn't doubt it. 'Bye Mr. Miller."

Notes: Apart from a roaring chesty smoker's cough, a vast improvement on the last conversation I had with Mark Miller. He seems to adore Grace, which is good. Phobia of hospitals? Maybe just plain old squeamish. Many men are when it comes to matters mental.

Feb 23.

Phone call conversation between Dr. Marie Fallon and Rosemary Miller in the presence of Staff Nurse Cassandra Evans.

"Grace! It's Marie Fallon."

"Oh she's n ... not in. It's Rosemary." Rosemary had a strong stutter and a slight lisp. "Can I t ... take a m ... message?"

"No that's fine Rosemary. I was just phoning to see how you were all getting on."

"Fine. Alm ... most back to n ... normal." Rosemary sounded pleased. "B... bit of a shock when one of us g ... gets sick like that."

"It certainly is, especially something like depression that you can't fix with a plaster cast. Grace did very well in hospital, she worked quite hard at it herself."

"Sh ... she'll have been qu ... quite scared I imagine. She'll have w ... wanted to get b ... better."

"Of course and that's a big step in her favour. Lynne says she away on business when Grace was in hospital. Were you away too?"

"M ... me?" Rosemary laughed. "Good grief no."

"So how come you couldn't come to see Grace?"

"I was n ... needed here. It's a b ... big house to keep. I knew Grace was getting better. You're w ... wonderful people. I hope you got the emails I s ... sent after Grace got home?"

"We did yes, thank you. We also got the cards the others sent."

"G ... good. Should I tell her you ph ... phoned? I have to g ... go. Ben's c ... coming."

"Yes please, Rosemary. See if you can come with Grace to her next appointment."

"I'll s ... see. I have to go. Thanks for c ... calling."

Note: I wonder if Rosemary's speech impediments cause confidence issues of her own? It often happens.

Return call from Ben Miller approximately three minutes after Rosemary Miller had hung up. Call taken by myself, Marie Fallon.

"Yo! What's with you bugging my sister lady?" Ben said angrily.

"I wasn't bugging anyone, Ben. I have Grace's permission to phone the house and she also assured me that you all would be OK with it."

"Yeah well I'm not." He said bluntly.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to appear as though I was pestering your family. This follow-up care is very important for Grace, Ben, you do understand that?"

"Grace is fine."

"I believe it. She still needs to know she has my support as well as her family's support. In time, she won't need me at all Ben. Please be patient with us? It's part of Grace's treatment."

"Well Rose is shite with phone calls." Ben said sulkily. "I thought you'd pissed her off, you know?"

"No and if it appeared that way, then I apologise." Had Rosemary got a bit upset due to her stutter? It would make phone calls very hard work.

"Right. OK, peace doc."

Dean jumped a foot in the air when the office door was unlocked with a loud click.

"Hell I forgot you were in here." Dr. Stan Wood came in and took a cigarette out of a packet. "I almost put the lights out on you."

"Sorry Stan, I lost track of time." Dean began to put the reports and files away. It was half past midnight! "Please tell me Trevor hasn't lurched his way back in."

"No not tonight. I'm sorry about that Dean. To be honest with you, that was more me copping out. I was busy with Tara Fielding, she had a really bad night. I simply couldn't be arsed with going to fight on with him." Stan apologised. "Vitamins and the long walk?"

"Just the long walk. He doesn't like me very much." Dean smiled.

"Can't put one over on you, you mean. What you doing anyway?" Stan looked at the files on the table.

"Just study notes. I'm preparing for my Advanced band next year." Dean answered.

"Next year? Organised or what! I just dragged two from the top drawer about three weeks before the papers were due in." Stan laughed.

"Well I'm just poking around for now." Dean put the folders back in the cabinet.

"Take my advice, go for that cabinet over there, top drawer." Stan nodded.

"I'll remember that. Anyway I'm off back to my pit. I need food and I need sleep. You never know, Trev may be having a late night out clubbing. There's time yet." Dean laughed.

"Not even in jest Dean, not even in jest."

Chapter 4

"How much did you get through?" Dr. Marie Fallon asked as she removed her outdoors coat. Dean had already been on the wards for thirty minutes reading over current notes, minus Trevor's he was pleased to see.

"Enough to be interested." Dean looked up. "I presume I'm not allowed to grill you about it?"

"You presume correctly." Marie clicked on the kettle in the nurses office. "That would be cheating."

"Am I allowed to ask if they're all still up on Camp Street?" Dean said and Marie pursed her lips. "Only reason I ask is because I pass the place on my way to my parents' house every month. Not that I'd ever go there, obviously."

"It was converted into flats three years ago." Marie said.

"Bugger."

"So you wouldn't have gone there, obviously?" Marie raised her eyebrows at Dean.

"No!" Dean protested. "Although one does need to slow down at that corner. I'm a very safe driver."

"Well your out of luck anyway so stop fishing." Marie handed Dean a mug of coffee. "I wonder how the kids will do?"

"What kids?"

"Ugh I'm old." Marie wrinkled her nose. "The care assistants. They're taking their National Standard exam today."

"Oh yes! I'd forgotten about that." Dean nodded. "I'm not sure if I agree with the fairness of that, you know. It can only be good that there is a standard for anyone working with ill people, but it's a fixed exam. Take Mrs Kennedy over in Occupational Therapy. What is she? Forty eight? Fifty? When's the last time she took an exam?" Dean explained. "It should be more tailored."

"Good point. Probably her 11+."

"And the form's bound to ask for existing qualifications. That's all well and good for the ones young enough to have sat them. Mrs. Kennedy is one of the best carers we have, she's done it for over twenty years. I just hope it comes across on paper against a string of GSCEs and a perfectly written 'why I want to be a nurse' essay."

"That's where her experience comes into it. Experience is invaluable." Marie argued.

"Absolutely but I bet the section for that is a two inch box crammed on the end of the sheet." Dean shrugged. "First place I'd look if I was hiring and firing. The papers get marked internally don't they?"

"By the admin. board. We only have about a hundred taking the exam in the hospital so they'll have

results in a few hours. We've three on this ward. Ruth Stamper, Tilly Marsden, and John Poole. I think they're all in GSCE or O Level age group."

"Good. I'd hate to lose her ... any of them ... due to this piffle and I know you're smirking."

"Freudian slips 'R' us eh?" Marie sniggered. "Ruth's twenty two, Tilly's thirty two and John's twenty seven."

"She's thirty two? Really?" Dean was very surprised. He was thirty and he'd put Tilly at at least five years younger than that!

"She's a bit of a pixie eh? OK I'll stop tormenting you. Yes, thirty two."

"So how do you know her then? You said you knew her personally." Dean tried to sound casual and just didn't manage at all.

"Oh we met a few years ago, quite a good few years actually. We kept in touch. I was delighted when she got this job so if those exams don't go the way I want I'll re-employ her as something else, just because I can." Marie grinned. "And speak of the devil." Tilly knocked and came into the nurses' office. "Hiya Tilly, how did it go?"

"OK I think." Tilly exhaled loudly. "It's been sixteen years since I sat exams. I'd forgot how scary they are."

"We were just talking about it." Dean nodded. "Asking what makes you think you're able to do something you've already been doing for eons."

"Some of it was, yes. I opted for the double exam though, so did John Poole. That was a lot harder." Tilly answered.

"I didn't know there was a double exam?"

"Yes the second part is an academic qualification and it's specialised. Me and John did the psychiatry paper, obviously." Tilly explained.

"I didn't realise that. Maybe it's not as pifflish as I thought." Dean conceded.

"It counts as between one and five GCSEs. I didn't expect it to be so technical." Tilly chewed on her thumbnail. "Fifty percent of the whole second part was an essay on a mental illness."

"That's a bit heavy isn't it?" Dean looked at Marie.

"Well there are plenty to pick from. What did you go for?" Marie asked.

"Multiple Personality Dysfunction." Tilly smiled and shrugged.

"Do who!" Dean said in surprise. "Pick a nice easy one why don't you? Tilly there are senior psychiatrists that couldn't write an essay on MPD." He laughed. "I think that's brilliant. They notice if you pick something challenging. Isn't that right Dr. Fallon?"

"Just as you're doing too." Marie agreed.

"Yep! No top drawer for this ward." Dean sniffed. "Now then, I distinctly heard Dr. Fallon say

'Dean, take the rest of the day off and go to the cinema.'

"Easy mistake to make." Marie nodded. "It does sound rather like 'Get your arse round these wards and do your charts.' But the 'Take Tilly with you.' bit was clear enough." Dean opened the door for his favourite care assistant and ignored Marie's smirk.

"Hiya Jackie." Dean walked into the six bed room that Jackie shared. "What's the score today?"

"I see you brought my ciggy machine." Jackie laughed and nodded at Tilly. "Not too shabby at all thanks boss. Look." He held out his hands to display only a slight tremor.

"Bugs you more than the illness doesn't it?" Dean said.

"You know it does." Jackie said dryly. "Thank god for electric shavers."

"Ouch! Good point." Dean laughed. "I'll have a conflag with Dr. Fallon and see if we can drop those meds a wee bit."

"Oh would you?" Jackie was very pleased. "I honestly don't think I need all that now, well not as much anyway."

"You could be right." Dean made a note in his book. "I'll see what the boss says." They left Jackie looking very happy indeed. "He'll be up and off before long."

"He's a nice man. I like Jackie." Tilly nodded. "He was so poorly when he first came here. I remember him sitting crying all the time and thinking what a shame that was. Such a big, strong man too."

"Pressure." Dean said. "Self employed, wife, two kids. He said it just all got too much for him and he felt like it was all caving in. Once he was in here and could see that it wasn't caving in, it did more than the drugs ever would."

"Taking a step sideways and watching." Tilly commented. "Gives you a different concept completely. I suppose with some people, like Jackie, they have to do that literally at times."

"That's it exactly." Dean agreed. "That must be Mr. Cooper in room two. He was brought in last night and I've not read up on him yet. I should talk to Dr. Fallon and Dr. Wood first I think." They looked through the open door to a man in his fifties. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, talking away to himself and not looking pleased at all. He looked up suddenly and saw Dean and Tilly. "Hello Mr. Cooper. I'm Dean Hawthorn, this is Tilly Marsden. I'll be popping in later to see you." Mr. Cooper scowled from Dean to Tilly, then screwed his face and eyes up tight.

"He's not there." Tilly said quietly.

"What?" Dean looked at her.

"Mr. Cooper. He's not there." Tilly smiled at the man sitting in the room. "And when he does get here you'll have to introduce yourself again."

"Yes. He probably won't remember us." Dean agreed.

"No. No it's not that. He hasn't seen us yet." Tilly said quietly. "The one sitting there knows you're here, but Mr. Cooper doesn't know a thing about it because he's not back yet."

"That's quite interesting Tilly. How can you be sure there's no memory retention?"

"Because he only has one brain and it's in use. This man here knows something is there and it's confusing him, just as Mr. Cooper will when he's in charge of the brain. Depending on how intrusive or unpleasant the other something is, one will try and cut the other off completely. They'll be two very clear entities. He won't be sitting there muttering and complaining because Mr. Cooper is buzzing about in there, he'll class Mr. Cooper as another person who just happens to be elsewhere just now. They won't share the brain at the same time anymore, they'll take turns." Tilly was talking to the floor more than she was talking to Dean.

"Complete fragmentation." Dean was very impressed. "But it's Mr. Cooper we want full time, not this one."

"Which is why now is the time to fix it. Mr Cooper knows something's not right here and he wants it sorted. If he splits completely he won't know he's ill. It'll look like you're trying to keep him away from someone he's known all his life. That could be tricky if this fellow here isn't a bad one." Tilly smiled suddenly at Dean.

"That really is very interesting." Dean said thoughtfully. "It's generally assumed that defragmenting is exactly what it says it is, bringing together the fragments. His fragments were part of the same form at one time, they need to be merged back together."

"That's OK for you to say." Tilly smiled again. "It's like telling a widow that everything is fine because her loved one is part of the pattern of life again. She may want to believe that, but how she genuinely feels is different."

"In that example, that would work through the grieving process." Dean pointed out.

"Ending in acceptance. Yes I know. Maybe the counselling that Mr. Cooper will need after his treatment is comparable, a form of grieving. Same confusion, same questions, same sense of loss, same sense of sudden loneliness. You know it's normal and it's supposed to be that way, but just because it's normal doesn't mean you're happy and bouncy straight away." Tilly peeped round the door at the Messers Cooper again. He was blinking around the room like a frightened child. "Try now."

"Hello." Dean stood in the doorway and smiled.

"Er ... yes, hello." Mr Cooper smiled weakly and wrung his hands.

"He's trying to weigh up how long you've been there." Tilly whispered. "He knows there's a 'grey patch' and it scares and confuses him. If he decides that you've just got here, he'll talk quite intelligently with you as though nothing's happened. If he decides you've been here a while he'll make an excuse for his 'grey spot'."

"I didn't see you there. I was miles away." Mr. Cooper said nervously. Dean glanced at Tilly and was very impressed again. "Damned headaches." Mr Cooper exhaled noisily.

"I'm Dr. Dean Hawthorne." Dean introduced himself to his new patient. "I need to talk to the doctors who saw you last night and to Dr. Fallon, the boss of the joint. Once they've filled me in a bit, I'll be popping back to see you. How you feeling?"

"Tired and a bit spaced out." Mr. Cooper rubbed his eyes.

"Try and rest up a bit. Sleep if you can." Dean said and Mr. Cooper nodded.

"That was mighty impressive Miss Marsden." Dean complimented as they approached the day room. "I'm used with talking with other doctors and we're all lobes, synapses and serotonin. To hear an opinion in plain old English is what we need from time to time. You were very accurate. How did you know he'd try and cover for the blackout?"

"Oh that's not hard to tell." Tilly said. "If you came into work limping and Dr. Fallon asked what was up, what are the chances of you saying 'Oh it's nothing.'?"

"Very high." Dean laughed. "You're very good at this. We don't like to admit we're damaged until it's unavoidable."

"That's what I think anyway." Tilly shrugged. "Poor Mr. Cooper. At least his illness was noticed quickly."

"Like most other sickness, if it's caught sooner it's easier to treat." Dean looked around the day-room at his regulars. "All present and correct. Now I have to report to the main man."

"The words 'main' and 'man' do not go in the same sentence." Marie was standing right behind them. Tilly hid a smile behind her hand. "Tilly will you come up to the office when you finish up in here please?"

"Yes. I'll be about an hour though." Tilly nodded.

"That's fine. Come on underling." Marie grinned at Dean and headed towards the nurses' office.

"You wouldn't believe the off the record diagnosis I've just heard from Tilly." Dean said as they walked up the corridor. "Her perception is astonishing."

"I would believe it." Marie nodded. "Part One. National Standard Examination. Eighty Two Percent." he handed Dean Tilly's exam results. "That's the 'Why I want to be a nurse' one. Part Two. Advanced. Academic Field - Psychiatrics. One Hundred! One bloody Hundred!" Marie whooped. "Dean the office is buzzing."

"Brilliant!" Dean said in amazement. "Total One Hundred Percent: Scale 5!" Marie nodded and handed him another sheet. "This John Poole's? He did well too. Seventy Seven percent."

"No that's mine." Marie laughed. "Just out of curiosity I took the test too, anonymously. Eighty in the first, seventy seven in the second. Tilly Marsden is a better psychiatrist than I am!" She was delighted. "They're contacting the board to see if there are any more one hundreds."

"Pfft! As if. Marie have you read this paper of Tilly's? It's absolutely astounding." Dean shook his head in admiration. "Aw she has to go out with me!" He wailed and Marie laughed.

"Oh some people just need more time, Dean."

"So I'll grow on her, yes?"

"Like mildew." Marie smiled. "And vice versa. You're excellent compost Dean. If there's a bloom there, it'll appear once the roots are deep enough."

"It's OK, I don't mind her treating me like shit." Dean sniggered.

"Who?" Tilly asked from the door.

"Er ... no one. Come on boss!" Dean flapped papers at Marie. They gave Tilly the wonderful news regarding her results and Tilly was flabbergasted. No nurse training school in existence would refuse her with these grades.

"Oh I don't know." Tilly answered vaguely. "I'm fine doing a practical job. I'd better get going. Thanks." She smiled brightly and left the office.

