

# ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** This is an Original/Uber story. The main characters and story are the product of the authors imagination.

**RATED NC17:** For profanity and sex.

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**FEEDBACK:** If you enjoy the story please let me know: [weebod@mac.com](mailto:weebod@mac.com)

This story takes place in Scotland. Anna Lynch, a Detective in the Drug's squad is sent undercover to a small Scottish fishing village. There she meets and befriends the charming Heather Keith. As the pair grow closer, Anna finds it increasingly difficult to draw the line between work and pleasure.

## Prologue

Detective Sergeant Anna Lynch stood amongst her peers, a cup of strong black coffee in her hand. Her eyes tracked over towards the windows that lined the wall to her left. The rain was falling from the dull grey sky. She sighed inwardly, they didn't call Glasgow rain town without good reason. She listened to her boss detail the latest movements of a drug baron they had been after for more than two years now. They had gotten close often, but never managed to pin anything on him. The arrests were always made lower down the pecking order of his organisation. So far nothing had been linked to him directly.

It seems this time he was importing the drugs from the North East coast. There was nothing unusual in that. It was a familiar route, due to miles of isolated coastline. They had run several operations alongside customs & excise, where drugs were being brought in using this route.

What made this operation different was the allegation that there was a fishing boat involved. It would be more difficult to find any crime being committed amongst men going about their usual business. To that end Anna's boss, Inspector Bruce Davidson, would be sending some of his officers undercover. They would stand a far better chance gathering information from within the community.

"So Lynch and McGinty you will be acting as a married couple." Anna's head shot round her blue eyes pinning her boss.

"Why me?" She sure as hell wasn't the only woman in the room.

Davidson didn't flinch, "You grew up on a farm. You and McGinty will be staying in a small farmhouse that you recently purchased. You've both given up your city jobs to make a go of things. We need people who at least know something about farming."

"My folks owned the local pub, which the farmers used...I'd hardly call that growing up on a farm," Anna answered in disbelief.

"Well its close enough. You must have picked up something." Davidson replied in a warning tone.

"Yeah, foot and mouth." There were a few sniggers at McGinty's quick-witted reply.

Anna shot daggers at him "And since when did you getting sexually intimate with sheep qualify as farming knowledge?" There was outright laughter from the other detectives in the room.

"Right! Right. That's enough." Davidson held up his hand and brought the meeting back on course. "Anna, it's you and Pete running the farm. You are the two best qualified for this job."

Anna sighed resignedly. It was clear there was no way out of this. Davidson's mind was made up already. She glared at Pete McGinty.

"You keep your paws to yourself pal. Don't go getting any ideas."

Davidson acknowledged Anna's acceptance, reluctant though it was.

"Right you two, start thinking farming. I want this operation started by next Monday. Clear what work you can and spend the next five days preparing. We'll meet same time tomorrow."

Pete McGinty sidled up to Anna as they left the briefing room. "So, Anna, I don't suppose you could lend me a few plaid shirts."

"Screw you, McGinty." His laugh could be heard all the way down the corridor.

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Anna headed to the cafeteria for lunch and, after selecting a ham salad with chips, she made her way over to a friendly face she spotted at one of the tables. Lesley Hamilton had joined the force around the same time as Anna. They were cadets together although, after spending five years in uniform, their respective careers had taken on different paths. Anna had joined the Criminal Investigation Department or CID, whilst Lesley had remained in the uniformed division and, after twelve years on the force, she was now a sergeant and married with two kids. For the past three years Anna had been involved in the intelligence branch of CID as part of the drug squad.

"Hey, Anna. Where have you been hiding yourself?" Lesley offered her long time friend a warm welcoming smile.

Anna smiled at Lesley's gentle chastisement. She really did try, but she had never been great at keeping up with friends and family regularly. Between her commitment to her job and the strange hours it entailed, she rarely had time for socialising.

"Hi, Lesley, how are the kids?"

"The kids are great, Anna. Roddy starts school after the summer and Rebecca will be starting nursery."

Anna was rocked by this information. It seemed just a few months ago that Roddy was starting nursery, now he was going to school, which meant he was almost five and Rebecca three. She briefly wondered where all the time was going. She shook her head a little in bewilderment.

"Wow...they grow up so fast. I'll have to visit soon or I won't recognise my little Godson." Anna glanced at Lesley a look of mild embarrassment on her face.

Lesley touched her friend gently on the wrist. "Its okay, I understand that you're kept busy, Anna. They would really like to see you when you have the time though. Gordon as well."

Anna smiled ruefully. Gordon was Lesley's husband. They had met on the force some ten years ago. Gordon and Anna had never really gotten along but they had a kind of peace pact because they both thought the world of Lesley. Gordon had left the force before the children were born. He now worked in insurance. Anna supposed that was maybe one of the reasons they never gelled. While Anna was passionate about her work, Gordon had always viewed it as just a job. It was probably for the best he had never forged ahead with a career in the force.

"So, do you think Gordon would insure me yet, or does he still think I'm a liability?" Anna asked cheekily.

Lesley laughed and lightly swatted Anna's arm. "You know he would, otherwise he would have me to answer to...Seriously, Anna, he knows you would do anything for his family. He respects you, even though he struggles to show you that."

"Well Gordon is certainly right about that. I would do anything for his family." Anna replied gently, a knowing look passing between them. Lesley had cause to be thankful to Anna on more than one occasion over the last twelve years. She knew first hand that Anna was a brave, strong woman, who could be counted on in an emergency or a potentially threatening situation.

The moment passed between them, Lesley gently cleared her throat. Anna may not be overly sociable but Lesley would never give up trying to change that.

"So, anyone new in your life?"

Anna knew Lesley would ask. She never failed. She always asked with such a hopeful look on her face that Anna almost wished she could tell her something different. She took a deep breath before answering.

"No ...," she replied as she released her breath.

"Anna..." Lesley started, but Anna interrupted her.

"I know...I know you want to see me find someone special, someone who makes me happy." Anna looked down and played with the food that was left on her plate. She looked back at her friend, "I don't know, Lesley, maybe it's just not for me."

Lesley looked at Anna. Her friend was truly beautiful, a tall, lean frame, dark hair and blue eyes. She certainly had no shortage of admirers. Even sitting there in her in jeans, T-shirt and trainers she was attractive. Anna had a certain androgyny, combined with feminine grace. She attracted both sexes with ease. The principal problem was Anna made no conscious effort to attract that attention. Perhaps as a result of this or maybe it was just down to her personality, either way Anna gave off a very intimidating aura. It took either a very strong or very stupid person to attempt to get past that.

"Never give up hope, my friend." Lesley replied, hoping herself that Anna would someday find love.

## **Chapter One**

Anna steered her Audi into the garage she had been given directions to. She was here to pick up a Land Rover and leave her own car for the duration of her assignment. Turning off a small road on the outskirts of Glasgow and into a yard full of tyres and old cars, she was immediately suspicious of leaving her car amongst this disarray. Cursing under her breath as she pulled up outside what she assumed to be an office, Anna was grateful that she had already dressed for her trip up North, so she wasn't feeling too out of place in her faded jeans, sweater and walking boots. She exited her car and was greeted by a man in his late forties. He was wearing faded navy blue overalls that sported oil and grease stains that no amount of washing powder could remove. She idly thought to herself that they never showed people trying to wash this type of garment on those inane TV adverts.

"Morning, darling, are ye lost?" Anna grinned at him; she could handle his playful banter. "I don't think so. I'm Anna Lynch, looking for George Robertson." She folded her arms and waited patiently while he gave her a quick once over. She could almost hear the wheels turning inside his head as he absorbed the information she had just given him.

He nodded once, his tone instantly turning business like. "You better come with me then."

He led her towards a row of garages that banked the back of the yard. Swiftly opening one towards the middle he motioned Anna to step inside. Anna was immediately transported back to a time when she was just a little girl. Her grandfather had been a mechanic. He owned a small garage near where Anna had grown up. She would often go there just to watch him work. Standing here amongst those same familiar smells of oil and Swarfega brought a small smile to Anna's normally closed features.

"Here she is." Anna looked round at George Robertson, the added boom in his voice brought on by the enclosed space they were in had given her a slight start.

"She's a beauty isn't she?" George proclaimed as he thumped the bonnet heartily.

Anna began to let her eyes roam over the vehicle in question. She had to agree. Anna had been concerned she was going to be driving a vehicle that made her look like some country wannabe. Instead she was looking at an original green Land Rover, possibly even built before 1980.

She glanced at George, her appreciation of the vehicle written clearly on her face. "It's reliable?"

"She certainly is. I use her for my fishing trips. She never lets me down." He opened the driver door then leaned across to let Anna in the passenger side.

"It's an old series III built in 1977. I'll take you out for a spin and show you how all the gears work....there are twenty of them." George grinned at her as he set off. Anna being used to only one gear lever with five gears paid very close attention for the next hour as George showed her how to operate and switch between the four gear levers.

Anna drove her car into the now vacant Land Rover spot, having secured a promise from the very helpful George Robertson that she would find her car in the exact same condition when she returned.

Anna donned her shades and removed her sweater, leaving her clothed in a light cotton T-shirt, the July sun having made an appearance from behind the clouds. She put the Land Rover in gear and began her journey. As she crunched the gears while slowing down approaching a roundabout, George's parting words were still floating round her head. *"Treat her like you own her, Anna."* She snorted to herself as she wrestled to find the correct gear.

She had been on the road now for close to three hours. As usual the traffic heading out of Glasgow on a Friday morning was less heavy than the traffic going into the city. With few road works on the main route towards Montrose she had made good time.

Anna checked her map. She had reached the village of Havenburgh with little difficulty now she had to find the farm. It was situated three miles outside the village and had its own road, which led to the actual farm buildings. It was finding this road that was proving to be the most frustrating part of her journey.

Just as Anna was about to do a U-turn she spotted a gap in the road up ahead. She indicated left and drove up towards what she hoped would be the farm.

As Anna approached she saw another vehicle already parked. It was an open bed truck, which she assumed must be McGinty's new transport.

Anna huffed again as she considered their cover story. She and Pete had been working in the city's financial sector and had had enough of the daily grind and long hours...so they had bought an organic sheep farm on Ebay. She knew that fact would actually raise less suspicion and would cover any ineptitude shown by herself or McGinty, but she still cringed inwardly at the thought of actually having to say that. She had been researching organic sheep farming methods on the Internet and hoped she could come off as vaguely knowledgeable. She didn't even want to know if the police department had actually bothered to provide them with bona fide organic sheep.

They would be assisted by Dave MacDonald, who was a lecturer at the local agricultural college and actually had a working knowledge of organic sheep farming. He would pose as a friend helping out for the first few weeks. She was pleased that Pete would be the one to take care of the sheep, since it seemed that he really did know a bit about them, having spent many summers on his uncle's farm.

Anna parked and got out of the vehicle. She took a good look round at her surroundings and at what would be her home for the foreseeable future. The farmhouse was a traditional stone building, with a slated roof. Originally 'L' shaped, it now had a flat roofed extension built onto where the 'L' shape was.

Anna knew the farm was about 124 acres all in and, to the right of the farmhouse, were several farm buildings, one of which Pete McGinty was exiting.

"Hey, Anna, glad you could finally make it."

"McGinty." Anna responded evenly.

"Hey, Davidson said you have to call me Pete, otherwise people will think its odd. Or you could call me darling, or honey, or...."

Anna glowered at him. "I'll call you Pete when we are in public, but that's it."

Pete shrugged. "So, have you got a welcoming kiss for your husband then?" McGinty asked with a grin.

"Do you always have to be such a pain in the arse?"

"Aww, c'mon Anna, I'm just having fun. Lighten up."

"Save it for the sheep, McGinty." She looked intently at him for the first time since arriving. He looked different somehow. His brown hair was a bit windswept, almost in need of a cut, but that

seemed to assist with his new look. He was reasonably well built and handsome, she supposed. He was usually clean-shaven, but today he was sporting a bit of stubble. With his worn jeans, cord shirt and body warmer, she thought he did look the part of a farmer, the most difficult obstacle would be them passing as husband and wife. *'Time to bite the bullet'* Anna thought. They had a job to do and she wanted to do it well.

"Pete. Why do Scotsmen wear kilts?"

He just looked at her blankly unsure where her question had come from.

"Because the sheep can hear a zipper from a mile away." With that she took her bags into the house, leaving McGinty staring after her slack jawed.

Anna walked across a gravel path and entered the farmhouse through a heavy oak door. She found herself standing in a large hall. To her left were the dining room and fully fitted kitchen. On her right was a spacious living room. She walked further down the hall and found another room on her right. This was the master bedroom, which Pete had already claimed as his own, assuming the luggage was his. At the end of the hall it opened out into a bright sunroom, which Anna realised was the extension she had viewed from outside. It had a warm, welcoming feel to it, with its bank of large south facing windows and cane furniture topped with overstuffed cushions. All the downstairs floors were wooden with the exception of the kitchen, which was covered with slate tiles. Anna took the stairs and found a further two en-suite double bedrooms, one of which she selected for herself. It had a double bed and a good view and that was enough for Anna.

## **Chapter Two**

Heather Keith pulled her white Vauxhall Corsa into an empty space outside the Marine bar. The pub was situated by the Harbour and faced out onto the North Sea. The water was currently calm with the tide gradually making its way out. Heather entered the bar and paused briefly inside to allow her eyes to adjust to the dimness of the room. Her nose was immediately assaulted with the smell of cigarette smoke and stale alcohol. Her ears picked up the direction of her intended party before her eyes did. The wolf whistles were always a give away. Heather made her way over to Greg and his crew. They had been back in the harbour for a couple of hours after being at sea for the last few days. As was the custom, they celebrated with a few beers before heading home to their families and friends. It didn't matter what time of night or day the fishermen returned, the bar was licensed to open specially for them. Heather deftly made her way between some tables and chairs heading towards the noise coming from the far right corner. She passed the long mahogany topped bar and nodded a polite hello to Margaret who was currently serving the patrons of the bar.

Heather was greeted heartily by the six-man crew. Greg Moir, the skipper and Heather's fiancée

greeted her with a warm kiss on the lips. This action was received raucously by the other crewmembers with a few more whistles and roars of encouragement. Heather laughed it off good-naturedly. She was very used to the men's antics upon returning from sea. There was always a sense of euphoria upon their return, which she knew would quickly give way to fatigue.

Heather looked at Greg, he had a few days beard growth and was, as usual, in need of a shower and a good nights sleep, but that didn't matter to her. She was just happy to see him return safely and looking healthy despite his tiredness.

"Hi, handsome. Good to see you." She smiled warmly at him conveying her sincerity.

He smiled back, "Same goes." Greg motioned for her to take a seat. "Drink?" He asked as he nodded towards the bar.

"Sure, I'll have a fresh orange juice, thanks."

As Greg headed towards the bar she looked around at the rest of the crew. "A good trip, guys?"

There were a few nods, then Jake a long time crewmember and friend of Greg's answered. "Not too bad, Heather, all things considered."

Heather nodded knowing full well to what Jake was referring. The white fish industry was being crippled at the moment. It was a real bone of contention amongst the Scottish fishing community. They were not free to fish where they wanted anymore. There were also restrictions on the amount of fish they were allowed to land. It made for a combination of longer hours on the water locating the fish and less money to be made from the smaller catch.

The mood amongst the crew turned sombre for a few moments before Jake deftly changed the subject to a lighter topic. "So, Heather, how are the wedding plans coming along?"

"Just fine, Jake. Though it's still almost a year away, its important to book the church and hotel well in advance to make sure we get our preferred choices for our wedding day. In truth my Mum has kind of taken charge of the organising and I have to admit that I'm reasonably happy to let her at this point in time. I will stop her from picking my wedding dress though!"

They all laughed at that statement. Most of the crew had known Mrs Keith for years. She was well known in the community particularly because she was on the board of most committees within the village. She also ran the local flower-arranging club. She was very much at the centre of village life.

Greg had returned from the bar and taken a seat next to Heather. He put his arm gently around his fiancée, while placing her drink in front of her. She glanced at him offering a soft smile of thanks. The conversation quickly turned to football and the chances of their respective teams in the coming season. Heather quietly absorbed the atmosphere around her until it was time to head home.

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Home for Heather and Greg was a modest two-bedroom cottage. They had purchased the cottage over two years ago. Just a few months after Heather had finished university. Upon Heather finishing her studies, Greg had proposed to her. He was keen to set a date for the wedding within a year, but Heather was more cautious and explained to him her reasons for wanting to wait a little longer. Heather had already accepted a job offer and was keen to concentrate on establishing her career in Community Education. She wanted them to start off on a sound financial footing. After much discussion they reached a compromise, which they both found acceptable. They would wait to set the date for their wedding and in the interim they could save money for the big day. They had continued on with this plan for almost a year after Heather graduated until Greg once again wanted to set the date. Instead another compromise was reached and they bought the cottage together. This had caused Heather some problems with her family. With her parents both active in the church they had frowned upon her decision to effectively live in sin. They had instead urged her to set the date to marry Greg and live together as man and wife. Though Heather loved both Greg and her parents dearly, on this she would not be swayed. The timing just didn't feel right for her. So she dug her heels in and she and Greg had moved in together a few months later. Her relationship with her parents had been a little strained initially, but they had come to accept her decision.

When She and Greg returned home that evening they had shared a light dinner after Greg had showered and were tucked up in bed by 9 p.m. Heather turned in bed to look at her lightly snoring fiancé, she wondered not for the first time what the future held for them both, particularly with regards to Greg's job. Only a few months ago he had been talking of the possibility of having to decommission the boat. However, in the last couple of months he had assured her that the boat was viable. Heather understood that the boat meant everything to Greg. His family had been fisherman going back many generations. It was in Greg's blood, it was more than a job. He loved fishing, it gave him a sense of fulfilment and every trip was like a new adventure for him. She could see the rush he got before setting off on a fishing trip. There would be a real anticipation and buzz surrounding him before he headed out to sea. She wondered how he could possibly give that up and hoped that he really could make it work despite the odds.

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"Wake up, sleepyhead!"

"Mmm ... Just a minute longer, babe." He reached out to pat the empty sheets next to him, frowning a little at the coolness. "Come back to bed." He said sleepily.

"You wish! Not even in your dreams, McGinty ... at least I hope not." Anna muttered looking at her partners sleep tousled hair.

Pete McGinty sat straight up in bed, suddenly realising where he was.

"Jesus Christ, Anna!"

"Exactly, it's Sunday and we're off to church. You have one hour to grab breakfast and look presentable." She gave him an appraising look. "I suggest you get a move on, you look like you will need all the time you can get." With that she strode out of the room and chuckled as she heard a pillow hit back of the door behind her.

Pete wandered into the kitchen thirty minutes later looking fairly presentable in a pair of navy dress trousers and a light blue oxford shirt. His outfit was completed with a pair of dark socks and brown worn in brogues. Once again Anna mused that Pete really knew how to blend in when he had to. Gone were the scruffy leather jackets, jeans and training shoes.

"There's coffee in the pot and some eggs and bacon keeping warm in the oven." Anna said as she threw a copy of the Sunday Herald onto the kitchen table.

Pete looked at her with appreciation, "My, my, we have been a busy little wife this morning."

Anna narrowed her eyes at him in warning. "I'm off to get changed, be ready to leave in twenty minutes." Anna had been up since 7 a.m. She had always been an early riser, which was great for work, but a curse on the weekends when she wanted to lie in. Instead she made use of her time and fetched a paper from the nearest newsagent. She had then showered and had coffee while she read the newspaper. After managing to use up another hour she had made breakfast for them both.

Anna returned to the kitchen twenty minutes later wearing a floral print sundress and a pair of stylish nubuck sandals. Her legs were bare, which showed off her tan. She had a small suede handbag over her right shoulder and a pair of sunglasses in her right hand. A lamb's wool white crew cardigan was casually draped over her left forearm.

Pete stared at Anna with open admiration. He would be proud to have this beautiful creature on his arm today. The thought that everyone there would think Anna was his wife both made his heart swell one moment then sink the very next. Pete felt like he was looking at a different woman completely. The clothes had softened Anna in such a way as to show her sheer beauty. Pete knew Anna was a great looking woman, but dressed like this he thought she was simply stunning.

Anna was beginning to feel self conscious under McGinty's stare. She wasn't used to wearing this sort of attire often and truth be told she wasn't exactly comfortable in it.

"Well?" She asked her voice conveying her irritation. Partly due to embarrassment and partly due to Pete's frank appraisal

"Anna, you look stunning." Pete replied while shaking his head ruefully from side to side. He offered his arm, "Shall we go, Mrs Thompson?"

Anna raised one dark eyebrow and gave him her best smouldering look. "C'mon, lets put on a show for our new neighbours."

Anna and Pete sat in a pew towards the back of the church. While neither of them attended a service on a regular basis, only managing the obligatory weddings, funerals and christenings, they knew enough to get by. They had both agreed that in a small community it was important to make as many inroads as possible. Attending Sunday service was one way of doing this. Anna took in her surroundings. The deep mahogany pews contrasted spectacularly with the white walls of the church. There was a wooden frame, which was built up into the V-shape of the roof and yet another slightly more rounded structure could be seen through the archway, which opened upon the altar. Both structures were made of the same rich mahogany. Several large windows lined the walls leading up to the altar bathing the building in natural light. Behind the altar itself three arch-shaped stained glass windows faced back onto the congregation. Anna had always had a slight fascination with churches. Growing up in a family of practicing Catholics she had spent many hours looking at the inside of the church during mass. With a childlike fascination for all things religious, she had decided by the age of ten, that it was her calling to become a nun. She almost snorted out loud at that memory. Clearly her thinking had changed drastically between the ages of ten and sixteen and, instead of wanting to be a nun, she actually found herself with a crush on one, Sister Gabriel, who taught religious education classes at her high school.

Anna snapped back to the present as her eyes settled on a blonde across to her right and about three rows ahead. Cute, she thought idly.

After the service finished Anna and Pete made their way leisurely back out into the bright sunshine. The minister was greeting the congregation on the steps as they left the church.

"Good morning to you both. Are you visiting our little village today?" He was a slender man who looked to be in his late sixties, his grey hair a little unruly and in need of a cut.

"No, Reverend, we've just moved here. Bought a farm just a few miles outside the village."

"Ah, and what farm would that be now?"

"Newhaven farm, Reverend."

"Oh yes, well that's just wonderful. So we will be seeing more of you then?" It was more of a statement than a question.

"Yes, and might I say it was a wonderful service today." They moved to leave but the Reverend stopped them.

"Hold on a minute there. You won't really know anyone yet will you? I know just the lady for the job."

"Thank you, Reverend, that's very kind." Replied Pete.

"Think nothing of it." He responded in kind, guiding Anna and Pete towards a group of people of to his right. "Mrs Keith."

The woman in question turned to them "Yes, Reverend MacKinlay."

Good God thought Anna *'its Hyacinth Bouquet!'*

"This is ...?" He looked to Anna and Pete expectantly.

"I'm Peter Thompson and this is my wife Anna."

"Peter and Anna have just moved into the Newhaven farm."

"Oh that's wonderful news." Mrs Keith beamed.

"Yes indeed, unfortunately being new to the area they haven't had time to meet anyone yet. Would you do the honours, Mrs Keith?"

"Of course, Reverend, consider it done." She beamed with pride clearly relishing the task Reverend MacKinlay had requested of her.

"Thank-you Mrs Keith." He turned to Pete and Anna. "I'll see you both next Sunday then. Good day." With that he wandered off to chat with more of the congregation.

"Thank-you, Reverend." Anna called after him. He waved in acknowledgement without turning round.

They both turned expectantly to Mrs Keith. She was a well turned out woman, somewhere in her mid 50's. Her hair was tastefully highlighted with soft blondes and silver, which gave her a more natural look, while hiding the grey. Her make-up was light, apart from her lips, which were a wickedly vibrant pink. She smiled winningly at them.

"It's wonderful to see some young people move into the village." She paused a moment then added, "Are you intending to work on the farm or just live on it?" They both sensed their answer to this question would be important to Mrs Keith.

Pete answered. "Well, we're going to be farming sheep, organically." He gave her his most charming smile.

"Organically you say? Oh my! All these new ideas, its hard to keep up." With that Mrs Keith

began introducing them to what felt like the entire village.

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Anna and Pete arrived back at the farm some two hours later. Anna headed straight for her room anxious to get out of her dress and into more casual attire. After selecting some shorts and a T-shirt she headed for the kitchen to boil the kettle for tea.

"So what do you think?" Pete asked as he took a seat at the table, his arms resting on top of the wooden surface.

Anna pondered his question for a moment before answering. "We certainly raised our profile a lot today. I think we adopt a normal routine for the next couple of weeks, basically go about minding our own business. You have the sheep arriving tomorrow, so we can spend the next few days learning more about what looking after them entails. Then, midweek we take a trip into the village for a drink in the evening. Raise our profile a little more."

"Sounds like a plan to me. I'm going to take a trip up to Aberdeen, within the next few days. I'll work it around the time that Dave will be here." Pete rubbed his hands over his face. "I plan to take it easy for the rest of the day, cause tomorrow is going to be very busy."

Anna grunted her acknowledgement. The thought of seventy sheep being in their care was not a pleasant one.

### **Chapter Three**

Anna was desperate to get off the farm. It was Wednesday evening and she and Pete had mutually agreed they needed a change of scenery. Three full days with the sheep had finally taken their toll. They decided to pay a visit to the village local and hopefully make a few new inroads with the bar patrons.

Anna and Pete climbed into her Land Rover and as she gunned the engine, the sounds of T-Rex came through the speakers. Pete turned to Anna with a smirk on his face.

Anna could feel his scrutiny even before she turned to look at him. "Something on your mind Pete?"

"I just never pegged you for a fan of 70's glam rock."

"I'm not." Anna replied simply as she put the Range Rover into reverse.

Pete almost sighed audibly but managed to hold it back. Sometimes it was like pulling teeth, trying to get Anna to open up about anything personal. "Anna, I hate to point out the obvious but ... if you're not a fan why are you playing the music?"

Anna shrugged "I wanted to listen to some music, I don't have any tapes with me and the Land Rover doesn't have a CD player. The tape was already in the deck."

Pete smiled at Anna's answer. Perhaps she wasn't as complex as he originally thought. Here she was driving a Land Rover down a country road and listening to T-Rex simply because it was the only music she had. She seemed perfectly comfortable with both.

"So if you had a choice what would you be listening to?"

Anna thought about her answer for a moment while she manoeuvred onto the main road that led into the village. She shrugged, "I'm not too fussy. Something relaxing maybe."

Pete rolled his eyes, an obvious sign of his exasperation. "Could you be more specific, even if its just because you're supposed to be my wife! Christ, Anna, its just a question about music."

Anna parked outside the Marine Bar and pulled on the handbrake. She looked over at Pete who had his arms folded across his chest, glaring at her. She held up her hands in mock surrender. "Alright, Pete, keep your hair on. Let's see ... Dido. You happy now?"

Pete still seemed a bit grumpy as they walked towards the entrance of the pub. "Moby." He still said nothing. Anna tried again "Katie Melua." That only got her a raised eyebrow so she decided to go for broke. "Snow Patrol."

"No way!" Pete stopped right in front of the door effectively blocking her entrance.

"What? You don't believe I like Snow Patrol?"

"It's just..." Pete was shaking his head unable to find the right words.

"Yes...?" Anna was making him squirm. She had been enjoying toying with Pete for the duration of the ten-minute journey.

"Nothing" Pete mumbled as he turned to open the door for Anna to enter. Anna had to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from laughing. That would teach him to leave his CD cases lying around the farmhouse.

Anna entered the bar and looked around. She sensed that the conversation in the bar had suffered a lull upon their arrival. A few heads had turned to see who had entered the small establishment. Pete sidled up behind her letting his hand rest naturally on her back as he suggested she find a

table for them while he got the drinks in. Anna chose a table that was reasonably near a mixed group of about eight men and women. She recognised a couple of faces in the group from the introductions Mrs Keith had made on Sunday after church. The small blonde, who she remembered was Mrs Keith's daughter, smiled at her as she caught her eye. Anna nodded politely in return as she took a seat at her table. Pete joined her just a couple of minutes later with their drinks.

She looked around the bar, it had cream walls, which could have been white at some point in time but were now stained with nicotine. It had a burgundy carpet, with a gold crown-point motif. The walls were adorned with various fishing memorabilia, a clear testament to the history of the village. In the left-hand corner was an archway that led to the toilets and a way through to the lounge. The bar itself was a little confined which made the new comers stick out like a sore thumb.

Greg Moir watched the new couple enter the bar and saw the tall woman nod to his fiancée.

"Who's that?"

"Anna and Peter Thompson, they've just moved into Newhaven Farm."

Greg nodded, "More townies buying cheap property."

I don't think so, Greg, they are working the farm. They've given up jobs in the city to farm organic sheep."

"That's all we need, more clueless white collar workers trying something fancy. The farms around here have been farming sheep for centuries and now that's not good enough." Greg took a long swallow of his beer.

Heather looked at her fiancé; these last few months had seen him increasingly frustrated with the lack of revenue from his fishing boat. She understood his frustrations, but that was no reason to be directing his anger at the new couple.

"I think we should make an effort to make them feel welcome."

Greg looked at her. "Why? People like them are coming here and buying up the property because it's cheaper than in the city. Then the folks who grew up here,' he gestured around the table at the present company, "we can't afford to buy a home for ourselves. Jake and Callum are still living at their parents' house because of the inflated prices."

Jake answered, "I hear you, Greg, nothing affordable has come on the market for months now." His younger brother Callum agreed.

Heather couldn't dispute the point Greg was making. Getting a foot on the property ladder for most young people in the village had become increasingly difficult.

"I agree, Greg, but I still think we should make an effort with them. The Thompson's are going to contribute to the local economy and in the future might even offer employment to some people around here. It's not like they have bought a house in the village as a weekend getaway."

"She does have a point, Greg," Forbes Forsyth added, offering his support to Heather's point. "They have come here to work."

Greg nodded, but looked like he was yet to be convinced.

Anna slowly sipped her half-pint of lager as she and Pete made idle conversation about sheep and the weather. Anna watched as the blonde got up from her table and made her way through the arch.

"Go to the bar and get me another drink, Pete."

He glanced at her for confirmation of what she was up to. They were only about half way through their drinks. She leaned closer to him to whisper in his ear. To anyone in the bar it would look like a romantic overture. "Take your time, she might take pity on me and stop for a chat on her way back from the toilet."

Pete took his cue and headed to the bar with the intention of making idle chat with the barman, while ordering the drinks.

As Heather returned from her trip to the bathroom, she noticed the dark haired woman was now sitting on her own. She had been looking for an opportunity to invite the couple into their company but was reluctant to butt into their conversation. She saw an opening and decided to take it.

"Hi again."

Anna looked up at the blonde who had approached her table. She had watched her return to the bar and had been about to attempt to get her attention when the blonde took the initiative. For that, Anna was grateful.

"Hi, have a seat."

"Thanks. Its Anna right?" Anna was pinned with warm, welcoming green eyes.

"Yeah, I'm sorry I met so many people on Sunday I'm struggling to remember your name." Anna had the decency to look a little embarrassed.

The blonde smiled in understanding, clearly not offended. "Its Heather, Heather Keith." She offered a warm hand, which Anna took.

Ah, yeah, your Mum was kind enough to introduce Peter and myself to a few people after church."

Heather rolled her eyes and smiled. "She can be a little overbearing."

Anna couldn't help but notice the cute way Heather's nose crinkled at the bridge as she scrunched her face.

"No, she was great. We don't know anyone around here, so it was good to start meeting people."

Heather nodded knowingly. "Did she talk you into going to her flower arranging classes?"

Anna's face took on a look of mock sadness and she affected a pout. "I had to decline, because of my allergies."

Heather laughed out loud. "I wish I had been there to see that. Not many manage to escape so easily. You're either a quick thinker, Anna, or an unfortunate farmer."

Anna chuckled, "My lips are sealed." She couldn't help but marvel at how easy it was to talk to Heather. She didn't have to put in much effort. The conversation was just flowing naturally. It was at that point that Peter returned from the bar, having clearly exhausted all avenues of small talk with the barman.

"Peter, you remember Heather?"

Pete put the drinks on the table and offered Heather his hand. "Sure I do, yes. Nice to see you again."

"Likewise. Listen, I was wondering if you would both like to join us for a drink." Heather motioned to the group of people she had been sitting with. Pete and Anna both agreed and took their drinks with them over to the tables in the corner. Heather introduced them both to the rest of her company, which consisted of her fiancé Greg's fishing crew and their wives and girlfriends.

As the evening wore on Anna found herself talking more and more to Heather. She learned that Heather was a community education worker, having gained her degree at Dundee University five years ago. Anna did some quick mental arithmetic and worked out that Heather had to be older than she looked. She originally considered Heather to be around 21, but now believed she had to be closer to 27 years old.

Being a community Education worker meant Heather was very active within the village and surrounding areas, running and integrating educational programmes and activities. She had mentioned to Anna that part of her job was to encourage members of the local community to volunteer to assist with the various programmes and groups. Apparently, the local youth club was in desperate need of additional volunteers. Anna had winced at the thought of working with

both kids and animals, but knew that this could be a very good opening for her. Upon sensing a spark of interest, Heather had encouraged Anna to come along to the community centre on one of the evenings she ran the youth club. Anna had said she would give it some thought.

When they left the pub at around eleven p.m. a fog had rolled in giving the harbour an eerie feel to it. The temperature had dropped considerably and Anna felt her body shiver in response to the sudden change from the warmth of the pub to the cooler outdoors. She briefly lamented forgetting to bring a jacket as she felt the goose bumps rise on her bare arms, when she felt a sudden warmth as Pete wrapped a strong arm around her shoulder, hugging her closely to him. Over the three hours Anna had only consumed two half pints of lager as she was driving. Pete on the other hand had indulged. He walked towards the Land Rover with his arm around Anna and a smile plastered to his face as he said goodnight to everyone. Anna slipped an arm around his lower back as the rest of their company left the bar on foot. She watched closely as Heather and Greg shared a few words and a giggle. Anna suddenly felt very envious of Greg Moir and she didn't want to think about that too much.

## **Chapter Four**

"Hurry up, Pete, I don't want to be late." Anna was just finishing up the dinner dishes. She had decided that tonight she would go to the youth club under the pretence of a tryout, but there was no doubt she would be volunteering regardless of how it went. Working alongside Heather Keith would offer Anna many opportunities to gather information and find out more about her fiancé Greg Moir. The trip to the local pub had already proven to be very fruitful, meeting the entire crew of one of the local fishing boats. McGinty decided to take the opportunity to go to the pub for similar reasons, so Anna had offered to drop him off then meet him there later.

Anna re-appeared downstairs having changed her clothes. She had chosen to wear a pair of hipster jeans with a tight fitting long sleeved white T-shirt. Opting for a casual fashionable look, on her feet were trainer socks and a pair of navy suede retro training shoes.

"You've got two minutes, Pete, be ready or I'm leaving without you." Anna called as she went outside. It was a balmy July evening with very little breeze, which was unusual being so close to the North Sea. Anna started the engine just as Pete jogged out of the front door. He was freshly showered after his exploits with the sheep and looked good in his jeans and T-shirt with a pair of Nikes. Pete hopped into the Land Rover with enthusiasm. He threw a small bag into Anna's lap and waited expectantly.

Anna looked at the package, then Pete, with suspicion in her eyes. She reached into the bag and brought out a cassette, it was Snow Patrol.

"I made a copy for you. Thought it might be a change from T-Rex."

Momentarily stunned, Anna's eyebrows shot towards her forehead. "That's really good of you, Pete. Thanks very much."

"You're welcome."

Pete was looking pretty smug and Anna had the sneakiest feeling she had just been had, but she couldn't be sure. *'Oh well, Snow Patrol it is'* She popped the cassette into the deck and hoped that it wasn't dreadful.

The community centre was situated at the top of the village. It was one of the newer structures, most of the current village buildings having been built between the late 19th century and 1950's with only a few exceptions. Anna parked in one of the designated spaces. She was beginning to love the freedom of parking that village life offered. Back home in Glasgow parking was a logistical nightmare, especially in the area of the city where she lived. One of the drawbacks of living fairly centrally she supposed. Anna entered the building and noticed an office immediately to her right. Through the glass fronted window she could see Heather Keith sitting at a computer. She knocked on the open door and waited.

Heather spun round in her chair at the sound of light knocking to be confronted with the very tall, dark haired Anna Thompson. "Anna!" Heather proclaimed, pleasantly surprised by her visitor. "Come in and have a seat."

"I hope I'm not disturbing you?" Anna sat on a chair to the side of Heather's desk. The office was a bit cramped, but functional. The walls were painted a duck egg blue and lay host to various notes, charts and memo's.

"No, nothing that can't wait. What can I do for you?"

"Well, I thought about your offer and decided I'd quite like to give the volunteering thing a try. That is if you're still looking for someone."

"Yes! That's great! Really, I can always use an extra pair of hands at the youth club. So, you up for starting tonight?"

"Might as well. Just tell me what to do and I'll give it a go."

"Tell you what. Tonight just chat with the kids, get to know them a little, that way you can observe and get a feel for what goes on. I'll introduce you to the other volunteers when they arrive. This evening it's myself; Steven, who in truth more likes to come to hang around than volunteer really, but he's too old to attend otherwise. Also, Tom will be volunteering tonight. He works offshore on the oilrigs so is only available when he's home on leave. I should warn you, the kids are always curious when someone new is here. They will most likely give you the third degree and test the waters a little so to speak. Basically they will be trying to get a feel for who you are and to ascertain what they might get away with around you."

"Thanks for the heads up. I think I can handle that."

"Good." Heather's animated voice turned serious for a moment. "There is one thing, Anna, I have to do a background check on you, through the police. It's a required procedure now to run a check on any adult working with kids. Do you have any problem with that?"

"No, not at all. Just tell me what information you need and I'll be happy to let you run the check. I understand it's important to do this." Anna was aware of the check that was required and, of course, she already knew the information she supplied to Heather would return a clean record. There were serious concerns regarding the amount of known paedophiles attempting to solicit contact with children through volunteering. Nobody was prepared to take any chances these days without first running the appropriate background checks.

By the end of the evening Anna was feeling quite exhilarated; Heather approached her as the last of the youths left the centre.

"So, what do you think?"

"I had a good time, it was fun."

"Really...?" Heather drew out the word. She had been keeping an eye on Anna for most of the night and the woman had clearly been in her element, especially around the pool table.

"Ah, yeah." Anna shrugged, half in apology. "I kind of grew up in the right environment. My parents owned a bar so I played a lot of pool and we also had a football table for a while."

"And here I thought it was a sure sign of a misspent youth, you know too much time hanging out in pool halls with all the cool kids and the bad boys." Heather teased.

"No, nothing so glamorous I'm afraid. So, have I tainted my bad girl image?"

"Well, maybe with me, but not with the kids. The guys think you're cool and ah, hot I believe was one comment amongst others and the girls are worried about the amount of attention the boys are paying you."

"Oops." Anna laughed a little. "So, on Thursday I spend more time with the girls then?"

Heather nodded her agreement, clearly pleased with Anna's foresight. "I think you could be good at this volunteering thing, Anna" she finished with a wink.

Anna waited behind while Heather locked up the centre, her protective instincts kicking in. Heather didn't seem to mind, even though Anna was sure she normally locked up alone. Its not like there was much crime committed in Havenburgh, which struck Anna as ironic since 'crime' was precisely the reason she was there undercover.

"I'm going down to the pub to meet Pete. Can I give you a lift anywhere?"

Heather declined Anna's offer as she lived only a short distance away. Despite Anna's protest's Heather assured her that she always walked home from the centre without any difficulties. Anna sat in the Land Rover and, as she watched Heather make her way home, she mused on the fact that it was difficult not to like this small blonde woman who had been so warm and welcoming. Anna knew that, despite her better judgement she felt drawn to Heather in a way that could create problems for both of them further down the line. It was a rare thing for her to feel so comfortable so quickly around another person. She sighed and started the engine this was a complication she didn't need.

## Chapter Five

The following Wednesday brought with it some miserable weather. It had rained for most of the day in the small village. Heather decided to drive the short distance to her parents just to keep dry. She pulled her Corsa into the driveway and parked behind her Father's navy blue Ford Focus, as she turned off her window wipers. A flash of lightning lit up the dark sky, which was followed seconds later by a crack of thunder. Opening her car door she decided to make a run for it. Bursting through her parent's front door, Heather briefly shook off some rainwater as she shed her jacket and hung it from a peg in the foyer. She opened the glass door into the hall and was greeted by a very excited Milly, her Mothers four-year-old golden retriever. Heather immediately got onto her jean clad knees to greet her.

"Hey, girl! Wow, you're happy to see me aren't you?"

"Heather, is that you dear?"

"Yes, Mum."

"Your Father's in his study doing his online banking. Pop in and say hello, then you can help me in the kitchen."

"Yes, Mum." Heather replied with a patience born of years of practice. Her father was so conscientious it would never occur to him to do his banking during work hours.

"C'mon, girl, lets go see Dad." Heather ruffled Milly's coat one more time then stood up to go towards the study with the dog obediently trotting behind her.

"Hey, Dad."

"Hello, sweetheart. How are things?" Malcolm Keith was a pleasant looking man in his mid

fifties. His once dark brown hair was mostly grey now, with a receding hairline. Her Father as usual, was well turned out. Dressed conservatively in navy pinstripe suit trousers, with a cornflower blue shirt and blue striped tie. His black brogues were highly polished, with a stitch detail finish. He looked every inch the local bank manager.

Heather gave her Father a quick hug. "Oh, not too bad, can't complain."

"So, you're here for your dinner and an update on your wedding preparations?"

Heather chuckled. "I'm sure I should be the one giving the update and not receiving it."

"Ah well, you know how your Mother likes to take charge of these things, she means well, but remember, Heather, if you're unhappy with that you just say the word." There was nothing but sincerity in his green eyes.

She knew exactly what her Father meant. He would step in if her Mothers' meddling got out of hand.

"I'm fine at the moment, Dad. It's a long way off yet." She waved off his concern.

"How's work going?"