"Responsibility." Marie sighed. "Hopefully she'll be able to handle a bit eventually."

Chapter 5

Dean holed himself up in the central office again. He hadn't mentioned Tilly's usage of her exam results again for fear of pressurising her.

“Compost heaps don't pressurise, Dean.” He told himself. “Just sit and ferment.”

Staff Discussion. March 5. GRACE MILLER.

Community Psychiatric Nurse David Pearson originally suggested a loosening of Grace's after-care. He proposed that we leave the ball in Grace's court, with the full and complete understanding that she can call, or come into the hospital at any time. He pointed out that her progress had been remarkable, and had continued to be so after her discharge. Even with these truths presented to me (Marie Fallon) I felt it was too soon for this approach.

(Personal Note – Marie - : I'm not quite sure why I'm holding off. David is perfectly correct, Grace has almost totally recovered. I can only put it down to myself having never dealt with a non-stereotypical family, parents/spouses/children.

N.B!! This is NOT a criticism, nor an expressed concern regarding the Miller family. It is merely a note to explain that I've never had the opportunity to deal with after-care involving a family made up of five adult siblings. It's probably more to help me than Grace!!)

Mr. Pearson went on to affirm that the telephone conversations we'd had with Grace and her family verified and reinforced their support for Grace, as did the visits where Dave had met most of the family (Rosemary for an hour and a half).

He described Lynne as 'beautifully elegant, very communicative and efficient, polite and eloquent'.

Ben was described as 'loud and defensive', not offering to move four heavy bags of soil so Mr. Pearson could get in the greenhouse to speak to him properly. Despite this, he'd expressed an understanding that his sister, Grace, had been ill.

David described Rosemary as 'timid, bespectacled, and quite self conscious about her voice, causing her to mumble. (speech impediments mentioned earlier). She expressed much gratitude over Grace's treatment and recovery and thanked Dave over and over for getting Grace home safely and well. She was very eager to show Dave many pictures and pencil sketches done by Grace and was obviously very proud of her sister.

Mr. Pearson hadn't met Mark, but evidence of his presence was there during his visit where he spoke at length with Rosemary. David noticed, and accidentally knocked over, a full ashtray and also noticed four empty beer cans on the floor by the chair. Rosemary had tutted loudly in disapproval and disposed of the untidiness.

Mr. Pearson's overall opinion was one of mature and sensible support between the family members. He also passed a light comment about not being able to lose any of them because they were all 'well stamped', referring to a strong family resemblance.

Compromise reached. As well as Grace's outpatient's Appointments, telephone reassurance would still be kept up on our part for another three weeks. This is providing Grace's condition continued to improve as it is now.

(OH take note!! Dave Pearson's conclusions regarding our compromise include calling me (Marie) a nosey biddy!!)

Dean laughed to himself and rubbed his eyes. How could she have not been a nosey biddy? He would have been exactly the same in the circumstances. Marie's belief in the importance of family support had reflected quite strongly in her star junior. He knew what must have been bugging Marie at the time. This now, very supportive family had barely got a mention during Grace's initial hospitalization. It just didn't 'feel right'. Even with all the awareness and provisions for an unconventional family structure, something just wasn't clicking.

The word 'evasion' sprang to Dean's mind. Was one of the Miller siblings ill, or in trouble, and didn't want the doctors or authorities to find out? Illness and Mark wouldn't be an ideal suit. Grace's mental illness could be seen as something to be ashamed of to Ben, given his young years, or even the super professional Lynne.

March 15. Phone call taken by Marie Fallon from David Pearson.

“Marie! Oh shit! Shit!” (I've never heard Dave as hysterical in all the years I've known him.)

“David? Dave! What the hell's wrong?” (Panic stricken.)

“I'm at the Millers' house.”

“Oh my god what's happened? Grace?”

“I'm in the car on my mobile phone. I said I'd forgot to switch the car lights off. Shit. Shit ... hell Marie.” (The most level headed man I know, two seconds from crying.) “Just ... just get down here. Whatever it is you're doing, trust me, this is more important.” (Hung up.)

Dean felt his stomach flip a few times as he re-read that, then he delved in the folder for more notes.

March 15. Community Psychiatric Nurse David Pearson.

GRACE MILLER.

Called on Grace for her home appointment, as arranged. I recognized the cough approaching the closed front door before Mark even opened it. I don't think the shock that registered in me will ever go away. Mark was dressed in faded jeans, training shoes and a black T-shirt. He had a cigarette in one hand and a dumbbell in the other. Mark was also five feet one with breasts. Mark was Grace.

Dean blinked at the words in shock. Had he read that correctly? He re-read it a dozen times just to confirm that he had.

Mark Miller invited me in to the house and it must have taken at least thirty seconds for my legs to unfreeze. I tentatively asked for Grace and Mark casually put down the dumbbell and told me she was out clothes shopping in town. It was the same coughing, strained voice I'd heard down the telephone, coming from Grace Miller, with her hair tied back off her face, dressed in boy's clothes. I excused myself on the pretence of checking my car lights, and phoned for Dr. Fallon immediately. When I returned Mark was lighting yet another cigarette. I casually asked him how he was doing. He proceeded to tell me that things were pretty quiet just now which was giving him time to fix up an old van he had in the back garden. Mark had indeed fixed up this van, I saw it myself and I'd seen it on previous visits in various stages of disrepair. I asked if he'd called in a mechanic and he replied 'Nah I can do all that myself.' Obviously very true, and quite well too. Mark also told me

about the rugby team he supported, their league position, and just about every rugby strategy in existence. I had a completely 'male' conversation with Mark, while looking at Grace. Dr. Fallon arrived ten minutes after I'd phoned her and I all but insisted on answering the door. I told her to prepare herself for a very, very big shock."

March 15. Report. Dr. Marie Fallon.

GRACE MILLER.

First physical meeting with Mark Miller. Five feet two, dark hair tied back firmly, jeans, trainers, thirty four inch bust! In all my years as a doctor, I have never, ever encountered anything like this.

Transcript of the conversation, recorded by myself (Marie Fallon) on a standard hospital issue pocket recorder.

"Grace?" (Almost a sob)

"Shouldn't be long. Clothes shopping or some such shit." Mark lounging on the chair with his leg thrown over the arm.

"And you are ...?"

"Mark." Mark gave me a puzzled look. "Ah right! Shit that's right, you've never seen me before, just talked on the phone. Or was that to you?" Nod to Dave. "Ah whatever."

"Are any of the others here, Mark?" Marie speaking.

"No I don't think so." Mark frowns out of the window. "Just me."

"Mark, it's very, very important that I speak to Grace."

"You can wait if you like. She's OK! I keep telling you this. I'd phone you if she wasn't."

"It's about her illness Mark. It's very important. I have to speak to Grace."

"You said she was getting better. Hey what's this shit? She's not going back in hospital is she?"

"Listen to me Mark. Grace is not getting better. She's very, very ill."

"Huh?" Genuine confusion from Mark. "So why the fuck did you send her home? Why all the phone shit and the visits?"

"We treated just one illness, Mark. We didn't know there was another one that's far more serious."

"You're talking crap."

"I'm a doctor. It would probably be against the law for me to talk this type of crap. When was the last time Grace was here, Mark. Please try and think hard."

"Oh christ how the hell should I know?" Mark stands up and looks agitated. "Couple of hours ago, maybe three. I don't know."

"And she's nowhere around now? Are you absolutely positive? It's vital I speak with Grace. Grace

Miller. I have to speak to Grace Miller.”

“God you do go on!” Mark shouting now. “You're doing my fucking head in woman! Leave me the fuck alone.” Flings himself on the chair and glares out of the window. David and myself watch.

“I ... I don't think she's ill. She's not.” Mumbled in confusion. “If she'd let me take care of it, she'd be fine.”

“Mark, is Grace there?” Marie speaking very gently.

“Yes.” Mark whispered.

“Can I speak with her? Please? You've taken care of her all this time Mark, let me help. I'm not a stranger, you know I'm not and I helped once before.”

“I'm not ill, Dr. Fallon.” Grace looks worried non the less. “Ack! Take no notice of this. It's not usually such a mess.” She empties the full ashtray, then loosens off her hair, then tucks in her T-Shirt.

At this point, Dave left and in all fairness I couldn't blame him.

“Grace I need you to come back to the hospital sweetheart.” Marie's voice close to tears of shock, guilt and out and out pity.

“Why?” Grace laughing. “I'm fine, Dr. Fallon, just a bit tired. “Ugh! Look at this!” Some sort of axle grease on Grace's elbow. “Mark and his bits of bloody engine all over the house. He's going to teach me to drive. There's only him and Lynne can drive.”

“That's ... that's great, Grace.” Marie's very unprofessional tears. “I've cleared it with the others, they know you need to come back to the hospital.”

“Oh.” Grace looking so very lost. “Lynne noticed last time, so I suppose they'd notice again. I feel OK though.”

“You will be, Grace, I promise.”

“I'm such a loser. I let everyone down. I thought I was doing really well too.”

“Hey you haven't let anyone down and you are not a loser. Come on, we'll pack you a few bits and bobs.”

NOTE: I made a point of going in every room in the house, with Grace. I'd done this once before but I'd only looked, not seen.

Every shoe was exactly the same size. Mark's, Lynne's, Grace's, Rosemary's, Ben's. Every dress, pair of jeans, shirt, T-shirt and sweater were the same size.

I brought one of Lynne's pretty nightdresses into Grace's room to pack.

“Oh! Oo! I can't take that.” Grace laughed. “She'll go berserk. I'll just take my pyjamas. I'd better leave a note to tell them you've given me a lift. They'll worry.”

“They'll be fine. You all will.”

Dean was staring, open mouthed, at the files.

“Holy hell!” He whistled. “All Grace? All five of them? Jesus!” Dean took out another file in a different coloured folder. This set was a completely off the record and non-professional collection of reports. It had been included with the full permission of the staff involved and was to illustrate the the level of total and utter shock felt by the professional people involved. It was in no way, shape, or form, to be used for reference, or in any further diagnoses or treatments. It was an account of personal feelings.

David Pearson. CPN.

I'm probably the most shocked of all. I've met, in person, four of the five members of the Miller family. I never presumed for one second that they were all Grace and only referred to their family resemblance in passing. I had no reason to suspect that the family wasn't exactly what they said they were. Might I have noticed this sooner if I'd got closer to Ben? He was thirty feet away from me, potting plants in the greenhouse, baseball cap on his head. If only I'd suspected, I'd have moved those bags of soil myself. I spoke at very close range with Lynne and Rosemary, and I spent over an hour in Rosemary's company. Even in retrospect, there was nothing to suggest that they were both Grace. Lynne wore make-up and had her hair done professionally up in a knot on her head. She wore a smart dress suit that was nothing like how Grace had dressed in the past. Rosemary wore no make-up, but she did wear very large, gold framed glasses. Her hair was wedged back off her face with a hairband. She wore cotton trousers and a plain brown blouse. Grace is a jeans and T-Shirt stickler, we'd all noticed. I'm still trying to order my brain to accept that these were NOT separate people, that they were all Grace Miller. To be honest, I'm finding it very difficult.

Marie Fallon.

Probably the most unprofessional thing to do would be to cry over a patient. It suggests an over-attachment and obviously that's a huge no-no. It's not Grace Miller per se that my tears are for. It's the discovery of an illness that no one noticed for almost eighteen years. It's the utter disbelief that one, very charming, young girl has lived the lives of five people, simultaneously, alone, and no one cared enough to notice. The development of mild depression in only one of these personalities (Grace's) is absolutely astonishing in so complex a condition. It's just been a complete fluke that no common or run of the mill illnesses have affected that family and so these personae have gone unnoticed. I can hardly put into words the emotions I feel when I think about 112 Camp Street. These five personae are so independently complete that they each had their own rooms and areas, furnished and decorated accordingly, and none of them were even vaguely similar. They were so independent of each other that they each had their own hobbies and talents. Grace's reading and learning, Rosemary's computers, Mark's mechanical skills and his weightlifting and rugby, Ben and his rock music and gardening, Lynne's passion for fashion. All starkly separate and different. It even goes to the extent of two personae being able to drive and three not! Ben sneaks into Mark's room to peep at his adult mags, Lynne complains about Grace borrowing her clothes, Rosemary fretting about the others. Oh my god. The image of one person, Grace, carrying out all those roles alone, in that huge house, would touch the heart and soul of anyone. You know what is incredible? It worked! It worked so effectively that no one noticed for eighteen years! The department is frantically devising an approach to all this and those idiots at the City General aren't helping. After numerous phone requests for Grace's files, they are now due a very irate visitor, namely me, very soon.

Dean's head was reeling so he could only imagine how David and Marie must have felt. For Dean, the male personae had taken him aback the most and from all these descriptions, they were very much male too. Weightlifting and porno mags and a typical hormonal teenage boy sneaking in for peep too. Poor Grace. Marie had been right, the images the whole tragedy threw up were pitiful.

"I have no idea but it's bugged." Stan Wood unlocked the door. "It only ... oh. You live in here or something?" He laughed when he saw Dean.

"May as well eh? No, I'm just about to finish up for today." Dean laughed. "Oh hello Tilly." Tilly was standing behind Dr. Wood.

"Tilly's going to fix Old Evil over there." Stan nodded over towards a rather dormant looking computer. "As I was saying, it stays on for a few minutes then it goes blue and switches itself off."

"I don't mind staying with Tilly, Stan. I have to put all these notes away anyway." Dean offered. Records offices weren't allowed places for unqualified staff and that included Tilly.

"OK. I'll go play with my medicine trolley." Stan waved and disappeared.

"I was thinking it was probably a virus." Tilly started Old Evil. "Easy fixed if it is. I'll get it a virus scanner and a firewall too."

"I have to admit I know nothing about them." Dean said, putting the files back in the cabinet. "I can google for sites but if anything went wrong, I'd be stuck."

"Well Dr. Wood said he may have broken this one while downloading music." Tilly laughed. "Shame on him eh? Hospital computer and all."

"Oh my dad does that too and he's a policeman!" Dean laughed. "Reminds me, I must phone him tonight." He wrote 'phone dad' on his hand in biro. "Bloody heap of a car packed in so I won't be home next week."

"Must be contagious. I had the wiring rove out of mine last weekend because it wouldn't play nice." Tilly said, tapping the keyboard.

"You fixed it yourself?" Dean was rather impressed.

"Well there wasn't a lot up with it once I'd got in there. Anything disastrous and I'd have taken it to the garage. "Ugh! Eight trojans." Tilly pointed at the screen. "We'll have those out of there."

"You're a bit of an all rounder eh?" Dean smiled.

"Jack of all, master of none." Tilly laughed. "Often more trial, error and good luck than good management. I cheated with the car anyway, I asked Jackie." Tilly grinned. "He wants to marry you, by the way. His shakes have all but stopped."

"Good! About time too." Dean said.

"Oo! Can I be bridesmaid?" Tilly sniggered.

"The visual of Jackie's hairy legs in a wedding dress will disturb me all night now. Thanks Tilly." Dean pulled a face.

"Ha-Ha! Here we go, firewall in, antivirus set to scan daily as well as run on startup. You'll have to tell Dr. Wood to stop downloading smut."

"Dirty old man." Dean sniffed. "Come on before they lock us in. You parked round the front? I'll walk round with you."

“Yes. Er ... Dean? I have a question. Well more of a request really.” Tilly squirmed.

“OK. Fire away.” Dean pulled on his jacket.

“Um ... well no, it's OK. I'll sort it.” Tilly muttered quietly.

“What's up? Hey you need something and I can help, I will. You'd do it for me.” Dean shrugged.
“Spit it out.”

“It's nothing. I shouldn't have mentioned it.” She said weakly, opening the hospital doors.

“Tilly what is it? I can only say yes or no eh?” Dean smiled.

“Will you come with me to the golf club tomorrow please?” Tilly blurted quickly. Dean almost fell over in surprise. Had she just asked him out?

“Of course I will.” He tried to answer casually. “I couldn't play golf to save my life, but I'm sure I can manage the club.”

“Hell I feel such a nuisance.” Tilly said awkwardly. “I'll explain. I've been asked to meet someone and I don't want to go by myself. I originally thought about Dr. Fallon but I know she has her husband and son to be busy with at home.”

“No worries.” Dean nodded. “Is everything OK? You look incredibly worried here.”

“I am worried, otherwise I wouldn't have been such a pest and asked you to come with me.” Tilly replied nervously. “I'm not in trouble or anything, nothing sinister, I'm just not used to going to clubs and pubs by myself.”

“Not many women do, it's understandable.” Meeting someone? Who? Who? “Even when they are meeting someone.” He managed a bright smile.

“Well I won't be staying in that company long.” Tilly chewed her lip. “No, I can't. Dean it's OK. I shouldn't have mentioned it and it was a liberty.”

“You've lost me.” Dean shrugged. “I honestly don't mind, Tilly. If it's private then I'll go to the club with you until whoever you're meeting shows up, then I'll toddle off and sit at the bar. It's a bloke thing, we can sit on our own at bars.” He grinned, making Tilly smile too.

“I didn't know who to ask. I wouldn't bother you if I wasn't stuck. It's quite important otherwise I wouldn't have gone at all. I don't really know many people outside of work. Sad little geek eh?”

“Nah.” Dean laughed. Fair enough she'd only asked his as a backup because she was desperate but so what? He also got the impression that this was more of an arranged appointment and therefore platonic. He reminded himself on not to ask questions, and that Tilly would think more of him for it.

“So do you want to be excruciatingly embarrassed by accepting a lift in my nasty Fiat? I won't be drinking so I can drive.”

“Ha! Fiat? I'll never fit in a Fiat! I'm six feet two! Knees up to my ears, sounds great.” Dean

smirked. "Pick me up out here?" They were standing in the front car park. Dean's fourth floor window overlooked it from the staff accommodation block.

"I will. This is a huge relief, it was bothering me all day. You must think me a right cheeky sow." Tilly sighed wearily.

"Not at all. I feel quite flattered that you see me as a friend who you can ask. See you tomorrow at work." Dean watched Tilly get into her tiny car which was almost hidden by two other vehicles. "I need to capitalise on this." He muttered to himself as he entered the staff block.

Chapter 6

“She's not meeting another bloke is she?” Joe asked as they sat in the staff coffee lounge. “You're going to look a right arse if she is.”

“No, no I don't think so. Come on, is she the type of girl to do that? I think not.” Dean rattled his plastic spoon on the table. “I don't know what to do! This is a perfect opportunity for us to get to know each other and I'm scared to say anything in case I push her off. Bah!” He sighed. “She'll probably know I've been out with a few people here. I want her to know that that was because I could, not because I was looking for anything more.”

“You don't want her to think you're a big tart and she's just one more girl in your chain. Yes?”

“Yes. Big tart.” Dean laughed. “I am not, sod off.”

“Oh you are!” Joe sniffed. “Just take it as it comes Dean. She obviously feels safe and comfortable with you otherwise she'd not have asked you.”

“Like compost?”

“Huh?”

“Nothing. So I'm just going to go to the golf club with her, naff off to the bar out of the way, leave the golf club with her, get dropped off here, and that's it.” Dean heaved a sigh.

“Yep and that's a few hours social company that you wouldn't have had a few weeks ago.” Joe pointed out.

“I suppose so. I'll just mope about waiting for her to ask me out again. How useless am I eh?” Dean rolled his eyes.

“Nah. You're handling it perfectly, in my opinion, and very patiently. You dare sod it up and I'll tell the whole hospital you're gay.” Joe told him.

“Wouldn't they be curious to know how you know? Keeping in mind that I share rooms with you.” Dean sniggered. “So! Can I borrow those black Falmer trousers from you. Fluffkins?”

“Fluffkins! Can you hell.” Joe snorted.

“Oh go on! You can't get in the golf club in jeans!” Dean wailed. “Please Poppet? Pretty please? I'll do your ironing.”

“Oh OK, as long as you do the ironing in your boxer shorts.” Joe smirked, stood up and walked straight into Dr. Fallon. “Ah.”

“Oh don't mind me boys.” Marie waved her hand and sat down. “Boxer shorts eh?”

“I'm going to physio.” Joe said aloofly. “Dean, I don't like you.” He disappeared through the doors.

“Marie?” Dean made sure the room was empty apart from the two of them. “About the case study.”

“No chance.” Marie said flatly.

“No I'm not fishing. I'm up to the second hospital admission. It has me reeling, Marie. I just wanted to say that however you handled it, you did so brilliantly. Jesus, I'd have been cabbaged.” Dean said truthfully. “Maybe I'm not supposed to ask but was Dave Pearson OK after it? He seemed pretty freaked out.”

“He was, poor Dave.” Marie replied. “The number of hours the man put into it all was phenomenal. It drained him, he was exhausted. He was absolutely fine after a few weeks time off, but he jumped at the Admin. Vacancy when it came up.” She said. “Anyway, enough of that. Jackie's doing great on his lower dosage of tablets. He wants to marry you.”

“So I've been told.” Dean laughed.

“Better make sure you iron your boxers then, and hope Joe doesn't get the hump.” Marie nodded.

“Ha-ha.” Dean said sarcastically. “Tilly in yet? I'd like her to sit in on the Cooper case, if that's OK?”

“Fine by me. She's playing Twister in the day room with Andrew and Theresa.”

“Would it be unprofessional if I went and joined in?” Dean asked hopefully.

“Yes, Dr. Hawthorn. Staff do not roll around on the floor with patients. Tilly's exempt because she's Tilly.” Marie stated.

“How about if we stopped the patients playing?”

“OK so staff do not roll around on the floor with other staff. Well not in public anyway. Go and find something professional to do.” Marie smiled and shoo'd Dean away.

Mr. Cooper looked very tired as he sat in the office with Marie, Dean, Tilly and Tanya Bentley.

“I slept pretty well.” James was saying. “Better than I was at home anyway. Has Judith phoned?” Judith being Mrs. Cooper.

“No but it's a bit early yet.” Dean said. “She knows you're seeing us this morning so she'll probably call later. I'll make sure you get to know.”

“Thank you.” James nodded. “Poor Judith.” He stood up suddenly and wiped his hands nervously on his shirt. “It's ... it's warm in here.” James looked out of the window.

“Are you OK?” Dean asked.

“Yes. It's just a bit ... uncomfortable.” James forced a smile. Tilly discretely handed Dean a note with the words 'the other one's there'. Marie saw it too nodded slightly.

“Uncomfortable how? Can you describe it?” Dean asked.

“Difficult to describe it really.” James picked at his fingernails. “I often tried to explain it to Judith. It's as though there's something that you've forgotten to do, something you just can't remember but

you know it's there and it bugs me.”

“Does the feeling get stronger at any particular time?” Dean asked.

“Yes but I can never pinpoint a time or a reason. Me and Judith made a chart to see if we could see a pattern, but we couldn't.” James rubbed his temples.

“That's quite remarkable, James, that you and Mrs Cooper approached this so sensibly together.” Dean complimented. “So these feelings have been there all the time you've been married?”

“Yes.” James hung his head. “Never as bad as this though. I could always ignore it enough to be able to get on with my life, control it. It bugs me.” James squeezed his eyes shut tight.

“Bugging you pretty bad right now eh?” Dean said and James nodded.

“It's as though I have to fight all day and every day and I'm too tired to do it.”

“What do you think would happen if you didn't fight?” Dean asked.

“Oh go away.” James groaned wearily.

“Did you hear me just then James?” Dean asked and Tilly shook her head automatically.

“Leave me the hell alone!” James sobbed. “No! I'm so fucking tired. So tired of all this. Shh.” He seemed to look through Dean rather than at him. “See? No one cares! Just piss off!” James scowled and looked at Tilly. “Is ... I'm ... I'm sorry about my language.” Another scowl.

“That's OK James.” Tilly said gently. “He's enough to make anyone swear eh?”

“He is, yes.” James contorted his face again. “I know if I go to sleep then something will happen and I'll be blamed for it. I know by the way people are looking at me when I wake up.”

“But that's OK in here.” Tilly spoke up, and the doctor's let her. “There's only us here and no one blames anyone for anything in here. It doesn't matter what happens, even if you are asleep. Dr. Fallon and Dr. Hawthorn will look after you just fine in here, James.” Tilly glanced at Marie, who nodded encouragingly.

“So you don't think I should be able to snap out of it, or force it away?” James rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands.

“You can't snap out of something that isn't your fault, Mr Cooper.” Tilly said. “Something like this can't possibly be your fault, and don't let anyone tell you any different.” Dean looked at Marie in surprise. Had she shown Tilly James' case notes? He began to casually browse through them himself.

“How do you know what he says to me?” James looked at Tilly in bewilderment.

“Because there's always a nasty piece of work hovering about, trying to force blame where none's due.” Tilly shrugged. “You tell him that it isn't your fault. I would.” She nodded. “Tell him the only reason you feel like hell is because he isn't playing fair.”

“H ... hear that? Oh yes you did.” James muttered. “You've been busted, you arsehole.” He whispered savagely. “Busted, busted, busted ... she does! She can see you! The others can't but this

lady can so fuck off. Stop that! Stop making me swear at you. Bollocks, bollocks, you talk bollocks.” James voice was barely audible but his eyes darted from side to side and he kept cocking his head to one side, listening. “Go away. Away, away, away!”

“Mr. Cooper?” Tilly said quietly. “James?” She glanced at Dean.

“Go on Tilly, get through.” Dean whispered.

“I agree with you James. I'm on your side and so is Dr. Fallon and Dr. Hawthorn and they're very important. We'll look out for you this end even when you are asleep. You tell him you couldn't give a stuff about his opinions because you know differently. You've done nothing wrong and you deserve nice stuff in your head, he's in your way. He's taking up room that Judith could use and she has more right to it than he does because she loves you. Mr. Cooper, tell him you have backup over here. Tell him you can hear me, and he'll hear me too.”

“I'm ... I ... I'm awake?” James blinked furiously and looked frantic.

“Yes and we're all still here too.” Tilly nodded.

“What am I doing?”

“Stamping your authority on your head! You rock Mr. Cooper!” Tilly smiled.

“I'm so bloody tired.” James looked at Tilly, not through her. “You know what it's like, don't you?”

“No sir. It's your head and it's as individual as anyone else's. Dr. Hawthorn says I'm useful because I'm not a doctor, just an ordinary person. I don't know docspeak but I know people.” Tilly smiled.

“Tilly has a wonderful gift for empathising with people.” Marie smiled. “And she's just scored a maximum grade in a national examination. The only one in the whole country to do so.”

“Congratulations girlie!” James smiled properly for the first time in weeks. “I didn't distress you did I? Judith's wonderful and she'd never worry me but I can tell by her face when I wake up that she's upset and alarmed, sometimes frightened.”

“It's exactly those things that you don't need to worry about.” Dean said. “As Tilly said, we'll look out for you this end, no matter what.”

“Thank you. Would it be OK for me to have a sleep? I feel a bit spaced out and blergh.”

“Of course. Tanya will walk with you up to your room.” Marie smiled and nodded.

“Is 'blergh' a Tilly word?” Dean smiled after James Cooper had left. “That was fantastic Tilly. He responded really well to you.”

“I'm pleased.” Tilly nodded. “I think it's because I'm not a doctor. A doctor saying 'I care' is expected, it's your job. I don't have to if I don't want to.” She laughed. “I'm real and you're not. OK I'd better go and get on with my tea trolley. I'll see if Simon's OK too. I fell on him playing Twister. He'll never be the same again.” Tilly left the office.

“I may be a tad biased here because I have it really bad for her, but was that astonishingly remarkable or what?” Dean beamed.

“You are, you do, and it was.” Marie smiled. “I do believe she was flirting with you there, Dr. Hawthorn.”

“Huh? When? I missed it!” Dean said desperately.

“I'm real and you're not' girlie giggle. You cloddish male.” Marie shook her head.

“Marie she confuses the hell out of me.” Dean sighed. “I've asked her to do platonic type things for six months and she's politely declined every single time, yet you say she's flirting with me? I don't get it.”

“Well it's probably because you weren't alone with her just then.” Marie said. “Her flirts can't go anywhere out of her control, in public situations. She trusts you a great deal, Dean, she trusts me too and its an honour. Like I've said, I've known Tilly a while and trust doesn't come easy to her.”

“You're the second person to tell me that.” Dean nodded. “She asked me to go to the golf club with her tonight. She has some sort of appointment arranged and didn't want to walk in the place by herself.”

“Oh?” Marie looked slightly surprised.

“I don't know, I didn't ask. I think she just wants a bit of assurance. Not many women like walking into a club alone.”

“No, I don't myself.” Marie nodded. “You'll stay with her, Dean?”

“Yes of course I will.” Dean didn't miss the concern in Marie's voice. “I'll sit at the bar, seeing as it's probably private. She is OK isn't she?”

“Of course. I'm just not keen on women alone in clubs, even if it is only the golf club.”

“She'll be fine with me, providing I don't get wedged in the Fiat.” Dean laughed “No one has a Fiat, for crying out loud!”

“My sister had a Morris Minor until it shook itself to bits. They run forever if they're maintained.”

“She knows her cars. She fixed the wiring in hers she said. Puts a bloke to shame eh? I phoned the garage and said 'It's broken' when mine packed in.”

Dean took an alarm clock into the records office with him. He didn't want to lose track of time tonight, of all nights.

GRACE MILLER.

Dr. Marie Fallon. CPN David Pearson.

Grace is very upset today. She's confused and frightened over her re-admittance to hospital when she 'feels fine', to use her own words. She's been on discrete, constant watch since her arrival, and has stayed as Grace. She's a very intelligent girl and she's beginning to demand answers as to why we brought her back into hospital only two months after discharging her as healthy.

“Grace, how did you realise last time that you were ill?” Marie asked.

“Well I kept crying a lot. Sometimes I never stopped and I felt as though I was being buried alive. I just didn't want to get out of bed some days.” Grace replied.

“Did you realise that you needed help?”

“No not really. I don't think I noticed for months.”

“So who did notice?”

“Lynne. She made me go to the doctor's.” Grace was still very upset.

“OK. I want to talk to Lynne.” Marie said firmly, but gently.

“You have talked to Lynne.” Grace said in confusion.

“I want to talk to her now.” Marie said very gently.

“Well I don't know if you can, Dr. Fallon.” Grace said uncertainly. “She's not here. Lynne's away, I think they all are.” (NB: The confusion seen in Grace now is quite apparent, now we're looking for it. Prior to the discovery of this disorder, this confusion would have been barely noticeable.)

“Do you know where Lynne is, Grace? Can you find her for me?” Marie asked.

“Find her? How can I do that?” Grace asked.

“Just try and think where she is. There's no rush and there's nothing wrong. Take all the time you need. Concentrate on finding her for me Grace. Find Lynne for me. I need to talk to Lynne.” Marie used a similar tone of voice to the one used to reach Grace through Mark. Grace looked quite distressed, then looked at Dave, then back at Marie. “Is Lynne there, Grace?” Grace nodded, then frowned at Dave. “You remember David, don't you?”

“Of course I do!” Grace's smile lit up the whole room. Her face changed completely into a smiling, sparkling beauty. “How are you Mr. Pearson? It's nice to see you again, and you Dr. Fallon.”

“Grace?” Marie asked.

“Hmm. Not feeling too well again.” Lynne's brow creased with worry. “I'm so pleased you sent for me. No one likes hospitals but it's a good job they're here.” David was visibly shaken at this transformation and excused himself for five minutes.

“You're the organised one, aren't you Lynne?” Marie smiled sadly. “The one who keeps the spirits high.”

“I think it's important to keep optimistic, within reason, yes. I sometimes think I set the targets a bit high though. I don't mean to. I know Grace can do anything she likes but damn, she needs a bomb in her chair to get her going at times.” Lynne said seriously.

“Grace hasn't many friends, has she? No boyfriend?”

“She could if she got herself tidied up and motivated a bit.” Lynne nodded.

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

“Well I can't see what that has to do with anything but I did have, yes.” Lynne shrugged. “He was a nice man. I'm not sure what went wrong with him actually. I was quite worried about him at one time. He kept yelling and ranting about me standing him up and leaving him in the lurch in public. I did no such thing! It was quite a relief when he stopped phoning, to be honest with you. It was getting a bit scary. Peter his name was, Peter Thomas.” This was noted. “It's maybe just as well Grace doesn't get boyfriends. I don't know if she'd handle someone as erratic as Peter.” Dave came back in and resumed his seat.