"It's good, it's going well." Heather wandered over to the window in her Father's study. The rain continued to fall heavily, giving an oddly damp, chilly feel to the late afternoon air. Malcolm Keith watched his daughter for a moment. Years of practice told him there was something on her mind. He also knew she needed him to offer a platform to assist her to open up.

"Is Greg out in the boat?"

Heather sighed and shook her head a little despondently. "No. I asked him to come today, but he said he had things to do."

"And does he?"

"Dad, he's only allowed to fish for fifteen days a month. He has more time on his hands than he knows what to do with." Heather decided to open up to her Father. If anyone could offer her sound advice it was he. "I don't know, Dad, I've tried talking to him about the *Laissez Faire*," Heather said, referring to her fiancé's boat by name. We all know the white fish industry is on its knees. I'm concerned that he won't make the right choices when the time comes."

"You mean decommissioning the boat if need be?"

"Yes, I suppose. It was only a few months back he was talking about that possibility. I know it's the last thing he wants to do, the boat was his father's, it's more than just a job to him, it's his Father's memory, it's a way of life." She finished, looking up to the ceiling, frustration clearly evident in her tone.

"Something's changed, Dad, I don't know what. I've tried asking Greg, but he has pretty much shut me out. He says the boat is fine and I've not to worry about it."

"You don't believe him?"

"I don't know what to believe. He's been fishing his quota and trying to buy, or lease, quota unused by other vessels. But you've heard what's happening with that. They are effectively being held to ransom by each other, the demand for spare quota is so high. I just don't see any improvement in the near future. There are too many restrictions imposed at the moment." Heather finished, clearly frustrated.

"So you're worried about your long term financial security." Malcolm Keith didn't miss the subtle cues from his daughter. He knew there was more, but wouldn't push her.

"Yes, that's a concern."

"I can't give you any good prognosis on Greg's future, Heather. It's in the hands of the Government and the rest of the European Union. Nobody knows what decisions they will make at the next meeting. Who knows, they may lift some of the sanctions, but they may stay the same, in which case the boats continue to be forced into decommission and it's survival of the fittest. Maybe Greg has what it takes to be one of the survivors?"

Heather thought about what her Father was saying. Maybe Greg could survive, but at what cost? She hated the uncertainty surrounding Greg's fishing future.

"Maybe he can, Dad. I just wish he would talk more to me about it."

"Give him time, sweetheart, see what happens in the next wee while." Malcolm Keith decided to try and lift some of his daughter's gloom. He put his arm around her, "Now come on, your Mother will be thinking you've gotten lost. I happen to know she's cooking one of your favourite dinners and I heard talk of dessert."

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Heather returned home from her parents around nine p.m. to find the cottage empty. She felt a little anger towards Greg. He normally went with her to her parents for dinner, when he wasn't out at sea. She removed her jacket and black leather ankle boots and, sitting down on the sofa, she reached for the TV remote. Flicking through the five terrestrial channels she found nothing that caught her eye. She laid her head back on the sofa and attempted to let some of the tension drain from her body. She heard a key click in the front door lock and turned her head expectantly towards the living room door. At the sight of Greg's welcoming smile she felt most of her anger diffuse.

"Hi, baby."

"Hmm, you smell good." Greg buried his nose into Heather's hair, inhaling the scent of her shampoo. He kissed her neck then made his way to her lips, lingering and then deepening the kiss.

Heather responded to Greg's passionate overture, immediately tasting the alcohol on his breath. Normally it would not have bothered her, but tonight she felt a little pissed off about it. She pulled out of the kiss and sat back on the sofa.

Greg looked at her with concern, a little confused by her actions. "Is everything okay, Heather?"

She turned to look at him, contemplating how to respond to that question. She remembered her Father's advice from earlier about giving Greg time, but she really wasn't sure that she had the patience to do that. Something inside her wanted to scream and she couldn't figure out exactly where it was coming from. She sighed deeply as she laid her head back on the sofa.

"I don't know, Greg, maybe just a little tired I guess." She pondered her answer a moment and immediately questioned why she was holding back on the truth.

"No scratch that, Greg. I'm wondering why you didn't come with me to my Mum and Dad's."

"I told you, Heather, I had some things to do."

"In the pub?" She glared at him pointedly.

"Well, I suppose it could have been done somewhere else, but yes in the pub. I met with a guy who had some spare quota; I was negotiating buying up what he has left. Look, darling, I'm sorry I wasn't with you tonight. I really didn't have much of a choice, this was when he wanted to meet and I didn't want to miss out on the chance."

Heather softened once again upon hearing this. "I'm sorry, Greg, I know how hard you're working to keep the boat going." She reached for him to pick up where they had left of.

"So, does this mean we can still have an early night?"

"Sure, handsome."

Heather finished in the bathroom and entered the bedroom. Greg was already in bed waiting. He eyed her hungrily and could feel himself harden as she made her way to him. Heather removed her white waffle robe and slipped into bed naked. Greg turned on his left side to face her. Kissing her deeply he pulled her left leg over his hip. Heather groaned as she felt his hand slip between her legs. As his mouth sought out her breasts, his fingers swirled over her clitoris and she surged against them. Sensing she was ready for him, in one smooth motion he turned Heather onto her

back. As Greg entered her, Heather planted her heels into the mattress and moved against him. Greg thrust steadily as Heather's hips rolled to meet each stroke. As she felt her orgasm build she prayed that he wouldn't climax before she herself reached release. Greg came quickly with a loud declaration of love, and Heather screwed her eyes shut in dismay. As her fiancé rolled off of her body and began to snore lightly, Heather contemplated what she should do. Wait for Greg to waken up or just leave him sleeping and take care of her needs herself.

The latter thought won out and, as Heather brought herself to orgasm and, just before she fell asleep, she was surprised to find a brief, unbidden image of Anna and Pete making love flit through her mind.

## Chapter Six

Anna glanced at the figure before her, taking in his rumpled appearance. He was definitely in need of a hair cut. With his unruly wavy black locks and full beard, he looked more like a mountaineer than a college lecturer.

"Morning, Dave."

Dave MacDonald turned around to see Anna standing in the doorway of the farmhouse.

"Morning, Anna. How are you?"

"Oh I'm good, thanks. Can I get you a cup of something?"

Dave grasped the bottom of his beard in his hand as he contemplated his answer. Anna hid a smile as she observed him trying to make his decision. She wondered how he would react if she actually asked him a difficult question.

"I'd love some tea, Anna, if its not too much trouble."

From the corner of her eye, Anna spotted a black and white fur ball approaching at speed.

"Hey, Jasper." She petted the enthusiastic bundle of Border collie playfully. "I'll be right back, Dave."

When Anna returned it was to find Dave leaning against his van and smoking on his pipe. She mused on the fact that, if Dave were any more laid-back, he would just fall over. Nothing seemed to bother him and she briefly envied his ability to seemingly set his own casual pace.

Dave thanked her as she handed him a cup of strong tea.

"So what's on the agenda this morning for you and Pete?"

Dave shrugged, "Shaving the sheep."

Anna looked puzzled. "You mean like removing all their wool?"

"Oh no, nothing like that. Just shaving the wool around their backsides. Helps reduce the possibility of parasites from blue bottles and the like. Shaving the area keeps their backsides nice and clean ... no wool for the shi ..."

"Ack! I get the picture, Dave." Anna quickly interrupted while pulling a face. She vaguely remembered reading something on this method. Since organic sheep could not be treated with chemicals or antibiotics, it was used as a preventative measure. She quickly decided that she would have to be off the farm for most of the rest of the day. No way was she having anything to do with that activity.

Anna decided to head up to Aberdeen to do some shopping. After saying her goodbyes, she went inside to pick up her keys and bag then set off on the thirty-mile journey.

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As Anna approached the city of Aberdeen she was immediately taken by the clean looking visage it presented. It wasn't her first trip there, but it never failed to impress her. She wondered if that perception had anything to do with the amount of granite used in the various buildings within the city. She remembered that after a shower the granite seemed to sparkle when the sun hit it. She headed on into the city centre deciding to shop on the main Union Street.

After purchasing some new books, CD's and DVD's, Anna had headed to a little Italian restaurant for a solitary lunch. As she was tucking into her pasta her phone went off. She looked at the display before answering.

"Hello, darling."

"Where the hell are you?"

"Having lunch."

"Where?"

"Aberdeen. Anything I can bring you back ... a stick of rock maybe?" she asked sweetly.

"You know where you can stick your bloody rock!"

"Now, now, Pete. No need to be like that. What's got you so wound up?"

"Nothing." Pete mumbled.

Anna took another bite of her pasta, clearly enjoying herself. "C'mon you can tell me. Sheep not treating you right?" Her tone was flirty and teasing.

"Listen I got a call from Jim Wallace inviting us to the pub tonight." Pete changed the subject, not taking the bait.

"Who's he?" Anna asked, slightly puzzled.

"The skipper of the *North Star*. I met him last week in the pub."

Anna recognised the name of the fishing boat as being one Pete had previously mentioned. "Is there any specific reason for this invite?"

"I don't think so. We just seemed to hit it off and he wants to meet my beautiful wife. I think it's a good idea, Anna, this guy really is full of himself."

"Okay, what time?"

"I'll call him back and tell him we will be there at eight o'clock."

"Good enough. See you later, Pete."

Anna pressed the button to end the call and leisurely finished her lunch.

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It was close to three p.m. when Anna took the turn off the main road that would take her back to Havenburgh. She made a last minute decision to pop into the community centre, hoping that Heather would be around.

As Anna entered the centre she glanced through the window of the glass-fronted office only to find it empty. She briefly considered her options and decided to venture further into the building. She peeked into the main hall and saw that it was full of senior citizens playing bingo. A man and woman she had never seen before seemed to be in charge of the activities. Anna then spotted Heather behind the counter at the top of the hall, apparently in charge of refreshments.

"Four and nine, forty-nine."

"All the eights, eighty-eight."

"On its own ... number two." Anna had to smirk at the dramatic pause. Bingo was a very popular hobby and pastime, but she just never got it. It was like a whole other world to her.

"Two and one, key to the door twenty-one."

Suddenly, a high screech of "House" pierced the room, quickly followed by a lot of mumbling and a few groans.

Anna saw her opportunity and swiftly took it. She headed straight for Heather who was busy putting out a lot of teacups.

"Need some help?" Anna addressed the back of the blonde head.

Heather swivelled at the sound of her voice, instantly recognising those dulcet tones. "Anna!" She offered a welcoming smile to her dark haired saviour.

"You could start by taking the plates of biscuits and putting a couple on each table."

"No problem," Anna replied happily whilst briefly considering where her own sudden burst of enthusiasm was coming from.

It was obvious she had timed her visit to coincide with the afternoon tea break from the bingo. As she distributed her supplies, she received some polite hellos from the members who recognised her from church and a couple from the pub. The man and woman who were in charge of the activities were quickly, and efficiently, handing out the cups of tea and coffee that Heather was pouring. Within minutes everyone was served and happily chatting, sipping their drinks and dunking their biscuits.

"Thanks very much, Anna."

"You're welcome."

"I'm not normally involved in this club but one of the volunteers is on holiday so I just have to jump in and help out when necessary."

Anna shrugged. "I just popped in to say hi. I'm happy to help out."

"Actually, now that you're here, I wonder if I can ask you something?"

"Sure, go ahead."

"I hadn't mentioned this previously because you've only just started helping out at the youth club, but on the last Friday of each month they have a disco."

Anna could see where this was going, but managed to keep a light smile on her face.

"Go on." She encouraged.

"Well we're a little short-handed for this months disco and I was wondering if you might be free and willing to go along with us?"

"Can you tell me a little more about it?"

"Sure. Well the disco isn't here. We travel by coach to Montrose. The venue is fairly big and it's usually well attended. Our job is to look after the kids and keep them out of trouble, then make sure they all get on the coach home." Heather finished brightly.

Anna raised an eyebrow at the last piece of information.

"Ah, yeah. There have been problems in the past. Usually it goes fairly smoothly, but sometimes ..." Heather shrugged "You know, teenagers." She gave Anna her best puppy dog smile and prayed she would agree.

Anna shook her head and wondered how anyone could say no to this woman. She was adorable. She could probably sell ice to Eskimos and make them feel good about it, even whilst she was taking their money. Anna felt a wry grin come over her face.

"This Friday then?" Heather nodded hopefully.

"Okay, I can make it."

"Great!" Heather voiced. "So, you wanna help me collect up all the cups and saucers?"

Anna gave her a look of mock horror, which quickly became a smile and a chuckle as she made her way to a table with the tray Heather had just handed her.

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**Chapter Seven**

As Anna drove back to the farm, the Land Rover was filled with a stony silence. Pete sat in the passenger seat occasionally throwing a quick glance in her direction. Under normal circumstances he would give her time to cool off, but being as he had just spent another night sinking pints of lager at the Marine bar, he was feeling less inhibited and less intimidated by Anna's fury.

"C'mon, Anna, it wasn't that bad."

Pete was met with absolute silence. Anna continued to stare at the road in front of her. Her jaw set hard and her posture rigid. For the entire evening she had endured sexist comments and lewd overtures from Jim Wallace. If his constant bragging wasn't bad enough, that had just been the icing on the cake. The guy thought he was God's gift to women and had constantly invaded her personal space. Under normal circumstances she would have put a stop to his antics with a few well-chosen words. Instead she had bitten her tongue and endured his bragging and fondling to the point where her jaw ached from clenching it. By the end of the night, all she wanted to do was deck him with a swift right hook and leave him lying in a heap.

"And could you please try and be a little nicer to him," Pete continued. "I mean, it's okay to use his nickname, but you managed to make it sound like an insult."

"If that idiot is stupid enough to ask me to call him Wally, then I'm more than happy to oblige." Anna replied, in a deceptively mild tone. In truth that had been the one thing that helped her retain her composure throughout the evening. She used it as a mental trade off while she waged an internal battle between her natural instincts and her common sense.

"Don't worry, Pete, I won't blow it with him."

"Fair enough. So, how are things going with the community worker?"

Anna pulled up in front of the farmhouse as she contemplated her answer.

"Slowly in truth. She isn't the type of person who spills her life story five minutes after she meets you. She certainly isn't a natural gossip, unlike her mother. Maybe I should have taken those flower arranging classes after all." She blew out a breath showing her frustration at her lack of progress. Normally a woman of direct action, it was difficult to adopt such a slow approach to gathering information. Today it would have been easy to completely forget what her true purpose for being here was. She slammed the door closed as she headed inside.

Pete headed to his room and Anna to the kitchen. When Pete returned, he found her sitting at the kitchen table nursing a cup of tea, her mood was clearly dark. She didn't look up when he returned until she heard a thump on the table. Before her was a bottle of Royal Lochnagar. A Twelve-year-old single malt whisky.

Anna raised an inquisitive brow.

"Care to join me?" Pete motioned to the unopened bottle.

Anna nodded her agreement. Pete poured himself a small nip and made sure to give Anna a more generous helping. They sat in companionable silence for a while before, much to Pete's surprise, Anna broke it.

"Did you ever go on one of those outdoor education trips at school?"

Pete blinked, confused by the question that seemingly came out of nowhere. "What like canoeing and orienteering?" Anna nodded. "Sure I remember spending a week in one of the outdoor centre's ... Braemar I think."

Anna nodded again; she hadn't been to that one, but knew of it. "I spent a week up at the Lagganlia Centre near Kingussie." She pointed to the bottle. "Lochnagar is one of the mountain ranges in the Cairngorms." She shook her head as a small smile came over her face. "We went up into the Cairngorms as one of the activities. On the western edge somewhere. It turned into quite an adventure." She stopped to take a sip of her whisky, savouring the rich smooth liquid that carried a hint of butterscotch. She swirled it slowly over her tongue then felt it blaze a path down her throat.

Pete sat in rapt fascination, as Anna's low lilting voice seemed to take on a hypnotic quality, pulling him in as she told her story.

"The further we got up the mountain the more it seemed to be pushing us back down. A couple of the smaller, lighter kids were literally being blown off their feet, so our guide had us walk single file behind him, so we could put a steadying hand on any kids struggling to keep upright. Eventually we came across a bothy, though it was nothing more than a small hut, we were thankful for the shelter. We all huddled inside, sheltering from the constant battering of the wind. We had hot drinks and recovered some energy for the walk to the top. A few of the kids didn't want to keep going, but we were a team and we all wanted to help each other complete all the activities. So on we went and when we got there the view was brilliant. Amazing really, the sun was shining, even though the wind was biting cold. It felt like it had cleared especially for us, so we could have this memory. We settled down to have our lunch and were no sooner tucking into our food than the guide was up and urging us to get going." Anna paused for a few seconds. "There was a moment's confusion, almost like we didn't believe he was serious, till we looked behind us. The mist and clouds were rolling up the gully so fast it was unbelievable. It was like watching a big ball of black smoke approaching." Anna paused again taking another mouth full of neat whisky.

"Some of the kids started to panic. It was clear we had to get off the mountain quickly or we would have a lot of trouble finding our way down safely. We had the right gear for a few hours of daylight walking, but nothing for overnight in the middle of winter. It was December, a couple of weeks before Christmas. By the time we were organised our guide was already off and running and, if there had ever been any doubt as to the seriousness of our situation, that image certainly put paid to it."

Anna stopped talking and sat calmly sipping her drink. Pete sat looking at her expectantly. Anna seemed to be lost in her thoughts for a moment then she looked at Pete. He urged her to continue.

"It was strange really, almost a surreal moment for me. There, in the midst of the panic and urgency, a sense of complete calm washed over me. I wasn't afraid that we wouldn't get off the mountain. I can't explain it rationally, but it kind of felt like she had been looking after us. First she was trying to push us back the way we came, then at the top, there was the break in the sky and the first sunshine on our faces that day."

"So, what happened?"

Anna offered a rueful smile. "We took off en masse, charging down the mountainside while screaming at the top of our lungs. It was totally thrilling. At the bottom everyone felt exhilarated even though most of us were collapsed on the ground trying to get as much air into our lungs as possible. I remember looking round at all the smiling faces, watery eyes, runny noses and rosy pink cheeks."

Pete smiled in response to the sparkle in Anna's eyes. They sat in silence again; Pete trying to garner some sense of what Anna, in her own way, was trying to tell him. Then a sudden thought came to him. "Is it still like that for you, Anna?"

She looked up, silently asking for clarification.

"I mean that feeling of calm washing over you when others might panic. The exhilaration after it."

"Oh yeah, it's what keeps me wanting to do this job. The unexpected quality of it, the potential danger that lurks in the shadows."

Pete nodded. "You must be finding this operation a wee bit tough. You know, it is kind of mundane most of the time." Pete softened hoping he hadn't overstepped the mark.

Anna shrugged and he decided not to press the issue. He picked up the bottle of whisky and motioned to Anna's glass.

"You trying to get me drunk, McGinty?" Though her voice was serious, it held an underlying hint of playfulness to it.

Pete refilled the glass and laughed. "Somehow I think I would be under the table long before

you."

Anna glanced at Pete and wasn't so sure about that. In truth, she wasn't much for drinking to excess. Perhaps it was growing up surrounded by alcohol and bearing witness to its effects from a very young age. She also hadn't missed his gentle flirting every time he was under the influence.

"Oh, I don't know about that, Pete. I think you can pretty much hold your own." She pinned him with her keen blue eyes making sure he got the message.

Pete silently acknowledged what Anna was conveying to him. Unspoken though the signal was, he knew that no amount of alcohol was going to get her between the sheets with him

Anna rose from the table and rinsed her glass in the sink. "Night, Pete."

"Sleep tight, Anna."

As Pete watched her go, he couldn't help but wonder at the total enigma that was Anna Lynch. He felt like she had just opened up to him a little, yet he still didn't know nearly enough about her. The fact that she had opened up at all was something though, he mused, but she had quickly made sure there would be no misread signals.

He snorted as he picked up his glass, recalling her words. She was classy with a wicked sense of humour; he had to give her that. *'Holding my own?'* he muttered, while shaking his head. He had certainly been doing plenty of that, especially when he thought of Anna, just a short distance away each night. Now she had given him a clear message that she was more than aware of his interest and holding his own was all he could expect.

## **Chapter Eight**

Anna parked outside the community centre. It was a warm evening with a salty breeze coming in off the sea. She could think of many better ways to spend a Friday night than babysitting a bunch of teenagers at a disco, but as she saw the visage of Heather Keith standing looking out over the North Sea, with the sun outlining her blonde hair in a halo like glow, she found herself hard pressed to think of any of them.

She paused before getting out of the car and gave herself a moment or two longer to gaze upon the sight.

Heather was shorter than Anna by a good six or seven inches. Her frame was lean, with a bit of muscle definition indicating that she probably worked out. Her hair was reasonably short and cut in a fashionable layered style. Anna couldn't see her face but imagined a smile upon it in this

unguarded moment. As she shut the heavy door of the Land Rover, Heather turned and offered a small wave in greeting as she walked towards her.

"Hi, Anna, you're early." Heather had been looking out to sea lost in thought as she pondered the ins and outs of her life. She was not, by nature, a melancholy individual but, just lately had found herself tending to these bouts of deep thought. A tendency that was often accompanied by a sense of 'something' she knew not what, hovering on the edge of her consciousness, just waiting for her to reach out and grasp it.

The sight of Anna had instantly raised her spirits. Ever since that first evening in the pub, she had been keen to get to know the dark haired woman better. They seemed to click almost instantly and got along so easily. Heather had always believed it was a gift to be cherished when you met someone with whom you could instantly feel that comfortable. She wasn't quite sure what it was. Perhaps they were kindred spirits or even opposites, it was really too soon to tell. But she knew, even after such a short time, that she would like to get to know Anna a lot better.

"Hi there." Anna offered her a toothy smile, which instantly had Heather marvelling at just how beautiful she was. With her long dark hair and piercing blue eyes, not forgetting those cheekbones and lovely white teeth, she really was quite a vision to behold.

"How is the sheep farming coming along?"

"Oh you know, Pete's happy, I'm happy." Anna shrugged her indifference.

"Change of pace taking a bit of getting used to?"

Anna nodded and cringed inwardly, God how she hated lying to this woman. She quickly pushed those feelings aside. She knew she had a job to do and this was part of it. "Yeah, I've been having a bit of trouble filling up my time, you know. I'm used to the fast pace of city life and lots of amenities within walking distance. Shops, bars, restaurants." Eyes widening playfully as she finished.

Heather seized the opportunity developing in front of her. "Hey I know some good places to eat and they're not too far. We could, well ... you know ... I mean, ..." She trailed off, suddenly feeling a bit self conscious at her sudden forwardness.

"I'd love to." Anna replied easily, immediately dispelling Heather's discomfort.

"Really?"

Anna nodded.

"Great! I'll arrange something, maybe for next weekend?"

"Sure, how about Saturday and maybe something a bit spicy?" Anna added hopefully.

"No problem, I know just the place." Heather smiled, the bridge of her nose crinkling in just that way Anna had come to notice.

And, had to admit to herself, it was cute.

Just then a group of four girls arrived on foot, giggling and screaming. Anna took in their attire and rolled her eyes. She decided that it wasn't so much a question of what they were wearing as what they weren't wearing. There was definitely a distinct lack of cloth covering skin. They all seemed to be wearing the same style of clothes, but in different colours like four variations of the same outfit. Short skirts, which were no longer than a pelmet; spaghetti strapped tight fitting Lycra tops in bright colours and calf length, light suede boots, housing artificially tanned legs. The outfits were accessorised with a good helping of gold to increase the bling factor and a healthy slathering of make-up. She glanced across at Heather with a raised eyebrow, only to see her chuckle in response as she went to greet the girls.

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Anna stood in the club that was the venue for the youth disco. It amazed her that this really was a nightclub, which, after the disco was finished, would be cleared and ready to admit late night clubbers from eleven p.m. onwards. The only difference right now was that the bar thankfully, was dry. It was serving non-alcoholic drinks to these under eighteens. Anna knew of these discos, they were the latest money making venture for clubs who would normally be doing little or no business this early in the evening. They didn't begin to fill up usually until after midnight, when the pubs started to close. Setting up these youth discos with their £5:00 admission fee for three hours of boogying and selling the kids over-priced soft drinks, was actually good business for the owners. It really did have the atmosphere of a nightclub, but with underage patrons. Anna could understand the appeal to the youths attending.

She had found herself a wall to lean against, allowing her to casually observe what was happening. It was beginning to get hot in the club, but not uncomfortably so. The music was loud with a heavy, underlying bass beat. There seemed to be a preference for the more laid-back hip hop/rap style of music, containing lyrics about sexual prowess and with a healthy dose of profanity thrown in for added emphasis. Anna wasn't by any means a prude; she recalled her own teenage angst preferences of stuff like Sinéad O'Connor, while her brother had gone for the Happy Mondays with their swearing and references to drugs. They would play the music louder and louder until their parents had to intervene. Seems the music genre had changed but, not the content of the lyrics nor the reasons behind the choices of the music.

It was going on for nine-thirty when Anna glanced at her watch again. The disco hadn't been too bad, she had managed to wander a little and stretch her legs. Glancing around the dance floor she caught sight of Heather dancing energetically with a couple of the girls from the youth club. She was smiling and laughing, clearly enjoying herself. Anna couldn't help but let her gaze linger on Heather's compact body, which was moving with co-ordinated ease. Just then Heather looked her way and caught her eye, motioning for Anna to join her on the dance floor. The tall brunette shook her head no, but watched as the blonde smiled and spoke to one of the girls, then headed

straight for Anna with a mischievous glint in her eye.

Reaching her, Heather grabbed Anna by the wrist and gently pulled her towards the dance floor. Even while she half-heartedly protested, Anna already knew it was a lost cause.

"Just one dance, Anna," Heather implored. "Then you can go back to hanging out in the dark." She laughed when the brunette gave her a wry look and started dancing. Anna couldn't deny that, under different circumstances, this would have been a very enjoyable activity, but she was undercover and, even if she weren't, Heather was engaged. So she endeavoured to enjoy the moment for what it was, a dance between two friends. As she looked into Heather's face full of genuine joy and fun, she dearly wished it were more.

When the song ended Heather excused herself and headed towards the toilets. On her way she bumped into Mark, one of the boys from her youth club, standing there with a huge grin plastered to his face.

"Heather, this is pure magic. Have a' ever told ye how brilliant you are for doin' all this for us? You're just great, Heather." Mark then proceeded to throw his arms around her, hugging tightly. Heather untangled herself from his rubbery limbs. She tilted his face towards her to get a good look at his eyes. She knew Mark was on something, he was never this demonstrative, normally he was quite shy around her.

Heather spoke to him in quiet, serious tones "Mark, please tell me what you've taken?"

"Aww, it was just a wee pill, Heather." Mark drawled putting his thumb and forefinger up in front of her to indicate just how small the pill was. "The guy said it was safe, he took one as well." He spread his arms wide and smiled to indicate that he was doing just fine.

Heather cursed quietly under her breath. "Mark, please tell me who gave it to you." she pleaded.

He seemed to give her question serious thought as he frowned then suddenly his face transformed into one of comprehension. "Oh, I see, you want one too. No problem ... C,mon." He motioned for Heather to follow him.

She was deeply grateful that Mark, at this time seemed to be coping physically with the effects of whatever drug was in his system, but inside she was extremely angry with the knowledge that he had been stupid enough to have taken something. But, even more than that, she was absolutely furious with whoever was dealing the drugs in this environment. As they got closer to a table off to the right of the bar, Mark pointed out a man who looked to be in his early twenties.

"Is that definitely him?" She asked firmly.

"Yep, that's the guy."

Heather marched to the man. No other thought in her head than to confront this drug dealer face to face.

"Excuse me, which group are you here with?" Heather glared at him, arms stiffly by her side, fists clenched.

He looked at Heather cautiously. "What's it to you?" He stood up from his seat, where he had been in the company of a few teenage girls, eyes never leaving hers.

"I want to know who to contact about your selling illegal drugs on these premises."

"Fuck-off, you don't know what you're talking about!" He laughed derisively.

It was at that point that Mark decided to say something himself; too far-gone to register the potential volatile nature of the situation. "Aye, you sold me something. She just wants the same."

The stranger grabbed Mark forcefully by the front of his shirt and pulled him close. "Shut your fucking mouth." He growled.

Heather attempted to intervene when he didn't look like he was going to let him go. Mark attempted to dislodge himself from the vice like grip on his clothing. With arms starting to flail around, a scuffle quickly ensued which ended with Heather receiving an elbow to her left eye and Mark lying sprawled on the floor.

"Fuck!" Heather scrambled to her feet just in time to see the stranger make a run for the fire exit. As she began to make her way across the dance floor she caught sight of Anna running out the exit after him. By the time Heather made it outside and into the car park she found the drug pusher flat on his stomach with Anna holding him down, a knee placed firmly between his shoulder blades, his arm twisted behind his back.

"What the fuck! Get off me!" The dealer was shouting, clearly startled.

"Shut up and stop squirming."

"What are you doing?"

"Making a citizens arrest." Anna hissed through clenched teeth.

Heather caught up with them and, right on her heels were half the disco goers.

Anna glanced at Heather who seemed momentarily speechless by the vision before her.

"What did he do, Heather?"

"He was selling drugs to the kids." Her voice strongly conveyed her anger.

Anna immediately started directing traffic. "Okay, call the police and tell them we have a drug pusher in custody. Tell them we also need an ambulance to check out the kids who have taken

whatever it was he's been selling. Get the kids back inside while we wait for them to arrive. Oh and, Heather, get some ice on your eye."

Heather nodded and immediately did as Anna had asked, too dazed to register the ease with which the woman had taken control.

When it was again quiet, Anna leaned in really close to her suspect's ear. "Right, lets cut down on some time and tell me what you were selling?"

"I'm saying nothing." He spat out and started to struggle, only for Anna to apply more pressure till he stopped moving. He was breathing deeply from the exertion of struggling and the pain Anna's hold was inflicting on him."

"Let me fucking go." He hissed out between breaths.

Anna leaned in again as she used even more pressure. "No way, but ... if you tell me what you were selling I'll ease up a little, how's that?" Anna asked in a menacing tone.

"No way, bitch." He squirmed again only to have Anna push harder.

"Ahh, fuck!" He felt like his arm was going to be ripped from its socket.

"Okay," he gasped, "Ecstasy."

"Good boy." Anna cooed lightly and eased off a little. She called back to a guy standing at the fire exit door, instructing him to inform Heather what the drug was. Just then, the sirens could be heard in the distance, Anna estimated she had two more minutes, tops to wait.

"Who the fuck are you?" He wheezed, as he attempted to take in a lungful of air.

"Me? ...I'm a sheep farmer." Anna answered mildly.

Her captive grunted. "Must be some really big sheep on your farm darling." He chuckled at his own joke, appreciating the irony of the situation.

"Something like that." Anna mumbled.

Just then, two police cars drew up, doors opening and then slamming dramatically.

"Is this the suspect, Madam?" Anna groaned internally, biting back a snide answer that was on the tip of her tongue.

"Yes, officer." She relinquished her hold on the suspect as two policemen took over. A third officer then led Anna towards the front of the building. Anna began giving her statement to a female officer as she watched the paramedics arrive.

'So, Mrs Thomson, you apprehended the suspect?' The officer asked, clearly impressed.

Anna nodded as she ran a hand through her long dark hair, which now looked jet-black, without any sunlight to bring out the auburn in it. "Yeah I just kind of reacted, you know." She was cringing inside. *'Wait till the boss gets wind of this, he's going to blow a gasket.'* Anna thought. She was desperate to get this over with and check on Heather, wanting to make sure she was okay after the blow she took to her eye.

Several more police officers had arrived on the scene, which sped up the process of the interviews. By the time everyone had finished it was close to midnight. Heather had been phoning round the parents to let them know they would be late back. Fortunately only Mark from her group had taken the ecstasy and was being kept overnight for observation, along with three other youths from another group, at the Montrose Royal Infirmary. If anyone else had taken anything, they hadn't admitted to it, which was likely for fear of their parents finding out.

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Heather watched as the last of the youths got into their parent's cars to head home after an eventful night. They certainly didn't seem any worse off for the experience, quite the opposite in fact. On the short journey back to the community centre, the bus had been buzzing with tales of Anna and Heather's heroics in apprehending a drug dealer and holding him until the police arrived. As a result the guys had nicknamed the two women, calling them Rocky and Rambo. While most of the girls were positively hyper, letting out loud squeals as they recalled the action and the drama that had unfolded.

Heather let out a long slow breath as she began to allow the events of the evening to wash over her for the first time. She had been so caught up in the mayhem, then ensuring that all the parents were aware of the delay, and finally discussing the matter with the ones who were waiting to pick up their kids, she just hadn't yet had time to take it all in. She leaned back against the nearest available object, not even noticing that it was Anna's vehicle.

"How are you doing?"

The question was asked in soft, comforting tones, which immediately helped soothe Heather's tension. She rubbed her hands over her face, wincing at the pain around her left eye socket. She could feel the swelling despite having iced the area fairly quickly. "I've been better." She mumbled.

"C'mon, I'll give you a lift home and you can get some more ice on that eye."

Heather was about to refuse, then thought better of it. She watched as Anna unlocked the passenger door then closed it after Heather got in. "Where to?"

"Drive down the hill and take the second left. It's the fifth cottage on the right."

A short while later they pulled up in front of the cottage and Anna insisted on escorting Heather right up to the front door.

"I'll be alright, honest."

"I'm sure you will, but ... humour me?"

Heather nodded "You better come in then."

Anna followed Heather into the cottage. She squinted briefly as Heather flicked on the hall light, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the sudden brightness. They went into the kitchen where she was able to get her first good look at Heather's black eye.

"Tea, coffee?" Heather asked as she went to the sink to fill the kettle.

"Tea, thanks." Anna took a seat at the small, round, beech wood table. She watched as the community worker pulled a couple of mugs from a cupboard, and then went to the fridge to get some milk.

"Do you have ice in your freezer?"

Heather nodded.

"Good." Anna moved from her seat and went to the freezer where she removed two bags of ice cubes.

"Clean dish towels?"

Heather opened a drawer and gave one to Anna. While she made the tea, Anna wrapped the dishtowel around the bags of ice cubes.

They made their way to the living room and settled down into a comfortable sofa. Anna sipped her hot tea and took in her surroundings. The room was decorated in light colours and gave off a feeling of comfort and relaxation. There was a distinctly feminine feel to the décor. A soft, neutral coloured, woollen carpet was fitted wall to wall. The walls were a basic barley shade. The sofa and armchairs were a buttery colour and accessorised with cushions and throws in shades of grey and yellow, with the occasional pattern on them. On the opposite wall from where Anna was sitting there was an original open stone fireplace and she could understand anyone wanting to keep such an exquisite feature despite the more practical, newly installed, central heating. She imagined that it must be very romantic on cold winter evenings, then immediately quashed that thought not wanting to imagine Heather and Greg together. She did wonder where he was though.

"Greg not home?" Anna asked nonchalantly.

"No, he's out on the boat." Heather leaned forward, settling her forearms on her knees. Her voice sounded flat, its usually cadence gone.

"How long is he usually away for?" Anna prodded.

Heather shrugged, "It's several days at a time, depending on how quickly they locate the fish."

"There must be some tough times out there."

"Yeah..." Heather sighed "Listen, Anna, about tonight. I want to thank you, for what you did."

"Oh, don't mention it, I was glad to help... Really."

"You did more than help, Anna. You were amazing. I mean the way you got that guy and held him until the Police arrived." Heather shook her head in awe. "You were great. I wish I had thought about what I was doing, instead of just charging in there and confronting him. It was a stupid thing to do"

"Hey, don't worry about it. Those kids mean a lot to you. I'm not sure I would have reacted any differently in those circumstances."

Anna's words didn't seem to have any effect on her. "It's just... Damn! I can't believe that was happening and right under our noses. How can I expect the parents to trust their kids to our care when they find out that drugs are being sold to them?" Heather started to tear up, her emotions beginning to take over. "I hate drugs, Anna. The kids are the most vulnerable group and these people are preying on them. I mean, this is a quiet village most of the time, but the surrounding towns and cities are rife with drugs, especially Aberdeen. The north-east coast is often where drugs are smuggled in, so it makes them even more easily available round here."

Heather wasn't telling Anna anything she didn't already know. It was common knowledge both within and outside the police force. "Hey, c'mon. It's not your fault. You could never have known that some idiot would choose to operate that way. You do everything you can to make the kids feel safe. You weren't the one to allow that drug dealer to volunteer. He was with another youth group"

Heather let go a sob she had been trying to hold back. "God, I'm sorry."

"Hey, no need to apologise." Anna put a comforting arm around Heather's shoulder and the blonde went willingly into the embrace.

They both sat together on the sofa for several moments. Anna gently rubbing Heather's back to try and soothe her distress. Eventually she lifted her head from Anna's shoulder and offered her an embarrassed smile.

"Hell, look at me, crying all over you." She rubbed her tears away, as she attempted to regain her composure.

Anna smiled in return. "No problem." She held Heather's gaze for a few more seconds, conveying her sincerity.

"Listen, I better get going. Will you be okay?"

"Yeah, I will, and thanks again, Anna."

"Don't mention it." Anna got up from the sofa and made her way to the front door. Heather followed behind her.

"Will we see you at the youth club on Tuesday?" Heather had been almost afraid to ask.

"Count on it." They shared a weary smile before Anna left the cottage.

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Anna was still cursing herself as she drove along the lane towards the farm. She just knew her boss was going to be on the phone first thing tomorrow with a stern reminder not to blow her cover. There would be the usual rant reiterating the amount of the time and effort being put into this exercise, not to mention the money it was costing. And how it was important that she not fuck up. As if that wasn't bad enough she was genuinely attracted to Heather Keith. If there had been any doubts before, they had been well and truly blown away on more than one occasion tonight.

She had seen so many sides to Heather's personality that evening and each one of them had left her craving more. Anna also knew that her biggest mistake had not been her apprehending a drug dealer, but taking a 5 foot 4"ish blonde dynamo into her arms and offering her comfort. Worst of all, she knew she could not have stopped herself, even if she had had the foresight to try.

As Anna parked the Land Rover in front of the farmhouse, she pounded her fists on the steering wheel in frustration, before finally making her way inside. Heading straight to the kitchen she located Pete's bottle of single malt and poured herself a large dram. She made her way upstairs wearily, whisky glass in hand and switched on the lamp on the bedside table.

Anna sat on the edge of the bed, fully clothed, sipping on the whisky and staring out through the window into the inky blackness. The lack of street lighting reinforced the feeling of there being nothing out there. *Fuck! This can't be happening to me.* Was her last thought before angrily stripping of her clothing and slipping between the cool sheets.

## Chapter Nine

"It was nothing, really." Anna answered almost pleading with Heather's mother to shut up.

"Nonsense, dear. What you did was simply wonderful. I mean really, how many young women or men for that matter, would actually apprehend a suspect single-handed? It's marvellous. I'm sure you must be very proud of her, Peter? Hmm."

"Oh, absolutely, Mrs Keith. I mean, who knew my wife had it in her to actually catch drug dealers. It's certainly come as a great surprise to me." Pete was milking this for all he could get and there was no doubt he was enjoying himself.

Anna shot him a look that clearly indicated he would pay for that jibe later, but Pete just carried on lapping up the praise and perversely enjoying Anna's discomfort due to all the attention.

Mrs Keith continued on oblivious to all around her, gesturing dramatically to convey her point. "You know when I saw Heather's face, well I almost fainted. My daughter with a black eye, it was such a shock I can tell you. I mean, I just don't think she's cut out for that sort of thing. No disrespect, Anna dear, but you do look like you could handle yourself a bit better than Heather. She's just a slip of a girl really. Perhaps Greg can talk some sense into her when he returns from the sea."

*'God, does this woman ever shut up?'* Anna thought. To make matters worse Heather was standing not two feet away from her. Mrs Keith carried on regardless as though Heather were not even party to her rant. Anna looked at Heather and could see the hurt and anger clearly visible on her friend's normally bright face. She had heard enough.

"I can assure you, Mrs Keith, Heather does a wonderful job at the youth club. The kids think very highly of her." She offered a smile of support in the blonde's direction, who looked duly grateful.

"Be that as it may, Anna, I'm just not convinced it's the right job for a young woman like Heather," Mrs Keith replied testily, clearly a little put out at Anna's audacity. Disagreeing with Mrs Keith was obviously something that didn't happen often.

Anna looked challengingly at her. "I'm sure that decision is Heather's to make," she added injecting a touch of ice to her voice.

Heather decided to put an end to her mother's rant. "Yes it is, Mother. We've been over this *many* times before. I don't want to discuss it again. Especially not here."

"Fine. We'll see what Gregor has to say about it." With that parting shot, Mrs Keith walked off in search of new prey.

Anna looked at Heather, her eye had darkened in the two days since she had last seen her. "How are you doing?"

"I'm good, I just have to deal with my mothers meddling all over again, now that she has some new ammunition." She rolled her eyes to convey her exasperation.

Changing the subject she continued, "listen, I booked us into a restaurant for next Saturday, spicy just like you requested."

"Oh, great. I'm really looking forward to it." She smiled at the blonde, who looked more relaxed now that her overbearing mother had moved on.

"Me too. I'll see you Tuesday?"

"Wouldn't miss it," Anna replied, genuinely looking forward to spending more time with Heather.

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"You wanna tell me what the fuck that was all about?" Anna had sensed Pete had something on his mind. He had been too quiet for the duration of the drive back from church.

"What?"

"First the stuff with Mrs Keith. Did you have to antagonise her?"

"Oh come on, Pete, the old battle axe had it coming."

"Yeah and you just had to be the knight in shining armour?"

Anna glared at him. "You want to explain exactly what that's supposed to mean?" she asked, her tone turning menacing.

"Look, Anna, I know the two of you are getting on well, but it seems to me that it might be a little too well."

"What, me and Mrs Keith...are you jealous?" Anna opted for humour, which only served to upset Pete further.

"Don't do this, Anna."

"Do what!?" Anna stared at him hard before continuing. "My job? Isn't this exactly what we're supposed to be doing, hmm? Getting people in the community to trust us so that they tell us what we need to know. Then we just waltz out of their lives like we were never here in the first place. Easy as that," Anna spread her arms wide "So would you care tell me which part I'm doing wrong, Pete?"