“You do realise that Grace needs you constantly, Lynne.” Marie said gently.

“She is going to get better though isn't she?” Lynne asked in concern.

“With your help yes. I'm putting Grace on some rather heavy medication. It's strong stuff but she does need it.”

“Yes. Yes of course. You're in charge.” Lynne nodded.

“I need her back, Lynne. Dave needs to start her on those medicines.”

“Isn't she here?” Lynne looked around in confusion.

“Can you try and find her for me?”

“You will make her better, won't you Dr. Fallon?”

“Of course I will.” Marie and Dave watched Lynne walk over to the window. “We'll bring it all into line, Grace, I promise.”

“Yes.” Lynne nodded. “Dr. Fallon?” It was definitely Grace who turned round. The pallor and the nervousness was back in place and the change was quite drastic. “I'm not sure what happened there. I feel a bit sick.”

“Come on. Come and have a lie down. I have some new medication for you.”

Dean glanced at his clock and decided he just had time to read the footnotes.

With the aid of the medication, we're aiming for an absorption of these personae by Grace. To do this, Grace needs to be aware that they're all her, that they're all different manifestations of her own personality. She'll have to be told.

To Do: Play holy hell with City for still not coughing up these notes! Discretely see if Peter Thomas exists.

“And on that cliffhanger ...” Dean put the papers back in their folder. Gradual suppression of the Miller personae. Drugs would go a long way in treating this but Grace needed to *retain* the attributes of all these personae, they were who Grace was. The fragmentation was so complete that these facets were completely independent. Grace would need to retain memories, and attributes, and accept that they were hers all along. “Tough work.” Dean exhaled loudly, then left the office.

Chapter 7

Dean sprang down the steps and out of the staff block feeling very content with the world. He'd showered, changed, ironed the Falmer's and even rummaged out a smart tie to go with his black shirt. He sauntered down the road, looking between the parked cars for the tiny blue Fiat.

"What's wrong?" A nervous voice made him turn round.

"Tilly?" Dean had walked right past her! She looked fabulous and completely different to how she looked at work. "Hell I didn't recognise you!" He laughed. Tilly smiled and automatically put her hand up to her hair, which was twisted up into a knot at the back of her head. She wore just a smudge of make-up and an elegant, knee length black dress. Dean rearranged the 'quite trim' category of Tilly's figure to 'wow'.

"I hired a car." She pointed to a black Astra. "But the bloody thing's like a tank. You drive there, I'll drive back." Tilly tossed him the keys and he smirked at the badly parked vehicle. It was on a slant and taking up two parking spaces. "Pfft. My Fiat only takes up half a space."

Dean noticed Tilly's mood changing as she drove to the golf club. She became nervous and edgy and ended up sitting in complete silence.

"You OK?" Dean asked, just for the sake of asking. She clearly wasn't OK. "Remember, we can leave at any time. You just say the word." He parked the car and undid his seat belt.

"Dean I owe you an explanation." Tilly grabbed Dean's arm.

"No you don't." Dean shrugged. "I'm listening if you want to talk, but you don't owe me anything, Tilly. Whatever it is, is fine by me. Honestly it is."

"I know and I'm so pleased it is." Tilly sighed heavily. "I'm meeting my dad."

"Ah right. That's fine, like I said. I'll sit at the bar." Dean shrugged.

"No you don't understand. I haven't seen him for fifteen years."

"Oh!" Dean said in surprise. "Well that explains why you're a bit nervous, naturally."

"I tracked him down about three years ago but I'm not sure it was a good idea. He wrote to me telling me he'd remarried eight years ago and that all was rosey in the garden." Tilly shrugged her shoulders. "I just want to know one way or the other. Come on before I change my mind." She got out of the car.

"Will you recognise him?" Dean asked, opening the door of the golf club for Tilly.

"Shit he's there." Tilly was looking straight at a couple in their late fifties or early sixties. Mr. Marsden was thin and tired looking, with watery blue eyes and a far too red complexion. Mrs. Marsden was quite a contrast in her smart skirt and blouse and her well groomed hair. Dean noticed quite a few pounds worth of gold jewellery on the woman too. "Dean ... Dean ..."

"I could stay right next to you if you like? Tilly I don't mind, just tell me where you want me to be." Dean said gently. Poor Tilly was beside herself with nerves.

“With me.” She grabbed Dean's hand so hard that it hurt. “Please? I know I'm putting on you and I feel such a fool ...”

“Come on then.” Dean lead the way over to the Marden's table.

Charlie Marsden's jaw fell open when he saw the young woman and her boyfriend approaching their table. He stood up slowly and had to support himself on the back of his wife's chair.

“Tilly?” Charlie whispered.

“Hello. This is Dean.” Tilly dug her fingers further into Dean's hand.

“You haven't changed at all.” Charlie sank back down into his seat.

“Don't you believe it, dad.” Tilly sounded suddenly very confident indeed. Dean glanced at her. Was there going to be a scene here?

“This is Penelope.” Charlie introduced his wife, who only just managed to nod her head in acknowledgement. “Fifteen years. How old are you now?”

“I'm thirty two, dad.” Tilly muttered.

“Penelope has a twenty eight year old daughter, she was just married last week.” Charlie nodded. “Not had it easy with him though. I hope he realises now what a good girl he has.” Penelope managed to curl up the corners of her mouth an increment. “I started a new job too. Not easy at my age. Penelope keeps me going though, don't you, Old Thing?” Penelope nodded and smiled slightly at her husband. “Er ... I really can't think of a lot to say.” Tilly hung her head and swallowed hard. Dean felt very annoyed here. Talk about barging in with the wrong openers! Charlie Marsden hadn't said a thing right yet!

“I'm a nursing assistant. I just got ...”

“Didn't Jill have a go at that?” Charlie interrupted. “Not a bad little side job.” He actually looked at his watch! “It's nice to see you doing OK, Tilly.”

“How would you know?” Tilly said quietly. “Do I have kids? Am I married? Do I live around here? How did I do in school?”

“Well I presumed Ian here ...”

“Dean!” Tilly snapped. “His name's Dean, not Ian. You presumed to suit yourself.”

“Look, maybe I should I have introduced myself a bit better.” Dean said awkwardly.

“No it's fine.” Charlie said brightly. “As long as Tilly's OK. It's none of my business who she sees.”

“Well, yes it is, sir.” Dean said in disbelief. “She's your daughter.”

“Tilly.” Charlie sighed heavily. “Fifteen years is a long time.” Tilly nodded. “I did well for myself after the mess I went through.” He held Penelope's hand. “It was a long, hard road for me, Tilly. A lot of hard work. Penelope fully understood and accepted me. She's helped me enormously.”

“Yes. I'm pleased.” Tilly mumbled.

“The thing is, we think it's best that it's left alone. You're doing OK aren't you? You have this young lad here. It's for the best, Tilly.” Charlie took his coat off the back of the chair.

“Hey! Hang on!” Dean let out an incredulous laugh. “I'm sorry Tilly, I know it has nothing to do with me, but is that it?”

“You don't understand, lad.” Charlie said.

“You're damned right I don't.” Dean shook his head.

“I'm settled. We're settled. I've never been settled in my bloody life! I'd like to live my life with Penelope and I'd prefer nothing in the way of that.”

“In the way?!” Dean blinked. “She's your daughter!”

“It's OK Dean.” Tilly smiled sadly. “I was prepared for it. Sort of.”

“We should be going. We have a taxi booked for half past.” Charlie muttered.

“Weren't planning on hanging around long, were you?” Dean stated. “Can't she at least have a phone number? An address?”

“I don't think so.” Charlie helped Penelope into her fur coat. “I have Penelope and Jill to think of. Goodnight.”

“You can't ...”

“Leave it, Dean.” Tilly pulled Dean's arm. “Leave it, it's OK.” They watched the couple leave.

“I don't believe what I've just sat though.” Dean said in shock. “Stay there. I'm going for a very large drink. You?”

“Orange, please.” Tilly smiled. Dean half staggered to the bar. Tilly watched Dean order the drinks and didn't know what to think. She was hurt, embarrassed, miserable, and she'd subjected someone else to all that too. Tilly was actually considering darting for the door, but Dean had already turned round and was on his way back.

“Tilly I'm so sorry.” Dean sat down. “I'm sorry for butting in like that too. I know it was intrusive.”

“Don't be sorry. You have no idea how pleased I am that you're here. There was always a chance this was going to happen. He doesn't want me.” Tilly tried to smile.

“I can't understand why he doesn't. Honestly I can't.” Dean shook his head. “Are you going to press it further? Remember I'm always here and I'll do anything I can.”

“No I'm done with it now.” Tilly took a deep breath. “I've done OK up to now without him.”

“You have. You're a credit to yourself and us lot who know you. He doesn't know what he's missing.” Dean nodded.

“Thanks Dean.” Tilly smiled. “Ah sod him. Penny and Jilly for shit's sake.” She rolled her eyes and made Dean laugh. “Leeching old bastard. He'll have reeled in her and her bank balance. Bugger

him.”

“Too true.” Dean raised his glass to that. “Always remember though, you can talk to me if you need to.”

“Not much to talk about really.” Tilly exhaled loudly. “He drank himself retarded for the seven years he was in my life.”

“Oh I see. I do remember you not being too keen on alcoholics.” Dean said tactfully.

“Ones like him should be hanged.” Tilly said bluntly. Dean paused mid-drink in surprise. “He beat my mother to death.”

“Jesus!” Dean let his drink drop to the table and it was sheer luck that it remained upright. “Christ, Tilly, I’m so sorry.”

“Me too.” Tilly fiddled with her glass. “He was jailed for it. I’m not sure how long he was in there but it can’t have been long. He’s been married to Penelope for eight years.” Tilly said to the table. “Er ... I shouldn’t be bothering you with this. I don’t usually waffle on about it. I’m sorry.”

“Hey.” Dean moved her empty glass away from her. “Will you stop that? You are not bothering me, OK? We’ve got quite a bit of trust going on here and I’m very, very pleased about that. I’m your friend, Tilly. I’ll help you however and whenever you want me to.” Tilly nodded. “You sure you don’t want a voddie bunged in your orange?”

“Just orange.” Tilly smiled. “With a straw.”

“Oo you devil.” Dean wandered off to the bar and had to wait while the barman went to answer the phone.

“Dean? Dean who? No, sorry mate, no idea.” The barman looked round at Dean. “Oh hang on. Black shirt and red tie? He’s here, hang on.” Dean was very surprised indeed. He’d never been here before and not many people knew he was here tonight. Dean took the drinks over to the table, excused himself, then went out into the lobby as per the barman’s directions, to the public phone.

“Dr. Hawthorn.” He naturally assumed it was the hospital.

“Dean? Tilly’s Dean? Do I have the right one?”

“Yes Mr. Marsden, you do.” Dean said flatly.

“Charlie, yes. Look, Penelope’s not here right now so that’s OK. This whole thing with Tilly, you know? I don’t think she could ever understand.” Charlie sighed.

“Probably not seeing as she got only twenty minutes since she was seven years old.” Dean snapped. “Did Mrs. Marsden even know about her?”

“Of course she did! I was very honest with her, I owed her that. We did discuss this, Dean. It was given a lot of thought.”

“And you decided to cut Tilly out of the picture. I see.” Dean said nastily.

“She was never in it, not for fifteen years.”

“And that's her fault? I think not!” Dean shouted, then remembered where he was.

“Having Tilly back in my life would cause too many problems. It would raise a barrage of questions from her, and from you, that I just don't have answers for. I owe it to my new family not to put them through that.” Charlie tried to explain.

“I don't fucking believe this!” Dean snarled. “How can you cast her off like that? She did nothing to you, Marsden, nothing! She was only a child!”

“I know. You aren't hearing me. I can't handle all the pain it would entail. I couldn't cope with all that. Don't you understand?”

“No I fucking well don't. You selfish old shit!”

“Just forget I exist, Dean. Tilly will, she has for long enough.”

“God you're pathetic.” Dean said in disgust.

“I know.” Charlie said weakly. “I'd better go.”

“If you're going to go, you stay gone. You'll tear her apart if you waft in and out of her life.” Dean threatened.

“You love her a great deal, don't you?”

“What?” This took Dean off guard slightly. “Yes. Yes I do.” He said firmly.

“Are you married? To Tilly I mean? I'd like to know she's OK, despite all this.” Charlie said wearily.

“No we aren't married. But I do love her.”

“So I'm not a grandpa?”

“If Tilly had a hundred kids, I still doubt you'd get that title.” Dean said shortly. “Tilly will be just fine. I shouldn't be standing here putting your mind at ease, and god knows why I am. She's a fantastic woman. Everyone who knows her will tell you that, if only you were genuinely interested, which I doubt. You've made your decision, go stick by it. Get on with your settled life and leave Tilly to those that care about her.”

“Take care of her, Dean.” Charlie hung up.

“Old bastard.” Dean threw the phone back on the hook and went back to join Tilly. He found her looking very flustered and in the company of a middle aged man who looked vaguely familiar. “Sorry I took so long.” He sat down and gave the older man a very hard stare. He was leering quite openly and was lounging sideways with his arm round the back of Tilly's chair.

“Oh *this* junior doctor!” The man laughed and Tilly squirmed on the spot. “Oh I wouldn't worry too much about young Hawthorn here.”

“Wouldn't you?” Dean asked calmly. “Maybe you should start if you intend keeping your arm on

that chair.”

“D ... Dean.” Tilly blurted. “This is Mr. Paxton, from surgical. He's the consultant. Remember?”

“Oh yes!” Dean smiled falsely. “Nice evening, Mr. Paxton.”

“Derek. Yes it is and getting better all the time.” Derek leered again.

“Tilly and I were just saying how nice it is here. No lecherous old buzzards harassing the ladies.” Dean said casually. Derek didn't miss the snipe.

“Didn't think it would be your scene, Hawthorn.” Derek said pleasantly. “Let's face it, you'd soon get through the meagre selection of females in here. Two a week average isn't it? Oh but it is only Tuesday.” He said smugly.

“I think I'll go home.” Tilly said quickly. “Or ... outside, or somewhere. Excuse me.”

“Tilly, wait!” Dean said as Tilly darted out of the door. “OK. Would you mind telling me why you did that, Mr. Paxton?” Dean was not impressed. Tilly had had an awful night without having a middle aged senior surgeon slobbering all over her, then having to hear comments on Dean's love life.

“Oh come on Hawthorn.” Derek laughed. “Stardust Club next door remember? Full of beauties, so don't be so touchy. Drink?”

“No thanks.” Dean snapped.

“Oh come on! Everyone knows you Hawthorn, Tilly included. She'll have been expecting it. Now about the Stardust?”

“Go ahead. I bet they could do with a laugh.” Dean stood up and followed Tilly.

“Hell, what a shitty night.” Tilly grumbled as they got in the car. “We should have stayed on the ward, they're saner.” Dean snorted a laugh and Tilly looked sideways at him with a smile. “You drunk?”

“Just a bit merry.” Dean sniggered. “Paxton wanted me to go on the pull with him to the Stardust Club.”

“Ack! Street cred in minus figures or what?” Tilly laughed. “Bah! I can't see over the back of this juggernaut!” She eventually managed to unpark. “It would be interesting to see if you could have got Paxton fixed up.”

“Eww! You think anyone's that desperate? What was he saying to you anyway? Old creep.”

“He asked me if I hurt myself when I fell from heaven.”

“Oh you have to be kidding me?” Dean said in dismay. “Weird, I didn't see the vomit.” Tilly started to laugh.

“I told him I was in company and the nosey old coot asked who with. I told him one of the junior doctors, then you came back in.”

“I hate just leaving you.” Dean frowned as they entered the hospital grounds. “Will you be OK? You really have had a shitty night.”

“I’ll be fine.” Tilly looked up at the windows of the staff block. “It must be nice living here.”

“Do what?” Dean laughed. “It’s like a battery farm! Stack of shoe boxes.”

“I mean with all the other people around. I’m above a betting shop and I don’t even have any neighbours.” Tilly said.

“You get a bit lonely eh? It’s not hard to see.” Dean said kindly.

“I’m OK most of the time. It’s usually when I go to public places, like the golf club. It reminds me on that there are other real people in the world.” Tilly laughed. “I’m a hermit.”