"Its not that you're doing it wrong, Anna, it's more like you're doing it too well!" They were both

shouting, needing to let off steam.

"Aww, hell! C'mon, Pete give me a break here. Yes, I like Heather, this kind of thing happens. We're not machines after all. I just keep doing my job and deal with it."

"Fair enough. That's all I need to know."

Anna looked at him and nodded. She felt it was time to get Pete to back off a bit and allow her some breathing space. "You know, Pete, you have to trust me here. I'm not prone to fucking up and I'm not about to start. I appreciate the reality check, but I don't need coddling."

Pete nodded, the tension beginning to ease from his body. "I'm sorry. I just can't afford to mess up here. Not after the last fiasco I was involved in."

"I understand, and I really do appreciate the effort you are putting in. Just allow me the space that I need to do my job." She made sure to make direct eye contact with him; "I won't let you down." Her tone conveyed the seriousness of her statement.

It was important for Pete to hear those words. The last big operation he had been involved in had ended with the main target evading arrest. The only arrests made were small time drug dealers. Guys like the one Anna had apprehended at the Youth disco. It was a very small return on a big operation. And because of that, it was a black mark against Pete and his chances of promotion in the near future. It was also one of the reasons why Anna had been reluctant to pair with Pete. She didn't know exactly why the operation had largely failed, but was now beginning to suspect that it wasn't down to Pete McGinty. The truth of the matter was she had been impressed with his hunger and dedication so far in this project. He definitely had a point to prove and was setting about doing that in the best way possible, by doing his utmost to deliver a result. The one thing Anna was good at was delivering big. She had developed that good habit over the years and she wasn't about to let anything mess that up. Anna would do everything in her power to ensure this operation was a success. That meant that Pete had every chance of succeeding by association.

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Dinner at the Keith household the following Wednesday was a tense affair. Greg was back on dry land and had accompanied Heather this time. Mrs Keith had spent the duration of the meal putting ideas and thoughts into Greg's head about what was and was not appropriate for her daughter. Heather had caught her father's eye several times, offering him a pleading look. He had said nothing, instead returning her gaze with a look that was unreadable to Heather. It was as if he had chosen to remain completely neutral, not wishing to be seen to take sides. On a fundamental level, it angered Heather. He would normally side with her when he deemed his wife to be taking something too far. Heather felt this was such an occasion, yet her father remained silent.

Heather and Greg returned home around eight p.m. She was tired and irritable, a feeling which was becoming familiar and more prevalent with her around both Greg and her mother. She made

some tea and settled down on the sofa to watch television with Greg. He was channel surfing and eventually settled for a home improvement style show. Heather really wasn't much interested in finding out how to give your sitting room a makeover within a limited budget, it seemed after a few minutes neither was Greg, when he abruptly shut the TV off with the remote. Heather looked at him over the rim of her cup. He obviously had something on his mind judging by the pensive look on his face. She couldn't help but feel a sense of foreboding regarding the impending conversation.

Greg turned to face her, "I think your mum's right, Heather."

Greg could tell by the look on her face she was about to object so he continued quickly, "Just hear me out."

Against her better judgement she agreed, "alright."

"Maybe it would be a good thing if you got a job that's less risky. I don't want to have to worry about coming back from sea and find you with a black eye again or some other injury. You know you'll be giving it up when we start a family anyway, so what would be the harm in finding something simpler till then?"

Heather found herself speechless for a good thirty seconds. She could not believe what she was hearing from Greg. She exhaled a long slow stream of air out through her nostrils to calm her ragged nerves.

"Greg, I don't even know where to start." She looked at him and shook her head. "You fish in deep waters in all kinds of weather. Not only are you at risk from the elements but, also there is an added danger from the equipment you use. Boats have even been dragged under unexpectedly when submarines have caught their nets. Any number of things could happen to you when you leave harbour. Yet never once have I asked you to reconsider what you do. I accept the inherent risk and danger that go with your job. And do you know why?" Heather paused to give Greg a moment to think about what she was telling him.

"I'll tell you. Its because I know you love what you do." She waited for her point to hit home before continuing. "I have one incident and this is your knee jerk reaction. I'm not a little girl, Greg, I can take care of myself and I will not be giving up the job I love just because you or my mother want me to."

There was a tension that hung in the air between them. Greg was thinking over Heather's answer, but he still had a point to make.

"What about starting a family?"

Heather's brow furrowed, this was a subject that they had broached in the past. It had remained a given that when they married things would progress in that direction. Heather did want children, but she also wanted a secure future, or for it to be as secure as they could make it. This was a point she had made clear to Greg and thought he understood and shared her wishes.

"You want me to give up my job when we decide to start a family?"

"I thought that would be the plan, yes."

Heather could not hold back her frustration any longer.

"Tell me, Greg, how are we supposed to remain financially solvent if I give up my job? Where is the money going to come from to feed and clothe ourselves and any children we may have?" She ran a hand through her short hair, exasperation showing in every movement. "I have no plans to give up my job. I enjoy it and we need the money." She looked at him, pleading with him to understand, her hands moving to emphasise every point. "Your job isn't stable, why will you not acknowledge this?"

Greg stood up and paced back and forward in front of Heather. "The boat is making money and it will continue to make money."

"Then help me understand, Greg? How can that be? What has changed?"

"It's nothing that you need concern yourself with!"

"You can't keep me in the dark over this, I won't have it!"

Greg walked into the hall and reached for his jacket.

Heather followed him. "Where are you going?"

"Out." He turned to look at her as he opened the door. "You know, Heather, my mother never asked about my father's business with the boat. That side of things was left up to him."

"For one thing, Greg, there were plenty of fish in the sea when your dad went fishing!" She lowered her voice hoping to get through to him the importance of the matter. "How can you not see that this affects us both? It's not just your future."

He didn't reply and instead made his way out of the cottage. As the door closed, Heather slumped to the floor in defeat, wondering not for the first time just what was going on. She felt that things were spiralling out of control and there was nothing she could do about it until Greg was willing to talk openly.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

Anna was putting the finishing touches to her outfit, selecting a rectangular shaped Mother of

Pearl pendant on a silver chain. She wasn't much for lots of jewellery, preferring to go for an understated look. She had on her usual watch, which was a simple linked, stainless steel, bracelet with a light blue watch face. The only other piece of jewellery was the platinum wedding band on her ring finger, which she had been wearing since the beginning of this operation. She had opted for a tight fitting knitted crew olive tank top with a pair of grey dress trousers that had a flat front and side pockets. The outfit showed off her toned, tanned arms, while accentuating her trim waist. On her feet she wore a pair of casual, natural suede mules. She applied some light make-up, added a squirt of perfume, then grabbed a dark denim jacket and headed downstairs to wait for Heather who would be picking her up just after seven p.m.

Anna stood just outside the farmhouse, next to an old wooden, park style, bench. Its green paint was cracked and peeling, giving it a weathered look. The brunette popped her jacket down on the bench seat and sat on top of it to give her a little comfort. She glanced out over the fields, she could make out the sheep far off in the distance, beyond that were rolling hills, which had a purple hue from the abundance of heather covering them. It was quite a spectacular view, especially given the time of year, the evening sunshine bringing out every colour the landscape had to offer. The poor summer had prevented the grass from taking on the dry, sun-bleached look that it would normally have this time of year. Instead, it was a lush green colour, usually associated with early summer.

Anna glanced to her left and saw a small white car making its way along the private road up to the farmhouse. As it got closer she saw the familiar blonde head behind the steering wheel. The sight instantly bringing an unconscious smile to her lips.

Heather put her Corsa in park, grinning at the brunette making her way towards the passenger side. Heather leaned across to open the door and then watched Anna carefully fold her tall frame into the car.

As Anna reached for the lever to move the seat back Heather grinned her apology, "Sorry, my mother was the last front seat passenger."

"S'alright," replied Anna as she moved the seat back.

Since Agnes Keith was around two inches shorter than her daughter that was all the explanation Anna needed. She smiled at the blonde as she casually took in Heather's appearance. Heather wore a low-necked, sleeveless top that was white in colour. It had a smattering of small, delicate flowers decorating it. She was wearing a pair of lilac coloured slacks, but that was as much as Anna could see at the moment.

"So you up for some spicy food?"

"I'm always up for spicy food." Anna replied with mock seriousness. "And I'm incredibly hungry."

"Better get going then, it'll be worth the wait, trust me."

Anna mused that she would be hard pressed to think of a more trustworthy person than her blonde companion, as her brain was busy trying to pin down the scent of Heather's perfume, which was eluding her at that moment in time.

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Twenty minutes later Heather was leading Anna into a restaurant called *The Spice of Life*. The brunette thought that the title was definitely a good omen, as she ogled Heather's toned backside. The trousers had turned out to be a three-quarter length Capri style, which the blonde wore with a pair of fashionable sandals. Anna thought Heather looked incredible, even a little like Doris Day. She was a sucker for the good girl look, but thought she better keep that little titbit to herself.

"How's your food?"

"Mmm, its great, lots of flavour and nice and spicy."

Anna had opted for the chicken madras, one of the hotter dishes on the menu. That had earned her a raised eyebrow from Heather; she didn't like anything too hot and spicy and on this occasion had gone for a lamb bhoona.

"Wanna try some?"

"Eh, no. I think I'll pass. I don't think there's enough water left on the table."

Anna chuckled, "Not into the hot stuff, huh?"

"No, it doesn't seem to agree with me too well."

They continued making small talk while enjoying their main courses accompanied by sweet naan bread, rice and a pleasant house white wine. Anna eventually decided to do a little prodding.

"Greg doesn't mind you being out tonight?" One look at Heather's face had Anna instantly regretting that question. She had witnessed a flash of pain, which was quickly followed by a forced smile.

"Sorry. Forget I asked," Anna added, feeling contrite.

"No, it's okay. Things are just a little tough at the moment. What with the fishing restrictions and then Greg siding with my mother about me giving up my job."

"I'm sorry, that must have been hard."

Heather sat for a moment, contemplating opening up to Anna. She had been feeling the weight of carrying this burden. She didn't really have anyone to open up to, as everyone around her was too close to the problem.

Heather let out a frustrated sigh. "I just don't get what's going on with him at the moment. He doesn't seem to be thinking clearly right now. He's a fisherman, Anna...it's a dying industry. There's no money to be made at the moment...it's simply a case of survival and not everyone is surviving. Yet he won't even talk to me about the boat...said it's not women's business! Can you believe that?"

Heather shook her head in disbelief, while Anna was thinking about what a prick Greg was being.

"To top it all off he sides with my mother, then casually mentions that I'll be giving up my job when we start a family anyway. How Greg can think we can afford to raise a family without my financial contribution just baffles me."

"I'm sorry, Heather." Anna wanted to say so much more than that. She was getting exactly the type of information she needed from Heather in terms of her job, but she felt nothing but guilt at gaining it. She was getting it because Heather trusted her. That meant she was doing her job well, but she gained absolutely no pleasure from that knowledge. She felt inept because the only word she seemed to be able to say to her younger companion was *sorry*. She was sorry, but for so much more than Heather could know.

The meal had now become a bit subdued so Heather decided to try a change of topic.

"How long have you and Pete been together?"

Anna winced inwardly and wondered if this night could get any worse.

"Oh, about five years or so. We met at work." Well at least part of that was true, Anna thought.

"How did you know he was the one?"

Anna contemplated her answer knowing she had to sell this. She had a sudden thought and decided to go with it.

"Almost from the moment we met I was drawn to him. His zest for life, his natural enthusiasm, it's infectious, and before you know it, it rubs off on you. He cares about people and he wants to make a difference. Of course, he's also very easy on the eye. It was all those things and more." Anna shrugged not really wanting to go on, especially when the person she was actually describing was the woman sitting opposite her.

Heather smiled at Anna's explanation, "You're very lucky," she said softly.

Their eyes met and they held each other's gaze.

"Perhaps," Anna replied cryptically, softly, not breaking the tension.

Heather suddenly felt herself blush and ended the moment with a nervous clearing of her throat.

"So, you want to head back?"

Anna cursed internally, her behaviour had been inappropriate, but she was loath to regret it, instead she decided to enjoy the connection they had shared. She knew she was falling for Heather and, for the first time, she had felt something in return and that warmed her greatly. Tomorrow she could worry about the implications of what that meant.

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The journey back to Havensburgh was relatively quiet, both women seemingly lost in their own thoughts, till Heather broke the silence.

"Would you mind if we stopped off somewhere?"

"No. Not at all." Anna was secretly intrigued.

Heather turned off the road and after a couple of minutes, pulled up into a parking spot that overlooked the sea. This was one of her favourite places and she wanted to share it with Anna.

"Grab your jacket it's getting a bit cooler."

They exited the car and Heather opened the boot to remove two travel blankets. She grabbed her tall companion's hand and led her down a small path, which opened onto a secluded stretch of beach.

"I love coming down here on a clear night, especially when it isn't too cold. Sometimes I've even been lucky enough to see the *Aurora Borealis*," Heather added wistfully.

They walked a little farther towards the shore, then lay the blankets on top of the sand and sat on them. Anna could see the attraction of this place for Heather. It was beautiful and tranquil, like having your own little piece of paradise.

"What was it like for you growing up, Anna?"

"Pretty normal; pretty average ... it was stable."

With Heather's encouraging look she continued, "I grew up in a farming community down in the borders. That's where my parents have the pub. It was fairly quiet, though my brother Liam and myself still found lots of trouble to get into. I suppose it must have been similar to yours. You know how it is, everybody knows everyone else. A close knit community, everyone knows your

business."

Anna paused for a moment, "You don't have any siblings?"

The question seemed to take Heather completely by surprise, "Actually I do. I have an older brother...I haven't seen him in a few years." Heather added, her voice taking on a melancholy tone.

Anna waited for more information and when none was forthcoming, she knew there was a story there somewhere. Perhaps Heather and her brother just didn't get along.

The wind was beginning to pick up coming off the sea, but neither woman seemed ready to move from their little haven. Anna took her blanket and wrapped it around Heather's shoulders, leaving herself sitting on the cool sand.

"Here, it's getting cold."

Heather was initially stunned by the gesture, then marvelled at the thoughtfulness of it. Without hesitation, she shifted over a bit on her blanket to provide space for Anna.

"C'mon, you must be getting cold as well."

When Anna moved onto the blanket Heather wrapped the other one around Anna's shoulder to share with her. They were so close it just seemed like the most natural thing in the world to move towards the other's body heat. Anna drew her arm around Heather and they sat quietly enjoying the other's company. There was nothing but the hypnotic sound of the small waves lapping at the shore as the tide began to come in, and the sound of the other's breathing. It was a moment so perfect Anna knew she had never experienced anything like it before. It was so beautiful it almost hurt.

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Heather dropped Anna off back at the farmhouse. As she made the short journey home she was, for the first time, able to admit that she had a crush on another woman. The evening she had just shared with Anna had felt romantic to Heather. More so than anything she shared with Greg in recent memory. It had been a long time since Heather had felt this way. She thought that perhaps she should be a little shocked that she was attracted to another woman, but she didn't feel that way at all. Instead, she felt a little giddy, even a little naughty. She had no thoughts of this crush being anything other than her own personal secret. Anna was a happily married woman after all. The way she had spoken about Pete earlier in the evening had actually left Heather feeling a little jealous of him. She shivered as a memory of her and Anna wrapped up in the blankets sitting on the beach came to mind. Heather had been enthralled by the very nearness of her friend. Anna had smelled wonderful, an earthy scent that reminded Heather of woods and spices, with a hint of jasmine. Whatever perfume Anna had worn, Heather loved the scent. It suited her tall, dark haired companion very well.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Good night?"

Pete half groaned and half grunted. He made his way to the kitchen in search of coffee. Finding half a pot left warming he quickly poured a mug of the strong brew. He had left yesterday lunchtime to watch Aberdeen play their opening home game of the football season. He was only now returning to the farmhouse.

"Ahh, that's better," he sighed.

"So, what kept you out all night?" Anna asked clearly amused at Pete's dishevelled appearance and obvious hangover.

"Let's just say, the bait is there waiting to see if Wally bites." He took another gulp of black coffee before continuing. "He thinks that I've cheated on you with a buxom, leggy blonde."

Anna raised an eyebrow, "And did you?" She asked, clearly amused.

"I never kiss and tell, Anna."

"Since when?" She snorted in disbelief. Pete had never been shy in the past, but she supposed this wasn't the same situation, as there was really no one to brag to.

"Wally has agreed to cover for me, in fact he came up with the story. I have just spent the night in police custody, sleeping off my drunken stupor in a cell as did Wally."

"And did he?" Anna asked curiously.

Pete shook his head negatively, instantly regretting the manoeuvre as his head started to pound. "He spent the night in the same hotel I did. He drove us back this morning."

"Okay, we wait and see if he uses any of this to his advantage. Maybe call in a favour from you in return for keeping quiet. Might give us something."

"How did your evening go?"

Anna immediately felt a pang of guilt as she was reminded of her task the previous evening. "Not too bad actually. Seems Heather is worried about Greg, thinks he might be keeping secrets. Could be something, could be nothing, but worth keeping tabs on, that's for sure. Said he had been talking about decommissioning the boat a few months back and now he won't entertain that

thought anymore."

"Good work," praised Pete.

"I'd say the same, but I think it was just a normal night out on the pull for you."

"Ha ha, very funny," grumbled Pete.

"Davidson is starting to get antsy about the operation. He's expecting us to give him something positive by tomorrow. What we have could be something or it could be nothing." Anna poured herself more coffee and sat opposite Pete, making sure to drag the chair across the wooden floor. She loved to watch him suffer.

"Jesus, Anna do you have to do that?"

Anna feigned innocence, "So, what should we tell him?"

"There are six boats working out of this harbour. So far we only have contact with three of the six skippers. The only one that looks remotely suspicious is the *Laissez Faire* and that could turn out to be nothing." Pete looked at Anna, "He's going to go nuts, isn't he?"

"Well he is if we just tell him that." Anna pursed her lips, she knew they needed to buy more time from Chief Inspector Davidson, time in which he would allow them to follow their instincts, without pressure from external sources.

"We have three boats under close surveillance, the other three we are monitoring for any signs of illegal activity. Of the three we are closely monitoring, two are worth more in-depth scrutiny. Namely, The *Laissez Faire* and the *North Star*. Both skippers could be involved in illegal activity and we have made strong inroads with them socially. We tell him specifically of the bait you have offered Wally and the relationship I have built up with the fiancée of Greg Moir. We give details of the activities of both men. Greg Moir recently changed his mind about decommissioning his boat and thinks his fiancée should give up her job, while she thinks they can't afford to. That is definitely worth pursuing, something is going on there."

"What about Wally? I'm not sure that we really have much on him."

"We just need to give Davidson the information he wants to hear. Wally is worth keeping close tabs on. Sure there has been nothing specific going on with him, but there is something about him that tells me to keep watching."

"So, what do we tell Davidson?"

"That Wally is a fisherman without a care in the world, while everyone around him is showing the strain. He is definitely worth the effort even if it's just because he has a big mouth and likes to brag. He might give us something on someone else."

"Has anyone ever told you that you should be working in politics? Gordon Brown could find a job for you as a spin doctor."

Anna shrugged, "We need to buy time with Davidson and keep him off our backs. Hopefully by the time he realises that we really don't have much, we might have something more."

She looked at Pete, "You know, this isn't exactly the most dynamic operation I've ever been on, but if we get what we're after then it will have all been worth the effort, including the sitting around twiddling our thumbs part. When it's time to move on this operation that will be it. The only chance we get. We're the ones everyone else is relying on to make that call. There will be no second chances with this one. When we call it, everyone in this village will know what has just gone down. So, if it's the wrong call, it's over. Anyone who is involved in something illegal will know to move their operation elsewhere."

Pete nodded his agreement. He also knew that call would be Anna's to make, but the information he supplied would be vital in helping her make it. He understood that she was stressing the importance of the timing of this operation and the information gathering. He was beginning to see what made Anna Lynch the proficient detective she was and why she had a sound reputation amongst her fellow officers. He knew this woman could help make him a better detective if he paid attention.

Anna stood up from the table. "Right, we are not missing church because you have a hangover, anyway a guilty man would go just because he feels guilty." Anna pinned Pete with an icy glare. "So, you cheating rat bastard, get a shower and clean yourself up!" She walked energetically from the kitchen, chuckling at her own teasing made at Pete's expense. Knowing her good mood and vitality would only irritate him more due to his delicate condition.

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On his return from church, Pete had headed straight to bed opting to try to sleep of his hangover. Anna decided to scout around the area. She wanted to familiarise herself with as much of the coastline and outlying area as possible. She would also be on the look out for anything that raised her suspicions. Changing into clothing more suitable for her excursion and, under the guise of sightseeing, Anna jumped into her Land Rover armed with binoculars and a digital camera. She had taken a few of these trips before and each one increased her knowledge of all the local back roads and out of the way secluded spots.

There were two locations that Anna was constantly drawn to. She had viewed them during daylight hours and after dark. The first was in the next village up from Havensburgh. The population of this village was similar in size, but it had more secluded spots nearer the shoreline, as the actual village was perched about fifty feet above sea level. There was a small road that led down to the bay but a vehicle could drive off to the left and park beneath the large, arched structure of the bridge alongside its very foundations. There was no proper road but, it was

accessible, this was a spot that Anna would consider using if she wanted to conduct business away from prying eyes.

The second spot was in the most sparsely populated village, just another three miles away. It had a small functional harbour that no longer saw any commercial fishing activity. With the tide in, a large fishing boat could use the harbour to offload its catch, or anything else it was carrying. Anna favoured this spot, as a boat could come into the harbour and leave again without anyone knowing it was ever there. It was also on the main stretch of water between Peterhead, where most fishing vessels landed their catch and Havensburgh, where the boat would dock. A trip into this harbour would be a short detour for any of the boats from Havensburgh. Reaching the harbour by car involved driving down a winding road that was used, almost exclusively, by the few residents located sporadically throughout the area.

Anna raised her binoculars to get a closer look at a specific area from her vantage point, scouting what would be her last location for the day. She let the binoculars hang around her neck again then used her digital camera to take a few more pictures that she could download to her laptop and review later. She was hungry so decided to stop off at a chip shop she had heard good things about. Not the healthiest food available, but it would do for this evening. One of the bonuses of this operation was that Anna had time to devote to improving her dietary needs. She was usually grabbing a quick bite to eat or skipping meals altogether. At the Farmhouse, she and Pete were actually cooking main meals.

Anna juggled the hot food in her hand while holding on tightly to the bottle of Irn-Bru she had tucked under her arm. She quickly used her keys to open the front door, then made her way to the kitchen before she dropped something. Leaving the unhealthy food wrapped, she headed to Pete's bedroom to wake him.

Anna banged on the door, 'Hangover Harry, you're dinner's out!'

She heard a groan from behind the door. "C'mon, Pete, trust me on this, it'll do you the world of good."

Upon hearing the sound of movement from within the room, she headed back to the kitchen to plate the food. Pete entered grumbling to himself.

"Anna, I'm not sure I'm going to manage any..." Pete stopped as his brain registered the smells wafting through the air.

Anna chuckled, this hangover cure rarely failed.

"Is that..?"

"Yep. White pudding supper and Irn-Bru."

For some strange reason, this seemed to be the food and drink of choice that hung-over Scots

seemed to prefer. No one knew exactly why, it just was. Irn-Bru, a fizzy drink that tasted like no other and was the colour of rusted girders; white pudding made from oatmeal and beef dripping with some spices and seasoning and chips with lashing of salt and vinegar.

Pete sat gingerly at the kitchen table and took his first bite. In no time at all he was digging into his food and washing it down with the Irn-Bru.

"How's your fish?"

"Very good," Anna replied. She had been pleasantly surprised with her fish supper. The food might not be the healthiest, but she could understand why the chip shop she used had a good reputation.

"You know, Anna, as far as acts of kindness go, this one is right up there." Pete was clearly feeling a lot better. He never teased when he felt bad.

"Yeah. Well don't get used to it. It's a one off."

"So you want to watch a DVD or something?"

"Depends," Anna replied cagily. "What have you got?"

"James Bond?"

That was met with a so-so look.

"The Usual Suspects?" Pete hedged.

"Yeah, I could watch that one again."

"You like it?"

"It's one of my favourite films."

Pete nodded, "you know after watching it three times, I still can't figure out who was Keyser Söze."

Anna looked incredulously at Pete, hoping he was joking.

At the end of the film, Anna glanced over at Pete who appeared to be deep in thought.

"A penny for them."

Pete glanced at her with a look of mild confusion on his face, which changed rapidly as

comprehension dawned.

"Oh." He chuckled and leaned his head back to rest on the sofa, as he stretched out his body. "I was just wondering what it's like...you know, taking a life. I mean, not that I'm anxious to find out or anything, just curious, you know?" He turned to look at Anna, waiting for her to respond to his musings. She was sitting, staring straight ahead, her body completely still. Eyes unblinking.

"Ah, Christ," Pete almost whispered. "I'm sorry, Anna, I just wasn't thinking."

Anna turned to look at Pete, his apology had barely registered with her, having just been plunged into a dark memory from her past. One she tried not to think too much about, if she could help it.

"It's not anything a person who is capable of feeling remorse would want to experience."

Pete sat transfixed on the woman next to him. He wasn't aware of her ever speaking to anyone he knew about this part of her.

"Until you find yourself in a certain situation which causes you to react, I don't think you can ever be truly aware of what you are capable of." Anna's gaze never once moved from Pete's. He found himself virtually spellbound.

"Then, in the cold light of day, you are left to deal with the aftermath of your actions. The strange thing is, I don't find that reality the most difficult to deal with. It's the fact of knowing, for certain, that I would do it again, that's the most harrowing part. Living with the knowledge that you are capable of taking a human life."

Pete felt himself shudder involuntarily. He wasn't the type of guy to be easily spooked, but hearing Anna talk in such a calm, detached manner about the subject of taking a life had left him feeling a little uneasy. Not because he feared the woman sitting next to him, he both respected and trusted her more each day. His feelings of unease had more to do with the realisation that there were some things in life you just didn't want to experience. No matter how curious you were. He wondered just what price that experience really came with.

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# ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Monday morning found Anna making the short trip up to Stonehaven, the biggest harbour town along the stretch of coast between Montrose and Aberdeen. She had awoken that morning realising that she needed to do some serious food shopping. Anna chose to head to Stonehaven for a change of scenery and a wider variety of choice than given by the little grocer in the village.

As Anna drove along the small coastal road towards her destination she noticed a group of teenage boys walking in the same direction she was headed. As she got closer she recognised them from the youth club. Putting on her indicator, she pulled over onto the grass verge by the side of the road.

"Hey, Guys!"

The group of five turned and, recognising Anna, immediately headed over to the Land Rover. They greeted her with a chorus of '*Hi's*' and '*Nice wheels*'.

"Where are you lot headed?"

Jamie, a tall blonde headed youth who looked to Anna's eyes, like he ought to be in a boy band, spoke for the group.

"Just going to Stoney to see a film, Anna."

"Hop in then, I'll give you a lift."

"Cool, we were hoping that someone from the village would pass by."

Jamie immediately took the front passenger seat next to Anna while the other four piled in the back and sat on the bench seats.

"No buses?" asked Anna, which raised a round of chuckles from the boys.

"Are you joking? We are lucky if a bus turns up at all, never mind when it's supposed to." Jamie replied laughing.

Graeme, a tall, gangly teen with a touch of acne elaborated. "Aye, most of the time we start walking. If the bus comes along, we stop it, if it doesn't come we hope someone we know drives past and picks us up. The postie is pretty good for that and some of the farmers."

"You are the lucky one today, Anna, and you now have the pleasure of our charm and combined good looks all the way to Stoney."

Jamie's words were met with a chorus of laughter and agreement. Anna could not help but enjoy their exuberant good humour.

"Are you guys back to school in a few days then?"

That question was greeted with a chorus of moans.

"What, I thought it was optional after four years?" Anna teased.

"We're all staying on because we couldn't find any decent jobs," answered Graeme.

Anna thought that was a remarkably prudent idea and voiced her approval, only to have her comment met with a round of snickers.

She glanced over at Jamie, her confusion evident on her face.

"See, Anna, if we leave school we stay at home with no money and nothing to do. So, we're all staying on because of the new Educational Maintenance Allowance. If your mum and dad don't earn a lot, you can get up to £30 a week for staying on. Most of us will get that amount."

Anna now understood, given the choices there really was little option. Still she thought it was a hell of a lot better than them being bored and penniless, which often led to petty theft then who the hell knew what.

Mikey, a young looking sixteen year old added, "We all went for the same apprentice joiner job a little while back and Callum got it. That was one of the few going in the village."

Anna nodded her understanding, "What type of job would you prefer to do?"

Mikey answered again, "I wanted to be a fisherman like ma' dad was, but he had to give up his boat, so that's not an option any longer."

Anna wondered what that meant for a community in the long term. Particularly in terms of family and any long term, knock on effects on a place that has relied on generations of the same families going to sea to earn a living.

"So what does your dad do now, Mikey?"

Anna's question was met with an uncomfortable silence and she immediately regretted asking even before she heard the answer.

"He killed himself," Mikey's reply was soft and low, but Anna didn't miss it.

"I'm truly sorry to hear that, Mikey." Anna wished the ground could just open and swallow her up. She had dealt with a few suicides over the course of her career. The impact on the family was always profound. They were always left wondering why, and could they have done something more.

"It's a'right, Anna, but thanks."

Graeme patted Mikey on the back, "A'right, Mikey man, eh? Remember that wee Cheryl will probably be at the pictures." He managed to put a smile back on the face of his friend, which Anna was both relieved and delighted to see. It was clear that these guys were a great source of support for each other, despite their young age they were pretty clued in to what was going on around them.

The remainder of the journey was filled with the guys playfully ribbing each other.

As the five friends exited her vehicle Anna paused to ponder her feelings for just a few minutes. This assignment was constantly gnawing at her conscience, but she realised it wasn't her goal that was the problem. Anyone involved in importing drugs deserved everything they got, regardless of the circumstances. That had always been Anna's philosophy. She had once been involved in arresting a seventy-five year old woman who was selling drugs to fund her heating bill in the winter. Anna had no qualms about arresting the elderly woman. But this assignment was giving her pause for thought. Since she had first met and started befriending the people of Havensburgh, and had come to get an insight into their daily lives, the duplicity of her motives was, for the first time, leaving a bad taste in her mouth. She was building friendships and gaining trust and it was all part of the job. She was doing what she was paid to do. Deep down Anna knew it would be far easier to go undercover amongst the people actually breaking the law, than to be integrating into the lives of these people and refrain from making attachments. Normally she would walk away and not look back when a job was over but, this time, Anna knew it would be a wrench. What started out as an assignment that she believed would be mundane and boring, was getting more and more complicated by the day.

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The following evening Anna parked in front of the youth club and entered the building with an added spring in her step. Heather seemed to have that affect on her. She was early as usual, hoping to spend a few extra minutes alone with her cute blonde friend.

Anna popped her head through the office door; she couldn't help but to look Heather over before announcing her presence. The blonde was concentrating so hard on whatever was on her computer screen, she hadn't yet realised she wasn't alone. Anna smiled at the vision before her. Jeans and a short-sleeved white blouse never looked so good with a pair of sandals. "Hi, Heather."

Heather turned in her chair to be greeted by the smiling face of her new friend. "Anna, hi. How are you?"

"Good thanks."

Heather nodded and smiled. "I had a really great time on Saturday. We should do it again sometime," she added hopefully.

"Yeah, definitely, that would be great." *'God you have no idea how great that would be'*, Anna thought to herself.

"How about Italian food next time?" Heather asked.

"Absolutely, I love Italian food."

Heather had wondered previously if Anna might actually be part Italian, what with her olive skin tone and thick dark hair, so thought she would take the opportunity to ask, "Are you off Italian descent, Anna?"

Anna smiled, "No, but you're not the first to ask. My mother is Scottish and my father's parents are Irish. They live in Galway, but my father has lived in Scotland since he was Eighteen years old."

"Did he come over to work?"

"Nah, he came over to play football, fell in love and never went home."

"Wow."

"Yeah, he wasn't brilliant at football, but good enough to play for a few years. It was meeting my mother that kept him here."

"So you and your brother must have grown up surrounded by football."

Anna laughed, "Well we did, but much to my dad's dismay neither of us were really interested. My brother plays rugby and I participated in athletics until I left school."

"Well you couldn't have given up all sport. The way you sprinted after that guy at the disco was quite something."

Anna shrugged. "Yeah, I do a bit of running. What about you?"

"I try to get to the gym as often as possible. I keep in shape that way."

Anna had thought that Heather probably used a gym. Her compact frame had a firm toned look and Anna had found herself imagining just exactly how Heather's body would look unclothed.

"You look good." Anna found herself replying quite without conscious thought. "*That has got to be the understatement of the year, she looks absolutely fantastic!*" Anna thought to herself.

"Thank you," Heather said, feeling a small blush creep up her neck. "Listen, Anna, I know it's a little ways off, but the youth club usually plans a trip away for the October school holiday week. They want to go to Glasgow this year, I'm sure they would love it if you could come along." Heather hoped that Anna would at least consider it.

The dark haired woman would have loved nothing better than to spend more time with the delightful woman in front of her, but knew she could not commit herself to this trip. For one thing, she certainly hoped this entire operation was over before the middle of October and, even if it weren't she would be of no use to Pete back in Glasgow.

"I don't know, Heather, it's not really my thing, you know." Anna was telling the truth, she didn't relish the thought of spending a few days in the company of a bunch of teenagers, although, under different circumstances, she would have gone just to be able to spend more time with Heather.

"But you get on great with the kids, Anna, they think you're fantastic. Please say you will at least think about it." The blonde added, her green eyes practically pleading with Anna to reconsider.

One look at Heather and Anna was gone, she couldn't just say no, even though the chances of her actually going were practically non-existent.

"We'll see, I'll think about it and let you know nearer the time."

"Great!" Heather got out of her seat and gave Anna a quick hug, "That gives me plenty of time to work on changing your mind." She grabbed Anna's hand and led her towards the main hall, "C'mon, since you're here early you can help me set up for the evening."

Anna was happy to go wherever Heather wanted to take her.

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"Oh man! Great shot, Anna," Jamie cheered as Anna sunk the black ball in the bottom right pocket. Jamie had talked Anna into partnering him in a game of doubles and using the opportunity to talk to her more, while asking for tips on his game and discussing their strategy and shot selection. Heather had been covertly observing Jamie's behaviour towards Anna and it was pretty clear that he was smitten with the tall woman. Heather admired the way her friend was handling Jamie's interest. She was friendly and considerate towards his feelings, while maintaining the relationship of adult supervisor. It was a delicate balance to achieve and Anna was doing a great job.

When the game ended, Anna thanked Jamie for partnering her, while politely declining his invitation to another game, stating she had promised to spend some time with the girls. It seemed that despite her initial difficulties and concerns over relating to teenage girls, both they and Anna had found some common ground. When Anna introduced them to her 'Sex, Drugs and Self-Defence' classes, the teenage girls had been only too willing to participate wholeheartedly in all aspects of the class. When it came to the discussions on sex and drugs, Anna wondered sometimes just who was teaching who. There was a lot of giggling, from the girls, but Anna always made sure the main points of the dangers of drug misuse and the importance of safe sex were put across to the teenagers. The issue of keeping themselves safe when alone at night had brought about the interest in self-defence, making the class more popular than she had expected.

When the evening's activities were over, Anna and Heather found themselves alone in the community centre.

"Someone has a crush on you," Heather teased.

Anna smiled, "Jamie will be quite a catch for some lucky girl."

"Ah, you noticed."

Anna shrugged, "It was hard not to."

"He talks about you all the time. 'Will Anna be at the youth club? Is Anna coming to Glasgow with us? Is Anna married?'" Heather paused, "You should have seen the poor boys face when I told him you were."

"He will get over me as soon as the next girl turns his head." Anna replied.

Heather agreed, "Maybe so." But inside she doubted it would be that simple and she was no longer thinking about Jamie.

"I'm going to meet Pete at the Marine bar, would you like a lift?"

"Actually, yes, if you don't mind, I'll go with you." Heather knew Greg would be in the bar, normally she wouldn't bother to go, but it wasn't Greg she wanted to see. Instead she was looking forward to spending a little more time in the company of the alluring Anna Thompson.

Anna and Heather entered the bar a few minutes later. The place was very busy for a Tuesday night and the drink seemed to be flowing liberally and, judging by the high spirits of the men inside, probably had been for most of the evening.

There were a few wolf whistles as the two women walked towards their respective partners, who were both embroiled in a conversation with Jim Wallace.

"Well hello there, ladies, I was just enjoying some fine conversation with your lads here."  
Wally's lecherous look at Heather immediately raised Anna's hackles, but she had long since stopped reacting to the leers he sent her way.

"Good evening, Jim." Heather politely replied, while Anna simply grunted her greeting, which earned her a warning look from Pete.

"I was just asking Pete how you came to buy the farm?"

"I told you before, Wally, we bought it on Ebay."

'Oh yes, that's right, on Ebay. You hear that, Greg, you can buy anything on that site, maybe you could go on and get some fish!"

Wally chuckled heartily at his own joke, but Greg Moir looked none too pleased.

"Well it's certainly true there aren't enough in our designated fishing waters." Greg grumbled.

"Why keep fishing then?" Pete asked.

Wally jumped in, "I don't plan to be fishing much longer. I will decommission my boat in the next few months and retire on what I get. That old thing paid for itself years ago."

"The sooner you do that the better. It will mean more fish for the rest of us to catch."

This reply from Greg raised a few more chuckles.

"The money you get from decommissioning the boat will give you enough to retire on?" Anna asked.

Greg interrupted, "Well that and all the fish I've helped him catch. He follows me around like a puppy knowing I will lead him to where the fish are biting."

Wally ignored Greg's barb, but it was becoming clear to Anna and Pete that the two men had an obvious dislike for one another.

Wally continued, "Sure I can, so long as I look after the money and invest it well."

Greg snorted, 'Since when was betting on the horses considered an investment strategy?"

This latest barb needled Wally. "Aye well, it's not like I have anyone to look after but myself. I'm my own man."

"Aye, since your ex wife saw sense and left you."

"Greg." Heather chastised, clearly embarrassed by the behaviour of her fiancé.

Wally got up into Greg's face. "At least when she agreed to marry me, she actually 'set the date'." Wally looked at Heather as he said this, his meaning clear.

Greg lost all reason and took a swing at Jim Wallace, but Pete was quick to intervene and separate them before they could take matters any further.

"Come on boys, no need to come to blows."

Heather was horrified at Greg's behaviour; she had never known him to start a fight in all the years they had been together.

"I think we should leave, Greg."

"You can go if you want, I'm staying." Greg replied in a surly tone.

Heather watched Greg walk away from her and join a group of men in the corner.

"Are you okay?" Anna asked her friend, who looked like she was ready to cry.

"Not really, no."

"Would you like a lift home?"

Heather shook her head. "No, I think I'll stay a little longer, just to make sure Greg doesn't get himself into any more trouble. Would you mind some company?"

Anna smiled, "You find us a seat and I'll go to the bar. What would you like?"

"Just a fresh orange and lemonade please, Anna."

"Be right back."

Anna watched as Greg spoke with a man she hadn't seen before. He had a deep scar running from the corner of his mouth across most of his left cheek. He was very gaunt looking and, combined with the scar and his shaven head, he cut a menacing figure.

She asked Heather about him when she returned to the table. "Was Greg's friend injured in a fishing accident?" Despite all that had happened that evening, Anna was here to do a job and Heather could help provide answers.

The blonde looked over to where Anna had gestured with her head. She took in the stranger sitting with her fiancé. "I have no idea who that man is, Anna. I've never seen him before. That's not so unusual these days," she added dejectedly.

Despite her sympathy for Heather's current situation, Anna thought the information could prove to be very useful.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The following day Anna and Pete had a brainstorming session regarding the evening before. They both wanted to gather their information together and try to make more sense of what had been going on.

"You think *scarface* is involved in this somehow?" Pete asked Anna.

"I don't know, but Heather has no idea who this guy is, we should definitely be on the look out for any more strangers that Greg Moir is meeting in the pub."

"Before you arrived in the bar, Greg and Wally had been needling each other on and off most of the night. There is no love lost between that pair.

"I sort of guessed that when they practically started punching each other." Anna added sarcastically.

Pete ignored her and continued, "Wally hinted at something after you and Heather went to sit down."

Anna raised her eyebrow, "Would this be something besides hinting to me that you might not quite be the faithful husband I have come to know and love?" Anna mocked.

"The bastard, he never?"

"He sure did."

"Total slime bag."

The pair stopped joking and got back to the serious business of doing their job.

"He said something about Greg Moir's boat not always being where it should be."

Anna frowned, "Did he mention anything else?"

Pete shook his head, "No, and when I asked what he meant, he just grinned."

Anna gnawed at her bottom lip, and then blew out a breath. "This is bloody frustrating." Getting

up abruptly from the kitchen table, she cursed and paced over to the window adding, "I hate the lack of progress. We need something concrete soon or Davidson will pull us."

Pete could feel the frustration running off his colleague in waves. He sensed it was more than just the information gathering that was causing her irritation.

"You know, there won't be much happening for a day or two, why don't you take a little time to yourself, Anna? Blow off some steam."

Anna turned sharply to look at Pete, the little grin and the gleam in his eye confirmed his meaning. Initially about to give him a piece of her mind, she found the wind taken out of her sails.

Smiling ruefully, she had to agree that his suggestion was a good one; she needed to distance herself for a few hours. "I might just do that."

Pete's grin became a full smile, "That's my girl."

"Don't push it, McGinty." She cautioned, more to keep up appearances than to chastise.

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Returning home, Heather decided she and Greg really had to take time to discuss the previous night's events in the bar. They had spent a quiet, if slightly strained evening with her parents, her mother seemingly oblivious to the tension surrounding the young couple.

Hanging up her jacket in the hall, Heather joined her fiancé in the sitting room.

"Greg, we need to talk."

"I have nothing to say," Greg replied, his eyes never leaving the television screen, remote still in his hand, looking for a channel to watch.

"Please, Greg!"

Greg looked at Heather properly for the first time in weeks. He hadn't been fair to her, he knew that, but he didn't want to have this talk. He remained stoically silent in the hope that Heather would take the hint and drop the subject.

"Fine, you might not have anything to say, but you can at least do me the courtesy of listening." She was breathing heavily now with sheer frustration. "I don't know what is going on. You won't talk about the boat with me. You are meeting strangers in the bar and starting fights with a whinge bag like Jim Wallace. He has been a wind up merchant all his life and suddenly you are letting him get to you. A few months ago you would have laughed his comments off. This isn't like you, Greg."

She waited, hoping Greg would finally speak to her. When nothing was forthcoming, an increasingly frustrated Heather continued. "This is hopeless. If you aren't going to talk to me about any of this, I don't see how we can continue as we are." Heather was close to tears, disbelieving that her childhood sweetheart had let it come to this. "I'll be at my parents, you know where to find me whenever you are ready to talk."

As Heather turned to leave, Greg finally spoke.

"Heather, wait."

She stopped and turned to look at her fiancé, not sure of who he was anymore.

"You've changed." Greg said simply.

Heather paused, her forehead wrinkled in thought as she considered his words. They had surprised her. Had she changed? Certainly she had grown up and matured in the last two years, but she didn't think she had changed, until now.

"I've changed?"

Greg shrugged, "I think so."

Heather was momentarily speechless.

Greg broke the silence. "You're never going to marry me are you?"

She hadn't expected this. With the question finally out in the open, she could no longer ignore the truth. Greg was right, she wasn't going to marry him and no amount of talking was going to change that fact.

The tears flowed as Heather finally gave voice to what they had both known to be true for some time now. "I'm so sorry, Greg."

"I thought so." Greg stated with a distinct note of resignation in his voice.

Heather took a seat next to him. Taking his big hand in both of hers, she tried to explain. "I don't know what has changed, Greg, you me, both of us. I'm not sure. I do know that the direction we have been heading in, isn't the route I want to take."

Greg nodded, "And I want to stay right here, go fishing and raise a family. I wanted that life with you."

"I know, I know, but, I can't explain it, Greg, I'm not even sure of what I want. I only know what I don't want."

"You don't want a family?" Greg was surprised.

"I'm not saying that. I may, in the future, but not right now. You're ready to settle down, you have been since you were eighteen years old, but you've waited for me, and for that I'm immensely sorry. Sorry it's taken me this long to realise I don't want the same as you."

Greg started to sob, and as the floodgates opened, they both knew they would now have to deal with the reality that their relationship was effectively over and had been heading that way for some time. Long before they both started keeping secrets.

Despite the new status of their relationship, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for these two people, who had known each other for so long, to comfort each other. They embraced tightly and sobbed. Neither quite ready to let the other go just yet. Somewhere in amongst the heartache and pain, Heather realised that Greg had known this conversation would lead to this place and it was most likely the reason he had been avoiding talking about their relationship and finding sanctuary in the bar whenever Heather tried to broach the subject.

These two people, though now about to move in different directions, had been an enormous part of each other's life for years. Neither knew what the future held for them, but for the rest of that evening at least, there was no other place they wanted to be. Lying in each other's arms, finding comfort and solace amid the pain, until the cold light of dawn brought with it the stark realisation that they were finally over as a couple.

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Anna sought out a familiar number on her mobile phone and dialled. It was picked up on the third ring.

"Anderson." Came the cool reply.

"Hi, Maddie, its Anna."

"I know."

*Bitch.* "I need to see you."

"When?"

"Tonight?"

There was a pause and Anna waited patiently on the reply.

"I'm free from eight thirty p.m. Meet me at the front of the Pleasance gym ... I've moved."

"Okay, I'll be there. Bye." All Anna heard was a click then the dialling tone. *Jesus and people*

*think I'm cold.*

Anna checked her watch. If she got moving straight away she had just enough time to freshen up, change and pack some clean clothing to take with her for tomorrow.

"Pete, I'm going and I won't be back till late tomorrow morning or early afternoon."

"What, hang on? What are you going to do?"

"Strangely enough, I'm going to take your advice," she grinned.

Pete understood the message loud and clear, without Anna going into specifics. All he could think was that someone was a lucky sod and briefly lamented the fact that her tastes ran to women and, more specifically, didn't run to him.

Anna had met Maddie Anderson while on a case around three years ago. She was a fellow detective, around five feet ten inches tall, with a shock of long blonde hair and big blue eyes. Half Scottish and half Swedish, Maddie was stunning and stacked. Once they'd both realised the other was gay, they soon ended up sleeping together, no strings attached. That situation still remained, although it had been a while since they had hooked up.

Anna made it over the Forth Road Bridge in good time. She hadn't been to the capital in some months and rarely had she ever used this route, normally driving in from Glasgow. However, thirty minutes of traffic queues and stop/start driving later, Anna was approaching Edinburgh's main thoroughfare of Princes Street and immediately cursing. She had forgotten the road was closed due to work for the new tram system. *Damn! If I'm late, I doubt she'll hang around.* She quickly thought through her options and, remembering a short cut through the Grassmarket area, managed to get to the Pleasance and be parked outside the entrance gates with exactly three minutes to spare.

At precisely eight thirty she watched as the immaculately dressed Maddie Anderson came into view. Maddie's hair was swept up in a bun giving her a somewhat severe look. She was wearing a black, tailored trouser suit over a crisp white cotton shirt, and a pair of flat-heeled leather ankle boots completed the outfit.

Anderson stopped and, looking over at the Land Rover, spotted Anna sitting behind the wheel. Maddie seemed to view the vehicle with such apparent disdain that, for one split second, Anna actually thought she wasn't going to approach. Then suddenly, in just three long strides, she was opening the door, getting in and reaching for her seatbelt.

"Hi, Maddie."

"Nice wheels. They suit you." She said coolly.

"Thanks." There was no point in mentioning the vehicle wasn't hers, Anderson would barely raise an eyebrow.

"So, is this a social call?"

"I was hoping it could be."

"Good, I'll leave my car here and you can drop me off tomorrow. Head down to the waterfront, I'll direct you from there."

Anna nodded and put the Land Rover into gear. She didn't know exactly why, but Maddie's slightly accented, imperious tone did something for her. The woman was quite majestic in her own way. Not that she acted like she could give a damn, or maybe that was why. Either way it didn't matter to Anna, she wasn't too bothered about any analysis of Maddie's character. At this point in time, she was much more interested in her body.

Maddie had moved from her flat in the Morningside area of the city and into a loft conversion down by the Leith shore. The area was undergoing a major facelift as many old warehouses and empty whisky bond buildings were being converted into trendy flats, very popular with young professionals.

Passing the Royal Yacht Britannia, now moored in Leith, Anna was instructed to make a right turn.

A short while later Anna found herself climbing the stairs to Maddie's new flat. Anderson opened the door and Anna entered first, she didn't even take in the décor as she waited for Maddie to close the door behind her then Anna pounced. The one thing Anna loved doing was making this woman melt and she intended to give and take for as long as they both could keep it up.

Anna dropped her overnight bag on the wooden floor and pinned Maddie against her front door. She began unbuttoning her suit jacket in an effort to free the restrained woman. She kissed her deeply and Maddie responded in kind. Anna was soon freeing Maddie from her jacket and the blonde took the opportunity to reverse their positions. She thrust her thigh between Anna's legs and ground into her. Anna was helpless to resist the onslaught. She had been so horny for days and was now completely turned on by what Anderson was doing. She lost all sense of bearing and just gave herself over. She felt Maddie unbuttoning her jeans and pulling them off her hips along with her underwear. At the first brush of Maddie fingertips against her engorged clitoris Anna almost came.

"Mmmm, so wet."

"God yes, don't tease." Anna husked.

Complying with Anna's heartfelt plea, Maddie began rubbing her clitoris with a firm pressure, quickly bringing her to a hard and fast orgasm. Anna thrusting her hips against Maddie's hand to prolong the sensation.

Anna was leaning against the door far from spent, but it had been enough to take the edge of her need. Maddie grabbed for her hand and led her to the bedroom.

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Several hours later Maddie asked, "Are you hungry?"

"Starving."

"I'll order some Chinese. Any preference?"

"Hmm...chicken black bean with fried rice and some noodles."

Maddie rose from the tangled bedding completely naked. Anna watched her move gracefully out the door and decided that there was still plenty of time to enjoy that body. She had always thought that Maddie had fantastic breasts.

Maddie returned a few minutes later with wine and got back into bed. She handed Anna a glass.

"What's wrong?" She had that look on her face that told Anna not to bother bullshitting.

Anna decided to come straight out with it, "I'm undercover and I'm very attracted to the fiancée of a potential suspect."

"Tricky." Anderson answered, stating the obvious and not bothering to offer any lecture on blowing her cover. She knew Anna wasn't looking for one. Maddie was a complex woman, while at the same time she was a very uncomplicated human being. It was a combination that Anna found irresistible. The ambiguous duality of her nature fuelled Anna's attraction in a very potent manner, which had manifested itself in many, lust filled encounters between the two women.

"Though, I do happen to approve of your coping mechanism, it is quite ingenious." Maddie joked.

Anna chuckled as Maddie leaned her head back onto the pillows and offered the closest thing to a smile Anna had witnessed from her that evening. Just at that moment they heard the door buzzer.

"Ah, food. Be right back," said Maddie, this time prudently reaching for a robe and putting it on before leaving the room.

Anna took the opportunity to ogle the departing Maddie's toned backside and, much to her dismay she found herself wondering how it would compare to Heather's. Though trying valiantly to dislodge the rogue thought, Anna still formed an answer. She just knew Heather's would be firmer...

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The following Saturday was one of the busiest days on the Havensburgh social calendar. The annual flower show held by the local horticultural society would be taking place in the village hall and Anna and Pete planned to make the most of any opportunities that might arise during the day to further their cause. They had been told that the village population would triple in size with the influx of visitors for the flower show.

"Well, at least it's a lovely day for it." Pete remarked.

"That's for sure."

Something caught Anna's eye, a familiar face. "Jesus." She pulled Pete close to her and turned her back to the woman she had caught a glimpse of. She leaned in closer to Pete's ear, a smile on her face to cover the seriousness of the situation. "You see the woman over by the craft stall?"

Pete looked, "Which one, there are a few there?"

"Brunette, collar length curly hair. Arty looking."

"You mean the hippy?"

"She's arty, not a hippy."

"Pete laughed softly, "You didn't did you?"

"We had a thing."

"So, she knows what you do for a living?"

"Not exactly."

"What does that mean?"

"I told her I worked in an office. I'm not in the habit of telling one night stands what I do for a living."

"She keeps looking over, she obviously saw you."

"Okay, then we better put on a good show." Anna gave Pete a soft kiss on the lips, and then leaned into his ear again to whisper. "If I saw a woman I had been with doing this with a guy, I would keep her secret, I'm sure she will mine."

"I'm not sure that little peck was convincing enough." Pete leaned in and gave Anna a fuller, longer kiss. When he introduced his tongue, Anna bit it.

Pete disengaged grinning, "You can't blame a guy for taking full advantage of this situation."

Anna leaned in lovingly to him, "Try that again and I will cut your balls off."

"It would be worth it."

The pair laughed and continued strolling amongst the patrons.

Heather Keith stood just inside the village hall observing Anna and Pete. With Greg gone to sea she had yet to tell anyone that they had ended their relationship. Watching her new friend and her husband just compounded her misery. They looked so in love, she wondered if she would ever find what they had together with another person. As Anna leaned in and kissed Pete lovingly on the lips Heather felt her stomach tighten and twist. The air in the hall felt stuffy and hot and she knew she needed to get out of there. The feelings of longing and loss were too much to bear.

As Anna and Pete strolled hand in hand looking at the various floral presentations they were accosted by Mrs. Keith.

"Oh, Anna, Anna!" Mrs Keith shouted loudly enough that there would be no chance of Anna not hearing her.

Anna turned to see the woman coming towards them, Mr. Keith making no attempt to hurry up and catch his wife. Mind you, Anna thought, it's not like the conservative man would have any difficulty picking his wife out amongst the throngs of visitors, her dress was clashing with every display in the room, she looked positively garish.

"Hello, Mrs. Keith," Anna said politely. She nodded to Mr Keith as he strolled up beside his wife. "Mr. Keith."

"Hello, Anna, Peter, how are you both?"

"We're good, enjoying the last of the nice weather. Aren't we, darling?" This she said to Pete, who smiled winningly at his *wife*.

"We sure are."

"Anna, have you seen Heather today?" Mrs. Keith asked without any preamble.

Anna frowned, "No should I have?"

"I'm worried about her, she hasn't been herself these last few days."

"Oh, is everything alright?"

"Well I don't know, dear, that's why I'm asking you."

Anna thought for a moment, the blonde had seemed a little subdued on Thursday evening, but there had been no hint from Heather that anything was wrong.

"Not anything that I'm aware of, Mrs. Keith. Have you spoken to Greg?" Anna wondered if perhaps Heather's low mood had something to do with the incident in the bar the previous Tuesday. She certainly wouldn't be the one to tell Mrs. Keith about it if Heather hadn't

I can't ask Gregor, he's at sea."

*'Since when'* Thought Anna? Greg hadn't been due to take his boat out for a few days yet. She wondered what could have changed his mind.

"Oh, I had no idea. I'm sure Heather will be here, when did you last speak to her?"

"Last evening, but she promised to come today."

Malcolm Keith added his wisdom to the conversation. "I'm sure Heather will turn up when she's good and ready, Agnes. Now, don't you have some flowers to attend to?"

"Yes, but I just can't concentrate on the flowers right now, you know I can't. Something isn't right, I can feel it."

Anna decided to offer to help. "Why don't I go check and see if Heather is at home?"

"Would you, dear? That would be wonderful."

"Thank you, Anna." Mr. Keith added.

"You're welcome."

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Anna walked up to Heather's cottage and knocked on the door. When no one answered she opened the letterbox and called in.

"Heather, it's Anna."

A short while later she heard some movement inside and Heather opened the door. Anna smiled at the blonde.

"Hi"

"Hi, Anna, this is a surprise. Come on in."

"Thanks."

Offering Anna a seat, Heather asked, "What can I do for you?"

"Well, I promised your mum I would look in on you, she's very worried."

"That's nothing new, she needs to know where I am at all times."

"Is everything okay?" Despite Heather's forced cheeriness, Anna couldn't help but notice the red rimmed eyes.

With this question, Heather seemed to deflate right before Anna's eyes. "Actually, no, it's not. Greg and I have split up."

"Oh, Heather, I'm so sorry," Anna said, her sympathy genuine despite the falseness surrounding their friendship.

Heather couldn't hold the dam back any longer and the tears flowed again, as they had been intermittently since Wednesday evening, she seemed to have no control over them. Anna instinctively comforted her friend and Heather was content to be in her arms as she told Anna about the break up.

"In truth it had been coming for some time and Greg knew it. It was me that had been turning a blind eye to the fact that I was never going to marry him. We have been growing apart for some time now."

"You haven't told your mother?" Anna questioned, knowing full well the answer.

"No, I just can't face that conversation at the moment and, with Greg away at sea, I've been putting it off."

"What will you do?"

"I'll probably speak to my dad first. We will most likely have to sell the cottage, though Lord knows it's not the best time to be doing that. Truthfully though, I honestly don't know beyond that. Maybe it's time to get to know myself; I've never really had that opportunity. I've always been one half of Greg and Heather."

"You'll like Heather, she is well worth getting to know." Anna encouraged.

"I hope so."

Anna knew so.

Just then, Anna's mobile rang interrupting the silence that had descended. She apologised to Heather as she checked the caller display. "It's Pete, I better take it."

"Hey, Honey, I'm with Heather." She let Pete know she wasn't free to talk.

"A problem with the sheep? I'll be there right away?" Whatever was going on was urgent.

"I'm sorry, Heather. I have to get back to the farm. I'll call you later." She hated having to run out on the blonde, especially when Heather was going through so much emotionally, but she was here to do her job and, difficult though it was, she would have to leave the blonde on her own.

Giving Heather one last, reassuring hug, she quickly left the cottage. Although Anna had meant every word, inside she still felt like a total shit. She knew that everything she had said to Heather had been heartfelt and genuine but, because of the circumstances, her words would end up sounding contrived and manipulative to the blonde when the truth was finally revealed.

Shaking off the dark thoughts, she waked towards Pete who was already in his truck, waiting for Anna outside Heathers house.

"What's so urgent?" Anna asked as she put on her seatbelt.

"The contact from Peterhead called saying that two boats are due to offload their catch in the next twelve hours."

"A busy night ahead for us then."

"Hopefully we get something this time." Pete added.

They had been through the same routine several times now but, so far, no boat had shown any signs of doing anything other than offloading their catch. With time running out and the budget dwindling, both Anna and Pete were beginning to feel the pressure of producing a result.

"We will scout the same locations as last time, you see anything, let me know right away." Anna instructed.

The pair headed back to the farm for a change of clothing and to prepare and check the equipment they would need for the next twelve hours.

Six hours later Pete called Anna.

"Yes, Pete, do you have anything?" Anna asked, a hint of excitement in her voice.

"No, sorry, just wanted to let you know that one of the boats has been to Peterhead and it's now on its way to dock at Inverbervie."

"Thanks, Pete, I'll keep a look out for that one just to make sure they don't take any detours."

It was almost four hours later when Pete made the call to Anna that the second boat had docked and stayed in Peterhead. It was a very deflated pair of detectives who made their way back to the farm a short time later.

"Jesus, another wasted night." Pete complained.

Anna agreed, knowing they would have to catch a break soon as time was running out.

"How much longer do you think Davidson will give us?"

Anna considered the question for a moment. "Truthfully, he might just pull us on Monday."

"What!" Pete exclaimed.

"We are getting nowhere, we don't have one solid lead. Davidson isn't going to give us much longer. I really think we are talking only days here unless something crops up soon."

Pete yawned and leaned back on the sofa. "Just like that, we could be out of here in a few days?"

"It's really looking that way. Davidson's patience and budget are wearing thin."

They were both weary after spending the last twelve hours running up and down the stretch of coast that they had come to know like the back of their hand. With nothing to show for their efforts, yet again.

"I'm not ready to throw in the towel, Anna."

"Unfortunately, it's not our decision, but let's sleep on it and see how it looks in the morning."

Pete agreed and the pair retired hoping to see things differently the next day. Sleep was a long time coming to Anna as she went over everything in her head, hoping that something would jump out at her, maybe something they had missed. It didn't, but she did find herself forming a semblance of an idea. It was risky at best and downright crazy when she really thought about it, but she couldn't help but want to implement it. She understood that Pete was desperate for a result from a career point of view and she plain hated the idea of this operation ending up a complete waste of time, but what if...

\*\*\*\*\*

The following day Anna and Pete went about their usual Sunday routine. A hearty breakfast, then a trip to mass, the same as they had for the last several weeks. They politely spoke with Reverend MacKinlay, before acknowledging the other people they had come to know during their time in Havensburgh. Anna couldn't help but feel a sense of finality to the whole day, she suspected this would be the last time she would be attending this service.

The weather was noticeably cooler these days and people were not standing around outside the church as they had when Pete and Anna first arrived, instead moving in the direction of home or the church hall for a cuppa. That's where Anna and Pete decided to go and mingle for a little while longer. Inside they were immediately waved across by Mrs. Keith, she clearly wanted them to join her and her husband and, much to Anna's delight, Heather was also there.

"How are you both and how are the sheep? It was a shame Peter had to rush off last week during the flower show." Mrs. Keith asked.

Pete answered, "We're fine thanks, as are the sheep. A couple of them had gotten free through a hole in the fence. We got them back and the fence has been repaired."

Anna mused that lying was simply second nature to them, one lie after another rolling off their tongues as easily as the letter 'r'.

Mrs. Keith, always charmed by Pete continued, 'Oh, that's wonderful, and thank you, Anna, for being such a dear and dropping in to see Heather when she was feeling unwell. She told me you were a tremendous help."

"Think nothing of it, Mrs. Keith, it was my pleasure."

"Such a wonderful couple you are, we are really lucky that you have chosen to make Havensburgh your home. Will we be hearing the patter of tiny feet soon?"

Anna laughed, "I think at the moment, the sheep will be breeding before we do, but who knows in the future, I'm sure when we are a little more settled. What do you think, Darling?"

Anna deftly turned this one over to Pete.

"When the time is right, Mrs Keith, we hope to start a family."

"Oh, how wonderful, you will be marvellous parents, won't they, Malcolm?"

Mr. Keith agreed, "Absolutely." Always a man of few words, but then, it was difficult to get words in around his wife.

"We hope that it won't be too long before Heather and Greg decide to start a family of their own." Mrs. Keith added.

Anna had suspected the conversation may navigate towards the blonde and, turning her attention to Heather, she changed the subject. "How are you feeling?"

The blonde smiled, but she looked weary. "I'm better thanks, Anna."

Mrs. Keith added, "She still looks peaky to me, not quite right yet, are you, dear?"

"I'm getting there, Mum."

"Well it was lovely seeing you all again. We have to head back to the farm now to do more work on the fence, checking the boundaries." Pete made their excuses.

"Of course, don't let us keep you," said Mrs. Keith.

"I'll see you on Tuesday, Heather," Anna added, before they all said their goodbyes.

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

Monday brought with it the dreaded phone call from Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson.

*"What's bloody happening up there?"* Davidson shouted into the phone.

"Sir, we..." Anna could barely get a word in edgeways.

*"The budget is going through the roof and you two have nothing. Not one damn concrete lead."*

Anna tried again, but to no avail.

*"What the hell happened the other night?"*

Finally he let Anna speak. "Sir, the boats went about their normal business."

*"And the pair of you went running around the beaches like a couple of lost tourists -Again!"* he roared into the telephone, then continued, *"I think enough is enough, your holidays are over. It's time for the pair of you to get back down to Glasgow and lick your wounds."*

*Damn*, Anna thought, he was serious this time and she was going to have to do some very fast talking to change his mind.

"Sir, don't be too hasty, I believe we have something."

Pete looked at Anna in disbelief. He couldn't imagine what she was about to tell their boss.

*"Let me hear it and it better be bloody good."*

"One of the boats has gone out unexpectedly with a full crew."

"So?"

"This particular crew have been splashing some cash lately. Talk of finally buying a house in the village and weddings, things like that. I got this from the girlfriends. Seems this crew are getting lucky at a time when everyone else is struggling."

Davidson was silent on the other end of the line and Anna and Greg waited patiently for his answer.

*"I'll give you until this boat returns, but I warn you, if this turns out to be nothing, there will be hell to pay back here."*

"Thank you, Sir." Anna was mentally pumping her fist.

"Which boat?" Davidson demanded to know.

Anna gnawed at her bottom lip, thinking about her answer. "The Laissez Faire." She had just named Greg Moir as a possible drug smuggler and prayed her gamble was correct.

*"You better be bloody right, Lynch,"* Davidson warned before hanging up.

Anna looked at Pete who was staring at her slack jawed.

"What the hell was that?"

Anna shrugged, "You weren't ready to give up and neither am I, I've just bought us some time."

"What bloody houses and weddings? Why didn't you tell me about this?"

"Look it's a hunch, don't worry, I supplied Davidson with the spin, your arse is covered."

"I don't bloody think so," Pete cursed. "If this goes tits up it will be the second time for me this year. I can't afford another failure!"

"Calm down, Pete, just trust me, okay?"

Pete ran a hand through his hair, "Fucking hell, Anna, you better be right."

*God, I hope so,* thought Anna.

For the next hour they focussed on spending the time they had left usefully. With Greg's boat gone for the next few days, they weren't intending to just sit around waiting for it to return.

"Starting tonight we do shifts scouting the coast, we just might get lucky." Anna suggested.

"Makes sense, and if nothing transpires?" Greg asked.

"We hope that it all unfolds with the return of Greg Moir's boat."

Pete wasn't feeling much better hearing that. "Do you really think he is involved?"

"Desperate times can make people do desperate things," Anna answered cryptically.

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Tuesday evening saw Anna arrive at the youth club and, for the first time, not really looking forward to the evening ahead. She hadn't arrived early, as had been her habit over the weeks, with no other reason than to spend some time alone with Heather. It had been a guilty pleasure. The teenagers were already queuing outside when she approached the doors to the community centre.

"Can we play music tonight, Anna?"

"Will you join us in a game of pool."

The questions were fired at her thick and fast from the enthusiastic teenagers, she smiled simply because it was infectious.

"Whoa, one at a time," she pleaded. "I'm sure I can fit in a game of pool" and to the girls, she assured they would get to pick music to listen too.

Making her way inside she found Heather already in the main hall; everything set up with the help of Tom, one of the volunteers, who was obviously on shore leave. Anna hadn't seen too much of Tom over the weeks and, whilst she admitted to herself that he was a nice guy, it was his adoration of Heather that secretly bugged her. She wondered if Tom would now seize his opportunity when he found out Greg was no longer in the picture. Shaking off that thought she greeted her co-workers for the evening of mayhem ahead.

"Hi, Guys. Sorry I'm a little late."

"Hey, Anna, not to worry. Tom came in early to help." Heather answered, oblivious to Tom's ulterior motives.

Tom smiled at Anna. "Yes, I thought I would come along early to see if Heather needed anything

doing. I like to do what I can when I'm here,"

*'Oh, I'll just bet you do,'* Anna thought to herself. "That's very good of you, Tom, I'm sure Heather appreciates that."

"Of course I do. You're a great help whenever you are here, Tom."

Tom stood with his hands in the pockets of his jeans, looking absolutely chuffed with himself upon receiving praise from Heather. This guy had it bad, Anna mused. She couldn't help the false smile that appeared for Tom, or as she had just renamed him, Tomtastic.

Heather broke the silence. "Well, it's time, all hands to the pump." With that, she opened the doors for the teenagers to begin their night of fun.

Anna couldn't help but feel a sense of finality about the evening and no matter how hard she tried to shake it, she couldn't. She already knew she wouldn't be attending Thursday's youth club, regardless of what happened. She just couldn't stand another night like this. It wouldn't be unusual, she had promised Heather one night a week, but had most of the time turned up for both the Tuesday and the Thursday evening. There had been absolutely no need, but she just wanted to spend time with Heather.

During the course of the evening she had caught Heather's eye more than once. They both seemed to be going through the motions but fortunately, Tom was out to impress, so he was picking up the slack. By the end of the evening, it was a weary Anna and Heather that were cleaning up the mess left behind. Anna, thinking this could well be her last time alone with Heather, was willing Tom out the door, but he wasn't going anywhere. Unbeknownst to Anna, Heather was wishing the exact same thing, so when the three left the building and Anna offered the blonde a lift, Heather jumped at the chance.

Anna couldn't help herself; she had to mention what she had observed. "You know Tom has the hots for you?"

Heather frowned at Anna. "No, he just likes to help out."

Anna laughed, "Trust me, the guy has it bad."

"Oh, God, that's all I need right now."

Anna was already pulling up in front of Heather's cottage. "How are you doing?"

"I still feel numb, it's kind of surreal, you know. Thinking that Greg won't be in my life any more. I still haven't told my mother." Heather confessed.

"Good luck with that. I would suggest that you don't leave it too long. It won't get any easier."

"I know, and thanks, Anna." Heather removed her seatbelt, "Will I see you on Thursday?"

"No, sorry, I can't make Thursday."

Heather smiled. "Not too worry, if not before, I'll see you on Sunday."

Anna didn't respond, not wanting to lie, though it seemed a bit late for that. "Night, Heather."

"Sweet dreams, Anna."

*'They will be if you're in them.'* Anna thought.

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The following day, Heather decided it was time to talk to her father about everything. She headed into Stonehaven to meet him at work, bringing some lunch to his office for them both.

"I wondered when you would come to me." Malcolm Keith said sagely, looking every inch a bank manager.

"So much has happened, Dad. I don't even know where to start."

"Just say whatever you need to, Heather, you know you can tell me anything."

"I can't..."

Malcolm Keith decided to help his daughter out and get the conversation started.

"What's happening with Greg?"

Those words did the trick and Heather answered him honestly. "It's over, Dad. I feel bad about that. I never wanted to hurt him but, at the same time, I have realised that marrying Greg just isn't the right thing to do. My heart was never truly in it. I would have been settling and I've come to see that I need more than that."

Malcolm Keith nodded; he wasn't surprised to hear what Heather was telling him.

"When are you planning to tell your mother?"

"I don't know, but it will have to be soon. Greg will be back within the next few days, I will have to tell her before then or she will hear it from someone else"

"Come to dinner tonight, you can tell her then."

Heather was about to object, but her father stopped her.

"No point in putting it off and you know that she should really hear it from you."

"You're right, Dad, it's just that I know it's going to hurt her. She will try to take matters into her own hands."

"Yes, she will, but only if you continue to let her."

Heather looked at her father, the shock of his words clearly written on her face.

"Until you take full control of your own life, Heather, she won't stop. I'll be there for her, she's my wife and I love her. You don't need to take on that responsibility. I want you to be doing what makes *you* happy."

"I love my job, Dad, I really do."

"But, you can do your job anywhere in the country. Remember, you no longer have anything to tie you to the village. If you want to see more of the world or if you want to work in a bigger place, in a different area of expertise, you're free to choose to do so. There is no longer anything holding you back."

"I'm surprised, Dad."

"Don't be...I want you to be happy, that's the most important thing to me."

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On Friday evening, Pete returned from yet another futile few hours scouting along the stretch of coast he had come to hate the sight of. Slamming the front door of the farmhouse, he angrily kicked off his boots.

"This is fucking ridiculous." He grumbled.

Anna observed her cranky partner from over the rim of her teacup.

"Not a bloody thing in sight. A boat a car, a person! A complete and utter waste of time."

"I'll go out, we have to keep at this, we might just get lucky."

"Lucky? This is a joke! We should have had solid leads, instead we are running up and down this stretch of coast chasing shadows!"

"I know it's not ideal, Pete..."

"Don't you give me that, I have worked my arse off here. I found us the only leads we got."

"What the hell are you getting at, McGinty?"

"I'm saying, if you had spent more time concentrating on your job and less time sniffing around that little blonde, we might have gotten somewhere instead of relying on luck!"

"Don't you dare question my professionalism. You need to take a step back, and gain a sense of perspective."

"What I need is to know I will still have a career after yet another fuck up."

"Stop being so melodramatic. You wanted this assignment, you practically begged Davidson to allow you to work with me. Now you want to go apportioning blame when you think it's not going to work out." Anna paused, her anger spilling from her. "You need to relax and stay focused."

"That's easy for you to say, you don't have as much to lose."

Anna shook her head, he just didn't get it, "It's not about that, Pete, the last thing I want is for us to be going back to Glasgow empty handed. Until that is no longer a possibility I am remaining optimistic. If you are going to lose it, you will be no use to me. Until this is over, you need to be out looking for boats, or down the pub getting any information you can, looking for strange faces, whatever it takes." Anna paused. "Do you hear me?"

Pete nodded, "Yeah."

And one more thing," Her voice became deceptively low, "Don't get in my face again. I mean it." With those words Anna headed out of the farmhouse hoping beyond hope to finally get the break they needed.

After checking out all the most likely spots twice, Anna found herself driving to the stretch of beach she and Heather had sat on several weeks ago. As she parked her Land Rover, she found herself thinking about that evening again, it seemed so long ago now. She looked out over the sea, but it was so dark now, nothing like the evening she spent here with Heather, when it was a light evening. She lifted her night vision binoculars to her eyes, she doubted she would see anything in this spot, but she was here now so what the hell. As she scanned the area she caught a glimpse of something. Going back, she saw a solitary figure standing on the shore.

*"It couldn't be?"*

Anna exited the Land Rover and made her way down. The wind was whipping up and it was considerably colder than her last visit here.

As she got closer there was no doubt that it was Heather, standing alone looking out at the sea. Anna called to her.

"Heather."

The blonde turned at the sound of her name.

"What on earth are you doing out here all alone?" Anna asked. Up close she could see the tracks of Heather's tears, and she had a sudden urge to take the blonde in her arms and tell her everything would be alright, but she couldn't. Knowing that as soon as Greg's boat returned, that she too would be out of Heather's life, kept her arms by her side. The blonde would find out her true identity or, even worse, Anna would be gone from her life, sneaking away like a thief in the night, never to be seen or heard from again.

"I could ask you the same thing?" The blonde answered.

Anna hadn't seen Heather's Corsa parked nearby and wondered how the blonde had gotten here. "Did you walk?"

Heather nodded, "I wanted to clear my head and this is where I ended up."

Anna frowned, "And you would have to walk all the way home again, you must be mad."

Heather shrugged, "It seemed like a good idea at the time." She looked at Anna, "What brings you here anyway?"

"I had an argument with Pete, I just wanted to get out for a while and I remembered this place, so here I am."

"It doesn't seem like you and Pete to fall out, is everything okay?"

"Yes, we're just feeling the pressure of work. Things aren't quite working out on the farm as we had hoped."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear that." Heather had no doubts that Anna and Pete's relationship would endure, but she did hope that where the farm was concerned, the pair could make it work. She very much enjoyed Anna's friendship and would be devastated to see the couple move on. Her crush on Anna aside, she genuinely liked Pete, and would never even consider anything with Anna beyond her dreams and fantasies. It was her little secret.

"You aren't planning on running off back to the city anytime soon are you?" Heather joked, but she seriously hoped that wouldn't be the case.

Anna looked at Heather, the blonde's words so prophetic they were like a knife slashing across Anna's skin, cutting her to the quick. What she saw on the blonde's face made her drop her head in shame.

"I, ah, I don't know, Heather."

"Oh..."

Anna glanced up and saw again what she had only dared to imagine. There was a look of longing on Heather's face and though she knew it was wrong on so many levels, she took strength from it.

She spoke from the heart, meaning every word. "No matter what happens, Heather, I would love to remain a part of your life. I've come to regard you as a very good friend in the short time I've known you. I would like for us to continue our friendship no matter what." Anna knew it was what she wanted and only time would tell if Heather wanted the same.

The blonde smiled, a genuine smile, the first one Anna had seen in days. "I would like that very much, Anna."

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

Heather looked around the church, but there was still no sign of Anna and Pete. She was looking forward to seeing Anna again. She had heard nothing from the brunette since Anna drove her home after that unexpected meeting on the beach on Friday evening. She looked at her mother who had barely glanced her way since Wednesday evening. Not that she blamed her; she knew it would take her mother time to get over the news.

Heather winced as she recalled some of the conversation.

*"You have what?"*

*"Greg and I have split up, Mum."*

*"Why? What could have possibly happened? Has Greg found someone else?"*

*"No, Mum, I have left Greg."*

*"Why on earth would you go and do a thing like that? For heaven's sake, girl, have you lost the sense you were born with?"*

*"We have grown apart. I'm sorry, Mum, but I have come to realise that Greg and I want different things out of life."*

*"What will you do?"*

*"I don't know." Heather shrugged.*

*"Oh, for goodness sake. Give it a few days until Greg gets back and I'm sure you will have come to your senses."*

*"No, Mum, this is definite. We won't be getting back together. Not now and not in the future, it's definitely over."*

Heather recalled how her mother had pleaded with her father to talk some sense into her, but her dad had refused, stating it was Heather's decision and they had to respect it.

Mrs. Keith had taken to her bed for the rest of the evening and had not spoken to her daughter since. In some ways Heather was grateful for that. It would be difficult enough talking with Greg, who was due home that evening. They had to discuss their immediate situation regarding who was going to move out and what would happen with the cottage. Heather wasn't looking forward to any of it, but no matter how unpleasant, it had to be sorted out.

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"Right you are, cheers, mate." Pete ended the call and looked at Anna. "Greg Moir radioed ahead to say he will be back around midnight."

Anna nodded, "This is it, then." She glanced at her watch; it was almost seven p.m. "We have a bit of time before he is due back, so let's pack up our stuff, so we are ready to make a quick exit from here."

Pete nodded his agreement, "We don't want to be hanging around after this goes down." He didn't even mention that it might not happen this evening, unable to voice the prospect that they may be returning to Glasgow with absolutely nothing to show for the last ten weeks.

The pair went about their preparations quietly for the next hour. Anna had put the back-up uniformed police on alert. They would be ready to assist them if required, making arrests and setting up roadblocks.

"What other boats are out, Pete?"

From Havensburgh, just Jim Wallace."

Anna nodded, Wally always went out around the same time as Greg Moir, and so she wasn't surprised to hear that. "No word of him returning?"

Pete shook his head, "Nothing yet, but then he often returns a good few hours after Greg does."

"You ready?"

Pete took a deep breath, hoping that tonight would finally see them make the breakthrough, "Yup."

"Let's do it then."

The pair left the farm separately, each heading to the locations they had been scouting meticulously. All they could do now was watch and wait.

Anna parked high above the spot she had favoured since she first looked at it all those weeks ago. She knew this place would be her choice if she wanted to do something away from prying eyes. Though the village of Inverbervie was here, perched above sea level as it was, nothing could be seen below the Bervie Bridge unless you took the small road down to the secluded shoreline. The Fishermen of Inverbervie moored their vessels in the harbour one mile up the coast, which was much more accessible. This was an eerie place, especially at night.

Anna made her way down the grassy slope to a spot which allowed her to see the road that led down under the bridge's viaducts. She would also be able to look out to sea from here. With the tide in and midnight less than two hours away, she was praying this was 'it'.

Anna waited patiently, the damp grass seeping into her jeans, as she lay prone, resting on her elbows, her night vision binoculars in her hands. As she peered through them into the inky blackness of the night, she willed something to appear. Five minutes later her patience was rewarded, but not in the water. She heard a vehicle approach the old road and watched as a Luton van carefully made it's way down towards the disused harbour. Anna's heart began to speed up, she instinctively knew this was it; all she needed now was the boat.

Raising the binoculars to her eyes, she looked out over the sea and there it was, a vessel making its way towards the harbour. She breathed deeply and waited. As it got closer she was in no doubt that it was Greg Moir's boat. She made the call to backup, making sure they were ready to swoop as soon as she gave the word.

Binoculars in one hand, she used the other to dial Pete on her mobile.

*"Anna, you got anything?"*

There was no mistaking the note of anxiousness in his voice, tinged with anticipation.

"Greg's Moir's boat is right now making its way towards me, right under the Bervie Bridge's and there is a Luton van already down there waiting." Anna's voice remained calm and precise.

*"Brilliant!"* Pete shrieked, *"I'm on my way."*

Anna knew this was going to be the hard part. "Hang on, Pete, I don't want you to come here."

*"What!"*

"Just listen to me, I want you to go back to Havensburgh and keep an eye on the harbour. Remember to stay out of sight and let me know if anything happens."

*"Are you fucking joking me? No way, Anna, you're not pulling this shit on me."*

"Pete, you have to calm down and trust me, I need you to be at the harbour. I'm not pulling anything on you. I'll be joining you there, hopefully pretty soon. Keep your eyes peeled and yourself out of sight, and call me if and when something happens."

*"You better know what you're doing, Anna, cause I swear if you don't..."*

"I know, I know, I promise you I'm on the level, let me know if a boat comes in."

Anna ended the call; she knew Pete would do as she asked. She watched as Greg Moir's boat docked and the crew secured her with ropes. Greg Moir spoke with the van driver who had come to greet him, Anna could just make out the man's face and was certain he was the one from the bar the night Greg tried to thump Jim Wallace. She waited and watched as the crew began to unload box after box. This was it; she made the call.

With the van loaded, it had taken all of twenty minutes, Anna watched as the crew made their way back on to the boat to begin their final journey to Peterhead. The van driver started his engine and made his way slowly back up the small road. Anna could see the roadblock already in place waiting to intercept him at the top. There was also a police unit waiting to arrest the crew of the 'Laissez Faire' at Peterhead.

Anna made her way to the Land Rover and waited until the van was intercepted before making an appearance. Flashing her badge at the attending officers, she introduced herself before requesting that the officers open up the van to begin searching the cargo.

Anna got her first good look at the van driver and it was the man they had nicknamed *Scarface*. Crate after crate was being unloaded from the back of his van...but they were all packed with ice and fish. The officers attending, dressed in their protective riot gear, were looking more despondent by the minute. Finally the sniffer dogs were brought in to make sure nothing was hidden away somewhere.

"Sorry, DS Lynch, nothing, but fish in here."

Anna nodded solemnly. "Oh, well, looks like a wild goose chase. Nothing more for me here. The Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency will want to deal with this now." An illegal landing of cod destined for the 'black fish' market. That's what Greg Moir was up to. Illegal, yes, but not the drugs they were after.

After thanking the back-up for their assistance, Anna made a call to Pete, while on her way to the Land Rover.

"Anything?"

*"No, and I'm freezing my arse off here."* Pete grumped.

"Just caught Greg Moir unloading an illegal catch of cod. No drugs."

*"Christ."*

"I'm on my way, where are you exactly?"

*"Just round the back of the pub, it's closed by the way."*

That meant they weren't expecting anyone back, Anna assumed. "Be with you in ten minutes."

Pete was none too happy when Anna arrived. "You care to explain what I'm doing here while you have been chasing fish?"

"I told you, I have a hunch."

Pete muttered to himself, as he continued to scan the water using his binoculars. "Who the hell is that?"

Anna looked out through her binoculars, trying to locate the same thing Pete was seeing. They both watched in silence until the boat was close enough to recognise.

"He's not due back yet?"

"I know and he hasn't asked to unload a catch at Peterhead."

They watched patiently as Jim Wallace brought his boat in and moored it.

"That is unusual and he doesn't seem to have any crew with him." Anna added.

"So, why did he go out then?"

"Maybe he knew Greg Moir was unloading tonight and used the opportunity."

"Yeah?" Pete replied sceptically.

"It's what I would do, especially if I was hinting that Greg was up to something. Like Greg says, Wally is always tailing him, maybe it's not to locate the fish, as much as to know exactly what Greg is up to and when."

Seeing where Anna was going with this Pete added, "He knows when Greg is over fishing and off loading the illegal catch instead of throwing the fish back into the water."

"And while Greg docks the illegal catch, Wally is sailing right into the harbour and unloading under everyone's nose." Anna whispers.