“Well we all have times where we want to be alone, and times when we don’t. That’s why I asked if you’d be OK.” Dean said.

“I usually am.”

“I could shake you at times.” Dean raised his eyebrows at Tilly. “That isn’t an answer. You’re more than welcome to come up there with me. I said I’d be there for you and I meant it.”

“OK.”

“I’d only be sitting there worrying about you anyway. I know you’re a private person and I respect ... what?” Dean frowned at Tilly.

“I said OK, that’s if Joe won’t mind.”

“Joe ... Joe ... is not important at all. In fact he’ll probably pass out in shock.” Dean said, almost passing out in shock.

They walked into the small, messy flat to a very disturbing sight. Joe’s rear end in the air, clad in bright yellow shorts, while he rummaged about under the stereo system.

“Frigging remote is well named.” He puffed. “The shite that’s on that telly is unbelievable. Go get a porno out ... OO!” He’d turned round and saw Tilly. “Out! Yes, out altogether. Foul things. Tilly! Nice to see you.” Joe said brightly.

“It’s not nice to see quite so much of you, Joe.” Dean rolled his eyes.

“Huh? Oh! Yes I’ll go put my pyjamas on. Get the beer out, Dean.” Joe darted into his bedroom.

“I feel like I’m imposing.” Tilly said awkwardly.

“Nah. You’re only five feet tall. Sit yourself down if you can find a gap on the sofa.” Dean tutted and wandered off to the fridge. “I’ve no orange or coke or anything. I can make you a coffee if you like?”

“Sprite!” Joe was back, tracksuit covering his shorts, can of Sprite in his hand.

“Ugh! Has that been under your bed?” Dean pulled a face.

“Certainly not. It was in the window sill.” Joe sniffed and handed Tilly her can. “Good night?”

“No it was shite.” Tilly said flatly, then snorted a laugh. “And that's without a drink.”

“Shite? Dean you creep! How was it shite?” Joe laughed.

“Oh not Dean's fault. Mr. Paxton from surgical started slobbering on me.” Tilly pulled a face.

“Yack! You beat him up, Dean?” Joe cringed.

“Almost.” Dean smiled. “Tilly just needed a bit of company.”

“Well you're always welcome here.” Joe nodded. He'd realised this was all still platonic. “And some of us are up at 5am so I must bid you both goodnight.” He smiled and disappeared into his room.

“Give me two minutes to go and throw all my junk under the bed. It's like a pig sty in there. I'll have the sofa.” Dean stood up.

“No, you don't have to do that!” Tilly objected.

“I know.” Dean smiled and went to clear a path through the landfill.

Chapter 8

Dean was already awake when Joe got up at five the next morning. He was quite grateful to be able to unfold off the cramped sofa.

“Such a gent.” Joe smiled. “Is Tilly OK?”

“She's fine. Like I said, just needed a bit of company.” Dean threw the blankets from off the sofa, behind of the sofa. “Shitty night.”

“The appointment she had?”

“Didn't go well. I don't know Joe, don't ask. It's her business, not ours.”

“Yes of course.” Joe nodded. “You really are good to her, Dean.”

“Well everyone needs a friend, Joe. Some people find it easier to make them than others. If all it takes is my being here then that's not so difficult.” Dean shrugged.

“Nope, not at all.” Joe said. “You can go get in my bed for a few hours if you like. You look shattered.”

“That's OK thanks Joe. I'll wait and see if Tilly wants a lift home. Car's too big for her.” He smiled. “Seat up to the windscreen so she can reach the pedals, then she can't see over the bonnet or the boot.”

“Isn't that cute?” Joe smiled and wrinkled his nose.

“Piss off to work.” Dean sniffed.

Dean was dozing on the sofa when Tilly peeped round the door. Dean opened one eye and smiled.

“OK my guilt trip needs a passport. You look shattered.”

“Well you don't.” He complimented. “Need me to drive the tank?”

“No need, I have a change of clothes at work. Dean I really do appreciate this. I think too much when I'm on my own.” Tilly said awkwardly.

“Anytime. I don't mind at all, I've told you that.”

“Yes but I mind. I know how this could look, me coming back here with you. I wouldn't want people to think I'm using you or anything. God I'm a sap.”

“*You using me?*” Dean laughed. “I seriously doubt anyone will think that. None of anyone's business anyway.”

"I know it isn't. You've been very good to me and it seems like I'm pushing it now I know you aren't going to try and cart me off to bed. I'm sorry, that came out arse ways fist." Tilly floundered.

"Listen to me." Dean sat forward on the sofa. "If I want to help you then it's because I want to help you. OK? It's probably my own fault for having such a ... tarty ... reputation. I don't expect any sort of repayment at all, let alone that sort. That what you're trying to say?" Tilly nodded and looked at her feet. "I like you. Get over it."

"I'm trying to." Tilly smiled. "I don't react like normal people when it comes to closeness. I can't help it. I can't understand why people would want to be close to me and I push away what I don't understand. I know, that's so ignorant."

"No not really, we all do that to a certain extent. Tilly the thing I don't understand is why you should have such a low opinion of yourself, or where you got such an opinion from. You're intelligent, you're funny, you're unbelievably kind and understanding, and you're physically attractive. I know there's more to it than that. I got a glimpse of your upbringing last night. I might be wrong but I doubt closeness played a bit part in that."

"None at all. I was a ward of court from the age of seven. I suppose that's why it's a huge fight for me to build up a trust in people. I'm not really sure how or why I built it up in you. I just don't want to scare you off with my little oddities." Tilly smiled. "I very much regret exposing you to my past like that. It didn't occur to me that it could be embarrassing and awkward for you and that was selfish of me."

"Surprised and shocked, not embarrassed. Shocked at him, not you. You were incredibly brave to meet face to face like that. I'm absolutely sure I wouldn't have had the balls for it. You were pretty high in my estimation ranks anyway, Tilly, that pushed you up a bit further." Dean nodded.

"I can't see why. He pissed me off." Tilly shrugged.

"You missed the point on purpose there Miss Marsden." Dean said sternly and Tilly laughed. "He said his life would be less complicated without you in it. Well how ironic is that? Your memories of him aren't exactly pleasant are they? You can move on, Tilly, because you have no fault to get over. You never have had. He had a second chance last night that not may get and quite frankly, one he didn't deserve. Think of yourself now. That part of your life needs filed away."

"You sound like a shrink." Tilly smirked.

"I know. Sad isn't it?" Dean sighed. "Think yourself lucky I'm not Joe, he's a neurosurgeon."

"Oo! Full frontal lobotomy!" Tilly laughed.

"I'd kick his balls off if he tried. You're fantastic as you are."

"Er ... Dean?" Tilly chewed her lip. "Well, would it surprise you to know that all the shit screwed me up quite a lot in the past?"

"It would surprise me if it hadn't." Dean nodded. "And worry me. That would mean it was all still buried inside of you." Tilly glanced at Dean then at the floor. "Is that what's worrying you? Do you think I'm going to think badly of you because all that made you ill?"

“Well ... it wasn't nice.” Tilly muttered nervously.

“Tilly I'm a psychiatrist.” Dean smiled and knelt on the floor in front of Tilly. “Even with my profession aside I'd have to be a pretty narrow minded arsehole to lack that much understanding.”

“I was a bit of a mess. I think it left a few holes too.” Tilly said quietly.

“And you think that's abnormal? I'd tell you different. If you have your appendix out, it leaves a scar.”

“Mine was a trench.” Tilly sighed.

“Understandable.” Dean nodded. “You aren't going to put me off, Miss Marsden.” Dean smiled. “Scars, trenches, holes and all. I don't care. Something else for you to get over.”

“It would matter. You would care.” Tilly mumbled sadly.

“No I wouldn't Tilly.” Dean said gently. “Tell me if I have the right thread or not here. Just nod or shake. Do you want to be close to me?” Tilly nodded and shook at the same time. “But you think that any problems you have, or have had, because you were ill, will be no good to me so I'd run a mile?” A nod. “So you subtly push me away right at the start to protect yourself.” Another nod, head down. “You aren't so sure that your little oddities will push me off though now, are you?” Dean said gently. “That's why you're talking to me like this. Everything's telling you that I'm 'safe', but your automatic barricade's throwing in doubt.” Tilly nodded again and a big, hot tear rolled down her cheek. “Just a little more building on your part, Tilly, that's all it'll take and I'll do everything or nothing, whenever you want me to.” Tilly let out a sob. “Hey it can't be that bad.” Dean held Tilly's head to his chest. “And I couldn't give a rat's arse even if it is.” Dean had to take a back seat to Tilly's emotions in this. He wasn't at work, and it wasn't professional help he was offering. “I've just had a great idea. You want to be my girlfriend?” He grinned.

“W ... what?” Tilly snivelled and laughed at the same time.

“You know? Holding hands in the carpark, buying each other sappy teddy bears. Not as adults, as kids! It'll be great!” Dean laughed and wrote 'Dean 4 Tilly' on the newspaper.

“You're mad.” Tilly laughed.

“As a March hair. Kids don't take oddities into account because they're odd by definition so sod all that. Come on, I'll hold your hand across the carpark.”

Tilly collected her change of clothes from the staff office, then went to change in the bathroom. Dean looked at the door and chewed his thumbnail.

“OK?” Marie asked from her desk.

“Just a bit concerned. She had a bit of an upset last night.” Dean said. “You said you've known her a while? What about her father?”

“She told you about him?” Marie looked genuinely surprised.

“Not in any detail, but the basics. I met him last night and his new wife. Please Marie, you have to keep this to yourself, for Tilly.” Dean quickly told Marie about Tilly's meeting with her long lost father. “I don't actually think she wanted a reunion, Marie, not after all that, and the time that's

passed, but to be as cold and dismissive as that. What an asshole. I've never felt so useless in my life. There's very little I can do but be there."

"You probably don't realise how useful doing exactly that is to her." Marie smiled. "You'll know already that Tilly doesn't make friends easily. She seems to be making a very big effort with you and it would be a very special man who could support her unconditionally."

"She's completely in charge." Dean shrugged. "She's under enough pressure. Maybe she needs a break."

"This is her break, Dean. This is where she's the happiest and she gets paid for it!" Marie laughed. "Seriously, Dean, I can give you a list right now of Tilly's associates outside work. There's you ... yep that's about it. You're doing all the right things and I'm very proud of you."

"Ken's roaring and swearing up here." Tilly popped her head round the door. "Someone's moved his slippers."

"I'll go." Dean stood up. "Moved his slippers?"

"Well actually they're on his feet." Tilly nodded.

Dean did eventually stop hiding round corners and behind plants when he saw that Tilly was doing just fine and working away as usual. He made a point of telling Marie, very loudly, and in Tilly's presence, that he was going to the records office.

Case Notes: GRACE MILLER.

Grace is responding miraculously to the medication prescribed, so much so, we could consider dropping the original dosage. Today, Grace seems quite relaxed and happy. Even though this is the best mood for her to be in for today's session, it seems a shame to disturb it.

"Grace I'm going to ask you to do something that might sound a bit strange." Marie said.

"Oh? OK, I don't mind." Grace smiled.

"I want you to bring Rosemary, but I want you to stay too."

"How can I bring Rosemary? I don't think she'll be there, Dr. Fallon." Grace gave her expected answer.

"She is there Grace, I know she is. I need the both of you together. Don't let Rosemary take over, I need you here too." Marie picked Rosemary purposely as she was the 'weaker persona'. Lynne's efficiency or Mark's aggression would have taken over immediately.

"Take over?" Grace laughed. "I don't think Rosemary would like to take over anything." She frowned at the floor. "She only ever takes charge when there's technical, clever stuff to do, she's so intelligent. Intel ... intelligent ... she's not ... not a geek or anything. It's d ... different! I'm not! I'm sorry, D ... Dr. Fallon. I get a bit Defensive s ... sometimes." Rosemary was here, lisp and stutter too.

"Grace?" Marie asked gently.

“She's n ... not feeling t ... too ...”

“You are Grace. You are Grace Miller.”

“I'm Ro ... Rosemary.” She blinked a few times. Marie handed her a small handbag mirror.

“Who's that?” Marie asked.

“I don't underst ... stand.” Rosemary frowned at the mirror, then turned it round to see the back of it.
“I'm Rosemary.”

“You see Grace. Grace is there.” Marie nodded.

“I'm here.” Grace stared at the mirror. “Yes. That's me. What's happening Dr. Fallon? I'm scared.”

“There's no need to be scared Grace, none at all. I'm here and so is Dave.” Marie said gently. “Can you feel Rosemary? Rosemary's intelligence? Do you know how to program a computer, for example, Grace?”

“Rosemary can. Rose ... Rose...”

“Grace. Not Rosemary. Use Rosemary's knowledge of computers Grace, it's yours. Rosemary is you.” Marie pointed to the mirror.

“I don't understand.” Grace started crying. “What's wrong with me?”

“Rosemary is an aspect of your personality, Grace. Do you understand me? It's the part of you that can mend a computer and speak two languages. Your mind has labelled this separately as Rosemary but Rosemary isn't a separate person. She's part of you.”

“Rosemary doesn't exist?” Grace looked round in panic.

“She exists inside of Grace Miller. She'll always exist as a part of Grace Miller. A very important part, Grace, but not a separate person that needs a name. Can you feel that part Grace?” Marie sat forward on the chair.

“Rose ... that part. Yes.” Grace stuttered.

“What does reformat mean, Grace?” Marie pointed to the computer.

“Basically, starting your whole C drive again. The most effective way is to delete it and create another.” Grace said without a trace of a stutter or a lisp. Marie was quite astonished herself at this as she listened to Grace giving her step by step instructions regarding the computer.

“Thanks Grace, that's fantastic.” Marie smiled. “You're a very good techie. I'm useless.”

“Yes.” Grace looked extremely confused and bewildered, understandably. “I'll keep her. You do know that, right?” Her voice trembled.

“It's part of you. You can't lose it Grace.”

Object: Grace will stop referring to that aspect of her talents and nature as 'Rosemary'. Grace has a long way to go, but if today's session is anything to go by, she'll be absolutely fantastic. Months?

Years? However long, it'll be worth it. Grace Miller is one of the most remarkable young women I've ever met.

Re: Very irate visit to City Hospital. The incompetent imbeciles told me they'd 'misaid' Grace's files. They're blaming their computer systems and are continuing to look for them.

Dean replaced that file and took out another. It read very similar to the previous one. Marie Fallon was without doubt one of the finest Doctors there was, in Dean's opinion. She had the balance of drugs, empathy, and therapy down to perfection. Even when poor Grace had become overwhelmed and hysterical, only a very minor adjustment had to be made to her drugs to be effective. This was very much to Dean's way of thinking too. Modern drugs were extremely important, often essential, but they weren't the be all and end all, not by themselves. He took out a set of papers marked 'Breakthroughs'. It was a series of accounts where Grace had 'lost control' and the other aspects of her personality had 'taken charge'. This had taken place over a period of five months.

Notes: GRACE MILLER.

Marie Fallon.

I was seeing another patient when a loud hammering on the door interrupted me. Nurse Evans opened the door, intending to deal with whoever it was. She wasn't prepared for Mark Miller. I apologised to my other patient, and excused myself to deal with this personally.

"I've had enough of this shit, Dr. Fallon." Mark said angrily. "I know you mean well and you're a nice lady but we can manage. We're going home." Mark began throwing belongings into a plastic bag.

"That really wouldn't be a good idea, Grace." Marie used Grace's name, even though she knew Mark was fully in charge.

"Grace will be fine with me!" Mark shouted. "So she's a bit fucked up in the head? So shit!"

"I'll thank you not to use that language to me." Marie said sternly and firmly. "And remember where you are. Lower your voice please."

"You aren't ordering me about lady." Mark growled.

"No but Grace is. Grace you have full control over your temper here."

"Yeah yeah." Mark sat on the edge of the bed and glowered out of the window.

"Things not moving fast enough for you. I know." Marie sat on the edge of the bed too.

"I just don't seem to be getting anywhere!" She couldn't tell if this was Mark or Grace.

"That's so inaccurate it's an exact opposite. I could show you notes where me, Dave, and the other staff have been dumbstruck at your progress." Marie said truthfully.

"Pumping Grace full of fucking dope." This was definitely Mark. "Sorry, that was a lash out. Force of habit." Grace again, very rapidly.

"Say it again."

“What?” Grace went red.

“Say it again. I'm not angry or offended I promise you. I want to hear Grace's opinions.”

“Pumping me full of fucking dope.” Grace cringed. “I'm sorry.”

“Don't be. I know it seems like a long haul, Grace, and it seems like we're asking a lot of your patience. It won't go any faster no matter what we do with it.”

“Yes, I understand.” Grace sighed and stood up. “OK I'll unpack my fucking bag.” Grace smirked at Marie and Marie burst out laughing. Despite the laughter Marie was delighted with memory retention and Grace's progression so she could now refer to it in this manner.

Dean laughed too. Marie and Grace had a very good doctor/patient relationship, that was obvious. It was quite fascinating how some people, like Grace, never 'clicked' with anyone except a certain person, Marie. Tilly was very similar with the trust and friendship she had with Dean. It was a very rare and a very special occurrence. Tilly and Dean had no apparent, common ground. No shared interests, friends, tastes. It was just like a spark that darted between the two of them without a tangible trigger.

Case Notes. GRACE MILLER. (aka ... Hello there Ben!!)

An altercation broke out outside the bathrooms and Dave went to investigate. He found Grace with Rodney Sharp pinned against the wall by his T-shirt.

“Grace! Good grief!” Dave hurried towards the scene.

“She's fine Dave, mate.” Dave skidded into the wall. “Just wait until our Mark gets wind of this!” Dave blinked a few times before his brain accepted that this was Ben.

“What happened? Let go of Rodney, I think you're hurting him, Grace.”

“Grace wouldn't hurt a fly!” Rodney was dropped to the floor. “Beat it, perv boy.”

“P ... perv?” Dave couldn't have stopped the unprofessional smirk if his job had depended on it.

“He touched my arse! The bloody homo!”

“I ... I think we should go somewhere quieter.” Dave dragged Grace into the television room. “OK, what happened?”

“I was taking a shower.”

“In the men's bathroom.” Dave nodded as the penny dropped.

“No, out in the carpark.” Grace/Ben said sarcastically. “Course in the men's bathroom! Where else am I supposed to go? Batty boy there wanders in, which was no biggie.” Shoulder shrug. “Then next I know he grabbed my arse and asked me for a quickie! I'll break his bloody nose if I catch up with him again!” Marie arrived at that moment and hid, very unprofessionally, round the corner until she'd stopped laughing. The 'pervy' thing was quite serious, not encouraged at all, and she fully intended to speak with Rodney regarding it, but this teenage outburst coming from Grace's physical self was undeniably comical. So was Dave's face.

"I'll have a word with Rodney, don't worry." Dave said seriously. "Try and remember though, he's ill too."

"He will be if he grabs my arse again."

"I'll sort that out. Trust me on that one. OK? Leave it to me."

"Pose so." Attitude mood to the fore.

"Calm down a bit."

"K." Moodier.

"You were in the wrong corridor, Grace. You do know this. Try and think about it. What were you doing before you decided to take a shower?" Something had called for Grace's juvenile, carefree side and Ben had taken over.

"Shit." Grace rubbed her eyes. "Bored, bored, bored. I thought I'd been asleep. I know I haven't. I'm bored." Grace was fully in charge again.

"It happens a lot in here." Dave looked hugely relieved. "You're intelligent and imaginative enough to deal with that, Grace, just like you do with everything else. Can you still feel the bit that's yelling 'bored!' at you?" Grace nodded. She could still feel 'Ben'. "And you know that's you?"

"Yes, I know that's me." Grace sighed. "I stuffed up."

"No, not at all. Boredom is a good sign actually. It means you're getting better, believe it or not." Dave smiled.

"Um ... I'll go with the 'not'"

"Are you sulking?"

"Nah." Grace sniffed in a typical angsty teen way, but it was Grace's sniff, completely Grace. "Can I put my telly on?"

"Yep. Help yourself." Dave stood up. "Er ... bathrooms, Grace?"

"The one in the other corridor, I know." Grace waved her hand around. "MTV is so shite. Hey! What about randy Rodders? So I was in the wrong bathroom but he was still out of order."

"I'll sort that out, like I promised." Dave and Marie left Grace to her rock channel. "How unfair is that?" Dave said once they were out of earshot. "I'm the one with no kids of my own so how come I get the 'tudenal teen? Unfair!"

Dean noticed again, that Marie and Dave were getting drug-free results here. Obviously Grace was still on medication but no 'extras' were being used to deal with theses breakthroughs. They both should have, and probably were, extremely proud of themselves, as well as Grace.

Chapter 9

Dean was rather disappointed to find that Tilly had already left by the time he'd finished in the records office. The disappointment turned to apprehension when he found a note pushed under the door of his flat.

'Dean I've lost my watch.' Dean let out a sigh of relief. 'It isn't on the ward or in my locker and your flat is the only other place I've been. I had it on in the golf club. It's not valuable but it was a gift from Dr. Fallon so it's valuable to me. If you find it can you bring it into work tomorrow please? Thanks. Tilly.'

Dean ransacked the sofa and the chairs then went to raid the bedroom. He found the tiny, gold faced watch in his bed.

“What you done in here?” Joe was in the sitting room.

“Looking for Tilly's watch. I found it in the bed.” Dean came through and put the sofa back together. “There's only one betting shop in town isn't there?”

“Two. I didn't know you gambled.”

“I don't, usually. Two? Bah.”

“The one Friar's road is part of a social club.” Joe told him.

“So it won't have a flat above it. Where's the other one?”

“Oak Road. Anything wrong?”

“Tilly's flat.” Dean held up the watch. “Can I borrow your car? Mine's still sick.”

The betting shop stood on the corner of Oak Road and Wilson Terrace. It was a gaudy red and blue affair, but the flat on the second floor was markedly different. Two windows were visible at the front and both were festooned with beautiful flowers in window boxes. Tilly's front door was on Wilson Terrace and that had two hangers full of flowers on either side of it too. Dean hesitated and frowned at the name plate above the bell. M Marsden. M? Tilly herself answered the door armed with a step ladder and a watering can, before Dean had chance to ring the bell.

“Dean!” Tilly sloshed water over Dean's boots. “Ack!”

“Here, give me that. I can probably reach without the ladder. Want me to do it?”

“Have at it.” Tilly took a few steps back and watched Dean get drenched from watering the hanging basket while standing under it. “Hehe.”

“OK, so horticulture isn't my forte.” Dean laughed. “I hope you don't mind me just turning up like

this. I found your watch. I had no phone numbers or anything.”

“You found it! Oh I'm so pleased. I was starting to think I might have lost it in the tank. You really needn't have come out with it straight away.” Tilly smiled. She put her watch back on her wrist. “I'm pleased you did though. Come in.” Dean squelched upstairs after Tilly.

“I'll take these boot off, Tilly. I'm making a mess.” Dean did so, at the sitting room door. “Nice flat.” Everything was so neat and tidy. Plants figured a lot in here too and even though the flat was quite compact, it oozed style. Everything was coordinated and everything matched or complimented. Dean and Joe's dump was a hotch-potch of whatever would fit in there physically.

“Thanks. I like it too. There's even a yard round the back of the bookies, that's mine too. Tea? Coffee?” Tilly headed for the kitchen, Dean ambled after her and stood at the door. He could see over the herb crowded window sill and into the yard. “Who's is that?” He pointed down to a motorbike covered in plastic sheeting.

“Mine.” Tilly laughed. “It's waiting for a new exhaust and I can't afford one just yet.”

“Is there anything you can't do, woman?” Dean took his mug of tea. “It says M Marsden on the door, I had to look twice. M?”

“That's the landlord's fault.” Tilly rolled her eyes. “He had the plate made and he used the name on the lease form. Mathilda and if you laugh, I'll beat you with that cactus.”

“Laugh? Me?” Dean sniggered. “Well my middle name's Sebastian so I can shut up eh? So Dr. Fallon gave you the watch?”

“She did, yes. I've known her a long time. I'd have been gutted if I'd lost it.” Tilly looked at her watch and smiled. “I tend to hoard things that people give me no matter what it is.”

“Quite rightly too.” Dean agreed. “You eaten yet? I'm famished. We could go to that Chinese place on Grove Lane.”

“Or we could order in? It would take me an hour to get showered and changed.” Tilly laughed. “Girl thing.”

Even the plates were dispensed with and Dean and Tilly opted for a good old fashioned slob-out. Dean 'washed up' by tossing the empty foil containers into the bin.

“Splendid!” He smudged a blob of oyster sauce into his T-shirt. “What are you doing? Tilly was fishing money out of a jar. “Um ... how about no? You buy the next one.” He rolled his eyes and Tilly laughed.

“Did you give the delivery man a tip? I'm soft, I always do.”

“I did, a very good one. I told him not to expect one to avoid disappointment.” Dean grinned. “My mum tips absolutely everyone. It drives my dad nuts.”

“You have any brothers and sisters?” Tilly asked.

“Older sister, Rachael. She's married with a daughter, Laura. I think she's eight, or nine. Maybe ten. She beats me at cards anyway. I presume there's just you?”

“Yes. Under my circumstances, it's just as well eh?” Tilly said. “I'd loved to have had a close family.”

“I'm very lucky in that respect. I still go home and dump all my laundry on my mum. How sad is that?” Dean smiled.

“Very. You big oaf.” Tilly laughed. “Ah why couldn't there have been just my mum and me, eh?” She sighed.

“Can you remember her?” Dean asked carefully but casually.

“No not really. She had dark hair, like mine, but that's about all I can remember. Well that and her hiding me in cupboards when my dad came in roaring drunk.” Tilly said sadly. “Why couldn't he stop drinking for me and her? He did for Penny and Jilly.”

“Well I've said before, it's his loss. You're worth ten Pennys and ten Jillys I reckon.” Dean said gently.

“And my mum never got chance to be.” Tilly mumbled. “He killed her and just left her on the floor in the living room, then staggered off to bed. His hangover kept him snoring in there all night and most of the day. I was awake and trying to make my mum better for hours before I realised she wasn't going to wake up. I was too scared of my dad to go for anyone else and too scared of my dad to go for my dad. I just sat there among the blood and the bones and the smell. I don't know who found me, I can't remember. I remember someone talking about him when he was jailed. It was in the papers. I can't remember who it was they were talking to, just another adult. My mum was pregnant.” Tilly's voice was little more than a whisper.

“Jesus Tilly.” Dean was shocked and heartbroken. “I can't believe they let him out of jail. He should never have been released, in my opinion.”

“I don't think he was allowed to try and see me when he was released. Maybe he didn't want to. I don't know.” Tilly exhaled loudly.

“What made you want to meet him once you were an adult yourself?”

“I don't know that either. Maybe I just wanted the satisfaction of telling him to piss off. I didn't manage that either did I?” Tilly smiled weakly.

“Yes you did. It doesn't matter if he heard you or not. The decision was yours and it didn't have to be verbal. You want him to piss off and he's gone.” Dean reasoned.

“He took my mum from me.” Tilly mumbled again.

“Tilly he has his payback. I know it seems like it's all roses and rainbows for him, but I bet it isn't. He'd rather you disappeared because you're a link to his past, atrocious life. You didn't disappear, you grew and flourished. He can cut you out physically, but he'll never forget what he did and he'll have to live with that. Don't torment yourself with vengeful thoughts, Tilly, you simply don't need them. You succeeded, he never will. Your mum would have been very proud of you.” Dean smiled.

“I don't deserve to feel so sad at times.” Tilly looked at Dean.

“No you certainly don't.” Dean agreed. “And that's exactly what you tell yourself. Sod the lot of it,

Tilly. None of it was your fault and it has no right to affect you.”

“So you don't think I'm abnormally affected anymore? I was at the time.” Tilly said timidly.

“We've been here.” Dean told her. “Back then it was normal to be affected quite deeply by such a tragic event, especially given your age. As for now? Well take a look! You have a lovely home, a good job and a ... Fiat.” He smirked.

“Don't you be sniggering at my Fiat.” Tilly smiled.

“I didn't! Much.” Dean sniggered. “Tilly you came through a horrendous experience that could have affected you permanently. To live and function as well as you do now is astonishing. You were ill in the past because of all that. So buggery? It was enough to make anyone ill.”

“You've never asked what was actually wrong with me.” Tilly pointed out.

“Nope and I don't need to know the specifics.” Dean shrugged. “I do know the potential severity of illnesses something like that could cause, and I know you're a credit to yourself for getting over it.”

“Aww you being a shrink?” Tilly smiled.

“No. A shrink wouldn't be allowed to tell you how wonderful you are. I'm being Dean.”

“This would be the time where I babble on about having to be elsewhere, then crying for an hour because I'd copped out again.” Tilly said awkwardly.

“Oh? You often get compliments like mine? Can't be having that. From who eh?” Dean winked at her.

“No not like yours. I don't usually cry after the other ones.” Tilly smiled and went red. “I'm a geek, I know.”

“Well there's no tears now and I'm still here, and you haven't once suggested an alternative location for yourself.” Dean pointed out.

“Well no, I live here.” Tilly replied.

“Valid point. So you're in charge. Where do you want me? Oh loaded question there.” Dean laughed. “Ah we're doing fine as we are Tilly.”

“We could always go to bed.”

“Yes it is quite late. I lost track of the ... did you say we?” It was a good job Dean was sitting down already.

“Unless you have to get back. I noticed you were using Joe's car and I know you're on earlies tomorrow. It's ...” Tilly was starting to babble.

“Shh.” Dean stumbled off the sofa. “No way are you talking yourself out of it. You'll cry.”

“I will.”

“And I'll cry a damn sight more.”

Dean bounced into work at 6am, on three hours sleep, and was too happy to be tired.

“Tanya! Lovely day eh?” He beamed all over the ward.

“If you ignore the wind, rain and obscene hour of the day, then I suppose so.” Tanya laughed.
“Marie's not in until 10 and there's only five to see today.”

“Good. I have some research notes to swot up on.” Dean clipped on his pager. “Let me know when Tilly gets in please Tanya?”

“Will do.” Tanya nodded and Dean sprang down to the records office.

Case Notes. GRACE MILLER.

Dave found Peter Thomas (Lynne's boyfriend). The man was at work in a picture-frame making factory and was good enough to speak with Dave during his lunch break, although he declined Dave's invitation to come to the hospital.

GRACE MILLER. Notes and observations by CPN David Pearson on meeting Peter Thomas.

Mr. Thomas is just an ordinary, hard working bloke. Six feet tall, average build, average pretty much everything. He was quite surprised when I introduced myself and told him why I wanted to speak to him.

“Grace? Well I only met her twice, quiet girl. Sorry to hear she's ill.”

“Where was Grace when you met her?” David asked.

“Once at home and once in town in a bookshop. When I saw her in town she didn't even recognise me.” Peter laughed. David made a note of the importance of this. Complete non-recognition.

“I promise I'll explain my reasons for asking you questions as best I can, Mr. Thomas. I can't thank you enough for agreeing to help us. Could we talk about Lynne?” David asked politely.

“I met Lynne at an open day fund raiser for charity.” Peter said. “It was obvious she was a lady. Smartly dressed, elegant, well spoken, full of fun. It was her self confidence that won me and she had every right to be that. We turned a few heads when were out anywhere.”

“What went wrong? Please forgive me being so personal, but it is important, and as I said, I'll explain.” David said awkwardly.

“She was just so unreliable.” Peter sighed. “One time we'd arranged for her to meet my family. My mother travelled over sixty miles especially for it. Lynne just didn't turn up. We were all just sitting looking at our watches, waiting to go out to dinner. Me, Lynne, my parents and two sisters. I got no answer from Lynne's mobile so I phoned the house and got that snot of a brother of hers, the younger one, Ben.” That explained, to David, Lynne not turning up. “He told me she wasn't in, then told me to go and do one when I asked where she was. Little shit he is. I asked if any of his other lot were there, you know? The older ones? He told me he wasn't a messenger boy and hung up. I drove to Lynne's house but got no answer to the door although I knew snot-boy was in. I could see him through the window upstairs. It was two days before I managed to get Lynne on the phone and she

told me she'd been sick in bed with the 'flu. As you can imagine, I was furious with Ben, and all for kicking his grotty little arse. Lynne phoned my family and apologised to them in person, she was like that. She did it again and again though, Doc.” Peter sighed. "I'd arrange to meet her in places and she just wouldn't show and a few times she just ran out on me! Like one night down the Butchers Arms, she went to the toilets and just didn't come back. I just got a bit fed up with it, Doc. I just didn't know where I stood with her. Is she OK? You said it was Grace who was ill.”