"You bloody suspected this all along." Pete accused.

"No, but it began to make sense when I thought about it."

"So, why keep me out of the loop?"

"Because someone is tipping him off."

"And you thought it was me?" He was incredulous.

"Look, I needed to be sure. I felt I could trust you, but in the circumstances, I told no one. I wanted this to play out exactly as it did, I didn't want Wally getting wind of anything if he is the drug smuggler. I hope there are no hard feelings?"

"I suppose in the circumstances, I would I have done the same thing."

"If you ever find yourself in a position like this, you should do the exact same thing, no matter how much you trust your colleagues."

They stopped debating as they caught sight of Jim Wallace leaving his boat, a plastic fish box in his arms. He went to his car, opened the boot & put the fish crate inside. Returning to his boat, he

removed a second plastic fish crate and again put it in the boot of his car. Getting into his car, he started the engine and slowly drove off.

"Keep an eye on his direction, I'll get the Land Rover," Anna declared.

She ran to where she had parked, hoping that they didn't lose sight of Jim Wallace in these vital seconds, before she picked up Pete.

On getting into the Land Rover, Pete pointed Anna in the direction Jim Wallace had gone.

"Looks like he is heading onto the main road."

"Yeah." Anna kept her lights off as they tailed him, staying what she hoped was a safe distance away, but it was a hopeless endeavour. Jim Wallace turned off the main road after less than two hundred yards.

"Shit! Where has he gone?"

"I think he knows we are following him." Anna stated as she made the same left turn Jim Wallace had.

"This isn't even a road." Pete declared.

Anna killed the engine of her vehicle and looked through her night vision binoculars.

"I can see his car stopped just fifty yards ahead. I can't see him though."

"Maybe he has done a runner?" Pete suggested. "Should we call it in?"

Anna debated that possibility. She had been reluctant to do so, as she was sure someone was tipping off whoever was smuggling the drugs. Deciding she had to make the call anyway she pulled her mobile phone from her pocket.

"Damn, no signal."

"What do we do now?"

Anna thought for a moment, she went with her instincts. "Let's check the car."

The two detectives cautiously approached the abandoned Volvo estate. When there was no sign of its driver, Pete popped the unlocked boot. Opening the lid on one of the plastic fishing crates, he was not overly shocked to find it stacked full of bags of powder.

"What do you think?" He asked Anna.

"Probably heroin."

They opened the second fishing crate to find it contained the same as the first.

"Looks to be around fifty kilos here."

Pete let out a low whistle.

"I think..." Anna never had time to finish sentence.

"Hands in the air, both of you."

They immediately did as commanded. The voice was unmistakably that of Jim Wallace.

"Turn around, slowly."

Anna stayed perfectly calm, but inside she was shaking. There in front of her was Jim Wallace with a gun pointed at her and Pete, who looked rightly terrified.

"Hand over your mobile phones."

Anna and Pete threw their phones towards him; Wally put them in his pocket.

"Well this is a pickle, eh?"

Wally seemed fairly calm, but then he was holding a gun. Pete on the other hand was scared stiff.

"Here is what we're going to do. You," he pointed the gun at Anna "are going to stand next to me. I don't trust you one bit, but I know Pete won't have the balls to run off and leave you to take a bullet in the head."

Anna wondered what Jim Wallace had up his sleeve, he had outsmarted them, and she had underestimated him.

"Pete take the fishing crates and put them in the back of the Land Rover."

Pete immediately did as Jim Wallace said, not wanting to provoke the man's ire as he had a gun pointed at Anna's head.

Jim Wallace looked at Anna and sniggered. "I knew you weren't the farming type, you have too much attitude going on."

"Is that right?"

"You were fooling no-one."

"If that's the case, how come you took the risk of going through with this?"

"I had no option, but you weren't supposed to be here."

"Oh, I know, we were supposed to be heading back to Glasgow by now, leaving the way clear for you to deliver the drugs without any police around to catch you. So tell me, who's tipping you off?"

Jim Wallace sneered at Anna, "Now, I'm not about to tell you that am I?"

They watched as Pete loaded the second crate full of heroin into the back of Anna's Land Rover.

"Did you really think I would believe your hint about Greg Moir being a drug smuggler?" Anna was mocking Jim Wallace, pushing his buttons.

"You're not as gullible as I hoped, I'll give you that, Darlin', but you just watch your mouth, I don't have to put up with your mocking tone anymore, so I would be careful if I was you." He pressed the end of the handgun into Anna's back to force home his point.

Anna tried a different tactic, anything to keep him talking. "How long have you known our true identity?"

"Right from the start."

"I see."

"It was fun, stringing you along."

"We must have looked like a right couple of idiots."

"I wouldn't say that, I think you have the rest of them fooled."

Jim at that point seemed to realise what Anna was up to, "What the hell is taking him so long?" He pushed Anna forward.

They walked towards the Land Rover, Anna had noticed that Pete had been taking things slowly in the hope that someone might appear, but the game was up. Pete re-appeared from behind the vehicle.

"What is that anyway, a Glock?"

"Lucky guess," Wallace answered.

"Not really, they are pretty popular these days." Anna now knew Jim Wallace probably had about seventeen rounds, unless he had extra ammunition, then who knew. It was more than

enough in any case.

"Use your handcuffs on him and give me his set, and all the keys."

He then threw some rope to Anna and instructed her to tie up Pete's legs. Once that was done to his satisfaction, he pushed Pete on to one of the bench seats in the back of the Land Rover.

"You get into the driver's seat."

Anna did as he instructed, waiting to find out what would happen next. Then it hit her, could Jim Wallace could not drive the Land Rover? He was also assuming that they had called in their position.

Getting into the back of the Land Rover, Wally handed the keys to Anna. "Do as I say and you will both be fine. Anything funny and I will shoot your boy."

Anna nodded, certain that Jim Wallace would carry out his threat, she had underestimated him and she was about to find out by how much. Anna started up the engine, turned on the lights and waited.

"I want you to drive straight ahead, you will see a dirt road, take it."

Putting the Land Rover in gear, Anna did exactly as he demanded. Within a couple of minutes she was driving along a dirt road so rough, it was testing even her newly acquired Land Rover driving skills. To make matters worse, the rain was starting to come down. Anna began to utilise the extra gears at her disposal and hoped that she remembered everything the real owner of the vehicle, George Robertson, had taught her about driving it.

As the rain continued to pour from the sky, Anna was sweating from the sheer effort of keeping the Land Rover moving forward. As they approached an incline, she struggled to find the gear that would take them over it. The Land Rover wheels slipped and spun as they tried to find traction in the mud; the engine revving and the gears crunching. Jim Wallace was beginning to run out of patience.

"What the hell are you playing at?"

Anna cut the engine and let the vehicle roll back down the incline, the silence around them eerie and unsettling.

"I'm doing my best."

"In case you hadn't realised, the only reason you are alive is because you can drive this thing. The only reason he is alive, is because I will shoot him if you mess up. If this thing gets stuck I will have to shoot you both."

Anna knew it to be the truth, if he could drive the Land Rover, he would have shot them out here in the middle of nowhere. She wondered just how long he would keep them alive? Probably until he could arrange another vehicle with one of his contacts. She had watched him attempt to do this several times using his mobile phone, but it seemed he couldn't get a signal out here either. She knew time was running out for her and Pete. He would be shooting them one way or another, but right now, they were still useful to him, but for how long?

Selecting another gear, Anna made a second attempt, this time successfully. Her relief was short lived, as she knew, that with every turn of the wheels she and Pete were a step closer to being shot and killed.

The situation was fast becoming desperate and Anna needed to think quickly. She intended to seize the next opportunity presented to her and make the most of it. She didn't have long to wait. With the windscreen wipers working on full and the rain lashing down, Anna deliberately took a ridge too quickly and, even as the Land Rover's suspension did its best to cope with the strain, the car swerved and jerked to a halt, the sudden deceleration causing the crates of heroin in the back to fly forward and crash into both Pete and Wally. As Wally cursed and turned to wrestle with them, Anna took her chance and, in less time than it took her to think, jumped into the back of the Land Rover and on top of a completely surprised Jim Wallace.

"You fucking bitch!" he shrieked as she landed a blow to his head.

Knowing he held the gun in his right hand, Anna immediately went for that arm and the two of them struggled and rolled around in the confined space. Pete tried his best to assist but, tied up as he still was, to little avail. He was still attempting to get back up off the metal floor as the pair crashed into him again and again as they fought with each other. With elbows flailing and fists flying in the commotion, Pete was taking a few hits.

Anna tried valiantly to dislodge the gun from Jim Wallace's hand. The man was strong there was no doubt about it. Suddenly, as Anna grappled with his right wrist, there was a deafening roar and the gun went off. Everyone inside the vehicle momentarily froze and time seemed to slow down. The next sounds to fill the silence were Pete's screams and this seemed to galvanise Anna into action again.

Renewing their struggle. Anna and Wally somehow propelled each other towards the back door, it opened and the pair flew out onto the dirt. Jim Wallace landed on his back, with Anna's full body weight coming down on top of him. The air rushed out of his lungs with a loud "Oof!"

Anna seized the opportunity. With both her hands pinning down Jim Wallace's right arm to the ground, and his left fist hitting her around the head and shoulder, she did the only thing she could and head butted him right on the bridge of his nose. The result was instant, as his head flopped back onto the muddy ground and his grip on the gun released.

After making sure Wally wasn't going to be getting up anytime soon, she took the keys for the handcuffs from him and immediately went to check on Pete who was lying back on the floor of

the Land Rover, bleeding profusely. She didn't know how bad the wound was, but was horrified at just how much blood was flowing from his thigh.

"Pete. Pete!" She slapped his face to get a response and Pete groaned in pain. She removed the handcuffs from his wrists and the rope that was still around his legs. "Hang in there, Pete. I'm getting us out of here. Okay?"

Thinking quickly, Anna put the handcuffs on Jim Wallace and used the rope to secure his feet, ensuring he wouldn't make a run for it. She then looked around the back of the Land Rover and rummaged for anything she could use to help staunch the bleeding from Pete's thigh. Finding a hand towel, a roll of duct tape and a torch, she returned to Pete. She clicked on the torch to initially make sure he was breathing, and to quickly assess his injury. Then folding the towel into a pad, she secured it to Pete's thigh using the duct tape. She hoped this would help stem the flow of blood and give her enough time to get him to a hospital. He had lost a lot of blood and was in shock, she knew time was her enemy.

"Come on buddy, I need you to talk to me." She tried to encourage Pete to respond to her, but she was getting very little response from him. Anna had no option but to bodily drag him into a prone position in the back of the vehicle. Pete outweighed her by a good two stones but, with time running out, Anna found the strength and determination to get her colleague into a better position, she was running on adrenaline. Sliding Pete along the floor of the Land Rover she put his injured leg up on one of the crates and hoped that would help lessen the flow of blood from his wound.

She looked down at Jim Wallace and seriously considered leaving him lying in the mud and rain, but as she heard him groan, her conscience got the better of her and she made the decision to take him with her.

"Come on! Get up!" She hauled him to his feet and he stumbled against her. With a firm push he staggered and fell into the back of the vehicle. Anna ignored his groans as she took his legs and pushed him all the way into the Land Rover. She searched his pockets and removed his mobile phone along with her own and Pete's, hoping that soon, one of the three devices would pick up a signal.

Getting into the driver's seat she fumbled with the keys as she attempted to put them into the ignition. Taking a deep calming breath she encouraged herself to relax a bit, she needed all her wits about her in the adverse weather conditions. The one thing on her side was that the dawn was fast approaching and the rain was beginning to ease off.

"Stay with me, Pete, I'm getting you to hospital."

Putting the handgun on the passenger seat, Anna set off hoping to quickly find a way off this back route and onto a main road.

After twenty frustrating minutes, Anna was lost. She had turned right at what looked like a track

leading in the right direction, but as she followed it, she felt like she was driving deeper into woods. She had no idea if she should keep going or turn back the way she had come. She wanted to scream with sheer frustration. Deciding to forge ahead, she selected a new gear and continued; maybe she would reach a farmhouse or something. Anything...

Anna braked so quickly; the Land Rover skidded in the fresh mud. She peered through the windshield wondering if her eyes were deceiving her. There in the middle of what she assumed was a road stooped an old man, she pulled down the window to speak with him.

"Ur ye lost lassie?"

Anna looked blankly at him; he seemed to have just appeared out of thin air.

"Whit ur' yae dain' here, hen?"

Even though Anna had spent all her life in this country, she had a problem with the sheer robust quality of this man's brogue.

"Ah, I took a wrong turn."

"I see... Ur' they deid then?" He finished this sentence nodding his head into the back of the Land Rover and tapping the side with his walking stick.

Anna felt this was one of those extremely surreal moments in life. Here she was, lost, with two semi-conscious bodies in the back of her vehicle, carrying on a perfectly civil conversation with this old Scotsman. He had obviously seen a lot of life.

"No, they're not dead, at least not the last time I checked."

"Will you be lookin' fur the hospital then?" He continued to peer into the back of the Land Rover as he awaited her reply.

This question spurred Anna into action. "Yes, yes I am. I'm a policewoman; my partner has been shot in the leg. The other guy there shot him."

"I better get in then and show you, it'll be quicker than tellin' ye how tae get oot o' here."

He proceeded to get into the passenger seat and buckle up; Anna had removed the handgun again making sure the safety was on.

"Well then, wit ur' ye waitin' on lassie. Take the left an I'll tell ye when to turn aff."

Anna nodded and did as she was told.

"The one wae the cuffs, that the shooter then?" The old man asked as he looked behind him.

"That would be him."

"Guns," he tisked. "A'body can be a hard man wi'one o' them." There was silence in the vehicle.

"I used them in the war. Ne'er had the inclination tae want tae touch one since. Awfy things." He proclaimed as he calmly sat there.

Anna had to agree

"You responsible fur the state o' yer man back there?"

Anna knew he was referring to Wally, who had blood streaming out of his nose, but she couldn't admit to police brutality.

"No comment."

There was a hearty laugh from her unexpected passenger. "Now that, A' kin respect. Ye ken. If I lean back jis' so, a' could get a couple o' guid licks in wi' ma walking stick."

Anna feigned to not notice as she heard a couple of hard smacks. Five minutes later he had them on the main road to Montrose. Anna looked at Wally's mobile phone and she had a signal. She immediately dialled 999.

*"Police emergency, how can I help?"*

This is Detective Sergeant Anna Lynch from Strathclyde Police. I'm travelling on the Charleton road approaching Montrose. I'm in a Land Rover with my colleague, who has a gunshot wound to the leg. I also have a suspect, who is handcuffed and semiconscious and a civilian passenger. I need medical assistance immediately.

*"Stay on the line, Ma'am."*

Anna continued to talk with the emergency operator, and within minutes she could hear sirens fast approaching. When she saw the ambulance, she pulled over. As the medics treated Pete and, much to Anna's disgust, a second ambulance crew that was now on scene was treating Jim Wallace, she spoke with the police officers that had also arrived.

Even as she filled them in on the events of the evening, all she could think about was Pete.

An hour later she and the old man were travelling in a police car back towards the farm in Havensburgh. Anna's Land Rover was now evidence and she had no transport. Sitting in the back of the car, covered in mud and bruises, she looked at the man beside her who may well have saved Pete's life?

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Finlay."

"Thank you, Finlay."

'Nae thanks needed, Lass."

"Call me, Anna."

"Wud be ma' pleasure, Anna."

"Where would you like to be dropped off, Finlay?" Anna asked as they sped along the road out of Montrose.

'Ah will jist say whin we get thur.'"

Five minutes later Finlay called to the driver. "This is me, lad's."

Anna watched as the white haired man slowly made his way out of the police car and stood at the side of the road literally in the middle of nowhere.

"Are you sure this is where you want out, Finlay?" Anna questioned.

He just waved his walking stick and started making his way back into the woods across the road. Anna asked the driver to wait until he was out of sight.

She glanced at her watch, it was almost seven a.m.

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Arriving back at the farmhouse, Anna immediately called again to check in on Pete. He had been taken to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee and was currently in surgery. Stripping off the clothing that was caked in mud and blood, she headed straight for the shower and scrubbed herself clean. She didn't intend to hang around any longer than necessary

Finding Pete's spare truck keys, she went to the harbour and located his truck. Returning to the farm, she picked up both her and Pete's belongings and put them in the front of the pick up. She didn't call Davidson, he already knew everything that had happened and she had no intention of speaking with him just yet.

Starting the engine, she grimaced as she used the clutch, pain shooting through her left knee; this was going to be one uncomfortable drive. Just one last stop in Havensburgh and then she would make her way to the hospital in Dundee.

Heather had just showered and was making a pot of coffee when her doorbell went. Assuming it was Greg, she didn't bother to throw on any clothes and answered the door in her robe. She had begun to wonder when he would be back from sea. Answering the door, she was surprised to find Anna Thompson standing on her front step, her hair damp and with obvious cuts and some bruising to her face. Heather was immediately concerned.

"Oh my God, Anna, what happened?" She took her friend's hand and led her into the sitting room, urging Anna to take a seat on the sofa.

"Did Pete do this?" Heather asked, a horrified look on her face.

"What? Oh, goodness no." Anna had been momentarily stunned by the question, but in the circumstances as Heather understood them to be, the question was obvious.

"What on earth happened to you? You look terrible."

"I got into a little trouble, it's nothing, honestly."

"Nothing! Anna, I'm calling the police, you have obviously been assaulted." Heather stood up to use the phone and Anna also stood to intercept her.

"Please, Heather, there's no need. I have to talk to you and try and explain what's been going on. God, please don't hate me."

"Why would I hate you?" Heather asked, looking decidedly confused. She couldn't image what Anna could say that would cause her to feel such a strong emotion.

Feeling the enormity of the situation wash over her, Anna stalled as she attempted to compose herself.

Heather continued to ask questions, unable to understand what had happened. "Where is Pete? Please tell me what happened?"

"Pete is in hospital."

The blonde was visibly shocked. "What happened to him? Are you both in trouble?" Heather was becoming more frantic by the second.

Anna put a hand on the blonde's shoulder in an attempt to reassure Heather and stop the volley of questions coming her way.

"Heather, honestly, we're not in trouble. Anna looked deeply into Heather's eyes, conveying her sincerity, but the look rapidly turned to one of desire.

Feeling the warmth from Heather's body through the terry cloth of her white robe, without conscious thought she found her fingers caressing the blonde's shoulder where her hand lay.

The look of confusion that had been on Heather's face was immediately replaced by one of naked desire. Anna didn't miss it. Pulling the blonde to her she buried her face into the freshly washed hair that smelled of peaches. Anna inhaled deeply.

"There is so much I have to tell you." She whispered while pulling the blonde closer to her. They hugged tightly, both expressing the desire they had been unable to act on. It was inevitable that their lips would meet as they nuzzled each other's neck, moving ever closer to the other's lips.

Anna heard Heather whimper at the first touch of her lips, she instinctively deepened the contact, wanting to show the blonde through her kiss what she had been feeling for the past few weeks they had known each other.

Coming to her senses, Heather broke the kiss. "Oh God, Anna, we can't"

"Yes we can, believe me."

Heather was confused, "What about Pete?"

"I'm not with Pete." Anna kissed Heather again before she could protest further.

Heather was instantly lost in a haze of sexual desire as the woman she was attracted to devoured her mouth with the sweetest intensity. The kiss was electrifying and ignited a passion in the blonde she didn't know existed. Heather thrust her hand into Anna's hair and pulled her closer, deepening the kiss; she entered Anna's mouth with her tongue.

Groaning deeply, Anna turned Heather and pushed her against the wall, the blonde's robe opened, revealing the barest hint of a rosy nipple. Anna immediately covered it with her mouth, all thoughts of the conversation she needed to have with Heather evaporating in the heat of her desire. Heather pulled Anna's head closer to her breast, encouraging Anna to suck harder, neither woman immediately aware of the banging at Heather's front door.

It was the blonde who finally heard it.

"Anna," she panted as she gently removed the dark haired woman's head from her breast.

Anna looked at Heather through lust filled eyes.

"There is someone at the door."

Anna immediately sobered. The banging on the door bringing her to her senses, reminding her of the reason she had come to see Heather. As Heather pulled her robe together as she walked to the front door, Anna attempted to stop her. "Heather, wait. I need to explain."

Heather was about to respond when the door banged again causing the blonde instinctively opened it.

"Heather, goodness!" Mrs. Keith exclaimed, "I've been knocking for five minutes, have you heard the news?"

Mrs. Keith was frantic as she walked straight past Heather, her umbrella in hand prepared for more rain.

Heather followed her mother into the sitting room. "What news?"

Mrs. Keith glanced suspiciously at Anna before answering. "Greg has been arrested."

"What!" Heather exclaimed.

"Last night, at Peterhead. He had offloaded an illegal catch before making his way there. When he arrived the police were waiting for him. It's all over the village."

"Goodness me, I had no idea he was doing that. Oh my, God what was he thinking?" Heather exclaimed, bringing her hand up to cover her mouth.

"Well of course you didn't, otherwise you would have stopped him." Mrs. Keith said imperiously.

Heather looked at her mother; judging by the tone and support being offered, it seemed that, all of a sudden, Greg was no longer son-in-law material.

"Not only that, there is a policeman in Ninewells Hospital who was shot last night in some drug bust and Jim Wallace's boat is crawling with police officers."

Heather was having a hard time taking all this information in, but something was nagging at her, she turned for the first time since her mother arrived to look at Anna Thompson and what she saw there told her all she needed to know. Mrs. Keith tracked her daughter's movement and she too looked at Anna. She hadn't initially noticed the appearance of the woman, but now she could see the cuts and bruising over her face.

Heather frowned, "Are you and Pete involved in this, Anna?"

Anna knew it was too late for explanations now; she had to tell the truth. "Yes."

Mrs. Keith asked the next question. "How are you involved? Is it illegal?"

Anna looking at both women replied softly, "No, no it's not. I'm a police officer, with the drug squad."

There was a stunned silence in the room, both Keith women looking utterly astonished.

"I was sent here undercover to catch a drug smuggler, Greg was an unfortunate casualty of that."

"You caught, Greg?" Heather asked? "You are a police officer?"

Anna nodded, "I did and I am. I was just doing my job."

"Everything you did here, the farm, the friendships - us?" Heather gestured between the two of them before continuing. "Was just to get information on people." Heather stated. It wasn't a question.

"Our friendship was never part of the job, it was real. This is real." Anna pleaded.

"You cheated us!" Mrs. Keith exclaimed. "Treated us all like fools."

Anna hung her head, what could she say, she wanted to explain to Heather, but with her mother there it wasn't possible. She looked at the blonde, but what she saw there didn't offer her any encouragement or hope. The look of disappointment and betrayal said it all.

"Get out." Mrs. Keith demanded.

Anna looked to Heather, but she said nothing. Her head was turned away from the brunette.

"Get out of my daughter's house!" Mrs. Keith chased the brunette from the cottage under the threat of the point of her umbrella." And don't come back here!"

Anna hastily left and opened the door to Pete's pick up, immediately starting the engine. There was no need for her to be here any longer. She put the truck in gear and headed to Dundee, hoping that Pete was going to be all right.

## **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**

Devoid of the usual sense of euphoria that accompanied a successful operation, Anna sat on a hard plastic chair in the waiting room of Ninewells Hospital. She was sore and tired, and more importantly, worried about Pete. He must surely be out of theatre by now, she thought. No longer able to sit still she went in search of another update. Instead she bumped into her boss, Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson.

"Anna?"

"Sir."

"How is he?"

"Still in surgery the last time I checked, I was just about to try and get an update."

"Have a seat, you look like hell. I'll find out how he is and I'll bring back some coffee."

Anna did as her boss instructed, too tired to protest. She closed her eyes and tried not to think of the past twelve hours that were full of images that would haunt her waking hours. Pete lying motionless on the ground, blood everywhere. Jim Wallace pointing a gun at her. The feel of it prodding into her back. The look on Heather's face when she realised the truth.

"Anna, here drink some of this."

Bruce Davidson handed her a polystyrene cup filled with warm black coffee.

"Thanks."

"Pete is out of surgery and in recovery. His leg was a bit of a mess, which was what took so long and he got a transfusion for the blood loss. Surgeon says in time he should make a full recovery."

"That's good news." Anna blew out a breath, making her relief obvious for her boss to see.

"Anna, what the hell happened? You called in the back up for Greg Moir's boat and you and Pete end up in the back of beyond with Jim Wallace and a Land Rover full of heroin."

"I suspected whoever was involved was being tipped off, it turns out that was true. Jim Wallace knew our identity from the start, he just played us along."

"Jesus Christ, so we definitely have a bloody leak."

"Definitely, and on this occasion, because I suspected that to be the case and had no idea who the leak was, or is for that matter, I went solo. I put all our attention onto Greg Moir, in the hope that, whoever was involved, seized the opportunity. It worked, and Jim Wallace is our guy. Now we need to find out who has been giving him information."

"How did it end up with Pete being shot?"

"Because I couldn't tell anyone my plan, we had no safety net. I called in Greg Moir and while I was dealing with that, I had Pete watch out for anyone returning to the Havensburgh harbour. I joined Pete and a while later, Jim Wallace returned, alone on his boat. He unloaded two plastic fishing crates into the boot of his car and drove off. We followed him, not calling it in for fear he would be tipped off. He must have spotted us and decided to pull off the main road. We did too and it looked like he had scarpered, abandoning his car. We checked the boot and found the drugs, then as I was about to suggest we call for back-up he was behind us with a gun. He took our phones, and had Pete load the Land Rover with the heroin while he held me at gunpoint. I

then had to handcuff Pete and tie his legs. Wallace held the gun on Pete while I was instructed to drive the Land Rover off road. The only thing keeping us alive at that point was the fact that Jim Wallace couldn't drive the Land Rover. With his mobile phone not picking up a signal in the woods, I knew it was only a matter of time. When he was able to make arrangements with his contact, he would kill us. I knew I had to act before that happened so I drove the Land Rover erratically causing the pair of them to be catapulted out of their seats in the back. As I wrestled with Wallace in the back of the Land Rover, the gun went off and Pete was shot."

Anna paused, "I'm sorry, Sir, it's the only thing I could do. I knew it could end up with one or both of us being shot, but I knew I had to do something."

"Don't blame yourself for Pete getting shot. You were left with no option and that is what probably saved both your lives."

"Pete has someone else to thank for saving his life."

Davidson looked at Anna wondering what she was talking about. "Who."

"It was bizarre, there I was off road, and following dirt tracks trying to find a way back onto a main route. I had no idea where I was and, just when I was beginning to despair, this old guy was standing in the middle of the dirt track, like he had appeared out of nowhere."

Anna shook her head still unable to believe what had happened.

"He got in the Land Rover without batting an eyelid at the scene before him and got us to the main road. If it hadn't been for him, well I don't know."

Davidson gave Lynch the once over with a sceptical eye, some old guy appearing out of nowhere in the back of beyond? He decided she had been spending too much time in the countryside; it was way past time to get her back to the city.

"Anyway, like I said, you did the right thing. Nice work."

Anna barely registered his praise. "Where is Jim Wallace now?"

"He was treated earlier for a broken nose and a concussion. He won't be able to travel till he gets the all clear, so it's looking like tomorrow before he will be transferred to Glasgow. He's in this hospital, fancy having a chat with him?"

"Absolutely."

Jim Wallace was being held in a private room with two policemen on guard outside. When Anna and Inspector Davidson entered, he actually looked relieved to see them.

"You need to get me out of here or I'm a dead man." He pleaded.

"And why should we help you?" Inspector Davidson asked. "We are going to be charging you with smuggling over fifty kilos of heroin into the country and along with kidnap and attempted murder. We don't need to do anything for you."

"He will have me killed before I can testify." His voice was rising with each word, the man was clearly panicking.

"Who?" asked Anna, hoping for a name.

They both watched as Jim Wallace sweated over his answer.

"If I give you a name, I want protection."

Anna knew that Davidson wanted the name so badly he could taste it; she waited to hear what her boss would offer.

"You give us who we are after and we will drop the attempted murder charge to one of intent to wound with a deadly weapon. Also, in return for your full co-operation, we will ask the judge for leniency when it comes to the heroin smuggling. That's the best I can do."

Jim Wallace thought about it, "He will kill me anyway, I'm dead whether I testify against him or not."

"We will make sure you have protective custody. Just give us the name to start with, so we can arrest him."

"Lackey Broon." Jim Wallace then proceeded to tell them what part he had played in the operation and how that led directly to Lackey Broon.

Davidson nodded and Anna showed no sign of emotion. They both walked out of the room.

"Yes! We've finally got the bastard." Davidson proclaimed once they were back in the hospital corridor. He immediately made a call on his mobile arranging the arrest of Lachlan Brown. They had finally got their man. He had been one of the main arteries for bringing the drugs into Glasgow and distributing them, he would be a big scalp indeed.

"You know, Anna, he has been eluding us for years. This time we will get him."

Though Anna sincerely hoped that would be the case, at that moment she just couldn't share her boss's enthusiasm. Her mind was too preoccupied with Pete and Heather; Davidson didn't seem to notice her lack of exuberance, as he continued to tell her what a brilliant job she had done.

"You wanting a lift back with me, Anna?"

"No thanks, Sir, I'll make my own way back, I've got Pete's belongings in the truck he was using,

I'm going to drive it back to Glasgow."

"Oh aye, well I'll see you tomorrow then, you get a good night's rest. And, Anna - Damn good job."

"Thank you, Sir.

Anna wanted to see Pete before she headed home to Glasgow. He was out of theatre and on a ward, but in no state for visitors. She sent a silent apology his way, and was deeply thankful that he had pulled through.

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Heather Keith sat opposite her ex fiancé wondering just what had happened to him. He had grown up in Havensburgh surrounded by people he loved, doing a job he loved. Now he was facing financial ruin, possibly a jail term.

"Why, Greg?"

"I don't know what to tell you, Heather. I felt that I had no other option open to me. I tried to do everything above board. Only fish when I was supposed to, in the designated waters. Then when the legislation came in about the size of the nets, I changed them as I was instructed, that allowed the smaller fish to stay in the water, but it cost thousands of pounds for the new nets."

Greg rubbed his tired eyes.

"Then the fishing quota was introduced. Anything we caught over our quota had to be thrown back into the sea. I just couldn't, the thought of throwing dead fish into the sea, what was the point. That's when I decided to start selling the extra catch on the black market. It meant I could afford to keep the crew on and we would make a decent living."

He stopped and looked at Heather.

"How could I give up? I wanted to provide a home for you and any children we might have. Without the boat, I wouldn't be able to do that. Fishing is all I know, I have salt water running through my veins."

Heather felt his raw pain, and could understand the reasons that had driven him to break the fishing laws. The fact remained he now had to deal with the fallout, but she wouldn't leave him to cope with that burden on his own.

"What will you do now?"

"The only thing I know, keep fishing. I'll be brought up before a magistrate about the illegal catch; the fisheries commission will be taking a close look at my logbooks and my bank account. I'll probably get a fine not a jail sentence."

"Can you afford to pay one?"

"Not really, I may have been over fishing, but I wasn't greedy, we were catching just enough to get a decent wage and keep the boat running."

Heather nodded, there were tough times ahead for the crew of the *Laissez Faire*. Meanwhile, she and Greg had to sort out their immediate future, for the time being he would move into the spare bedroom until they could come to a more permanent arrangement. They may no longer have been lovers, but Heather would always think of Greg as a friend. She hoped, in time, he would feel the same way.

That night as she lay awake, unable to find sleep, her mind raced through all that had happened. Finding out Anna Thompson's true identity had come as a shock. What was especially shocking was the timing of it. She had been about to make love to a woman, a woman she had become very attracted to. Then in the space of an hour her world had been turned upside down. It would have been enough to be dealing with her new thoughts and feelings, and the fact she had acted upon them. Now she was dealing with her anger at Anna because of her betrayal. Heather just wasn't sure what was real or imagined. She had built up a friendship that had been based on lies. Anna Thompson wasn't who she appeared to be, so what was real?

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

Parking in her allocated space outside her modern apartment in Glasgow's Merchant city area,

Anna grabbed her holdall from the passenger seat before locking the truck. She wearily climbed the stairs to her second floor home, her injured knee screaming with pain every time she pushed down on it. Reaching into the side pocket of her bag she removed the keys to her flat and opened the front door. The pile of mail behind it scrapped along the wooden floor and Anna looked at it in disgust. It was mostly junk. Flicking the light switch in the hall, she illuminated her sterile surroundings. The flat smelled stuffy, needing some fresh air after ten weeks lying empty over the summer. There was an additional pile of mail on the small table in the hall; Lesley had been popping in occasionally as she said she would. She went to her bedroom to drop her bag and open a window. Her bed looked inviting, but her stomach protested loudly, propelling her towards the kitchen.

Flicking on light switches and lamps as she went, Anna headed to the open plan area, hoping to find something edible. A frozen pizza won out, along with a can of coke. Her fridge stood bare apart from a bottle of ketchup, two cans of coke and an unopened bottle of white wine.

As the pizza cooked and Anna sipped on her coke, she pressed the button on her answering machine and took a seat on her sofa as she listened to the messages. Not many in truth for ten weeks and nothing that couldn't wait. She looked around her apartment, noting its stark contrast to that of Heather's homely cottage. Where Heather had splashes of colour and pictures of her family, including her dog, Anna had impersonal modern abstract prints, and a flat that she had bought already furnished, right down to the blinds and duvet covers. Not even a picture of her niece and nephews on display, little wonder she now thought of it as sterile. It certainly wasn't a home, it was simply a place to eat, sleep, have sex and watch movies.

The timer on her built in stainless steel oven pinged indicating that her pizza was ready. It promised to be stone baked with a succulent topping on a bed of grated mozzarella, with gently caramelised red onions. In truth, it might as well have been made of cardboard for all Anna cared.

Still on autopilot, she finished her meal and drank the dregs of the can of coke before slowly making her way to the bathroom. As she brushed her teeth, she found herself noticing the fine layer of dust that had settled everywhere. It just made her apartment look as unloved as she felt in that moment, like she didn't have a friend in the world that could help her remove the layers of hurt and anger. Never before had Anna felt so low about a woman she had lost out on, but Heather Keith had got under her skin, burrowed lower than anyone had before. It was unsettling for the brunette. She hurt because she hadn't been able to explain to Heather what had been happening, and angry that the nature of her job had forced that situation upon her. She slipped under her duvet, hoping that sleep would come quickly.

Anna Lynch walked into the main hub of the drug squad to be greeted by a round of loud applause. Everyone knew what had happened and, to top it all off, the information Jim Wallace was providing would ensure a lengthy sentence for Lachlan Brown. All they had to do was keep Wallace safe and make sure he testified. The drug haul was the largest Strathclyde police had seized this year with an estimated street value of four million pounds. It was a phenomenal result.

Good naturedly, Anna accepted the congratulations and jokes about getting Pete shot, but inside she felt nothing. Gone was the usual elation and excitement to be replaced by a feeling of melancholy and longing. It was the biggest anti climax she had ever experienced in her job. There was talk of celebrations and drinks after work, but all Anna wanted to do was to go and talk to Pete, but he was still in Dundee and wouldn't be transferred to Glasgow for another couple of days.

Anna went to Davidson's office to talk with him.

"Come in, Anna. How are you feeling?"

"Not too bad, Sir."

"Have you got a limp?"

"Just twisted my knee when I was wrestling with Jim Wallace."

"If you need a few days..."

The question was left hanging in the air.

"No, Sir, I'm fine, really, but thanks."

"We have a problem, Anna. This bloody leak, Wallace has no idea who it is and Lachlan Brown isn't giving him or her up."

Anna nodded; this was always one of their worst fears, an officer giving information to criminals.

"I want you to investigate this, keep it quiet and don't tell a soul. See if we can narrow it down, find a pattern, I know it's not your preferred choice of case to work on, but only you and Pete are in the clear here."

"What about you, Sir?"

"What about me? Do you have reason to drop me as a suspect?"

"Well no, Sir."

"Then I'm in the same boat as everyone else until you know different."

"Fair enough. I'll look over old cases, see if there's anything that might reveal something."

Anna had to respect this aspect of her boss, always had. He never hindered an operation by making assumptions, or allowing his officers to do so.

"Is there anything else?"

"I'm going up to see Pete tonight, Sir. Any messages for him."

"Aye, tell him to get his lazy arse back down to Glasgow as soon as possible."

"Will do."

The pair shared a ghost of a smile, before Anna left his office.

Later, down in the canteen, Anna stared at her macaroni cheese, not quite able to raise the enthusiasm her appetite usually had for this dish.

"Now why is the toast of the Strathclyde drug squad looking so glum?"

"Oh, Hi, Lesley." Her friend interrupted Anna's maudlin abstraction.

"You look rough and I'm not talking about the bruising."

Anna ignored Lesley's prying "Thanks for popping into the flat."

"Sorry, I couldn't get there more often, but life is hectic, what with the kids and working full-time."

Anna waved off the apology, as unnecessary. "How are the kids?"

"They're good, why don't you come for lunch on Sunday and find out for yourself?"

Anna knew Lesley would pester her until she agreed to come, so she gave in straight way rather than spend the extra energy on trying to get out of it.

"What time?"

Lesley looked closely at her friend. "There is definitely something going on with you. You didn't even protest first. We'll talk more on Sunday, okay? How's one o'clock sound?"

Anna nodded, "That's perfect."

"It will be good to finally catch up. You can tell me all about your summer and what's been going on with you."

Anna managed a half smile, "Okay, looking forward to it."

"See you then, oh and, Anna? You can ease up on the pasta now, it's been stabbed enough."  
Lesley laughed and made her way out of the canteen.

Anna gently laughed too and finally gave up on her lunch.

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The drive up to Dundee was a slow one, as Anna had caught the start of the afternoon rush hour, all the commuters beginning to leave Glasgow at the end of the working day. She was still driving the pick up truck Pete had been using since she hadn't yet had a chance to go back to George Robertson's garage to pick up her car.

Crossing the Tay Bridge Anna saw the sign for '*Dundee City of Discovery*'; she took a right on to West Marketgait, then turned left towards Ninewells Hospital. With visiting time already underway, it was hard to find a parking space, but she eventually found one in the pay and display. Finding the main entrance, Anna stopped at the hospital shop before taking the lift to the third floor, where Pete's ward was.

Pete had been moved from high dependency to a main ward, which Anna took to be a good sign. She saw him before he saw her and took a moment to observe him. He needed a shave and though his pallor had improved, he still looked pasty. He was also in need of a haircut. The hospital gown did little to enhance his look, but at least it would help him retain a little modesty.

"How are you feeling, McGinty?"

"Bloody crap." Pete answered honestly.

"Here you go." Anna put a box of chocolates and a bag of grapes on his bedside cabinet.

"Thanks," Pete responded, somewhat grumpily.

"Any word of when you will be transferred to Glasgow?"

"Aye, maybe by the end of the week. The sooner the bloody better. It's bad enough being stuck in hospital, but I'm miles away from everybody. It's a six hour journey for my visitors."

"I know."

"Yeah, thanks for coming."

"You're welcome."

There was an awkward silence between the pair and Anna felt the need to fill it.

"What have the docs said, you know, long term?"

"I'm going to be laid up for a while, but I was lucky that the bullet only glanced the bone and didn't shatter it. Will be ages before I'm able to be back on the job. I'll get desk duty until I'm passed fit." Pete looked disgusted with that prospect.

"Look on the bright side though, career wise, this couldn't have gone any better for you."

"I got shot!" Pete was incredulous.

"Ack, details. You will end up with a commendation and a great chance of a promotion. Isn't that worth taking a bullet for? And don't mention it, you can thank me when you get back on your feet - both of them."

"Bloody mad woman." Pete stated, but had a grin on his face.

"That's the spirit."

The mood turned serious for a moment as Anna contemplated her colleague. Looking at the machines regulating the intravenous bags whose tubes were pumping Pete full of goodness knows what, she shuddered involuntarily as she briefly thought that things could have turned out a whole lot worse.

"I would choose to work with you every time, in the same circumstances, you know."

"Cheers, Anna. That means a lot." Pete knew he could receive no greater compliment from her.

"See you back at the job soon."

"What? Are you not coming back up to Dundee to visit?"

"It's a six hour round trip you know." Anna mocked.

"Bugger off."

Anna laughed, "I'll be back in to see you when you get transferred to Glasgow. In the meantime, look after yourself."

"See you soon, Anna."

Pete was already becoming drowsy and Anna knew he would be asleep before she got out to the lift.

Anna left the hospital with her spirits lifted a little after seeing Pete. Not really thinking about

what she was doing, instead of heading back over the Tay Bridge, Anna found herself undertaking the one-hour drive to Havensburgh; she just had to see Heather. It was a Tuesday evening and she knew exactly where the blonde would be, at the youth club.

Parking near the community centre, but out of sight, Anna sat in the truck and waited for the Youth Club to finish. She watched the teenagers leave, as noisily as ever, the familiar sight instinctively bringing a smile to her lips. She would miss her Tuesday evenings here. Suddenly she felt her heart rate quicken as Heather herself came out of the building. Anna watched her putting off the lights and setting the alarm, before finally locking the doors. Tom, the volunteer with the crush on the blonde, never left her side, helping at every opportunity. As Heather and Tom waved to the last stragglers making their way home, Tom spoke to the blonde and then the pair started to walk down the road in the direction of Heather's home.

"Bloody hell," Anna cursed under her breath. That was all she needed.

Exiting the truck, she made her way down the road on foot, keeping a safe distance behind the pair. Tom didn't leave Heather's side until the blonde was opening her front gate, Tom standing watching, undoubtedly not leaving until the blonde was safely inside.

Anna took in the scene, noticing the oilskins hanging outside the cottage, which meant Greg was still around also. Hoping he was in the pub and not inside the cottage, Anna made herself known for the first time.

"Heather?"

At the sound of her name the blonde's head whipped around towards Anna, her front door key frozen in mid air, just short of the lock. Overcoming her initial shock, Heather's face turned to stone.

"What do you want, Anna?"

The brunette couldn't miss the icy tone of the blonde's voice.