“Grace is ill, very, very ill. I'll just say this as it is, Peter, it's the only way I can. Lynne, the Lynne you knew, was just one part of Grace's illness. Ben was another and Rosemary and Mark were the other two.” Dave said carefully.

“Eh?” Peter was obviously, and expectedly confused.

“They're all Grace, Peter. Yes she's very ill indeed and has been for years. I'm sorry, that must be very shocking for you.”

“Wait a minute!” Peter laughed rather hysterically. “Lynne was Grace pretending to be Lynne? Ben? Grace pretended to be that little creep too? You're having me on.”

“No, not pretending, Peter. Grace couldn't help it, it's not her fault at all. Lynne was the part of Grace's personality that was bubbly, efficient, and outgoing. Ben was the juvenile, immature part. For whatever reason, her personalities split completely and took on lives of their own. It was important I see you to verify that you did exist and that you weren't another personality.” David explained.

“So ... so she's nuts? Lynne is nuts?” Peter stammered in shock.

“Grace is mentally ill. She's making remarkable progress and it's thanks to help like this. It isn't easy untangling it all and I really do appreciate this.” David said truthfully.

“But ... but I met them! I saw all of them! I met the nerdy one and I had a full conversation about motorbikes with the older brother!” Peter said in disbelief.

“You met Mark Miller?” David's turn for the shock.

“Yes! He was fixing up an old van in the back yard ... well actually he was underneath the van.” Peter grimaced.

“You were spared a very big shock then. I saw all of him when he answered the door. It was Grace with that particular personality in complete control.” David said sympathetically.

“I can't get my head round this. I feel a bit ... ill ... actually. So the woman I've actually slept with is also a man? I'm ... I'm not homophobic at all, Doc but ... but ...” Peter stammered.

“No Peter, no that's not it at all. Listen to me. Grace is female, obviously she is. Everything about her is female, her personalities included. Mark is the aggressive, assertive side, that's all. All five will eventually be part of the same whole again, Grace. Just like they were before the split.” David explained.

“How can that happen?” Peter asked in astonishment. “I mean, how can someone's head split like that?”

“It can, and sadly, it does. Once we untangle all this and get to causes, then we can help Grace even more.” David nodded.

“How did you find me?”

“Quite easily. Lynne told us. Try not to be too overwhelmed, Peter. Grace was in hospital for two months for another reason, then receiving home visits for a further six weeks and none of us caught on either. It wasn't until the 'Mark' aspect answered the door. I worked very closely with Grace, spoke to Lynne and spent over an hour with Rosemary and I still didn't see it.”

“Christ.” Peter exhaled noisily. “Look, I'd like to help, really I would. If I can do that from here then I will, just ask. I doubt I could bring myself to see her though.”

“That's absolutely fine, Peter. You've already been incredibly helpful.”

Dean leant back in his chair and tried to imagine what the poor bloke must have been feeling when he was told that! There was no way he could have understood Grace's condition to any extent, even though Dave Pearson had done a very good job in trying to explain it. Still, the man had been intelligent and decent enough to offer his help, even though it would have been too much for him to actually meet Grace.

Dean looked at his watch. 9.45. Time to do the wards with Marie.

Chapter 10

“What shift is Tilly on?” Dean asked Marie, mid way through their rounds.

“She isn't. She called in earlier to say she had a legal appointment.” Marie answered.

“Did she? She didn't mention it. About her dad?” Dean asked in surprise.

“That would be my guess, although she didn't say and obviously I didn't ask.” Marie shrugged.
“Dean she's fine.”

“But I saw her at half three this morning and she didn't even hint at it.” Dean persisted. “I said 'see you at work' and she said 'yes'.”

“So maybe she forgot.” Marie said calmly. “Three thirty? Three thirty where?”

“At her flat.” Dean grimaced at his own big mouth. “Keep it to yourself Marie, you know what a private person Tilly is.”

“Good grief!” Marie was genuinely surprised. “So fast?”

“Eh? Seven months is fast? Which planet are you from, Marie.” Dean laughed.

“No I mean faster than I'd have expected. Keep in mind I've known Tilly a long time.” Marie said.
“Er ... well done.”

“Absolutely.” Dean grinned. “Seriously, Marie, this sudden absence won't have had anything to do with me ... my ... well you know?”

“I hope not.” Marie frowned. “She said she'd be out all day so I'll phone her later to ask if she's in work tomorrow. Don't worry.”

“Something's wrong.” Dean said in panic. “You wouldn't do that if you weren't worried too and you know her better than anyone.”

“Calm down, Dean.” Marie heaved. “I know she's a private person, just like you said.”

“She's regretting it, I know she is.” Dean said miserably.

“Oh shut up.” Marie rolled her eyes. “Maybe she has an appointment, just like she said. Why are we doubting that? I'll phone just to put our minds at rest. Now stop fannying about and go away, Dean. I'll do the rest of the ward.” She wafted her hand at Dean.

Dean sat in the coffee room and thought himself into a blind panic. He finally went to the payphone and dialled Tilly's home number.

“Damn!” Dean swore when he got the answering machine. “Tilly! Hiya Tilly. Phone me back on my mobile, I didn't get to ask you out again!” He said brightly, before hanging up and chewing on his thumbnail. “OK Dean back up.” He muttered to himself. “You barge in here and she'll bounce you so far back you'll collide with William the Conqueror. Back off a bit.” Back off to the records office to take his mind off this and to dissuade him from calling Tilly's answering machine every five minutes.

Case Notes. GRACE MILLER.

Grace's progress is staggering. She's been herself, literally, for three weeks now. However, both Dave and myself have noticed Grace's mood, expressions, and body language changing on occasions. Grace told us that's that when she can feel the others. If a situation calls for efficiency and professionalism, she can feel 'Lynne'. I.E she begins to think in a professional manner. If Grace is listening to the radio or watching T.V and it gets loud, then she can feel 'Ben'. I.E Grace likes loud rock music and it appeals to her. Decision making calls for the positivity and motivation of 'Mark' and academic and technological situations call for 'Rosemary'. This is how Grace is seeing it, and what's so fantastic is that she's seeing this by herself. This is Grace's own reasoning and interpretation.

P.S. On the occasions that we do get breakthrough and it's Ben, we've noticed that Ben actively seeks out Dave. This could be a separate issue completely, as none of the other personae do this. Theorising – Ben seeking out guidance from an authoritative male? Son/Father type thing? Is it still in the back of Grace's mind, even when Ben's in charge, that this is all Grace, thus making 'Mark' a non-viable source of guidance? To be explored as a separate situation.

“Don't make it easy for them, Grace, eh?” Dean laughed. It made sense actually, Ben was the 'under age and dependant' aspect of Grace and an 'off the rails male' to boot. Despite the seriousness of this, Dean had to smile. He'd known David Person for quite a while and he was as paternal as Bugs Bunny. He just didn't click at all with teenagers and looked terrified of them half the time.

Case Notes. GRACE MILLER.

City Hospital on the phone. They simply have no records for Grace at all. I even suggested, rather testily, that they got off their backsides and looked for them manually, rather than relying on the computer system, only to be told that they already had. I've sent an urgent fax to the National head office requesting Grace's files and explaining that it's vital to continue her treatment.

Grace is rather melancholy today. She said she'd been thinking, then said that she shouldn't because she wasn't very good at it. Grace told us that she'd been thinking about the others and it made her feel a bit panicky and hysterical to think that they'd never existed outside her own head.

“It's a bit hard to take in that I've lived on my own up there all this time.” She said in bewilderment.

“You've lived very well up there, Grace. You have a beautiful well kept house.” Marie complimented.

“A big house. It's too big.” Grace nodded.

“I bought my own house several years ago, I know property values. I simply can't figure out how you managed the mortgage repayments on the place.” Marie shook her head.

“I didn't pay a mortgage.” Grace frowned in confusion. “I never really thought about it, Dr. Fallon. It's just always been our ... my ... house. It must be paid for already otherwise I'd have been notified

or jailed or something.”

“You'd certainly have had some notification. You're only eighteen, Grace. There's no way you could have paid fully for that huge house.”

“No of course not.” Grace agreed. “I only know it was my family home. How can we find out?”

“Who will have the deeds for the place?” Marie asked thoughtfully.

“I don't think they're in the house. I know more or less what's in there. Bank maybe? I've never used a bank so I can't even offer a suggestion. I feel so stupid. I never even gave it a thought.” Grace said apologetically.

“No, not stupid. You've been ill, Grace.” Marie said sternly. “Is it possible that your parents left you the house?” When Grace's parents had been mentioned in the past, she'd said they weren't there. This had been taken as meaning they were deceased.

“Shit, I can't remember.” Grace looked very distressed. “I can't remember them at all. I don't know.”

“You don't remember them at all?” Marie tried to hide her excitement. A block? Could there be anything behind this block that could have caused Grace's traumatic illness?

“No, nor can the others ... the other parts ... blergh.”

“It's OK, Grace, don't knock yourself dizzy, I know what you mean.” Marie said gently. “So how far back can you remember? School? Pre school?”

“I don't remember very much of it.” Grace frowned. “I remember being at school, of course, but I can't remember anything apart from that I attended school. I can't remember going to school or coming home from school. I can't remember leaving parents in the morning or returning to them after school.”

“Can you remember anything about your upbringing?” Marie asked.

“Not until I went to the house on Camp Street. I was sixteen and I'd gone back to the others ... well I know now that I didn't, but I did then.” Grace floundered.

“So you were ill back then eh?” Marie smiled sadly.

“I must have been. I don't remember where I was before I went to Camp Street.” Grace looked very lost and very frightened.

“We'll probably be able to find out, Grace. It's probably very important that we do.” Grace nodded. “You're very well educated. You can speak French quite fluently, and a bit of German. Now you didn't just learn all that in two years from when you were sixteen, did you? Of course not, you went to school and schools have records.” Marie Smiled.

“But I don't even know which school I went to.” Grace said glumly.

“So we'll rifle through the lot of them!” Marie nodded encouragingly.

“Do you think we should?” Grace asked nervously. “I don't know what's behind that particular wall.”

“Whatever it is, we can handle it. Think of how many walls we've already climbed over together! One more isn't going to harm us. Nothing can harm us.” Marie told Grace.

“I'm never going to get better am I? I'm tired, Dr. Fallon, I'm tired of existing like this. At least with the others I had a family with me. They've gone now and I'm by myself for the first time in my memory. I know they weren't really there but they were there for me. I can join it all up in my head and remember and it wasn't horrible, or traumatising. I had no harmful axe-wielding maniac parts going off on the rampage either. I was happy. The fact that I can't remember anything before that tells me that it might not be all that nice. Is it really right to tell me how I should be happy? I wasn't hurting anyone, Dr. Fallon.” Grace started to cry.

“Grace, no one is taking your memories or your happiness away from you, no one can do that.” Marie was heartbroken, and tried so hard not to show it. “You can see why living as you were just wasn't viable in the long run, I know you can. Luckily you were physically healthy during that time, but what if you'd had an accident while one of the others was in charge? Medical teams need to act very quickly at times, Grace, they need to know who they're dealing with. Spending hours looking for notes on Lynne or Rosemary Miller could have been dangerously costly for Grace. For you. Do you understand?” Grace nodded and blew her nose. “It must have been incredibly taxing mentally too. You'd burned out and entered psychosis. You were taking on five different roles simultaneously, Grace. That's far too much, mentally and physically.”

“So I wouldn't have stayed happy.” Grace said flatly.

“Almost certainly not. You'd have got so ill, eventually, Grace. You'd have gotten so poorly that you wouldn't have been able to pull through it like you are now.” Marie explained gently.

“And will I pull through it?”

“Yes. Yes you will.”

Dean replaced the stack of papers. Grace was now stable enough to begin the 'backtrack timeline' thing. Poor Grace. She'd only backtracked two years and hit a brick wall, a wall that Marie would employ ropes, spikes and oxygen cylinders to get over if she needed to. Dean could also see the mounting importance of finding Grace's medical files.

Case Notes: GRACE MILLER.

Not only are City Hospital useless, so are National head office. Which suggests that no they are not. There are no medical records for Grace Miller. Have we got the wrong main persona?!!

I had the administration board endorse an urgent call to the National head office requesting files for Grace Miller, Lynne Miller and Rosemary Miller.

I literally chewed my fingernails until they bled, waiting for that return call.

The call was returned at 11.44pm. No Grace, Lynne, or Rosemary Millers of that age. The closest match were two Lynne Millers, one twenty eight and the other one fifteen.

I need to know who owns that house. I need to know where Grace grew up until she was sixteen. I

needed schools and I needed care homes. Houses paid for in full are usually left in wills or similar legacies to the next of kin, this being parents to children, traditionally. This suggested Grace's parents were deceased. Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages. Anything to jog Grace's memory. Anything to get over that wall.

Case Notes: Grace Miller.

Bad patch. Poor Grace went through all five personae during the day and continued with Lynne and Mark all through the night. We simply couldn't get Grace back at all and all we could do was let her exhaust herself so she'd calm down naturally.

Births Marriages and Deaths need quite a bit of hefty authorisation before they start discussing such information. I've set the ball rolling in that direction this morning. I've faxed the local authorities regarding care homes in the area and I'm waiting to hear from them. I also called the authorities asking advise on how to go about finding out who owned 112 Camp Street, they said they'd call me back.

Case Notes: GRACE MILLER.

A very tearful and tired Grace after the previous day's chaos for her. She's trying so hard to remember, yet I get the feeling she doesn't really want to. Understandably it's natural to fear the unknown, especially inside her own head, and Grace is tired to begin with ... but Mark isn't.

"Grace I'm going to do something quite unconventional today. It's going to seem like I'm going against most of our previous sessions." Marie said confidently.

"You're not going to send me home are you?" Grace sobbed.

"Good lord no! Not yet anyway. OK so are you up to being unconventional and weird?" Grace gave Marie a watery smile and nodded. "Good girl. Grace, sweetheart, we need Mark."

"M ... Mark? Don't you mean my strong assertive bits?" Grace stammered.

"Absolutely I do, all of them, full throttle. Your Mark bits." Marie used the name of Mark on purpose. She realised that this went against everything they'd built so far and she hoped and prayed it would pay off. "Grace, your Mark bits won't be crying. Or maybe they are." Marie shrugged and felt terrible about being so purposely offhand.

"No they wouldn't be. I'm confused." Grace wiped her eyes.

"I know you are Grace. Mark won't be though. Throw him out here."

"I don't understand why you're trying to confuse me." Grace muttered. "Don't you think I'm messed up enough?"

"You've no need to feel confused and you won't be if you let loose." Marie nodded.

"Let loose? Oh yes? And who's going to clean up the fucking carnage?" Grace looked straight at Marie. "What do you want me to do? You spend months telling me one thing then you do a complete frigging U turn! What is your problem?"

“Um ... well I didn't mean to aggravate you so much.” Marie still cringed at Mark's colourful language coming from Grace and felt very guilty about instigating it. “I didn't mean to make you angry.”

“I'm not angry, but I'm not a retard either. You don't have to goad me into a response you know. I'm sorry, I shouldn't be so rude. I'm fed up.”

“I know, you're bound to be.” Marie sighed. “I really do need you to answer some questions for me. I'm as fed up as you are, but not with you. Your notes have got lost in a mass of red tape. We can't find any medical records for Grace Miller.”

“Oh?”

“Not a thing. We've done so much for you here, it's astonishing, but we've hit a brick wall.”

“Yes. I know.” Grace stood up and frowned out of the window, stuffing her hands in her pockets.

“I need you to punch a hole in it. The house, who owns the house on Camp Street?”

“Me.”

“Who left it to you?”

“I don't know.” Shoulder shrug. “It's always belonged to me since ... since I left it.” Grace frowned at the floor.

“Can you remember leaving it?”

“No.”

“Can you remember where you lived after you left it?”

“No. Why can't I remember? Damn it! School ... school ... I went to school.” Grace screwed up her face. “I hated it but I went. How long ago was that?”