"I just want to talk to you, please, for a few minutes, that's all."

Tom chose that moment to intervene. "Would you like me to escort her away, Heather?"

Anna looked sharply at Tom, wondering where he thought he was going to find the balls for that job, but Heather came to his rescue.

"That's okay, Tom. Go home, I'll be fine."

Tom nodded, but felt the need to give Anna a menacing look before he left. At least Anna assumed that was what he was trying for.

Entering through Heather's front gate, Anna cautiously approached her.

"I just want to explain what happened."

"How is Pete?"

Anna immediately thought it was just like the blonde to be more concerned with Pete's well being. It spoke volumes about the woman standing before her.

"He's doing well all things considered. I've actually just come from the hospital."

"He was the officer shot?"

"Yes."

"Well, thank goodness he's going to be okay."

"I'll let him know you asked about him."

"Thank you."

Anna continued, hoping that this time she would be able to explain, or at least make Heather understand what had happened.

"I'm sorry that I had to lie to you."

"But you did." Heather stated.

"Please believe me, I had no choice."

"On a fundamental level, I do understand that, Anna, but I have a real problem with the way you used us, the way you used 'me' to get information on Greg." Heather was trying to remain clam but the wounds were too fresh.

"I never meant to hurt you, honestly."

"I'm sure you didn't think about that at the time, you had a job to do and you needed to use us to do that job."

"I did think about that, all the time. The more we became friend's, the *closer* we got," Anna emphasised the word, trying to convey to Heather what it meant to her. "I hated doing that to you, using you. I wanted it all to be real, for me it *was* real. We almost made love, *that* was real."

"Please, stop. I can't even think about that at the moment. I had no idea who you were at the time!" The blonde could no longer keep her voice low.

The front door opened and Greg Moir appeared.

"Is everything alrig..." He stopped talking when he saw Anna, his face turning to one of anger and fury. "What the hell are you doing here?" He demanded.

"I wanted to speak with Heather."

"She has nothing to say to the likes of you. Coming around here and ruining people's lives and livelihoods. Why don't you just go back to whatever hole it was you crawled out off and leave us alone!"

Anna didn't want an altercation with the man; she had done enough damage to him already. With Heather upset and Greg standing between them, she wasn't going to get to talk further with the blonde. She decided that retreat was her only option; Heather wouldn't appreciate her forcing the issue with Greg.

"I'm sorry for what happened to you, Greg."

"Just leave us alone." He repeated.

Anna nodded, "Goodbye, Heather."

The blonde remained silent as she watched Anna walk back down her garden path and out of her life.

## **CHAPTER NINETEEN**

"Morning, Sir," Anna greeted her boss as she stepped inside the door of his office.

"Anna, how's Pete?" He gestured for her to take a seat.

"Doing well, all things considered."

"At least that's some good news, can't say the same for our case."

"What's happened?"

"Guess who is representing Lackey Broom?"

"I'm imagining a comb over, a pipe and a handlebar moustache."

"Aye, Harold Donaldson, Q.C."

"And don't you forget it." Anna mocked.

Harold Donaldson was well known in Scotland for taking high profile cases, anything that would raise his own well-crafted public persona. He was the closest thing to a celebrity in the world of criminal law.

Davidson poured himself a coffee from the pot on his desk, and Anna declined an offer to join him. "The bloody peacock has Lackey Broon shut up tighter than a safe." Davidson grouched. "The only questions he answered were to confirm his name and address, oh and to deny knowing Jim Wallace. Never heard of the man, wouldn't know him if he walked past him on the street. He is one smooth bastard, I tell you that." Davidson finished by taking a gulp of his coffee, grimacing at the taste. Putting down his cup, he picked up a pen and moved a pile of paperwork in front of him.

"He's unlikely to be held on remand until his trial and it won't matter what the bail is set at, he will be able to afford it." Anna cautioned.

"Aye, and with someone feeding him information, we might struggle to keep Wallace safe. We need to find this rogue officer and fast." His pen was used effectively to punctuate each point.

"Understood, Sir."

Anna walked out of Davidson's office and back into the main, open plan area, which was currently full of her colleagues. She cast a critical eye over them, viewing each and every one of them with suspicion. It was a strange situation, but she had no room for sympathy or sentiment towards any of them, for the time being they were all suspects. Two or three faces immediately stood out to her but, if she was going to catch the informant, she had no room for complacency. She would leave no stone unturned and wouldn't ignore even the smallest shred of evidence, no matter how unlikely it seemed. One of the biggest obstacles facing her would be carrying out this investigation right under the noses of her colleagues without them finding out. First thing she needed was a case to work, so she at least had something legitimate going on.

"Danesh, Hopeton, what case are you working?"

"Southside, Sarge, a guy called Sahid Mohamed. Definitely drug running, but we can't work out how he is distributing the stuff." Answered Danesh.

"You want me to take a look at it?"

"Sure, if you have the time." Hopeton added.

"I don't have any cases assigned yet, may as well try and make myself useful. Leave me the file and I'll look it over."

Hopeton was an older detective who had been on the force years, decent enough at his job, but he

lacked a bit of appetite. More than likely he was going through the motions until he retired a few months from now, Anna thought Danesh would benefit better working with someone more dynamic. Danesh was a young, up and coming detective with a bright future ahead of him. He was raw and had a lot to learn, but was more than willing to listen. He possessed all the qualities that could make him a very good detective in a short space of time.

Glancing through the case notes the pair had made, she was in reality waiting for the office to clear so she could get moving on her main task, that of finding their mole. She would start looking at cases that had fallen through for some reason or other, and then cross-reference each one to see which detectives were working it. It was a bit of a long shot, but it might show something. After that, she would start checking who had been signing out the case notes. She was looking for the names that appeared most frequently, and hoped one name in particular stood out from the rest. It would be difficult not to go with her gut instinct on this, but she knew she had to do the legwork first, even if she ended up where she had first thought, she couldn't afford any mistakes.

It was several hours later when Hopeton and Danesh returned to the station. Anna had taken a proper look at their case in between searching the old case notes and had spotted something. She waited and spoke to Danesh alone.

"Raouf, I had a look at your Southside case. I just need to go over a couple of things with you."

"Sure, Sarge."

"Why have you not followed his girlfriend?"

"She works as a home help, cares for the elderly and infirm at home, she just didn't seem the type. I doubt she even knows what her boyfriend does for a living."

"Was that your decision?" Anna enquired.

"Hopeton said it wasn't worth our while to follow her, thought it would be a waste of time."

"And you agree?"

"Personally I wanted to investigate her, but he outranks me, so." Raouf shrugged.

"Then you should have done the surveillance on your own time." Anna advised.

"And go behind John's back?"

"If you have a hunch and your partner doesn't share it, there's no reason why you can't follow it up on your own time."

Danesh nodded.

"Tell me what you know about the girlfriend?"

"She has no previous convictions. Never misses her work, keeps her head down and works hard."

"So what is she doing with a drug dealer?" Anna prompted.

"That's the part I don't get, why is she seeing a scum bag like Sahid Mohammed?"

"Exactly, if something doesn't feel right, you should always follow it up." Anna waited until Danesh acknowledged her point. "You said that you couldn't work out how he is distributing the drugs?"

"That's right, it's like they appear out of thin air, then gone before we have time to track them."

Anna tapped the case notes. "The girlfriend is the answer."

"She's carrying the drugs?" Danesh asked puzzled. He doubted that to be true, as she had never made contact with any of the dealers.

"No, not carrying, she is stashing the drugs in the homes of the people she is looking after. That's why you can never track them."

Danesh shook his head, "I never thought of that possibility. She must have about ten clients. No wonder we've been chasing our tails on this one."

"Concentrate on her and you'll be able to make your case."

"Thanks, Sarge."

"One thing, tell Hopeton about this, don't go solo, but if the same situation arises again, do a little detective work on your own."

"Lynch!"

Anna looked over to see her boss beckoning her to his office, once inside she closed the door.

"Any luck?" Davidson looked like a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders.

"Nothing yet, Sir. I've got a lot of cases to go through, I'll let you know if I find anything."

Bruce Davidson drummed his fingers on his desk. "I bloody hate this. If we don't find this person soon, it could cost us this entire case. Any ideas in that devious mind of yours?"

"Not on this, Sir. All I can do at the moment is look through the bad cases."

"Okay, keep at it. Oh, before I forget, the Land Rover has been released since we don't need it

any longer. You can get it back to George Robertson. I'm sure he will be happy to see it returned in one piece."

"Okay, Sir, will do." Anna was about to leave, when she thought of something. "Sir, who do I return the truck to?"

"What truck?"

"The pick up Pete was using in Havensburgh."

"I've absolutely no idea, I thought it was his."

"I'll leave it parked here then until I check with Pete."

Anna went to the police garage to collect the Land Rover. She looked inside before taking it to George Robertson.

"Do you guys not clean these before you hand them back?"

"Not our job." They answered disinterestedly.

"My partners blood is all over the inside." Anna was furious.

The two mechanics stared dumbfounded at her.

"Christ, do you have something I can clean this up with? I'm about to return it to the owner. It's in a hell of a state."

The outside of the Land Rover was caked in mud; the floor inside covered in Pete's blood.

The pair finally assisted Anna, by getting a power wash and cleaning materials, one worked outside while the other assisted Anna with the interior. While cleaning around the passenger seat, Anna spotted something down on the floor and picked it up. It was an empty packet of pipe tobacco. Putting it in the back pocket of her jeans she continued to clean out the Land Rover. An hour later, she had signed out the vehicle and was heading for George Robertson's garage.

Anna felt a little strange being back in the Land Rover after everything that had happened. As she drove along, the memories and flashbacks were fighting for space in her head. An image of Heather when she dropped her off after finding her alone on the beach, the blonde sharing an intimate glance with her, one of many, as Anna now realised that's exactly what they were. Then an image of the last time she had seen Heather, her face set in stone, unyielding. Then a gun going off, sheer terror, then screams and lots of blood. Pete lying motionless in the back of the Land Rover. Anna had broken out into a sweat, her hands trembling. She pulled off the road and cut the engine, taking a few minutes to compose herself. She hadn't expected the sheer rush of adrenaline that had just coursed through her body. A panic attack, she knew the symptoms well.

Anna finally steered the Land Rover into the yard owned by George Robertson. It was five thirty-two p.m. and she hoped he was still around. Pulling up in front of the main building where George had his office, she removed the keys from the Land Rover and headed inside. She saw George through the glass window that faced out onto the inside of the main building. He was in his office sitting behind a wooden desk, the surface of which was strewn with paperwork. George raised his head as he heard Anna approach his open office door.

"Anna!" He greeted her warmly. "Good to see you again."

"Evening, George."

George immediately sensed Anna's despondency and being a mechanic; he feared the worst for his vehicle. "Is everything okay with the Land Rover?"

Anna, picking up the hint of panic in George's voice, immediately set about allaying his fears. "No, no. Nothing wrong at all, George. Quite the opposite in fact, she runs like a dream." It was true, but in the current circumstances, Anna was struggling with the conversation. With forced cheerfulness she soldiered on. "I'm going to miss her." Anna winced internally. Although she had been referring to the Land Rover, the double meaning in her own words immediately soured her mood further.

"I knew it!" George exclaimed proudly. "You've fallen in love."

Anna blinked in horror at George, was she that transparent, even to a man who was practically a stranger to her? She gave him a look of pure consternation her brow furrowed. George gently put his large, calloused hand on her back and led her out towards the row of garages that held her car.

"Don't worry, Anna," George said with a small amount of sympathy mixed in with pride. "It happens a lot. I could probably get you something very similar if you are interested."

Completely baffled Anna stopped walking and turned to look at him. Confused and tired she could make no sense of what George was saying. "What?" Was the only response she could utter.

"Well, I'm not saying I could get something exactly the same, but I'm sure it would be pretty similar. Think about it, Anna and let me know."

*'Jesus Christ! He's talking about the fucking Land Rover. Of course he would be, what the hell else could he have been talking about?'* Anna made a quick decision to get out of there fast, and head home for some sleep. She needed to clear her head and try to make some sense of the last few weeks and especially the last hour.

"Thanks for the offer, George, I'm sorry I'm just a bit done in. It's been a long day, you know?"

"No problem, Anna, just give me a call anytime if you're looking for something like her."

George opened up the garage that housed Anna's Audi. Once again, as had happened the first time she came here, she was assaulted with the familiar smells from her childhood. It momentarily soothed her.

"There you go, just as you left her. I ticked the engine over a few times and gave her a service. Did it all myself mind you, I'd never put her in the hands of one of the junior mechanics."

Anna managed her first genuine smile since arriving at the garage. "Thanks again, George." She pulled five twenties from the pocket of her jeans, but before she could hand them over George had stopped her.

"Oh no, Anna. You put that away now. I was doing this as a favour to a good friend of mine. Bruce Davidson is a good man. One I owe a lot to. I'll always help him in anyway I can. So you understand, Anna, I cannae take your money."

Anna understood perfectly. She slipped the notes back into her pocket thus ending any type of uncomfortable scene between them.

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"Hello, Girl." Heather patted Milly, the golden retriever, who always greeted her when she arrived.

"Mum?"

"I'm in the kitchen, Dear," Agnes Keith replied.

Heather made her way through to join her mother.

"Something smells good," she stated as she kissed her mother's cheek.

Since Monday morning, when Agnes Keith had found out that Greg Moir was involved in illegally catching fish, her attitude towards her daughter had changed dramatically. Heather was back in her good books and Agnes now fully agreed with her daughter's decision to call off the marriage and end the relationship.

"I hear you had a visitor last night?"

"News sure does travel fast around these parts."

"I met Tom this morning at the shop, he told me that policewoman turned up wanting to speak

with you. I can't imagine why."

"She wanted to apologise, Mum."

"I should think so too. I assume that will be an end to it then?"

"I don't think she will be back." Heather was fairly sure about that, but not entirely happy with the reality.

"I can't imagine what possessed her to come here again."

"She was visiting Pete, remember he was shot?" Heather prompted.

"Oh, yes, how is he doing?"

"Anna says he will be fine."

"Imagine all that going on all these weeks and we knew nothing, it's a disgrace." Mrs. Keith complained, as she strained the vegetables.

"They did have a job to do, Mum." Heather reasoned, but her mother wasn't too impressed.

"The whole debacle has created quite a commotion around these parts, and you stuck right in the middle of it because of Greg."

Heather couldn't disagree with her mother's summation. The previous night at the youth club had been a buzz with rumours and speculation. Interestingly though, not all of the teenagers were as scathing about Anna as her mother was, some were feeling hurt and let down, Jamie Stewart in particular, he had developed quite the crush on Anna. Other kids were angry, especially the ones from families with a fishing background. Greg being caught was an injustice as far as they were concerned and the names Anna was being called had become increasingly inventive, as the evening had worn on. There were however a few who thought the whole episode was like something out of a movie and Anna was a hero. Heather thought back to the way Anna had handled the drug dealer when they had taken the teenagers to the disco, no wonder the woman had been so competent.

She helped her mother take the food to the table and her father joined them from his study.

"How are you holding up, Heather?"

"I'm alright, Dad. Greg and I have come to an arrangement that suits the two of us for the time being. I'm still reeling a little from the shock of the whole situation. I don't think Havensburgh is going to be quite the same for a good while yet."

"Indeed." Malcolm Keith added. "And how is Greg holding up?"

Agnes Keith was about to add her tuppence worth, but a sharp look from her husband caused her to bite her tongue.

"Obviously his spirits are low, what with the break up and the arrest. He's strong, I think he will come through this, at the moment he is concentrating on fishing, it's all he really knows."

Malcolm Keith nodded, he may not agree with Greg's fishing methods, but he didn't share his wife's view that Greg was no longer a desirable human being. He understood the pressures that had been continuously heaped onto these men. It had forced many of them to break the law.

"Ask Greg to come into the bank to see me, or here at home in the evening if he prefers. He needs to think seriously about his finances, I can assist him with that."

"Thanks, Dad, I'll let him know."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

Anna drove over to the Hamilton household in Newton Mearns, a small suburban town seven miles outside of Glasgow. It had been a long time since she had done any socialising that didn't involve an ulterior motive and she was grateful for the opportunity. Turning off the A77, she entered the leafy suburb and within minutes was parked in the driveway of Lesley's modern bungalow. Lesley and Gordon had moved here just before the birth of their second child, as they needed the extra space. Anna always joked that it was just so Gordon could be closer to his favourite Masonic Lodge. She just couldn't help but to wind the man up. Removing her gifts from the boot of the car, she rang the front door bell.

"Anna, how lovely to see you, nice make-up."

Gordon was referring to Anna's fading bruises; the game was already afoot.

Anna smiled, making sure to bare all her teeth, "Good afternoon, Gordon, been working out I see."

Gordon had put on a couple of inches around the waist. Too much time spent sitting at his desk, Anna was sure. She knew his only exercise these days was a trip round the golf course when the weather was fair.

She walked past him, her arms full of gifts, she knew he wouldn't offer to help and, he knew if he did, she would refuse.

"Anna! Anna!" The younger members of the Hamilton clan greeted her much more enthusiastically. They were bouncing around her long legs like exuberant puppies.

"Come on, you two, let Anna get into the house."

"Ahh, leave them be, Lesley, I'm enjoying the welcome."

"Makes a pleasant change, I'm sure." Gordon Hamilton added, only to be shot a warning look by his wife.

Anna handed Lesley a bunch of flowers and a lovely bottle of Chardonnay. "Thank you, Anna, but you know you didn't have to."

"Yes I did. That's a thank you for looking after my flat and inviting me to lunch."

She threw a pack of Cuban cigars at Gordon. Who looked duly impressed.

"I see your tastes run deeper than I thought." He jibed.

"Yeah, but not *that* deep."

Fortunately, the exchange between the pair passed right over the heads of the junior Hamilton's, so Lesley let it slide. She knew Anna and Gordon would call a truce soon, then, throw a few more barbs at each other again when it was getting time for Anna to leave. She was used to it.

Anna handed a large parcel each to Roddy and Rebecca. "These are to make up for everything I've missed recently. I've been far away working." She always brought the kids gifts no matter when she visited. It was true she never remembered special dates, like birthdays, but she always more than made up for it when she did see them. They, in turn were used to this arrangement, and didn't seem to mind that Anna only brought gifts when she visited, instead of on the special occasions. They had worked out they got more presents that way.

"Thank you, Anna," they said in unison, and soon the paper was being hastily ripped open to find out what was inside.

Anna smiled, they were truly adorable, and watching them almost made her want one...almost. She looked up and caught Lesley's eye. "Ah, I don't think so."

"You never know, Anna." Lesley joked.

"Away with you, woman."

The children started oohing and making happy noises about their gifts, and then rushed to show their mum.

"Look! Look what Anna got me, Mummy." Roddy being older than his sister by two years got there first. Poor Rebecca was still attempting to drag the large box across the floor.

"Oh, wow," Lesley, exclaimed, "It's a castle."

"It has horses and knights!" The blonde boy stated,

"I see that." She looked across at her three year-old daughter, "What do you have, Rebecca?"

The dark haired little girl looked up, grateful that she wasn't going to have to pull the box any further.

"A house, Mummy." She squealed and used her little finger to point to the picture on the front of the box. "Open?" She asked hopefully.

"Not now, Princess, we're going to have lunch first, but I promise, after lunch, you can both play with your new toys."

There were mild protests from the pair, but they relented. As Lesley cleared the torn wrapping paper the kids had discarded, she sent an indulgent look Anna's way.

"You spoil them."

"That's what I'm here for, besides, I enjoy it." Anna smiled, happy that the kids were happy.

After a lively lunch, and while the kids played and Gordon was doing whatever it was Gordon did when he disappeared, Anna and Lesley finally got a chance to catch up properly, sitting on the decking of Lesley's back garden.

"Remind me to give you back your spare set of keys before you go."

Anna nodded, "I will." She stretched out her long legs, enjoying what was sure to be one of the last warm days of the year. It was September already, not long till winter. "This is nice." And it was. Not just because of the weather but because it also gave Anna the chance to relax without feeling the need to be somewhere else or to be secretly working. She leaned back on the recliner and pushed her fingers through her hair massaging her scalp.

Lesley watched Anna out of the corner of her eye, she knew her friend had a lot on her mind, but at that moment she looked relaxed, so Lesley gave her some peace and quiet and the pair lounged comfortably side by side, occasionally sipping from their glasses of wine.

Anna was so still and quiet that Lesley thought she had nodded off to sleep, that was until her friend spoke.

"I met someone."

Three simple words that had Lesley Hamilton whip round to look at her friend so fast she almost fell off the lounge.

"What? Who?"

No one you know." Anna turned to look at her. A hand tucked under her head. She contemplated her answer for a few seconds. "While I was away, undercover."

"So she lives up North? I assume we are talking about a woman?"

Anna smiled, "Of course. And yes, she does live up North, in the very fishing village where I was undercover."

"Well, what's her name?"

"Heather, Heather Keith."

"And what does she do?"

"She's a Community Worker."

"Good God, it's like pulling teeth trying to get information out of you."

"I'm sorry, anyway, she doesn't want to know me." Anna let out a sigh while rolling onto her back.

Lesley looked at her friend dumbfounded, a woman that didn't want to know her and someone that Anna clearly had feelings for, something was very wrong with that picture.

"What did you do?" She accused.

"I had her fiancé arrested"

"What!"

"Well he was actually her ex fiancé by then." Anna tried to explain, only to make the situation worse.

"What the hell have you been up to?" Lesley demanded to know.

Anna put her hands over her face. "It's a long story."

"I have plenty of time, so spill it."

"Okay, okay. You have to understand, I didn't mean to fall for her, Lesley, it just happened. There I was, undercover, focussed on my job and this woman, the more I saw her, spent time with her." She shook her head; "I just couldn't stop myself."

"You've gone and fallen in love with a straight woman?" Lesley sounded surprised.

"Hell, I don't know, and I'm not so sure about that."

"What? That you've fallen in love? Because let me tell you, Anna. You have it bad."

"No, not that part, I'm not so sure she is straight."

"How do you know? She has, or had, a fiancé."

"It has something to do with the fact that she had her tongue in my mouth." Anna stated defensively.

Lesley just stared at Anna, unable to imagine what her friend had gotten herself into.

Anna's head fell back onto the lounge. "Ack, I don't know. The short version is that I befriended her because I wanted to know more about her fiancé, as he was a fisherman. So I volunteered to help with the youth club she ran."

"Sounds perfectly plausible." Lesley failed to keep the sarcasm out of her voice.

"It was, until I started to fall for her, and I don't think it only went one way. She thought I was married to Pete and I knew she had a fiancé, but we just clicked. I've never felt so comfortable around another human being. And horny." Anna added.

"So what happened?"

"I knew I had to rein in my feelings, keep them in check as I had a job to do and I couldn't lose my focus. It was so damn hard, Lesley. Lying to her, it actually hurt."

"That must have been very tough."

"It was, I've never been in a situation even close to that before. Not just her, though. The whole place got me, the kids at the youth club, the folk from the church, the patrons of the pub. The sense of community and togetherness, it was touching and so different from anything else I've ever experienced. And then there was the damn fishing thing, hell even I want to lobby the European parliament for a better deal for the fishermen. It's a travesty, Lesley."

"Jesus, Anna, you sound like you've had a spell cast on you. Have you seen Brigadoon?" Lesley joked.

"Very funny, and you know I have. I love old movies."

"Then you know where I'm coming from."

"It's not bloody Brigadoon, the place doesn't disappear for a hundred years."

"Well how do you know, it reappears for lovers after all."

They both shared a hearty laugh at Lesley's joke.

"God almighty, I'm not even going to tell you about the old bloke that appeared out of nowhere and got me out of the woods, Pete might have died without him."

Lesley looked dubiously at her friend. "Are you for real?"

What was it with people when she told them that, Davidson had given her the same look? "Of course I am. Finlay was his name."

Lesley snorted with laughter.

"What is so damn funny about that?"

Lesley composed herself. "I considered calling Roddy, Finlay. Do you know what it means?"

"Obviously not." Anna was indignant.

"White haired courageous stranger or warrior."

Anna almost sulked. "I am not making this up."

Lesley sobered a little, the combination of the wine and the humour in Anna's story had made her giddy.

"I'm sorry, Anna. Tell me more about Heather, please?"

"Not much more to tell really. She ended her relationship with Greg; it was truly nothing to do with me. As the time wore on and Davidson was turning the screws we needed a result and I gambled. Part of the plan involved apprehending her ex fiancé who was offloading an illegal catch."

"So where does the kissing part come in?" Lesley was confused.

Anna looked a little embarrassed. "After everything went down, I got a lift back to Havensburgh, basically just to pick up mine and Pete's stuff, then I planned to drive back to Glasgow. But I couldn't resist one last stop. I had every intention of telling her who I really was, but instead I, well we, ended up kissing. The whole thing imploded when her mother came banging on the front door to tell her Greg had been arrested and the village was crawling with police. Heather already knew from the state I was in when I arrived that I'd been involved in some kind of trouble and that Pete was in hospital, and that was that. Her mother threw me out. I tried to see her again on Tuesday night, after I went to Dundee to visit Pete, this time her ex, well I assume he is still ex, fiancé ran me off. She is really mad at me, I honestly don't think I have any chance

now."

"I'm so sorry, Anna." Lesley really was, it looked like her friend had finally found someone who truly mattered to her and was probably in love, but the whole thing was soured because of circumstances. "Maybe she will come around, given time." Lesley suggested.

"Yeah, maybe," but Anna wasn't holding out much hope. She changed the subject. "Let's see what your kids are up to, I think they are too quiet."

Lesley knew the conversation was closed; she had been surprised at how much Anna had actually opened up to her. "I think you're right, let's check on them."

When the two women went back inside, they found the kids playing happily with their new toys, with Gordon keeping an eye on them.

"I'll just pop to the bathroom, won't be a minute," Lesley said.

With the two children engrossed in their play, Anna was left alone with Gordon.

"So, still slaving away for Strathclyde CID." He shook his head. "I'm probably on triple what you are."

"Yeah, good for you." Anna couldn't hold back, she was fed up listening Gordon's gloating. "It's funny that though, you getting a well paid job in an insurance company I mean."

"How's that?" Gordon asked.

"Well let's see, you went to the police straight from secondary school, no real qualifications to speak of. Not enough to have got you into University anyway. So, no graduate qualification, no experience working with an insurance company. I mean, insurance and police work, poles apart unless it's fraud investigation. You leapfrogged a good few people who were way more experienced than you were to get that job. Head of the pensions department? I'll bet the office juniors are more qualified than you." Anna scoffed.

Gordon smiled sardonically, "I was the best man for the job."

Anna leaned closer to him. "Is that what your Worshipful Master thought?"

Gordon's face turned to one of shock.

"Oh yeah, I hear he is on the board of directors of a certain Insurance company." Anna smiled. "You do him a little favour somewhere along the line? Hmm?"

Gordon's face turned red, he spoke through gritted teeth. "You don't know what you're talking about." He hedged, certain she was just guessing.

"What is it they say, Gordon?" Anna pretended to think about it. "Oh yeah, It's not what you know, but who you know, that is important."

Gordon was sitting staring at Anna when Lesley returned from the bathroom, she immediately sensed there was an atmosphere between the two, she looked at the children who were totally oblivious to it all.

"Well, I think it's time I was getting the kids off to bed." Lesley said cheerily.

Anna took her cue, not wanting to be around Gordon any longer. "It's time for me to be heading off now too."

She said her goodbyes to Roddy and Rebecca, with a promise to come visit again soon.

"Nice seeing you again, Anna."

"The pleasure was all mine, Gordon."

The pair were charm personified, but Lesley wasn't fooled. She knew they had traded some serious words.

"I'll see you during the week, Lesley and thanks for inviting me over, I really enjoyed the day."

"You're welcome anytime, Anna."

The pair hugged and said goodnight with a kiss on the cheek, before Anna drove back to the Merchant City.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY ONE**

Heather dropped Greg outside the bank in Stonehaven. He had opted to meet Malcolm Keith in the more formal surroundings of his office at the bank.

"I'm going to do some food shopping. If I'm not here when you come out, just give me a call, I won't be far away."

"Okay, Heather."

Greg looked to Heather like a man who was about to lose everything.

"Greg?" He turned to face her. "I'm sure dad will be able to help you sort something out."

Greg nodded, but didn't look overly hopeful, before walking into the bank.

Heather parked in the supermarket car park, and then headed inside to do the regular weekly food shop for her and Greg. It was odd how routine and familiar their lives remained despite the new status of their relationship. They shared the same home, Heather cooked for them and they ate together. It would have to change eventually, but until that happened, they both continued to take comfort and find refuge in the familiarity of being around each other.

After packing the boot of her car full of shopping bags, Heather drove to the bank and waited outside for Greg. He finally appeared, his shoulders were slumped, and there was the unmistakable look of a defeated man hovering around him. He looked like a man resigned to his fate.

Greg didn't speak as he entered the car and put on his seatbelt. Heather waited patiently for Greg to open up, but he simply stared straight ahead, saying nothing. She put the Corsa in gear and the pair set off on the trip home, not a word was exchanged during the entire length of the journey.

Arriving back at the cottage, Greg helped Heather unpack the shopping; sharing yet another thoroughly domestic scene, but they both knew they were simply going through the motions. Sooner or later they would have to make the tough decision to dissolve all the other parts of their lives together.

As they silently carried out this latest task, Heather realised that the situation was doing them both more harm than good. There was an air of despondency surrounding the pair; an unspoken sadness underpinning everything they did together. It was helping neither of them. Eventually something would have to give, and Heather came to the conclusion that it should probably be the sooner the better for both of their sakes.

As they sat eating the meal Heather had prepared she decided it was time to break the silence.

"What did dad say?"

Greg looked like he was about to protest before realising the futility of his actions. There was no need to hide anything from Heather anymore. He put down his knife and fork and finished chewing his mouthful of food while he composed his answer.

"Going on previous cases of this nature and the fact that my accounts don't show evidence of any financial irregularities that would indicate any prolonged illegal activity, your dad thinks I will be fined according to the size of the illegal catch I offloaded. Unfortunately, judging by those same previous cases, your dad estimates a fine in the region of fifteen to twenty thousand pounds."

Heather really hadn't had any real idea as to what the outcome of the trial might be and whilst she felt relief that Greg would most likely escape a custodial sentence, she knew a fine of that magnitude would most likely mean financial ruin. That would force Greg to decommission the boat.

"You don't have that kind of money?"

Greg shook his head. "I was serious when I said I wasn't greedy. Compared to what some boats are doing, we really were small time. This will mean the end for us as a crew. The guys will hopefully join other boats, but the 'Laissez Faire' will have to go."

Greg was facing an awful situation. Even if he could pay the fine, he couldn't run the risk of continuing to illegally offload fish to subsidise the boat and the wages. It really did look like the end for Greg and the 'Laissez Faire'. It was a truly terrible prospect.

"Greg?"

"Yeah," he said, distractedly, his mind on his current predicament.

"If there was a way for you to keep the boat running legally, would you? I mean, surely not every fisherman is having to resort to 'black fishing'."

Greg considered her question, his answer coming easily to him. "If I could find a way, I would do everything it takes to keep her on the water."

Heather smiled, "Then let's start looking at all the options available."

They spent the rest of the evening discussing what possibilities were open to Greg. Using his knowledge and the internet for research, they began to generate ideas and formulate a plan that might help secure a future for Greg, at least in the short term. It seemed that for every downturn there was always an upturn somewhere else. That seemed to hold the answer for Greg.

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Heather listened to the CD playing in her car. Since her break-up with Greg, the words of songs really did seem to resonate with her on a level she had failed to empathise with before. She hadn't really paid attention to how many songs were about loss and relationships ending, but now they were everywhere. The lyrics from the current track playing seemed to sum up her situation perfectly. *'All the times I cried, all this pain I've tried to hide. What am I supposed to dream, when nothing's ever what it seems?'* Heather hit the repeat button.

Parking her Corsa in the gym car park, Heather removed her kit bag from the boot before locking up the car. Showing her membership card and collecting a locker key, she headed for the changing rooms. She was already in her gym clothes; she just needed to lock away her holdall containing her change of clothing and shower stuff. Clipping her iPod shuffle to her sports top, she was ready to go. Stretching gently on the mats Heather tried to clear her mind and just focus on the enjoyment of exercise. She warmed up on the bike before moving on to the machinery. Thirty minutes later she was well into her hour routine, the dance music in her ears blocking out

all external activity around her. She was pounding the leg weight machine so hard she half expected it to go crashing through the wall. It was only when she felt a hand on her shoulder that she realised she had lost count of her repetitions.

"Ease up there, Heather." Alan, one of the coaches cautioned.

"Oops, sorry, Alan, I totally zoned out for a moment."

He smiled, a wide toothy smile, which had most of the woman swooning around him, but to his credit, he didn't flirt or flaunt it. Heather liked that about him.

"Remember, Heather, stay focussed." He cautioned.

She smiled, "Thanks, Alan."

When he walked off Heather took the time to compose herself. She had been thinking of Anna, and the feeling that had been building inside her was one of anger. Yes, she was hopping mad at Anna Thomson and she could now admit that to herself. Heather blew out a breath, disgusted that she had let her mind stray yet again to thoughts of that woman. She was mad at Anna and she was mad at herself because she couldn't stop thinking about her, no matter how much she tried. The realisation made her lose her appetite for exercise and she ended the session early and hit the showers.

Freshly showered and dressed in jeans and a lamb's wool jumper, Heather set off for her second stop of the day, an appointment with her bank manager.

"Hi, Dad."

"Heather, always a bright spot in my day."

"Thanks, Dad."

"What can I do for you?"

"Greg was telling me about the meeting he had with you. He can't afford any fine that's coming his way."

"I know, Heather, that's why I spoke with him about decommissioning the boat."

"I think that's premature, Dad."

"You do? Tell me why?"

"I believe he can still make the boat work. I have spoken with him about it and we looked at all the options open to him. He wants to continue with the boat, and he can do that but it will mean a

lot more time at sea for him. We did some research and we've discovered that there are new opportunities opening up for fishermen. Delivering supplies to oilrigs, guarding the rigs that are currently unmanned, he can even fish in waters outside of the European Union. He has the determination to make this work."

"That leaves the fine. How will he pay that?" Malcolm Keith remained focussed and practical.

"I want to buy Greg out of the cottage. We have agreed on twenty five thousand pounds."

Malcolm Keith nodded. "I have to caution you as your bank manager and as your father, that you are probably giving Greg too much. If you sold the cottage, you would be lucky to make any profit at all in the current climate."

"It doesn't matter, Dad. I won't walk away and leave him to face this alone. This way I know he will be able to continue with his livelihood. It makes me feel better too."

"Heather, you're a very fair and generous young woman. You make me proud." Malcolm Keith smiled fondly at his daughter.

"Thanks, Dad, that means a lot." Heather looked downcast despite her father's words.

"You have something else on your mind?"

"Yes." Heather looked down at her hands and wrung them together nervously. She slowly brought her eyes back up to meet her fathers, "I have feelings for someone," she finished in a whisper.

They both sat staring at each other. There was complete silence in the office. Heather was letting her father absorb the first part of her news, while her father was desperately trying to work out who Heather could be talking about.

"Do I know him?" Malcolm Keith tried desperately to put a note of enthusiasm into his voice; the truth was his daughter had completely thrown him for a loop.

"Do you remember the Thomson's who had bought the farmhouse?"

"Off course. They turned out to be undercover police officers, that's how Greg was caught with the black fish."

Heather flushed with embarrassment.

"That Pete chap, is that who it is?"

"No, it's the other one."

"What other one? I only ever saw Pete and Anna."

Heather stared at her father, waiting for the penny to drop.

The look on his face was priceless as the truth finally caught up with him.

"Anna?"

Heather nodded her answer.

Malcolm Keith sat back in his chair as he tried to absorb this new piece of information.

"Do me a favour Heather?"

"Sure, Dad, anything."

"Let's not mention this at dinner tomorrow tonight. I don't think your mother could take this all in on top of everything else right now."

Heather watched a strangely stunned look creep over the face of her normally unflappable father.

"I'm not sure I can take it all in myself, Dad, it came out of nowhere. I have never been attracted to a woman before."

This was unknown territory for Malcolm Keith. His daughter had given him a whole new set of issues to juggle with his wife.

"Mum isn't going to take this well."

Malcolm Keith scratched his head, the normally composed man, was openly struggling.

"I, ah... I don't know what to tell you. What with the trouble with your brother all those years ago, she is still in denial. She can't face the truth that her only son was a drug addict who stole from his own family. There is no denying that you being a lesbian, if indeed that turns out to be the case, well that will be very hard on her."

"At least the family silver will be safe."

"Heather." Her father mildly chastised.

"I know, Dad, but I don't think it's fair. I almost believe Mum would be happier with a son who went off the rails, than a daughter who is a lesbian."

Malcolm Keith couldn't deny that there may actually be a grain of truth in what his daughter was saying, but he held his tongue.

"What about you, Dad?"

"Heather, it's not something I ever considered till now, and while I may be a stuffy old bank manager, I've never felt the need or desire or indeed understood the lack of acceptance and the outright hatred towards people who happen to be attracted to the same sex. Your mother on the other hand is a different matter altogether. I will say this, all I ever wanted for you and your brother was for you both to be happy and healthy. If you find your happiness with another woman, well then, I will be happy as well."

Heather was relieved to hear this.

"Are you seeing her?"

"No, and I doubt that I will. When I developed these feelings, I didn't know who she really was. Now that I do, I'm left feeling cheated and angry at her."

Malcolm Keith considered that for a moment. "I understand why you feel this way, but she had a job to do, a very important one by all accounts. You know that more than anyone does. We, as a family, have seen first hand the damage that drugs do."

Heather nodded, she knew her dad was right, but that was all she was sure of at the moment.

"Have a think about things, Heather, don't be too hasty."

"Okay, Dad."

"In the meantime, leave this with me," Malcolm Keith pointed to the figures he had been projecting regarding Heather's request for a loan. "It's a fair chunk to add to your mortgage," He cautioned.

Heather watched as he looked over his notes.

"I'll have to go guarantor for this. The bank isn't in a lending mood at the moment, but with my name behind it, you should be fine. I know you're good for it." He added with a smile.

"Thanks, Dad."

"I can't personally approve this, but I'll get in touch with the mortgage department at head office, they will be making the decision, I don't foresee any problems."

Heather smiled, her dad was very careful about his work, everything above board and in the proper place. Thank goodness.

That evening at the youth club Heather looked around at all the teenagers as they went about

their activities. The guys playing pool, laughing and joking. The girls hanging out by the music, giggling and chewing gum. They had all gotten to know Anna. She had impacted upon all of their lives. The knowledge she had passed on about drug use, the self-defence classes for the girls, and awareness about keeping themselves safe. Even if her reason for being at the club wasn't entirely altruistic, the work she had done whilst there had made a difference. Did it really matter what her motives were? As Heather attempted to make sense of her own feelings, the rawness returned. Anna had used them, that was what was so painful and, even while the teenagers were moving on, Heather wasn't finding it so easy to do. Anna had hurt her.

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER TWENTY TWO**

Sitting at her desk, Anna looked at the list of names she had drawn up. Every person on it had done time for Lachlan Brown, but one name in particular stood out for her, Glen Keith. Unlikely as it seemed, she just couldn't help but wonder, was it possible, could he actually be Heather's brother?

"Lynch!"

Anna looked up to see her boss glaring at her through the open blinds in his office. He motioned for her to join him.

"Sir?"

"Shut the door, Anna."

She did as requested.

"Any luck?"

"Nothing. I've cross-referenced all the Lachlan Brown cases, not one officer stands out."

"Nothing at all, it's been over two bloody weeks?" Davidson asked in disbelief.

"Sorry, Sir."

"I don't need to tell you how important it is that we get this officer and quickly."

"When I was going through the cases where Brown always got off, I noticed that some of his associates haven't always been so lucky."

"And?"

"I want to talk to them, the ones that have done time."

Detective Chief Inspector Davidson rubbed his forehead as he considered Anna's request.

"This is very risky, Anna."

He was hovering, Anna knew it, but with no breakthrough and the paper trail going cold, there seemed little option. She waited him out, hoping he would agree.

He looked at her shaking his head. "Alright, but you be bloody careful," he cautioned. "With Broon out on bail, it's business as usual for him. You might have had more of a chance had he been put on remand, but that bloody Harold Donaldson had the judge convinced Lachlan was no threat to society. If Lackey Broon gets to Jim Wallace our case is toast. Wallace is terrified, even threats from Broon might be enough for him to change his mind. We need to find our man, but we need to be careful."

Anna understood her boss's need to urge caution, but she could see no other way forward.

"Understood, Sir."

She returned to her desk to start finding addresses for the names on her list, and she knew exactly which one she wanted to start with.

As she typed the name into the police computer for any recent activity, she glanced up to see Angela Davidson, the boss's daughter, enter the room. *'Oh, no, here comes trouble. That's all I need,'* she thought. The activity within the room seemed to slow down almost to a stop as Bruce Davidson cast daggers at every man in the department, most of whom were openly ogling his eye-catching daughter. Angela was a twenty-three year old policewoman mad keen to follow in the footsteps of her father. She was driven and ambitious. No longer in her uniform, she had changed into jeans and a top so tight it left little to the imagination.

Bruce Davidson was on the telephone and indicated to his daughter that he would be five minutes. The buxom blonde casually made her way over to Anna.

"Hello, sexy," she said in a low, husky voice. "Mind if I sit with you?"

She was already sitting opposite Anna before she finished asking, leaning ever so slightly forward, but knowing it was enough to show of more of her cleavage than was necessary.

"Hi, Angie, dinner at your parents tonight?"

She rolled her eyes. "Yeah, dad insisted. Look at him, all relaxed now that I'm sitting chatting to you and not to any of the blokes." She leaned forward a little more, her tongue flicking lightly over her freshly applied lipstick. "If only he knew that what I really want is for you to fuck me senseless." She giggled and sat back in the chair.

"Jesus," Anna declared under her breath. She had no intention of ever taking up Angie on her offer and it had nothing to do with her father. Angie was just so full of herself and flaunted everything she had. Beautiful and sexy she might be, but the package turned Anna off.

"Behave yourself." She warned

Angie pouted, "Why won't you? No strings attached," she added enticingly.

"Because I don't want to be directing traffic anytime soon."

"One day, detective, I'll be in your bed." Angie declared.

Anna smiled indulgently, but inside she was thinking that Angie Davidson would have to break into her flat to get to achieve her goal.

"Are you 'right, Angela?" Bruce Davidson enquired in a brusque tone, putting on his raincoat as he departed his office.

"Yes, Dad." She gave Anna what she considered to be her best sexy look as she leaned closer. "Ciao for now, detective."

Anna blew out a breath when the sex kitten was gone.

When Davidson was out of earshot, Mark McLaren a senior detective with a passion for wine and women asked, "Are you banging her, Lynch?"

"Oh, for god's sake." Anna declared. That's all she needed, was guys like McLaren thinking she was sleeping with Bruce Davidson's daughter. "Do I look that stupid to you?"

McLaren shrugged, "I would."

"Yes, I know," Anna replied, her dry tone lost on McLaren, but not on one of the new detectives, Mary Milne, who let out a snort of laughter.

McLaren turned to look at the young officer, "Don't you have work to do?" He asked, his tone sharp.

"Yes, Sergeant," Mary replied putting her head down to study her computer screen.

Anna rolled her eyes at Mark McLaren's behaviour; he could be such an asshole she thought.

The office was beginning to empty for the evening, as the detectives began departing. Anna remained behind intending to do some more digging.

"You've been hanging around this office lately like a bad smell, Lynch." McLaren stated.

"Funny, I was just thinking that the air might improve when you leave for the night."

"What are you working on?"

"All the cases you have messed up." Was Anna's quick retort.

"Very funny."

"That's what I thought when I looked at your clear up rate."

McLaren sneered. "You crack one big case and you think you are better than the rest of us."

"No, only you and that was even before the case."

McLaren cursed as he reached for his jacket. "You just got lucky, Lynch, don't forget that."

Anna kept eye contact with him until he turned and left. "Prick."

She looked over at detective constable Milne, who had kept her head down during the exchange between the two senior officers. Anna had noticed the young woman often stayed late in the department.

"Milne?"

"Yes, Sarge?"

"What are you working on?"

"Sergeant McLaren has me typing up his case notes."

Typical, thought Anna. "Make sure to leave in plenty of spelling mistakes."

Milne smiled and put her head back down.

Anna continued her trawl through the database searching for more information on the name that had caught her attention earlier - Glen Keith. Was it simply a coincidence or was he really Heather's brother? Despite a thorough search there seemed to be no further criminal activity noted since he was released from prison over six years ago. Prior to that there had been various charges ranging from possession to the supply of heroin. For that last one he'd been jailed for five years, while Lachlan Brown had walked. So, what had he been doing for the last six years? Anna entered his details again to find his last known address and place of work. She noted down all the details and since she had nothing better to do, decided to pay him a visit.

Driving her car into Maryhill, she headed for Garscube Road, one of the less desirable areas of Glasgow; Anna drove slowly looking for the correct street. It was getting dark and though the streetlights were on, a few of them were broken making her task a bit more difficult. Pulling up outside the tower block she assumed to be the right one, she was immediately approached by a couple of young lads.

"Watch yer motor for you, Missus?"

Anna went into the pocket of her jeans and handed them some pound coins, the last thing she needed was a broken window and these two little toe rags would do the damage if she didn't hand over some cash.

"Who you looking fer?"

Not wanting to mention the name of the actual person she was looking for she pretended she was searching for a drug deal, "I was told I could get some stuff from Jim at flat number twelve?"

"Naw, never heard a' um."

"Ur you the polis?" Asked the other.

Anna shook her head, "Just looking for something."

"Well that's flat number seven then." His friend replied, only to be jabbed in the ribs by an elbow.

"Shut up you, ya dafty!"

Anna smiled to herself and mentally stored this interesting snippet of information away for future

use.

"I'll be back in five minutes, make sure my car is okay."

"A'right, Missus."

Anna walked towards the entrance to the block of flats, there was no intercom system, meaning anyone was free to come and go as they pleased. The stairwell stank of urine and the lighting was dim, but at least there was some, however low. She took the stairs quickly, two at a time, finally reaching Glen Keith's flat, number twelve. Banging on the door she waited, there was no reply. She banged on the door again and called through the letterbox.

"Hello!"

She saw bare feet and jean clad legs coming toward her, and then the door flew open.

"Aye, whit dae ye want?"

"What's your name?"

"Who the fuck wants tae know?"

This guy looked nothing like the picture on the computer, this wasn't her man and she didn't want to take any chances.

"Anybody else in there?"

"Naw, jist me, what the fuck dae ye want?"

"Nothing."

Anna walked away, she couldn't afford to ask for who she wanted, things had a way of getting back to people like Lachlan Brown double quick. She exited the flats as fast as she could, not wanting to take a breath. She cursed when she got back to her car, to see the side window smashed.

"Little bastards."

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Anna drove back to the station and picked up Pete's truck, leaving her Audi behind awaiting the side window to be replaced, after a quick call to the emergency repair company to arrange it, she headed to her next destination.

She parked outside the Glasgow needle exchange, it was a twenty-four hour service and she hoped he would be inside. Pulling her jacket collar up around her face to protect her from the wind, she entered through the front door of the city centre building.

Anna looked around rubbing her hands together, trying to get some warmth into them, there was no sign of the man she was looking for, a man and woman currently stood behind a counter.

"Can I help you?" The female asked.

Anna walked to the desk, "I'm looking for a guy who works here, blond hair, about six foot tall?"

"Sounds like, Glen, he's not in till tomorrow morning."

"What time?"

"About nine, but listen, if there's something I can help you with."

"No it's okay, I prefer to deal with the other guy." With that, she quickly left the building.

The following morning Anna returned to the Glasgow needle exchange and waited patiently in her car for any sign of her man. Shortly before nine a guy in his early thirties appeared and headed towards the front door. Anna exited her car and followed, intercepting him just before he entered. She walked up to him and discretely showed her badge.

"Just tell me your name"

He seemed to catch on quickly, "Glen Keith."

"I need to talk to you urgently, but not here."

Glen looked at the door, half expecting someone to walk out.

"I'm free this afternoon." He said hurriedly.

"The Glasgow Film House, they are showing *'The Third Man'* at two thirty, I'll meet you inside."

Glen nodded and Anna left as quickly as possible.

She sat in the picture house, the film just starting; she always knew what was on here as it was her favourite place in Glasgow to spend her off duty hours. After twenty minutes had gone by, she was sure Glen Keith was going to be a no show. She looked around and counted less than fifteen other people watching the film. She considered the man she had met briefly that morning.

Was he Heather's brother? Anna thought she saw a resemblance, maybe the eyes. Glen's hair had been cropped short, but the picture of him on the police computer had been with longer blond hair. It was certainly possible that he was her brother. A short while later, Glen Keith sat next to her.

"You could have gotten me into a lot of trouble today." He cautioned in a hushed tone.

"I know and I'm sorry."

"What's so urgent?"

"I need to speak to you about Lachlan Brown."

"Oh, you have got to be kidding me." Glen Keith looked like he was about to get up and leave.

"Then why did you come along?" Anna questioned.

"I thought, never mind, I didn't expect this." He was about to leave his seat.

"Wait, just hear me out, okay?" Anna put an arm on his, urging him to stay.

"Look I don't want to end up floating in the Clyde." Glen Keith looked like he was about to bolt.

"You know Lachlan Brown, the pair of you were up on the same charge eleven years ago, he walked and you did time."

"Yeah and after that I cleaned up my act. I haven't had a hit in almost ten years."

"You served a full sentence because you wouldn't give up Brown?"

"I did a lot of stupid things, but I wasn't that stupid. Lachlan looks after people who go down for him, but they really have no choice, if they want to stay alive that is."

"So, what was your reward?"

"This." He gestured around.

"What?" Anna asked, bewildered by his answer.

"To be left alone, that was what I asked."

"As simple as that?"

"No, not quite. When I got out Lachlan came to see me, wanted to repay me for my silence. I told him I was out of the drug scene and I wanted to turn my life around. He tried to talk me out of that, said he would set me up in a nice flat and I could do business for him from there. I told

him if he really wanted to repay me, he would leave me to find my own way. He relented. I doubt he would now, but back when I was running with him, he was just starting out. I think he felt like he genuinely did owe me."

"I need to ask you something. Did he ever mention anything about having a police officer on the books?"

Glen Keith looked around nervously.

"I just need a name, that's all."

"I don't have a name. I'm sorry."

"Can you give me anything, no matter how insignificant?"

Glen Keith thought about it for a moment before answering. "He did mention something about that. When I told him I wanted out, I wouldn't go back to prison, he said to me, it was safer now, because he had someone on the inside. I assumed he meant a police officer and I asked him how. He simply said, 'blood is thicker than water'."

"So he is related to someone on the police force?"

"Look, I honestly don't know. That really is everything I can tell you, I haven't spoken to him since that day."

"Just one more thing..."

"No, I really have to go."

With that, Glen Keith exited the cinema leaving Anna to ponder several things. Like the unasked question of where was he from. That would have to wait, for now she had the first glimmer of hope since Davidson had given her this assignment and she intended to try and use it to get a breakthrough. She wasn't going to Davidson with this, not yet. She was going to research Lachlan Brown's family. If there was a relative of his working in the police force that could be the answer.

Anna sat in her city centre apartment and considered what her next move should be. She now knew she could probably eliminate every police officer who had been with the department less than six years, but that really helped very little. She was left with the prospect of having to find a police officer who was somehow related to Lachlan Brown. She would have to conduct this research well away from prying eyes as it could take days to find a link, that left her with the option of the Glasgow records office or the Scottish records office. She mulled over the possibilities and saw only one option. She would have to make the trip through to Edinburgh to the main records office as it held all the Scottish records, if she only did Glasgow, she could miss

the information she was looking for.

Opening her web browser she googled 'Scottish records office' the first hit was for 'The General Register Office for Scotland'. It quickly became clear that she would have to spend a significant amount of time in New Register House to enable her to view all the records she needed. The online service was set up for family history research and involved a fee to view records, but anything after 1955, couldn't be viewed.

She searched for the address and opening times. New Register House was at the east end of Princes street, Edinburgh's main thoroughfare, which was still closed because of the work going on to set up a new tram line. Typical, thought Anna, she would need to be up early in the morning, the traffic was going to be a nightmare.

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After spending almost two hours on the road for a journey that should take under an hour, Anna finally made it to St. Andrews Square in Edinburgh and attempted to find a parking space. On her third trip around the square, she saw someone pulling out. The place was mayhem due to the unusual volume of traffic squeezing through this bottleneck. All so the tourists could ride on a tram, madness, she thought.

"Morning," Anna greeted the gentleman who opened the door for her.

"Good morning, are you looking for anywhere in particular?"

"Yes, I want to do some research on recent births, deaths and marriages."

"Have you made a booking?"

Anna frowned, she hadn't even realised that would normally be necessary.

"This is a very busy place, but if there is a computer free, you will get it. Go to the reception at the top of the stairs and the lady there will assist you."

"Thanks."

This wasn't what Anna was expecting at all. Normally she would have had this research done for her by a specialist back at the police station, but Anna couldn't afford to have anyone find out what she was doing. It was time to exercise a little muscle.

"Morning. I understand you normally have to book in advance to view records here."

"That's right."

"I'm a police officer and I need to conduct some urgent research for a case." Anna showed the woman behind the open desk her warrant card.

She looked at the identification with a keen eye before replying, "Can you just come this way please?"

Anna followed the woman along a corridor where she used a key to open a room.

"This is a private research room, it will be at your disposal for as long as the building is open today. Would you like someone to come and show you how to use the database?"

"That would be great, thank you."

The woman smiled. The people here really were very pleasant and helpful Anna thought.

"Have a seat, someone will be with you shortly."

Less than five minutes later, a gentleman entered the room.

"Morning, I'm Stephen." He handed Anna a visitor pass. "If you just pop that on, no-one will stop you wandering around."

"Thanks."

He used the mouse and entered a code into the computer.

"I've just given you access to all the records on the database, that includes everything up to 2006. The rest are in the process of being digitised. So if it's after that you will have to go to the actual register office involved."

"Up to 2006 should cover what I'm looking for."

He nodded, "I'll show you how to navigate through the records and if you get stuck just pop back to reception and ask for me."

"Thank you, Stephen."

He spent the next ten minutes taking Anna through the database and showing her how to narrow down her searches.

"When you find a record you want, you can press print if you want a hard copy. All the printing is collected through in the main research area. There is normally a charge per copy, but your fee will be waived. Do you have any questions?"

"I think I'm good to go, but if anything comes up I'll be sure to ask for you."

"Happy hunting, Detective."

"Thanks."

Anna started with the most obvious person and typed in the search

Surname - Brown

Forename - Lachlan

Sex - Male

Year range - 1977 to 1977

District - All

Anna waited and only two records were found. She selected the one for Glasgow and viewed the record. There he was, Lachlan Brown born seventeenth of February 1977 at eight thirty-two a.m. in the Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital, Rottenrow, Glasgow, to John Brown, a painter and decorator and Ann Brown nee Callaghan.

Anna hit print as she jotted down the details on her pad. Then she searched for Lachlan Brown's parents' marriage certificate. Upon finding that she made a more general search for all Brown's born in the same area from just before their marriage to twenty years after and who had a mother with the maiden name Callaghan. There were four more hits and Anna viewed and printed each record while building Lachlan Brown's family tree. She now knew who his brothers and sister were, also both sets of grandparents. The next stage would be to search for his aunts and uncles and then his cousins.

Sitting back in her chair, Anna rubbed her eyes, which had begun to sting from reading all the records on the screen. So far she had located nine aunts and uncles and was still working on the cousins, which were proving a little harder to locate. She decided it was time for a break and went in search of the ladies room. She used the key she had been left to lock the door and walked down the corridor where she saw Stephen behind a desk with two other colleagues. She peered into what she assumed was the main research room for the public. Every computer was occupied and everyone was busy, yet the place was completely silent. Just like a library. Stephen saw Anna looking into the room and he came out to chat with her.

"Is there anything I can help you with, Detective?"

He was charming and pleasant, in fact everyone in this place was. Anna liked it a lot.

"I was wondering where the ladies toilets are?"

Stephen blushed ever so slightly, "Sorry, I should have pointed them out to you earlier. There is also a cafeteria if you get hungry, I'll show you both now."

Anna followed Stephen to an area where both the cafeteria and restrooms were located.

"If there is anything else, you know where to find me."

"Thanks, Stephen."

As Anna ate her salad roll she considered that what was initially an enjoyable exercise could quickly turn into something very frustrating. She got a little buzz every time she located a record for a family member of Lachlan Brown's, but with each passing record she was moving further afield. No name that was familiar to her had cropped up yet so now she was probably looking at someone who had married into the Brown family. She had been searching for five hours already and, with the net now having to be cast even further, she could see herself having to be here for the rest of the week. Anna returned to her private research room hoping to catch a break before four thirty when the building closed.

Anna lay in bed wide-awake watching a daddy long legs bounce off her lamp periodically and dance around her room. Something was eating away at her. She had traced all the cousins in Scotland and begun to work on marriages. Lachlan himself was unmarried so she had started with his siblings, finding that the three brothers were married, but nothing for his sister. There was no point in looking into his nieces and nephews, they were all far too young to factor into this. She had systematically crossed checked each new name that appeared with her list of possible suspects, there was the odd surname match, but further investigation had shown no family link.

As Anna drifted off to sleep, a random thought occurred to her to check the deaths, make sure all his siblings are still alive. Maybe there was a remarriage of a sister-in-law? Anna could barely keep her eyes open as she chastised herself for not thinking outside the box and considering all possibilities beyond the conventional.

The following morning Anna was back in Edinburgh with a renewed spring in her step. She had left feeling very despondent the previous afternoon. Anna was greeted like an old friend upon her arrival, the staff pleasant and efficient. The key to the room and her pass were waiting for her. Stephen appeared on her arrival and again put in a password to allow Anna full access to the database.

Her first search was for Lachlan Brown's sister on the register of statutory deaths.

Surname - Brown

Forename - Susan

Mother's Maiden Surname - Callaghan

Sex - Female

Year Range - 1979 to 2006  
Birth Year - 1979  
District - All

Anna hit search and waited, there was one match. She viewed the record that contained some interesting information. Susan Brown had died in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary on the eighteenth August 2002, just two days after childbirth. That was seven years ago. The cause of death was thromboembolism. Poor girl, Anna thought, it was a very tragic end. Then she immediately started a search for the child; she wanted to know who the father was.

Alistair Brown, born two days before his mother's death in the same hospital, father unknown. Anna had drawn yet another blank, but she just couldn't let this go. She always went with her gut instinct and she wouldn't settle until she had checked out the boy fully. Where was he now? Who was bringing him up? There were lots of questions flying around Anna's head. Adoption, maybe that held the answers. She went in search of the ever-helpful Stephen.

"Stephen, are there adoption records held here for the last seven years?"

"Sure, in the adoption unit. I'll take you there."

Less than five minutes later Anna was standing in the adoption unit waiting for the information on Alistair Brown. When it finally arrived she discovered that his maternal grandmother, who, at that time, had been living at an address in Bearsden, Glasgow, was the person who had legally adopted him. It seemed as good a place as any to start the next phase of her investigation.

Armed with this new information Anna returned to her research room to collect her belongings. As she looked at the computer screen she couldn't resist one final search before logging off.

Surname - Keith  
Forename - Glen  
Sex - Male  
Year range - 1976 to 1976  
District - All

The search returned one entry for the Aberdeen area. Anna opened it with keen anticipation. Glen Keith was born in Aberdeen Maternity Hospital on the eleventh of October, to Malcolm Keith, a bank worker and Agnes Keith, nee Campbell.

There was no doubt any more about Glen Keith, he was most definitely Heather's brother and Anna now had a good idea as to why she hadn't seen her brother since she was fifteen years old. She wondered if Heather had any idea where he was.

## CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

"Milne, you busy?" Anna had headed straight back to the station. She wanted to make a start on following up her research that same day.

Mary Milne looked at Mark McLaren, before answering Anna.

"Unless Sergeant McLaren needs me for anything."

They both looked on as Mark McLaren made a show of leaning back in his chair and considered the question. "What do you need her for, Lynch?"

"Surveillance on a flat in Maryhill. Someone is selling drugs from it."

"Which part?"

Anna rolled her eyes, "Look, can I have her or not?"

"Off you go." McLaren said to Milne as he motioned his head towards the door.

Mary Milne sucked her cheeks in to prevent the automatic smile that threatened to break out on her face. She would have jumped through hoops for this opportunity that had just miraculously landed on her lap.

"Few days and I will have her back to you." Anna promised.

McLaren yawned and stretched, "Take your time." He turned back to his computer screen.

Anna gave him one last glance before turning her attention to Mary Milne.

"Come on, let's go."

As they took the stairs down to the ground floor Anna handed Milne the keys to her car. "I need you to follow me. I'm driving Detective McGinty's truck to his house. You can drive my car and pick me up. It's Clarence drive, you know it?"

"Yeah, that's in Hyndland, Sarge."

Anna showed Milne where her Audi was parked, and then she went to get Pete's truck, before the pair headed to his flat.

Anna parked on Clarence Drive and saw Mary Milne pull up beside her. Anna motioned to her

and Milne rolled down the driver's side window.

"I won't be long, just wait here for me."

Walking up the steps that led to the main front door, Anna pressed the intercom for Pete's flat.

*"Hello?"*

"Pete, it's Anna."

She heard the door buzz and she pushed it open and took the stairs to Pete's first floor flat. The door was open; she went inside and closed it behind her.

Pete was back sitting on his sofa with his injured leg resting on it. A pair of elbow crutches on the floor next to him.

"How are you doing?"

"Ack, not too bad. Will be better when I get rid of those," he gestured to the crutches, "And I'm back at work. I'm bloody bored out of my skull."

Anna nodded. "When are you back?"

"Monday."

"Just as well I've brought your truck back then."

"About time too." Pete joked.

Anna laughed, "It's not like you can drive it."

"Yeah, I suppose."

"You could have told me it was yours. I was asking the boss who to return it too."

"I traded my car in for it just before we headed up to Havensburgh, I fancied a permanent change."

"I like it, handles nicely."

"Thanks."

The pair stood in silence for a few moments until Pete asked a question.

"Have you seen anything more of Heather?"

Anna sighed heavily, "I tried, I went up there after I saw you in Dundee, she doesn't want to know. She asked after you though, when she found out it was you that got shot."

"She's a nice woman."

Anna didn't want to talk about Heather, so she changed the subject. "Look I have to get going, I have a new detective downstairs waiting on me. Is there anything I can get you? Shopping, anything you need?"

Pete laughed, "I'm fine, Anna, the family has been making sure I have everything I need. I appreciate the offer, though."

Anna nodded. "Well, I'll see you Monday then."

"Any word on who is tipping off Lachlan Brown?"

"Not yet, but I might be onto something, I'll let you know if it comes to anything."

"I wish I was working it with you." Pete lamented.

"I know, but it won't be too long before you're back to full fitness."

Pete nodded. "See you Monday."

Anna patted Pete's arm, she knew it was tough for him to be sitting around waiting for time to pass while others were getting on with the job, but he would soon be back.

Anna jogged back down the stairs and out to her car. Milne was sitting in the passenger seat waiting for her. Putting on her seatbelt, Anna started the engine and drove out of the street.

Anna drove past Maryhill and continued north, she sensed a glance from Mary Milne, but the younger detective said nothing.

"As you might have guessed, we're not heading to Maryhill. But, if McLaren asks, that is exactly where we are working."

"Okay, Sarge."

"You can call me Anna."

Driving slowly along Milngavie Road, looking for her next turning, Anna took a left and drove slowly along the quiet leafy street lined with bungalows looking for the house of Ann Brown and her grandson Alistair. Anna saw the number she was looking for and pointed it out to Milne.

"Number fifty nine, that's the house we will be watching. You don't tell a soul what we are doing, not even Davidson. You just tell them we are watching a tower block in Maryhill."

"Anna, this is legitimate police work isn't it?" Mary Milne enquired, sounding more than a little concerned.

Anna drove past the house and parked about fifty yards away. She turned to look at Milne. She was about to put a lot of trust in the young detective, but she was so new to the department, Anna considered her to be the only choice of a partner, apart from Pete and he wasn't currently an option.

"Davidson knows what I'm doing, but for reasons he agrees with, I haven't told him exactly what and who I'm following. All you need to know is that we will be watching this house and waiting for anyone that we recognise to turn up. We will be working two jobs, this one and the flats."

Anna checked her watch; it was three fifteen p.m. The local schools would be out now and she hoped to catch her first glimpse of Alistair Brown.

Less than ten minutes later, a woman who looked to be in her early sixties came walking towards the car, a young boy of about seven years old by her side. They walked right past Anna and Mary, and Anna continued to watch the pair in her wing mirror. They entered the house she had pointed out to Mary.

"Who are they?" Mary Milne asked.

"That was Lachlan Brown's mother and his nephew Alistair."

"So we are watching Lachlan Brown's mother's house?"

"Yes, but it's not her we are interested in. All we are doing is watching out for a familiar face."

"Who?"

"That's the thing, I don't know yet, I just know we will recognise them." Anna glanced sharply at Mary Milne. "Not a word to anyone, it would mean your job and you are the only person who knows what I'm doing."

The message was clear to the young detective. Anna would know if she breathed a word.

"Understood, Sarge."

"Good. Okay, here is the plan. The school is just a short walk from here. I'll drop you there in the morning and you can watch for the two of them arriving. I want you there just in case the boy leaves from another house and we miss them here. It will be the same in the afternoon when school finishes. We wait near the school and watch for whoever picks the boy up. We can't afford to hang around the house all the time, we will be spotted, it will be easier to be at the

school."

"Makes sense."

"While the boy is at school, we go to the Garscube flats in Maryhill. No point in hanging around here."

Milne nodded, "So the boy holds the key?"

"I hope so."

The two detectives watched the house for another three hours but no one left or entered the house. It was unlikely the boy would be going anywhere else at this time of the evening.

Anna sighed, "Let's call it a day. Is there anywhere you have to be?"

Milne shook her head, "No."

"Where can I drop you? I'm headed to the Merchant City."

"My car is back at the station."

"No problem. Listen, tomorrow, let's not leave from the station. Where do you live?"

"Chesterfield Avenue. The new flats just off the Great Western Road."

Anna thought for a moment, trying to picture the location.

"Not far after the Marks and Spencer shop and garage, where the road changes down to two lanes." Milne added.

"Okay, I know it. I'll pick you up tomorrow morning at eight."

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The next morning, Anna drove into the private car park attached to the new apartment block where Detective Milne lived. The red haired woman was already waiting for her. She was standing out of the rain, at her stair door, keeping dry. Anna drove up to her and waited for her to get in.

"Morning."

"Miserable weather." Milne said as she got in the passenger door.

"I hate days like this, they give me a headache," Anna complained, as she put the car in gear and drove off towards Bearsden.

They sat quietly, listening to the local radio station as the car idled in the heavy morning traffic, waiting for the lights to change. The radio newsreader read out the morning headlines, another fatal stabbing on the streets of Glasgow. The Glaswegian weapon of choice claiming yet another young victim, the knife had long been a favourite in this city. The recession continued to bite heavily with news of yet more job losses. Then it was on to the sport and news of the latest football player's injuries ahead of the weekend games. The newsreader finished with a local weather report, promising more of the same for the rest of the day, rain.

"Lots of good news then." Anna remarked dryly.

The lights finally changed again and this time she was able to make her right turn.

"You're not a morning person are you?" Milne enquired.

Anna glanced at her briefly before focussing on the road ahead. "No." was the simple answer, as she drove up to the next set of lights.

In truth Anna wasn't normally too bad in the mornings, but between the weather and spending most of the previous night dreaming about Heather Keith she was in a foul mood and not up to idle chit-chat. The incessant blather coming from her radio was beginning to annoy her so she switched it off. She sighed as the pair of them sat quietly in the car waiting for the lights to change, the windscreen wipers the only sound filling the void. Anna already had a headache and rubbed the bridge of her nose.

"Maybe it's a sinus complaint."

"What?"

"You know, headache, rain, humidity, pressure."

Anna closed her eyes briefly and urged herself to remain calm. Milne was only trying to be helpful.

"Yeah, maybe." She agreed.

"I'm sure I have some painkillers." She started to rummage around in the pockets of her waterproof jacket.

"It's okay."

Mile continued to look despite Anna's protests. "I do, Sarge, just give me a minute, I just need to

find the right pocket, you know there are that many on this jacket."

"Milne."

The other woman continued to look and prattle on.

"Milne!"

She stopped and looked at Anna.

"You're giving me a headache."

"Sorry, Sarge."

"Let's just get to the school."

The young woman sat in silence for the rest of the journey wondering what had bitten Anna Lynch's ass.

Anna dropped Detective Milne outside the school then drove down towards the bungalow that belonged to Ann Brown. She turned her car at the bottom of the road and parked. A few minutes later Ann and Alistair Brown left the house and started the ten-minute walk to the local primary school. Anna called Detective Milne to let her know they were on their way. She waited fifteen minutes then picked the young woman up.

Milne got into the car, the water running off her jacket, both legs of her jeans wet through. She pushed back the hood of her jacket before she spoke.

"I saw her bring the boy to the school gates. He ran into the playground and she watched him enter the school, then she left."

Anna nodded, "We will come back just before the school finishes for the day. See who picks the boy up."

Anna looked at the time; it was just after nine, most likely too early for drug dealing.

"Have you had breakfast?"

"Cereal."

"I skipped it, want to grab a bite?"

"Can we drive past my flat so I can change out of these wet jeans?"

"Sure."

Anna was beginning to brighten a little, for which Mary Milne was grateful. She invited her sergeant up to her flat while she changed and with an offer to make her breakfast. Anna agreed, if Mary was cooking, she would eat.

Anna found herself standing looking out the window of Milne's third floor apartment. The view wasn't bad, would have been better if the weather had been clear. She glanced around the interior. The flat had only been built at the start of the summer, but already Milne had it looking more homely than Anna had her own place looking after six years. This flat had a much more lived in feel to it, not on the scale of Heather's, but there were family photographs and personal touches that hinted at a certain level of care and attention being invested in it. Milne was in the kitchen cooking eggs and bacon, the smell making Anna's stomach growl in anticipation. She really would have to start eating a proper breakfast.

As they sat drinking their coffee, plates empty, Anna decided to break the bad news to Milne that her weekends might not be her own for the time being.

"It's important that we watch the house over the weekend. One of us can do that while the other watches Garscube tower block. We can swap over for a bit of variety."

Milne seemed initially surprised, but quickly regained her composure. "I understand. Can I be honest?"

Anna frowned, "Sure."

"This is the first bit of proper police work I've been able to do since I joined the department, so I'm grateful for the opportunity. The one thing I don't understand is why you chose me."

"Believe it or not, you were one of the very few candidates in the squad for this job. On this occasion, you just joining us has worked totally in your favour."

"I'll take your word for it."

"Good. Are you ready?"

Milne nodded and put their plates by the sink. Anna watched and briefly thought that she couldn't recall the last time a woman had cooked for her, then Lesley flew into her head, but that was different. Not that she had any interest in Mary Milne outside of work, but it was a pleasant change.

Anna's mood had improved since she picked Milne up that morning, but the weather certainly hadn't. They sat in her car watching who went in and out of the tower block. It was a busy place and it was hard to tell who was going where, but the clue was often in how quickly the individual entered and left the block of flats. Anna recognised some of the faces turning up; regular small

time users gravitating naturally to wherever there was a supply available.

"Do you think Lachlan Brown is behind this set up?"

Anna thought about that, in truth it was as likely as not, but there were other guys looking to muscle in on his territory, which as far as she could tell, was the entire Glasgow area.

"Could be, but if it's not him, there will be trouble soon enough. He won't take too kindly to someone new selling on his home patch."

"Obviously quite a supply in there."

Milne was referring to the number of people entering and leaving the tower block within five minutes of arriving.

"Seems to be."

Anna stopped talking and paid close attention to a car that was pulling up in front of the flats.

"Snap this guy getting out of the BMW. I recognise him."

Milne did as Anna asked and quickly photographed him entering the tower block.

"Who is he?"

"Stuart Laing. A known associate of Lachlan Brown's."

"Keeping an eye on the place?"

"Yeah and dropping off drugs or picking up money, possibly both."

Laing left the tower block around fifteen minutes later and Milne snapped him again. The rest of the day followed a similar pattern, and was fairly uneventful. They left at two thirty and headed to the primary school.

Anna dropped Mary Milne near the school and then headed back to wait near to the spot she had parked in that morning. She watched as Ann Brown left her home and walked in the direction of the school. As she sat waiting for their return her mobile rang.

"Yes?"

*"They are walking towards the bus stop, Sarge."*

"Follow them on foot, but stay well back. I'll come pick you up."

Anna saw Milne waiting a good distance away from the bus stop, Ann and Alistair Brown waiting in the bus shelter paying her no attention. When the bus arrived they followed waiting to see where the grandmother and grandson went.

"She doesn't drive," Anna remarked as they sat in the Tesco car park while the pair were shopping inside the supermarket.

"Husband?"

"Passed away a couple of years ago."

"What did he do?"

"Painter and decorator."

"It's a nice house she lives in."

"I suspect Lachlan Brown has something to do with that."

"Oh well, at least he is looking after his mother."

Anna thought about that, it was probably true, but she suspected that young Alistair was a prize asset for Lachlan, or at least she hoped he was. It would be in his interest to look after the boy well.

The two detectives continued their surveillance on both locations for the next two days without any breakthrough but then, on Saturday afternoon, they spotted an interesting visitor to the Brown household.

Lachlan Brown parked his car in the drive of his mother's bungalow. Anna watched as he exited his black BMW and smiled wryly to herself as she remembered Laing's car from the flats and vaguely wondered if that was the car of choice nowadays for drug barons. He was dressed sharply, his suit made to measure; Anna could probably name his tailor. His hair was neat as a pin, not a hair out of place; he looked like a public school boy. No hair gel or spikes, she had to hand it to him, he looked classy. The problem was, he made his money illegally and piled misery, death and pain into society. There was certainly nothing respectable about Lachlan Brown, no matter how much he tried to disguise himself.

A short time later, Lachlan Brown left the house with his nephew. This was an interesting turn of events, thought Anna. The problem would be following him without being noticed. It was fairly easy with a sixty-year-old woman and a seven-year-old boy, but this was a career criminal who was, by all accounts, very successful at what he did. Lachlan Brown was a careful man.

Anna followed a safe distance behind the BMW, but it wasn't easy to keep track of him without

getting too close and a short time later she lost him at a set of lights. Anna cursed and turned around to make her way to the Garscube tower block. She couldn't risk being at the bungalow when Lachlan Brown returned. She wondered what Lachlan and his nephew did on a Saturday afternoon.

Milne sat in her car looking through a small pair of binoculars; she heard a knock on the passenger side window of her car and turned to see Sergeant Lynch standing there. She unlocked her doors letting her sergeant in.

"Lachlan Brown picked up his nephew a short while ago. I followed, but lost them after about ten minutes."

"Damn."

"I wonder where the hell he was taking the boy. Anyway, I don't want to be there when he returns, just in case he notices the car and realises that it was the same one that had been behind him earlier. I want you to take over at the house and I'll stay here. Let me know when the boy returns and who returns him. Do nothing, no matter who it is."

"Understood, Sarge."

"Call me Anna."

"Sorry, Sarge, I mean, Anna."

"Go, and ring me later."

Anna got the call later that evening. Lachlan Brown had returned with his nephew then left alone. Anna told Milne to go home and they would meet up tomorrow.

The next week followed a similar pattern; Ann Brown would take her grandson to school and collect him again. He went to cub scouts on a Monday evening and football skills training on a Tuesday. They both went shopping on Thursday. Over at the Garscube tower block there was no change, but Stuart Laing was a frequent visitor. Anna already knew how she would handle Garscube, but she needed the surveillance to run alongside the one at Bearsden. It was a good cover, and gave her a legitimate case to be working. She was pleased with Mary Milne. The woman worked hard and the only fault Anna could find was her need to talk first thing in the morning, but it was hardly a crime.

Anna wondered if Lachlan Brown would make an appearance on Saturday. If he did then, this time, she intended to be better prepared.

## CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

Holding the cordless phone in her left hand, Heather punched in the number she required and waited patiently for an answer.

*"Good afternoon, Glasgow Youth Hostel."*

"Hello, I'm calling to confirm the numbers for a booking I made."

*"Can I have your booking reference please?"*

Heather gave the number of the booking along with her name and she confirmed the information the receptionist then gave her.

"We will be arriving Monday the twelfth of October and staying until Thursday the fifteenth, that's correct."

Heather listened to the check in and out times, nodding along with the information, she already knew.

With the accommodation confirmed, she just needed to call the bus company. The last thing she needed was for the bus not to turn up next week. Three days in Glasgow with twenty-four teenagers and four adults, this was going to be one busy trip.

She finished typing up the itinerary that would be printed off and handed to all the youths going to Glasgow. Heather was very much looking forward to the trip. The members of the youth club had worked hard on the fundraising this year, they had needed to raise around eighty pounds per head to cover the cost of accommodation and travel expenses, and reached their target with a little extra that could go towards a trip to the cinema. As always, the biggest challenge with these trips would be keeping the boredom from setting in. Heather knew that when teenagers got bored they invariably became restless, moaned and got up to no good. That's why she had trips planned and the youth hostel had a pool table and an internet kiosk, she hoped she had covered everything, but there would always be some high jinks involved no matter how much planning she put in.

When the kids arrived that evening and she handed out the information the place was really crackling with the anticipation of the upcoming trip. It was at times like this that the remoteness of their location really showed. Glasgow was a city with a population of over a million people and it had everything compared to their small village. These kids just had a youth club and a grocery shop, and she hoped they didn't get too overwhelmed or carried away. They weren't

naïve by any means, but it would still be a change.

"They really are looking forward to it, aren't they?" Tom said as he walked up to Heather's side.

"They're excited. It should be a good trip."

"I'm delighted I was able to get the time off."

"Thank goodness you could, we need all the help we can get on these trips."

Tom looked at her and decided this was as good a time as any. "Maybe we will get a chance to spend a little time together?"

Heather wasn't surprised to hear him say this. Ever since Anna had pointed out his interest, she had noticed he was friendly towards her, but since it had become common knowledge that she and Greg had split up, Tom's friendliness had changed into something more. The glances he sent her way, the odd touch on her arm or lower back. Nothing overtly demonstrative, the change was subtle, but noticeable. Heather resisted the urge to sigh. The last thing she needed right now was romance.

She smiled politely at Tom, "I doubt it, I'm afraid we will have our hands full day and night making sure our charges are behaving."

Tom looked crestfallen, but remained ever hopeful. "Perhaps when we return from Glasgow we could go out for a meal sometime?"

Heather didn't enjoy having to let him down, but she was conscious too of not building his hopes up. "I'm sorry, Tom, I'm just not in a socialising mood at the moment. I have a lot to deal with outside of work right now."

"I understand, Heather, some other time maybe."

He smiled and walked off before she could reply, for which Heather was grateful. She knew that she would barely have a moment alone with Tom the entire time they were in Glasgow, and, thankfully, any time they were alone would be quickly interrupted by one of the teenagers asking a question or needing assistance. Heather would be sleeping in a large room full of bunk beds with about six of the girls and the room would most likely be on a different floor to the guys. Poor Tom, she thought, he really would have to move on. She genuinely liked him as a person, but had no feelings of attraction towards him at all.

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Mary Milne was sitting in her car watching Ann Brown's house. Anna had told her that Lachlan Brown had turned up the previous Saturday early in the afternoon, if he followed the same pattern he should be arriving any time now. The plan was that she would call DS Lynch when he arrived, and Milne would follow him if he left with the boy. Anna Lynch was already waiting on the road where she had lost him the week before. Assuming he took the same route, she would take over from Milne and follow him from that point. If the plan worked, they should at least find out where Lachlan was taking Alistair Brown on a Saturday afternoon.

Anna waited patiently in her car on Clyde street at the same spot she had lost sight of him the previous Saturday. Her mobile rang and she answered it immediately.

"Yes."

*"That's him leaving now, Anna, with the boy."*

"Good, stay just close enough to follow, don't let him become suspicious."

*"Okay, I'll call if he changes route from last week."*

"Be careful," Anna cautioned.

Milne stayed on the line using a Bluetooth headset to chat as she followed Lachlan Brown's car.

*"Looks like he is definitely heading your way, Sarge. He's just taken a right on to McFarlane Road."*

"Good, keep with him."

*"I'm on Pointhouse Road, Sarge and I can't see him."*

Milne sounded slightly panicked and Anna cursed silently, she didn't want to lose him again.

"Let me know if you spot him, but I'll keep my eyes peeled, he should be coming my way within a few minutes."

Anna waited patiently, her eyes looking for a black BMW. It could be at least another week if they missed out on this opportunity.

*"Still nothing, Sarge, sorry."*

"Okay, where are you?"

*"Broomielaw."*

Lachlan Brown should be passing her way anytime now. Anna waited.

"C'mon." She said under her breath. She spotted him. "I have him."

She put her car in gear and pulled out just after Lachlan Brown. She didn't intend to lose him this time.

"He's heading into the New Gorbals." She informed Milne.

Anna followed a safe distance behind, as Brown drove along St. Ninian's Terrace, before turning into Old Rutherglen Road. She watched from the corner of the street as Lachlan Brown parked his BMW. He and Alistair then got out of the car and headed into one of the blocks of flats. Anna drove past and checked the number. She turned back out of the street and parked on St. Ninian's Terrace.

"I have his location. He and the boy have gone into a flat on Old Rutherglen Road. Can you park at the top on the way in? I'm at the bottom, that way we won't miss him leaving."

*"Sure, Anna, I'm just pulling in now."*

"I'll call you when he leaves, if he's alone, we won't be following him."

Anna ended the call and waited. Lachlan Brown reappeared a few minutes later, alone. That meant he'd left the boy in one of the flats. Anna felt her heart rate pick up, she sensed she was definitely on to something now. She didn't know any officer who lived in this area and suspected this was a property owned by Lachlan Brown, she couldn't confirm that now. She would just have to wait and see who came out of the building.

Going on the time that Lachlan Brown returned with the boy last Saturday, they would have at least a four-hour wait, unless whoever was with the boy left the flat. She needed to have a look around. Getting out of her car, Anna walked through an archway that was half way down the road. It took her onto another road, but she could now see the back of the buildings. Where all the blocks of flats met, it formed a square, which had a well-manicured park in the centre, surrounded by trees and benches. With small trimmed hedges and a path to walk around the perimeter, it was unexpected, but very well planned out. There were children around, and Anna walked to the small brick wall for a closer look. Suddenly she caught a glimpse of little Alistair Brown, with his Rangers top on, running after a football. What she saw next shocked her. Mark McLaren, the perpetual bachelor of the department, was chasing him. Anna quickly ducked back under the archway, she took a deep breath and composed herself, and then she slowly walked back to her car. It was a most surreal feeling, like she had glimpsed something she wasn't supposed to. A private moment shared between two people, a father and a son. She left them to the rest of their day, as it was sure to be the last one they would be sharing in quite some time.

Anna got in her car and drove up to where Mary Milne was parked. Pushing the button to lower her window she spoke briefly to her.

"Meet me back at the station." With that, she drove off.

Mary Milne didn't even have time to ask a question, she simply followed her order.

Anna arrived before Milne and waited the couple of minutes extra that it took the other woman to arrive. She intercepted her in the car park.

"Listen, this is really important. Never tell a soul what you have been doing with me the last ten days. If anyone asks, only ever mention the Garscube surveillance. If anyone finds out that we were doing the other stuff, we could both find it very hard to do our jobs around here. Do you understand?"

Mary Milne could not mistake the serious tone of Anna Lynch for anything other than what it was. The younger woman was full of questions. She had known Anna was deliberately withholding information from her, but she never questioned her motives. She had trusted that Sergeant Lynch would tell her when the time came.