“Well you're eighteen now so it wasn't that long ago.”

“Bits and flashes. It's like looking through window blinds. It's like looking at someone else.”

“That's you Grace, you're remembering.” Marie nodded encouragingly.

“No. No it's not.” Grace shook her head. “I'm Grace. That's not.”

“Yes you are Grace.” Marie was delighted and very proud of Grace for retaining her identity. She was presuming Mark had taken over completely, obviously he hadn't. Had Grace realised that Marie's approach felt 'wrong' and therefore not complied? It actually wouldn't have surprised Marie at all. “Those are your memories, Grace, from the other side of the wall.”

“They're damned well not!” Grace shouted. “Shitty kids making fun of my name. Little arseholes making fun of me because I have no parents. I fucking hate kids.”

“Where did you live, Grace? Who did you live with?”

“God knows.” Grace heaved. “Big, shiny, plastic bloody place with a million of us in it.”

“A children's home?”

“Hmm. Could be.” Grace frowned. “That isn't me. I don't know where that's coming from but I'm telling you, that isn't me!”

“Who's are they then? You can't have other peoples' memories, Grace.”

“Oh? I have five bloody sets up here.” Grace tapped her head. “Yes I know, they're all mine.” She snapped irritably. “But at least I know they are mine. This lot here isn't.”

“Can you recall anything else?”

“I'm trying to. For fuck's sake Rose. Get out of the way!” Grace snapped. “Er ... sorry. Big drip, I know. I forgot.” She muttered. “I got GCSEs.”

“You did very well then.” Marie said. So Grace had finished school while in a children's home. “Why did you go back to the house?”

“Nowhere else to go and it is mine.” Grace shrugged. “The plastic palace really was shite. I could have stayed there if I'd stayed on at school. I didn't want to do either. I wanted to go home.”

“Sixteen is very young to be totally independent. That was a very big decision to make.”

“I knew ... or I thought I knew ... that the other five were there, remember? It was no contest really.” Grace shrugged.

“Fair comment. So can you remember when you started thinking about the other ... how many did you say?” Marie felt a cold dampness creeping up her spine.

“Five. Mark, Ben, Lynne, Rosemary and Grace.” Grace shrugged. “Five.”

“So you thought all five were in the house on Camp Street? Grace too?”

“Yes of course.”

“So if Grace wasn't thinking this, who was?” Marie knew for a fact that she sounded hysterical.

“Me.” Grace frowned around the room. “Which makes bugger all sense, does it?”

“Who are you? You thought Grace was in the house. The other kids were making fun of your name. What name were they making fun of?”

“I ... don't know.” Grace said in genuine bewilderment. “I don't understand. I can feel the others, Grace too. They've left me here.”

“Good god.” Marie said out loud.

“Er ... I don't really want to be here. Grace and the others have a much better deal of it.”

“What should I call you? Miller? Is your name Miller?”

“Miller? M ... Miller?” Grace that wasn't Grace started crying. “My mother was ...” She collapsed in a wave of huge, terrified sobs. Marie discretely handed Dave a prescription to go and draw up, seriously considering a syringe full for herself. Poor Dave could hardly walk straight and was visibly trying to keep hold of his own senses.

“Miller is your mum's name?” Marie asked, very gently.

“Oh god.” The girl was terrified.

“It's OK. It's fine. Do you understand? I've never let you down yet, neither has Dave. We aren't going to start now.”

“I was born in that house. It was my mother's.” She was shaking uncontrollably. “It's mine.”

“Is your mother still here?”

“I had a birthday party. I was seven. My mum made me a cake.” The terrified girl whispered.

“Up at the house. Yes?”

“Yes. Just me and her. I had to go to bed before the pubs closed. My ... dad ... NO!” She collapsed, just as Dave came through the door and caught her. “No!” She shrieked again and sprang away from Dave, grabbing my hand so tightly it hurt.

“It's OK! This is Dave, remember? Dave? Dave is your friend, he won't hurt you.”

“I'm sorry! I'm s ... sorry! I can see. I can see it! I can smell it! My mum's dead and she won't wake up. I have blood on my pyjamas and in my hair. I hugged her and hugged her but she stayed dead. They took me away in a big car. I couldn't speak so they took me to the Doctor. He gave me a blue badge with my name on it. Mathilda.”

Dean dropped the paper and staggered back against the office wall.

“N ... no.” He shook his head and wiped his hands down his coat, as if trying to clean them. “It isn't. It can't be.” He threw the files back into the cabinet then stared at it. “Marie? Why?” Dean ran out of the office and up the corridor. “Where's Dr. Fallon?” He demanded of Tanya.

“She left about thirty ...” Dean didn't need to hear the rest. He sprinted out of the hospital, across the carpark, and took the stairs three at a time to go and get Joe's car keys.

Marie's car was parked outside the betting shop, Marie still in it. Dean jumped out of Joe's car and almost got ran over crossing the road.

“Where's Tilly?” He said, opening the car door and getting in the passenger seat.

“Not home. You look a bit ... emotional.”

“Drop the shit Marie! Why? Why the fuck did you get me to study that case? Was it some sort of detective game? Let's see how long it takes Dean to catch on that his girlfriend is the most famous MPD case in the country?” Dean shouted.

“If I'd told you straight off, Tilly would never fully recover.” Marie sighed loudly. “I'm sorry Dean. It was a big risk and a very unprofessional one. I'm well aware you could have me up for it, and, quite frankly, I wouldn't blame you.”

“I'm pissed off but I'm not stupid.” Dean said flatly. “I don't believe for one minute you did that just to entertain yourself. I want the reason for it, Marie, That's all.”

“You're not stupid, no, so you'll realise that Tilly had to re-build her life completely. Every single bit of it, Dean. You've seen for yourself that she's done exactly that, most of it herself too. Dean I was driven to despair when I noticed her interest in you.” Marie smiled sadly. “You'll just have to trust me on that one. Not only is it a girl thing, but I've known Tilly, all of her, for fifteen long and chaotic years. Dean you were the last major wall for Tilly. Of all the charmers for her to fall for eh? I'm sorry to say this but I honestly didn't expect you to be interested in her. I also noticed that she was reverting because she couldn't handle her feelings.”

“Reverting?” Dean said in alarm.

“No, no, no. She's fine Dean, you've seen she is. It's a wall, yet another wall. If you'd ran into as many walls as she has then you'd be scared of them too. She'd never been in love before and didn't know what to do. She phoned me a few months ago and tactfully told me she felt a bit poorly. She told me it would be so much easier if she just let Lynne take over with you. Can you imagine how shocked I was? After fifteen years, she mentioned Lynne, by name, again.”

“Jesus.” Dean rubbed his temples. “She kept putting me off, Marie. You heard me bitching about it to Joe!”

“I did. I re-evaluated you and decided you weren't as big of a tart as I had you down for.” Marie squeezed Dean's hand. “Then came the gamble. I saw the only way there was of pulling Tilly into line before her baggage swallowed her again. I knew you could handle Tilly, you're a wonderful man, Dean, and your patience is incredible. If I'd told you Tilly's history you'd have gone into this as a Doctor. Having said that, you deserved to know and it would have harmed Tilly to know she'd have to tell you all this eventually, herself. If you'd known all this, you'd have analysed her and studied her. Your professionalism would have got in the way. I honestly didn't expect the wall to come down before you'd finished reading the script. I hoped you'd finish the study, know who Tilly is, and the time you'd spent together would strengthen what you had so you could handle it with her. I didn't have to hope that you'd stick by her, that was never in doubt.”

“I can't believe you pissed with my head like that, Marie. I almost fainted in that office. Christ it all fits in and it all raced through my head in a flash. Tilly can roll cigarettes even though she doesn't smoke, she hates alcoholics, she can fix cars. Mark. She has a house like the Amazon rain forest and the grungiest, loudest CD collection I've ever seen. Ben. She fixed the office computer in ten minutes flat. Rosemary. She went to the golf club dressed perfectly and her home is immaculate. Lynne. Grace is just her out and out niceness and compassion isn't it? The one that no one could possibly be offended by.” Dean stared out of the window in utter shock.

“Yes. Grace is also the glue that held it all together for so long. Despite her demure manner, Grace was the strongest persona by far. Tilly just stopped living, Dean. She simply didn't want to exist with the torturous memories of her childhood and what happened to her mother. She didn't want to be there, so she wasn't. Tilly left Tilly, built a wall, then went back home without her. It took three years to get Tilly and Grace together, twice as long as it took with the others. I'm genuinely sorry for traumatising you, Dean, really I am. I took it upon myself to decide that you'd be the one better to handle the trauma involved, rather than Tilly handling her own trauma of falling in love with

you.”

“You thought it necessary to let me know about it though.” Dean said.

“You have to understand. She's had so much shit, Dean, so much shit. I told her many years ago that I'd look out for her, and I have. Of course you needed to know, and it was inevitable that you'd find out eventually. You had to know, but Tilly didn't have to be there to see your reactions when you did. One look of revulsion on your face would have thrown her off the deep end. I said earlier, it would have harmed Tilly to tell you herself. Judgemental and presuming, I know. Tilly's more than a celebrated case to me, Dean. I've been with her through fifteen years, six personalities, and I've watched her grow. I love her every bit as much as I love my own son.”

“So I needed to know *after* I'd got attached to her so the shrink in me wouldn't take over and bugger it up, and I'd also had the time to know I'd never let her go because of it. I get it.” Dean exhaled loudly.

“I knew you'd never just drop her, Dean. Even if the discovery of all this was a bit much for you, I knew you'd handle it right for Tilly now you've had chance to get to know her. I noticed the feelings between the both of just simmering away there and I used them to Tilly's advantage.” Marie sounded exhausted. “You're a very exceptional man, Dean, and now you know the score one hundred percent.”

“I'm cabbaged.” Dean rested his head on the back of the car seat. “So she sold up and moved there.” He nodded to the plant bedecked flat above the bookies.

“Once she was well, and once she knew there was just Tilly Marsden to look after. That big house on Camp street was far too big and far too full of memories. I helped her clear it out when she sold it and she smiled all the while, Dean. She handled the belongings of all her previous six existences and had fond memories off them all. She put it all away, with love, and let it go.”

“And I'm the icing on the cake eh?” Dean smiled.

“You're a foundation block of a thing called Tilly's future. For her, it's been eight years in coming. Please don't be angry with me, Dean and please believe me when I tell you I'd never have trusted Tilly's feelings and mind to anyone else like I did with you.” Marie smiled.

“You really are close to her, aren't you?”

“I love her, like I said.” Marie shrugged.

“What do I do now?”

“You tell me.”

“I told her I wasn't going anywhere and I'm not. I told that bastard of a father of hers that I love her, and I do, baggage and all. You are right, I can handle this. This really has shown me the gravity of the things she's trusted me with, Marie. Telling me about her dad, telling me she still had scars.”

“And that suggests what, Dr. Hawthorn?”

“That Tilly was giving me huge, enormous hints. She wanted me to know. I wouldn't ask outright for fear of pushing her away, you didn't want me to ask outright in case my reaction hurt Tilly. Mission accomplished, Agent Fallon.” Dean smiled.

“I love it when a plan comes together. Little Fiat in the rear window. Go on, get out.” Marie said lightly.

“What about you?”

“Back to the hospital, as I was doing before you hijacked me. If Tilly was out and driving, then she wasn't sitting in the house feeling woefully regretful for bedding the hospital tart. Go on, get on with it.” Marie started the engine and Dean laughed and got out of the car.

Chapter 11

Dean sat in Tilly's flat with a cup of tea and realised that what he knew made absolutely no difference to him. He watched her watering her plants and realised that this was Tilly, past, present, tears, laughter, and all. Would it come out in dribs and drabs from her? All in one torrential gush? That would make no difference either, just as Marie had banked on.

“Here look.” She handed Dean a letter. “If my dad comes anywhere near me, I've to hand this into a solicitor to make it final. Mr. Babcock said he can do it within hours.”

“I think you've done the right thing, although I don't think he'll bother you.” Dean nodded.

“Me either, after you told him to sod off.” Tilly grinned and Dean went red. “I heard you. I walked straight past you on the way to the toilets but you were too busy ranting to notice. I didn't say anything in case I started crying like a big drip.” Tilly laughed. “Thanks, Dean. He needed told and you told him. I shouldn't have contacted the old fart to begin with, I know that now. You sorted it out for me.” She kissed Dean's cheek.

“Well I told you I'd be here.” Dean shrugged. “I'm pretty good at sorting stuff out if you ask me to.”

“Dean, I know.” Tilly said quietly.

“Know what?” Dean asked warily.

“I know that you know.” Tilly nodded.

“Do I say you know that I know that you know what?” Dean laughed.

“I know which files you've been reading in the office on the ward.”

“Ah right.” Dean winced. Nice one Marie. “And what did you deduce from that, Sherlock?”

First of all, that you were checking up on me. But I dismissed that idea, Watson. You had the file of Grace Miller on the table, closed of course, in full view of me. Only a very cruel person would check up on me then let me know he was doing so in such a crass fashion. I'd worked with you long enough to know that you're not a cruel man.”

“No, not cruel, just a careless clod.” Dean sighed.

“That was my second notion. Again I dismissed it because I know you aren't careless when it comes to your job, you're a professional. That only left one option. When you've eliminated the impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. You hadn't finished the notes and you didn't know who Grace Miller really was.” Tilly took a bow.

“Spot on.” Dean nodded and smiled. “And what's more, I didn't know until about an hour ago.”

“O ... oh! I thought you'd found out last night, you know? Before we ... I ... oh heck.” Tilly panicked.

“Tilly it makes no difference.” Dean laughed. “Honestly it doesn't. Do I look bothered?”

“Well ... no. I thought you must have finished the notes by then.” Tilly muttered. “Bah! Slow reader! Well I thought you were just going to ooze away nicely, you know? With me being screwed up in the head and a drip too. So I ... um ... carted you off to bed as a desperation move. Hell I'm a trollop.” Tilly flinched and Dean snorted a laugh. “It's not funny.” Tilly tried to keep a straight, serious face. “Why aren't you bothered? I'd be bothered if someone told me they used to be six people. Two of them were men!” Tilly jibbered.

“Oi! Shh.” Dean stood up and grabbed Tilly's hands. He got the feeling he was going to have to do this quite often. “Babbling! No? I like all six of you so shut up.”

“Even though I was being ... Lynnish ... last night?” Tilly chewed her lip and Dean burst out laughing. “I wasn't Lynne, don't get me wrong. I know all about that now. Bah! Stop laughing at me. It's my way of describing things. Piss off Hawthorn.” Tilly laughed too.

“Tilly I'd rather you were Lynnish than Benish and god forbid if you'd got Markish. It's actually quite remarkable that you can refer to it like that.” Dean said truthfully.

“Yes well folk look at me weird when I tell them to sod off before I get Markish on their arses. I've never been able to laugh about it until now.” Tilly smiled.

“Well it was no laughing matter, Tilly. We aren't laughing *at* it, we're laughing because it's dealt with and not an issue any more. No walls.”

“No walls.” Tilly fully agreed.

Marie sat in the records office with David Pearson.

“OK, we can lock this up now.” Marie was leaning on the cabinet, smiling.

“Yep. Seventeen years after it was opened.” Dave watched Marie sign her name at the bottom of a paper, then she handed it to him.

Case Notes. GRACE MILLER/MATHILDA MARSDEN.

Ten years after Tilly was discharged from hospital, Dave and I think it's time to close this properly. It's been two years since Tilly brought down her final wall and that's all thanks to Dr. Dean Hawthorn being not a Doctor, but one of the finest men I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. Dean and Tilly were married last week and the door was firmly locked on any shadows that could possibly haunt Tilly.

Seventeen years down the line, and Tilly finally sees herself as other people see her, as Dean sees her. She's a strong, beautiful, well adjusted woman and not the emotional and scarred burden she once saw herself as.

No one has ever tackled the Grace Miller Saga as part of an exam, no one except Dean Hawthorn. Dean passed with honours, in more ways than one, in my opinion. No one else will ever have the opportunity to tackle it now. Because it now involves the wife of a Doctor, it's officially classified as restricted.

You did it Tilly. I'm so very, very proud of you.

Dave smiled and added his own signature alongside Marie's. The case was put away, locked, and labelled with love and pride.

----- End