"Do I want to know what I have been involved in?"

Anna thought about her answer and decided it was only fair that Milne knew the truth, and then she would understand why it would have to stay quiet. It didn't matter how much Mark McLaren was in the wrong. He was a popular officer and many would have turned a blind eye. They would both have to be careful.

"I told you that Chief Inspector Davidson knows what I have been doing. When I went undercover recently it became clear that there is a leak in the department. Today we found that leak."

"I see. I suppose I will notice someone missing from our ranks very soon?"

"Mark McLaren."

"Oh my God."

"Don't worry, we will have nothing further to do with the case. Davidson will handle the rest."

Milne nodded, lots of thoughts racing through her head. She now fully understood the need to stay silent and, in truth, she was glad she hadn't known exactly what she had been involved in for the last ten days. She wasn't sure she could have been as composed as she was throughout it. No one liked to be investigating a fellow officer, which is why a separate body usually carried out any investigation. She knew that Anna and herself would be castigated by many fellow officers if it ever got out, no matter how wrong Mark McLaren was, their part in his arrest would be seen as a betrayal. They would become pariahs, no matter where they went.

"Take the rest of the weekend off and I'll see you in the department on Tuesday. We both need a break."

"Will we be continuing with the Garscube surveillance?"

"Yes, but it can wait a couple of days. Don't worry, we'll see it through."

"Thanks, Anna."

Anna made a call to her boss, Bruce Davidson.

*"Anna, any news?"*

"Where are you?"

*"On the golf course."*

"Which one, I'll meet you at the club house?"

*"Cawder."*

"See you soon."

Anna took the twenty-minute drive out to the Cawder golf course at a leisurely pace. All sense of urgency had simply drained from her body. She wondered what had driven Mark McLaren to do what he had. She assumed the boy was his but, with his name not being on the birth certificate, he would have had no legal claim to the boy. Lachlan Brown must have cut him a deal. In exchange for information, he would let him see his son. She wouldn't have taken McLaren for the sort, he didn't seem to care much about family, but obviously, he did. She felt more sorry for the boy than anyone else involved. He was about to lose a father and, hopefully, an uncle as well, assuming Jim Wallace testified. They would be out of his life, behind bars for a long time. Today's information should go a long way to help get that testimony.

Parking in the visitor's car park, Anna walked into the clubhouse. She had never been here before. It was a lovely old building nestled amongst the sprawling fairways that surrounded it. Anna looked around the bar area for her boss, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"Excuse me."

Anna turned to look at the man addressing her.

"Madam, can I ask you to please leave the premises?"

"Why?"

"We have a strict dress code and you appear to be breaking every one of the rules."

Anna looked down at what she was wearing; frayed jeans, with a tee shirt, a hooded top and a

pair of trainers.

"Everything?" She asked.

"I'm afraid so. No jeans, all tops must have a collar. No training shoes and absolutely *no* hoodies."

Anna debated what to do. Part of her wanted to just sit in the bar and make them drag her out, but it was her boss's club and he wouldn't take too kindly to being hauled in front of the committee.

Anna decided diplomacy was best. "I'm Detective Sergeant Anna Lynch, I'm here to see Chief Inspector Davidson." She showed her warrant card.

"Oh, oh well in that case perhaps you could wait in the club secretary's office and I'll let Chief Inspector Davidson know you're waiting for him. Please follow me."

"Thank you."

"Lynch, get your bloody feet off the secretary's desk."

Anna immediately sat upright in the comfortable leather chair. She had been swinging around in it and looking out the window, and had stretched her long legs out by putting them up.

"Sorry, Sir, it's been a busy week."

He looked closely at her. "You know who it is, don't you?"

She nodded, "Mark McLaren."

"Jesus Christ, Anna. How sure are you?"

"As sure as I can be without him actually confessing."

"So tell me how, or why?"

"Lachlan Brown had a sister, Susan. She died about seven years ago just a couple of days after giving birth to a son. The father is listed as unknown on the birth certificate. The timing of the birth seemed to coincide with Lachlan Brown getting information. I knew it had been going on for over six years, according to a source I found. So I thought maybe the key was the father. This afternoon I saw Mark McLaren kicking a football around with little Alistair Brown, something I'm sure he does most, if not every Saturday. My guess is Lachlan arranged this in exchange for information. Its Lachlan Brown himself who drops off and picks up the boy on a Saturday."

"Okay, Anna. Good work."

Anna didn't miss the despondent note in her boss's voice, she felt the same way, but it did mean they were more certain of getting Jim Wallace's testimony.

"I won't be back in until Tuesday." She handed her boss a folder containing all the information she had gathered.

"Everything will be taken care of before then. Is he with the boy right now?"

Anna checked her watch. "Probably."

"I'll have him picked up from his house later this evening."

"It doesn't feel good, does it?"

Davidson shook his head sadly, "No, but that feeling will pass soon enough."

"I'm sure it will."

"Anna, you'll make Inspector before the end of the year."

"Thanks, Sir."

She wasn't entirely sure what else to say at that moment, but Bruce Davidson lightened the mood.

"You could have made a bloody effort you know." Davidson scolded.

Anna frowned, not following.

"Coming into my club dressed like that." He gestured to her clothing.

Anna looked at Bruce Davidson's golfing attire. A pink polo shirt with a tan jumper over it and tan trousers completed his look.

She shook her head. "Do you own a mirror?"

"Bloody cheek, this is top of the range stuff." Davidson protested, gesturing to his clothing.

Anna left the office laughing.

[Continued...](#)

## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE**

Anna parked her car in the driveway and took a moment to savour the crisp country air before walking up the path to her parent's home. After the events of the last few weeks she needed to take some time out and a visit to her parents would make a welcome change. Unconditional love, you just couldn't put a price on it.

The trip down to Melrose in the Scottish borders always lifted her spirits. She didn't come down as often as she should, but her parents never complained and were always delighted to see her.

As Anna pressed the doorbell she could hear exuberant barking from behind the door. She knew she was about to meet her parent's new dog. By all accounts, she had been told it was a little terrier, but at that moment it was sounding more like a bullmastiff.

"Be quiet, Lucky."

Anna smiled as she heard her father's lilting Irish accent gently chastise the dog. The timbre of his voice could be almost hypnotic.

The door opened and Anna stood on the doorstep every inch the prodigal daughter returned to the family home.

"Anna! Goodness, now this is a surprise. Come in, come in."

"Fay! It's Anna." He called down the hall towards the kitchen.

Her father hugged her, his warm hands holding her tight for a few seconds, before releasing her from his powerful embrace.

"It's so good to see you."

"I've missed you, Dad," she whispered to him.

Fay Lynch came rushing through the hallway, wiping her hands on a tea towel as she

approached.

"Anna!"

Anna had to practically catch her mother as she lunged into her arms, delivering a hard kiss to her cheek.

After a few moments hugging, Fay Lynch held her daughter at arms' length as she examined her with a keen eye.

"Let me look at you."

Anna stood and waited patiently for her mother's report.

"You've lost a little weight and you need a haircut."

"Fay, give the girl a chance to get in the door."

Anna and her father laughed at her mother's fussing.

"I'm sure your cooking will soon sort out any weight loss, Mum."

"You're in for it now, Anna." Brendan Lynch joked. "Your plate will be piled high and you will have to finish every last crumb on it." He cautioned.

Fay Lynch flicked at her husband with her tea towel. She was well used to his teasing.

"How have you both been?"

"Just great, Anna. Enjoying retirement and going on all the holidays we missed out on over the years." Her father replied.

"So passing the hotel on to Liam is working out?"

"Absolutely, Anna. We were both ready for retirement, we have put in a lot of hard work over the years, now it's time to relax and enjoy ourselves." Her mother added.

"It's about time too." Anna agreed.

"Speaking of Liam, I'll let him know we will all be up for dinner this evening."

Anna smiled as her mother went off in search of the telephone, organising the evening ahead.

"And who's this?" she asked as she bent down to greet the new addition to the Lynch family.

"That's Lucky." The dog's ears pricked up as she heard her name. "Yes, girl, you know we're

talking about you."

Lucky sniffed around Anna and seemed satisfied with what she found. She barked a few times at the tall brunette, and then waited, expecting some kind of reaction. Anna obliged and bent down to pat the dog.

"I see she is going to have you wrapped around her paw just like the rest of us."

Anna laughed at the dog's antics. "She's a scruffy wee thing, isn't she?"

"We can't keep her clean for more than five minutes! We wash her and the very second she gets out in the garden she is rolling in the dirt. Remind you of anyone?" He added cheekily.

"Very funny, Dad."

Brendan Lynch put an arm around his daughter as they walked further into the house, Lucky scampering between them.

Dinner that evening was at the family hotel. Brendan and Fay Lynch had bought the place over thirty years ago, when he had retired from playing football. They had worked tirelessly and built the business up, mostly through sheer hard work. It meant they had very little time for holidays and Anna usually only went to Donegal for a short trip with her parent's and brother during the quiet season, which usually meant wintertime.

She was delighted her parents had now turned the running of the hotel over to her brother Liam and his wife Maureen. Although, with three kids and another due in three months time, Maureen already had her hands full with the children alone. Looking at them all now as they sat round the table eating dinner, she wondered how on earth they managed.

"Busy summer, Anna?" Liam Lynch enquired. He was older than Anna by a couple of years, taller too. He had greeted her by lifting her effortlessly from the ground and up into the air. Liam Lynch was a powerfully built man who had not long retired from playing Rugby.

"Yeah, I spent all of the summer undercover. Sorry I wasn't in touch." Anna added, with a hint of embarrassment.

"Oh, not to worry, Anna. We understand that your job keeps you really busy," Brendan Lynch interjected.

"Still, a call now and then wouldn't go amiss, just to let us all know you are safe and well." Her brother chastised.

Even after all these years it looked like Liam still wanted to play big brother, thought Anna. Her father never acted like this, nor did her mother, just Liam. That said, she could call home a little more often.

"It's a full on job most of the time, Liam, but I will try to be in touch more regularly."

"No, Anna, it's fine. We know it can be difficult for you, don't you be worrying yourself about us." It was Fay Lynch who interjected this time. She turned to her son, "Really, Liam, it's fine."

Anna wondered what was up with Liam. Yes he was her big brother and had always looked out for her, but he seemed surly to her and if the amount of wine he was consuming was anything to go by, he was well on drunk. Maureen, his wife, was a little quieter than usual. Maybe the hotel wasn't such a good idea for them, Anna considered. Kyle, her eldest nephew, who was now eight years old and growing like a weed, interrupted her musing.

"Did you catch any bad guys, Auntie Anna?" He asked excitedly.

Anna smiled, "One or two, Kyle."

"Cool!"

"How is the rugby?" She asked her eldest nephew.

"Really good, I'm going to play for Scotland like dad did."

"That's right, son, in the centre."

"I'm going to be a footballer, like Granddad," Declared Matthew.

Liam interrupted, "Laddies from the borders don't play football, they play rugby."

"Well, I want to play football." Matthew replied defiantly.

"Good for you, Matthew, I'm sure you will be a fine player." Brendan Lynch encouraged and Matthew beamed at his Grandfather's words.

Anna smiled, "Do you play football at school, Matthew?"

The six-year-old nodded, "I do, in the playground."

"Sophie, tell Auntie Anna what you want to be." Maureen asked her three-year old daughter.

The dark haired little girl played with the food on her plate then looked up. "Well, if Kywel plays ruwby and Maffew is football, I want to driwve powice carrrrs!"

Everyone at the table laughed at the antics of little Sophie while Anna looked on with added fondness, she didn't dare catch her brother's eye, she wasn't so sure he would see the humour in the situation right now.

"You guys are getting to stay up late on a school night."

"No, Auntie Anna, we are on holidays." Kyle replied.

Anna looked at her brother for clarification.

"October week, Anna, the kids are off school."

Anna frowned; she'd had no idea. Then a remembered conversation flew into her head. Heather would be in Glasgow during the October week.

"Anna, is everything okay?" Fay Lynch asked obviously concerned about the silence that had suddenly descended upon her daughter.

"Yes, I'm fine, Mum, I had just forgotten something that's happening this week."

Dinner was finished and it was time to get the children to bed. Anna had agreed to come and see them in the morning before she made the two-hour drive back to Glasgow. Initially she had planned to stay longer, but now that she knew Heather would be in Glasgow, she intended to try and make the most of the opportunity.

"You want to stay for a drink, Anna?"

She knew her brother wanted to talk and in truth she was curious to hear what he had to say, so she accepted his offer. Staying behind in the hotel bar after her parents took the short walk home while Maureen went upstairs to put the kids to bed.

"What's on your mind, Liam?" Anna asked after taking a sip of her beer.

"I'm worried that I've made a mistake."

"Taking over the hotel?"

"Yes, it's a lot of work, not that I didn't expect that. I mean we both saw how much mum and dad put into the business while we were growing up. I just didn't expect to be feeling like I have nothing else in my life."

"Let dad sell it and do something else." Anna suggested.

"I'm about to have four kids, I need to be able to provide for them, this could be the best way. It would be a big risk to start working somewhere else."

"But it's making you grumpy."

"You noticed?"

"Was hard to miss."

Liam sighed and grabbed his pint glass, which was dwarfed by his large hand.

"You have been knocking that back too."

He put his pint glass back down, seeing the truth of his sister's words.

"I'm bored, Anna."

"You miss playing rugby?" Anna suggested.

"I do, now I'm trying to adapt to something else. My entire life since school has been rugby. Training, playing, or sitting around kicking my heels while being treated for an injury. There was always structure, and I loved the game. Now I'm doing something I don't like."

"Not much fun in that, Liam."

The pair sat silent for a few moments.

"What about coaching? You're practically a legend around these parts. You could start out with one of the Borders' clubs. Maybe even do some television work, I mean you played centre, you're still not half bad looking." Anna joked.

That raised a smile from her brother.

"There was always an understanding that when I retired, I would be taking over the family business and mum and dad would finally get to do a lot of the things they missed out on over the years. I just never expected to hate it."

"Tomorrow morning, when we come for breakfast, you have to tell mum and dad. It's no good you running the hotel and being miserable, it's better off being sold."

"I don't want to disappoint them."

"I doubt that could happen, Liam. You live right next to them with your wife and kids. You have had a successful career in rugby, they could only ever be proud of you."

Liam smiled at his younger sister. "They're proud of you too."

"But I don't see them very often and I won't be giving them grandchildren."

"It doesn't matter to them, Anna. They always speak highly of you and understand the nature of your job."

"They're pretty special." She agreed.

"You could visit more though."

"I'll try."

Liam changed the subject. "What has you going back to Glasgow so early?"

"A woman."

Liam laughed, "Some things never change. I live in hope that one of these days we might actually get to meet one of your *women*."

"This one is different."

Liam Lynch suddenly looked at his sister through sobering eyes. They had always just assumed that Anna's love life was turbulent and full of short romances, but he had never heard that particular tone from her when it came to a woman. "Maybe some things do change."

"Maybe."

## CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

The single decker bus hurtled along the M90 on its way to Glasgow. The teenagers were full of excitement and it was hard to keep them in their seats, but Heather, Tom, Steven and Gloria were doing a decent job of maintaining calm. Heather was delighted to have a new volunteer who was so keen and dedicated. In the few short weeks since she'd started, Gloria was proving to be a great addition to the staff. Heather thought that, if the teenagers kept up this level of energy for the next three days, they were all going to be exhausted for the return trip.

During a quieter moment Heather found her thoughts drifting once again to Anna. She had hoped all those weeks ago that the dark haired woman would accompany her on this trip, but that was before everything came to light. She wondered how Pete was doing after being shot and couldn't help but imagine the kind of danger they had both put themselves in to do their job. They were very courageous indeed, but...

"Heather can we stop at the next services, I'm going to pee myself?"

"Me too!"

The teenagers were becoming restless again. Heather checked her watch; they still had over an hour until they reached the outskirts of Glasgow. She decided a stop would be the most prudent course of action.

"Okay, I'll have a word with the driver. Stay in your seats and try to drink less juice, the next time we stop it will be the last until we get to the youth hostel." Heather cautioned, before having a word with the bus driver.

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Anna was on the M8 approaching Glasgow from the east. She had made good time from the borders, leaving Melrose after a lovely lunch with her parents. Liam had spoken to them both that morning about the hotel and it seemed now that it would be put up for sale. Anna wondered if her parents had been expecting the news. They seemed to take it in their stride and were more than happy to support Liam in any new endeavour he chose to undertake. The pair of them seemed to have the knack of allowing her and Liam to get on with their lives, while being there with the right support when things weren't going too well. She marvelled at their parenting skills. They always seemed to be one step ahead. The unexpected outcome of it all was that Anna was to benefit equally from the sale of the hotel, it would be split three ways. Despite her protests, as her parents pointed out, with Liam no longer wanting to run the hotel, it was only right that any profit from its sale should be shared amongst all the family. Liam had been in complete agreement. If her parents were disappointed that the hotel was going to be sold they never showed it, and they certainly didn't want to take it back over.

As she approached her junction and left the motorway, she ran through the options in her head as to where she might find Heather. A youth hostel seemed the most likely place to find a party of teenagers and so Anna decided she would start with them. She wondered just how many there were in the Glasgow area.

Parking in her usual place in front of her apartment block, Anna removed her overnight bag from the boot of her car. It was almost four o'clock in the afternoon. She unlocked the door to her Merchant City flat then dropped her bag into her bedroom before making her way to the sitting room and turning on her answering machine. One message and that seemed to be a wrong number, she didn't know anyone called Jonathan, and wouldn't be meeting him at seven that evening. She went to her fridge and removed a cold can of Coke, opening it before sitting down and turning her laptop on. A quick Google search revealed several youth hostels in the area and she printed off a list before closing her laptop down.

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Heather waited until everyone was inside the conference room before starting the brief meeting regarding the evening ahead. Tom did a quick head count and confirmed they were all present.

"As agreed earlier, we will be going to the cinema."

There were a few boos before Heather continued, not everyone had agreed with tonight's choice of entertainment, but they would get their turn tomorrow at the ice-skating venue.

Heather cleared her throat waiting for them to quieten down, a smile playing on her lips. "As *agreed*," she emphasised the word before continuing. "We will be going to the cinema. It's too late to change your mind on your film choice as the tickets have already been bought, and I know who chose what, so no cheating."

There were some sniggers amongst the teenagers, knowing full well that they would chance their arm anyway.

"If someone else agrees to swap with you, that's fine, if not, tough."

"Now for the curfew..." She paused again, waiting for the groans of disapproval, and she wasn't disappointed.

"You must be back here no later than ten. Now I know it's a little earlier than most of you are used to at home, but this is a big city, with added dangers. You can stay up until midnight, but you must be in the youth hostel."

"Borrrrring."

"That's shan, Heather, we can look after ourselves."

Heather held up her hand to forestall any further protests. "I understand your disappointment, but the curfew is necessary and applies to everyone. Anyone who breaks it, won't be allowed on any more trips, so please, stick to this rule."

There were a few mumbles and general agreement.

"Now, back to the good stuff..."

Heather stopped talking in mid sentence as her eyes were drawn to the door and the kids looked at each other in confusion as to why their leader had suddenly gone quiet. Gradually all their eyes tracked Heather's shocked gaze and Anna Lynch found herself the focus of almost thirty people staring at her.

Suddenly the room was full of voices.

"Look who it is. The snake!"

"Oink, oink, oink."

"Oh my God, It's Anna. Hiya!"

"You're not welcome here!"

"Go home, pig!"

"Okay, okay! That's enough!" Heather called a stop to the shouting and name-calling. It took a few more minutes, but eventually, they all settled down.

"That's better. Now I understand that emotions are running high, but can we please remain civil?" Heather implored. The blonde attempted to regain her composure.

"I'm sorry, Anna, is there something we can help you with?" Heather was totally flustered by Anna's unexpected appearance.

"No need to apologise, everyone is entitled to their feelings."

That statement brought on a few more slurs.

"Traitor."

"Scum."

"Please, boys, that's enough." Heather chastised.

"May I have a few minutes of their time?" Anna asked Heather.

Heather looked to the teenagers, the decision was theirs to make.

"What do you all think?"

After a few minutes of heated discussion they eventually agreed to let Anna have her say.

Anna looked at all the familiar faces as she made her way to the front of the room where Heather stood. She glanced at the blonde trying to glean some kind of vibe from her, but Heather was impossible to read at that moment.

Now standing in front of everyone, Anna swallowed nervously before starting. "If you give me a few minutes and hear me out, I'll listen to whatever you want to say at the end." After a few nods and grunts, Anna continued. "Firstly, I want to apologise to all of you."

"I should think so!" Jamie shouted.

He was urged to be quiet by those around him, and Anna was able to proceed.

"I understand that some of you are angry. I truly do. I was sent to live amongst you with the sole purpose of finding a drug runner. Unfortunately, that meant doing whatever it took to get that person. I chose the youth club because Heather was the fiancée of one of the fishing boat skippers. I was looking for information and I befriended her in the hope that I would get some."

Anna glanced over at Heather, before continuing. "As the weeks passed, I got to know you all. In truth, although I had a job to do, and my motives for being around you all in the first place weren't strictly genuine, I actually had a terrific time working at the youth club. You are a great bunch of kids. I rarely ever have regrets about what I do, but on this occasion, I have strong regrets that I had to pretend to be someone else in order to get to know you. I hope that you can all eventually forgive me. I really am sorry for the hurt and pain I caused."

Anna waited for the onslaught. "You can ask me whatever you want now."

There were lots of questions fired at her all at once causing Heather to intercede and restore order.

"Alright, one at a time, hands in the air please." She nodded to Anna, who understood and started pointing and taking questions.

"Mikey?" Anna remembered this boy well. She felt especially bad, as his father, a fisherman, had taken his own life.

"Why did you have to arrest Greg?"

There were murmurs of agreement with the question.

Anna rubbed the back of her neck, she certainly wasn't getting it easy, but what did she expect?

"It was nothing personal with Greg, it was just the way things had to play out. If I could, I would have turned a blind eye to what he was doing, it wasn't part of my investigation, he just inadvertently got caught up in it."

She looked for another question, "Jamie?" She was dreading this one too, might as well get the tough ones over with.

"Is that even your real name?"

Heather perked up at that question, she too wondered if Anna Thompson was indeed, Anna Thompson."

Anna nodded, "My real name is Anna Lynch, Detective Sergeant Anna Lynch. I work for Strathclyde CID."

"So you're not married to Pete then?" Jamie added.

Anna shook her head, "No, that was part of our cover." She turned towards Heather as she spoke. "I'm single."

"Karen?"

"Is it exciting being undercover?" the red headed girl asked enthusiastically.

Anna smiled for the first time. "It can be, but it can also be very dangerous and a little scary."

"Did you get shot?" This question was fired at her from Graeme, one of Jamie and Mikey's friends.

"No, that was my partner, Pete, he's doing okay now, he's back at work today for light duties."

Anna took another question from one of the younger members, Penuel, Penny for short. Anna loved her name.

"Why didn't you say goodbye?"

*Ouch*, Anna thought, that hurt. "One of the hardest things about this assignment was leaving you guys behind. Knowing that when it ended I would be returning to Glasgow and probably not seeing you all again. I wanted to say a proper goodbye, but the way things turned out, I couldn't. I'm sorry."

"Come back and work at the youth club then," Karen suggested, which sparked a chorus of objections and agreement in equal measure.

"If I could, I would love to, but with me being based here in Glasgow, which is three hours away from you, it's not very likely, but if I could, I would work with you all again in a heartbeat."

"Come with us to the cinema." Jamie suggested, much to the shock of both Anna and Heather.

Anna looked to Heather for her answer. The brunette would love to go, but she knew it wasn't her decision to make. Heather decided to settle it with a vote.

"Those who would be favourable to Anna coming along with us raise your hands."

After a quick headcount there were twelve hands raised. Anna felt her heart sink. Heather then asked for those who didn't want Anna to come along to raise their hands.

"That's it settled then, twelve for with ten against and six abstentions. Looks like you're coming to the cinema." Heather said to Anna.

Anna was pleased, but she couldn't help but notice that Heather had been one of the abstentions

and wondered what that meant in terms of their future, if indeed they would have one.

Anna enjoyed the evening, well most of it, There was still some hostility thrown her way, but on the whole, most of the kids were fine with her presence. Tom didn't look too happy, but that was no surprise, on some level he sensed Anna was a threat to his chances with Heather, if indeed he had any, Anna currently had no idea.

Back at the youth hostel the kids were winding down after their first day in Glasgow. Some of them were still full of energy and probably would be for a good while yet. Anna hung around waiting and generally hanging out with them all, in truth she was looking for a chance to chat with Heather, but so far, the blonde had been busy and Anna was beginning to wonder if Heather deliberately didn't want to chat with her.

Eventually, when it was getting close to midnight, Anna decided it was time to go.

"I'm going to call it a night, it really was fantastic seeing you all again. Thanks for letting me come along."

"Will you be coming with us tomorrow?" some of the teenagers asked.

"I can't, I will be working from lunchtime until late into the night for the next few days."

"Aww, that's a shame, Anna, you could have come ice-skating with us." Sheila added.

"You could have had a laugh at me falling over every two minutes." Anna replied laughing.

"We would have helped you skate."

"I wish I could make it, but I'm working on a case."

"Come and visit us, Anna."

The brunette smiled. "I will, thanks." It seemed that the more time she had been around them that evening, the more she was forgiven.

As Anna made her way to the main doors, she was pleased when Heather followed her.

"You did a brave thing, Anna."

Anna shook her head, "It was the least they deserved after what happened."

"Still, most people wouldn't have bothered to make the effort. Thank you."

"No need for thanks. I don't deserve any. I'm just happy that they have accepted my apology,

well most of them anyway."

"The rest will come round in time."

"Good."

They had reached the front door and Anna opened it to leave.

"I heard you say you won't be able to come with us again?"

"Yeah, I'm working on a case, lots of surveillance. The only time I'm free is early mornings. Most drug users don't start functioning until after lunchtime, but it means they are up late too."

Heather nodded.

Anna blew out a frustrated breath, "Look, Heather, I know it's difficult to understand how I could do the things that I did, but I feel passionately about my job. Seizing drugs, catching dealers, that gives me a rush and I will do whatever it takes to make the streets safer."

"Actually.... I do understand."

Anna was surprised to hear Heather say this.

"I understand more than you could know. You see my brother, Glen, he was a drug user; could still be for all I know. I haven't seen or heard from him in over twelve years. He was doing a degree in Information Technology at Aberdeen University. In his first year he chose to live on campus, then he moved into a flat that he shared with a few other students. I don't know exactly what was going on with him. Glen is five years older than I am, so I was only thirteen when he left for University. Things started coming to light when he would come home for a visit and items were going missing from the house. My parents confronted him and we've never seen him since. Anna, my brother was injecting heroin."

Heather finished on a sob and started to weep uncontrollably. Anna wasn't sure what to do, she so desperately wanted to pull Heather into her arms as she had done before, but was afraid that her comfort would not be welcome on this occasion. After a few precious moments debating with herself, she decided to pull Heather into a comforting embrace, she gently rubbed the blonde's back which caused Heather to turn into her body, seeking solace in her tall companion.

The blonde hiccuped and continued, "Of course my mother is in complete denial. Anytime someone has asked about Glen over the years she comes out with some grandiose story about how successful he is and how proud she is of her hard working son. She claims he works in the United States for some important corporation. Of course the irony is that, for all she knows, he could well be in the States."

"I miss him. I miss him so much. I don't care what he has done, I would love to see my brother again."

Anna could see the desperation and longing on her friend's tear stained face. There was an internal debate raging within her. Should she tell Heather she had met her brother? How would the blonde react to that information? Anna wished she knew. She decided to ask a little more about the situation.

"Is that the reason your mother is so controlling, with you I mean?"

Heather nodded her head slowly, 'Yeah. It's like, ever since that day, something changed in her. I know she loves me, but the experience with my brother has affected her ability to just let me live my life the way I want to. Her constant meddling and need to try and control are a direct result of not being there to help my brother when he obviously had a major problem in his life. I'm suffering the backlash and though I can understand and rationalise her reasons for acting the way she does, it's become too stifling. At the same time I can't hurt her, she is my mother and I love her."

"What about your father?"

"He's remained stoic over the years. He is there for me when I need him. When my mother goes too far, he intervenes. He has always been there for both of us, and even when my mother is at her worst, he sticks by her. I'm sure he must hurt deeply himself, but he remains strong for his family. The exact opposite of my mother, he never interferes, but if I need advice he is always there with some words of wisdom."

"Sounds like a special guy."

Heather nodded, "That he is. I don't know how mum and I would have got through the last few years without him."

Anna was left in a quandary, should she tell Heather that she had inadvertently met her brother? She shouldn't, but she had done enough to unsettle this woman's life, maybe it was time for a good deed. She also had a sense of dread, if she told Heather about her brother, would Heather believe that it was entirely accidental? Anna decided there would be no more secrets. Regardless of Heather's reaction, the blonde deserved to know the truth.

"Heather."

The blonde who had remained silent after her emotional outburst turned to look at Anna.

The dark haired woman swallowed nervously, hoping that this conversation wouldn't turn into a disaster.

"Since my return from Havensburgh, I have been investigating further one of the major drug dealers. During the course of that investigation, the name Glen Keith cropped up."

"What?" She asked, stunned.

Heather's voice was small, almost disbelieving. "So, he is still alive and still involved in drugs." She said, resignedly.

"Yes, he's alive, but he's not involved in drugs, well at least not the way you think."

"What do you mean?"

"Your brother hasn't done drugs in over ten years."

"How do you know this?" The blonde whispered harshly, not wanting to trust what Anna was saying.

"I've spoken to him."

"You have spoken to my brother!"

The blonde's voice was stronger now, a hint of anger returning.

"Please, Heather, I had no idea he was your brother at the time. Yes, I considered it a remote possibility, but I really didn't know."

"You say he's clean, but still involved in drugs?"

Anna smiled, "That's right, he has turned his life around. He works at the Glasgow needle exchange. Seems community work runs in the family."

"My brother is here in Glasgow?" Heather was shocked, her head spinning.

"Yes."

Heather staggered back with a dazed look on her face, trying to take in this new, unexpected, information.

"I always thought the next time I would hear about my brother would be his death."

Anna thought carefully about her next words. "I could take you to him?"

Heather looked sharply at Anna, her hands flying to her mouth. "Oh, I don't know, Anna. What if he doesn't want to see me? I...I don't think I can."

Anna understood Heather's fear, but she had a feeling that the day she met Glen Keith, he was hoping for something. Since she met with him, the question had constantly nagged her as to why he ran the risk of meeting her. Initially she thought he wanted to help, but as she thought back to their meeting in the cinema, it was obvious Glen Keith had been expecting to hear something from Anna.

"When I met your brother, he seemed like a man who was looking for something. When I spoke with him, he was disappointed, like he was anticipating something else. I think he is ready to meet you, but afraid to take that step."

Heather had fresh tears in her eyes; her hands trembled as she attempted to wipe them away.

"It's all just so overwhelming."

"If you like, I could speak to him, see if he wants to meet you?"

"Would you?" Heather asked hopefully.

"Absolutely."

"Thank you."

"I am so sorry for all the hurt I have cause you." Anna whispered raggedly.

The two of them were so close their breath mingled together in the October night air.

"I forgive you, Anna."

"You do?" The words barely made it out through the emotional tightness of Anna's throat.

Heather nodded, she could no longer remain angry with this woman. Anna had stood up to be counted and faced the kids when they threw abuse at her and she had come back for more. Heather thought she was a brave, determined and beautiful woman. And still all the things she had fallen for originally.

Without further thought, she kissed the brunette, tentatively at first, then more forcefully.

Anna whimpered at the first contact from Heather's lips. When they parted, she was breathing heavily.

"Come back with me to my flat?" She rasped.

Heather shook her head. "I can't."

"I'm sorry, it was a stupid idea."

"No, it wasn't."

They held each other's gaze.

"I would love to come back with you, but I'm in charge of a bunch of horny teenagers."

Anna smiled, "How could I forget."

"Speaking of which..."

Anna understood. Heather had a job to do and she had to get back inside.

"Can I see you again before you go back to Havensburgh?"

"I'd like that very much."

"When do you leave?"

"Thursday morning."

Anna took a moment to think, "What about breakfast on Wednesday morning, early?"

"That would work. The kids will get up about eight, and have breakfast here."

"I'll pick you up at six-thirty?"

Heather nodded; she would make it happen. "I'm looking forward to it."

"Me too."

They both smiled; feeling like something new was beginning.

"I'll find out when Glen is next working, I could bring him here?"

Heather shook her head, "No, Anna, I have to concentrate on the kids. I will have to see him another time, if he is agreeable."

"I understand... well, goodnight."

Heather kissed her again, hard on the lips, for a few short moments.

"Night, Anna."

## **CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN**

The following morning Anna found herself again waiting in her car outside the Glasgow needle exchange. She hadn't asked Glen Keith where he lived and this was her only way of contacting him. After nine o'clock came and went, Anna decided to go into the building to seek him out.

Glen was chatting with a female behind the reception desk.

"Is there somewhere we can talk in private?"

"You again." Glen Keith stated accusingly.

Anna smiled, "I think this time, I might have some information you want."

"I doubt it. Look, I told you before, I've moved on." He whispered forcefully.

"I know, this is a personal matter, please can we talk somewhere quieter."

Glen looked around; the building was currently empty, apart from his colleague who despite looking elsewhere was soaking up every word.

"Come on through to the back office."

Glen led Anna to a square room, which also served as a kitchen. He gestured towards the kettle, "Tea, coffee?"

Anna declined his offer and took a seat on the worn sofa, where Glen joined her.

"What can I do for you this time?"

"Last time we met I got the feeling you were hoping to hear something from me."

Glen looked guardedly at Anna. "Maybe, but I doubt you can help me with that."

"Is it to do with your family?"

Glen looked surprised. "That was a long time ago, I doubt they would want anything to do with me now."

"What if they did? Would you want to see them?"

Glen Keith nodded and sighed, "I would love to reconcile with my family, but you have to understand, I'm not exactly your run of the mill ex-junkie. My family," He shook his head. "I really let them down."

Anna understood what he meant by that, more than Glen Keith could know at that moment. Here was a guy who had been given every opportunity by his parents and somehow he managed to mess it up. Add to that his mother's denial and it was a difficult scenario to overcome. She was,

however, pleased to hear that he did want to get to know his family again and she knew that at least one member of the Keith clan would be happy to see him.

Anna spoke softly to the man sitting next to her. "I don't know about your parents, Glen, but I do know that your sister would definitely like to see you."

"Heather?" He shook his head in disbelief, not trusting the words he was hearing. "How do you know this?"

"Over the course of the summer I got to know your family, especially Heather. I was working undercover in Havensburgh. To cut a long story short, when I returned to Glasgow your name popped up in my ongoing investigation, and I realised you were Heather's brother. I met with her last night, she spoke about you and I told her I knew where you were and that you had turned your life around. She wants to meet with you, if you are agreeable."

"Why would you do this for me?"

Anna shrugged, "I would do anything for your sister."

Glen looked closely at Anna, seeing the truth behind her words.

"So you and Heather are friends?"

"We're more than friends."

If Glen was surprised to hear this he didn't show it. He ran a hand through his short blond hair, taking in the information he had been given.

"You said you spoke to her last night, is she here, in Glasgow?"

"Yes, but only until Thursda-"

"Will you take me to her?" Glen asked eagerly, not even letting Anna finish her sentence.

"I'm sorry, Glen, I can't, she's here on a trip with a group of teenagers from the youth club she runs. She has to concentrate on doing her job, but she does want to see you. Why don't you give me an address and telephone number? I'll pass them on to her."

Glen looked a little deflated, but it didn't last long. "I can't believe my sister is here in Glasgow and she wants to see me." He pushed away a few errant tears that threatened to fall. "I'm sorry, this is quite emotional for me."

"No need to apologise, Glen. I understand."

"Let me write down my details." He went to the front desk and returned with a notepad and pen. He wrote down the information then ripped the sheet from the pad and handed it to Anna. "You

will be sure to give it to her?"

"I will, don't worry." Anna handed him her card, "Get in touch with me if there is anything you need to ask or, you know, just chat about."

Glen took the card and put it in the side pocket of his cargo trousers. "Do you really think she will get in touch with me?"

Anna nodded, "I do, don't worry, she'll be in contact. I'll pass on your details to her tomorrow."

"You will be seeing her tomorrow?"

Anna nodded, "In the morning."

"Tell her..." He shook his head, "I don't know, what do you say to your little sister after all these years? The last time she saw me I was strung out and being thrown out the house by my parents."

Anna waited while he gave it a little more thought.

"Just tell her, I've missed her." He said earnestly.

"I will, Glen." She rubbed his back reassuringly before getting up to leave.

"Thanks, detective."

They shook hands.

"You can call me Anna."

Pete McGinty looked at the tall lean figure approaching his desk. He wondered when Anna would turn up. He was one of only three people who knew what she had really been up to lately and, despite her heavy workload, she looked cheerful, he would play along.

"Good break, Anna?"

"It was, Pete, thank you."

"You haven't heard then?"

She frowned, what the hell was he on about. "Heard what?"

"Mark McLaren. He's been charged with passing on police information to Lachlan Brown."

Anna looked suitably shocked, "The rat bastard."

Pete nodded, "Davidson's looking for you."

"That makes a change," she joked.

"What are you working on?" He enquired.

"Nothing you're allowed in on."

"Bitch." Pete declared with mock seriousness.

"That's Detective Sergeant bitch to you, we're not undercover anymore."

"Yes, Sarge."

Anna smiled, "Welcome back, Pete, it's really good to see you here again."

"Cheers, Anna."

As she walked towards Davidson's office, she had to admit to herself that she had really missed all the verbal sparring with Pete McGinty.

Anna knocked on the open door of Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson's office.

"Come in, Anna."

She closed the door behind her and took a seat. "McGinty said you wanted to see me?"

"Aye, where the hell have you been?"

Anna looked bemused, "I told you I wouldn't be in until Tuesday."

"It's nearly ten o'clock."

"Oh, yeah, well too many late nights, I needed a long lie-in."

Davidson gave her a stern look and she struggled to keep a straight face.

Davidson sat back in his chair. "I've been grilling McLaren for two days, he won't roll over."

"Has he admitted to anything?"

"Only that he is the boys father and he does have a friendship with Lachlan Brown."

"Well we pretty much knew that already. I'm not surprised to hear he won't give any details. It's

the same everywhere you ask. People are scared of Brown, he has a long reach."

"And Mark McLaren wants to keep his son in his life." Davidson stated the obvious.

"At least with him locked up we can keep Jim Wallace safer."

"That's something anyway. Brown will remain free until his trial and then, hopefully, he will be going down for a long time. I want to make sure he stays down and can't run his operation from a prison cell."

Anna nodded.

"Let's start cleaning up. I want to target everything he is involved in and shut him down for good."

"I'm on one of his drug houses at the moment. Someone is dealing out of the Garscube tower blocks."

"Are you in a position to move on it?"

"If you can give me more man power I can move this week."

"Okay," Davidson glanced out into the general office. "Take Danesh and Hopeton and I'll arrange for an armed response unit to be on standby."

"Stuart Laing, a known associate of Lachlan Brown, appears two or three times a week. He is the delivery boy, treasurer and muscle all rolled into one. We will go in while he is there."

"Okay, Anna, you make the decision when to go in, just make sure you get a result. The priority is to stop the supply getting on to the streets."

Anna nodded, "If we have everything in place as of tomorrow, I think we will be done by the weekend."

"Good. That will be one more problem for Broon to be dealing with and I intend to give him nothing but problems until his trial."

"Understood, Sir."

"How's Milne working out?" Davidson queried.

"She's doing fine, shows promise."

Davidson nodded, "Glad to hear it, we need a few good detectives coming through. With John Hopeton retiring and McLaren gone, and of course McGinty on desk duty until he is fully fit, we don't need any eedjits coming to us, needing coddling." Davidson looked out at Pete McGinty,

"Speaking of Pete, do you think he is the right man for one of the vacant Detective Sergeant posts?"

Anna nodded, "Without a doubt."

Davidson looked back at Anna, "You know, I should have paired you two up ages ago. Would have saved me a lot of earache from the pair of you bitching about each other."

Anna laughed, "It was an eye opener. I wasn't sure about him after that big case he was working on fell apart. Now we know it was most probably down to McLaren."

"Aye, that cost Pete a lot and none of it his fault in the end. He was up for promotion and that case put a stop to it."

Anna frowned as she thought about that case. "Sir, can I take Danesh, but not Hopeton?"

Bruce Davidson looked sharply at his detective, "I know he's getting on, but he will do the job."

Anna shook her head, "It's probably nothing, but when you were talking about Pete and that case, I remembered he was working with Hopeton. Then I got to thinking about something Danesh said, about the case they are currently working."

Bruce Davidson studied Anna closely. "You think McLaren wasn't acting alone?"

"We can't rule out that possibility."

"But John Hopeton?" He questioned.

"I'm not saying he is, Sir. What I am saying is his police work is sloppy at best. It's probably just down to him counting the days until his retirement." Anna shrugged, "I'm most likely wrong about there being anything more to it than that."

Davidson's palms slapped down hard onto his large wooden desk. "That's all we need, another one," he hissed. Then he shook his head. "Maybe we are just getting paranoid, but still, I'm not going to ignore your instincts. Don't take Hopeton." Davidson looked out over the large office space, "You pick someone else."

Anna nodded; her boss was again showing his transparency. If indeed there were another mole in the department, he would expect her to consider him as likely a suspect as anyone else. Allowing Anna to choose the fourth team member would help remove suspicion from him. Or, was he just being extra clever? Anna was getting dizzy just thinking about it.

"Maybe you're right, we are just being paranoid."

Bruce Davidson had left his seat and stood with his back to Anna looking out the window into the dull, grey, morning sky. Anna waited patiently for his response.

"Still, best to be cautious."

"I'll take Beveridge instead."

Anna could see her boss nod, "Smart choice. I'll arrange the armed response team, it will be in place as of tomorrow."

"Will that be all, Sir?"

Davidson turned to face her. "Aye, for now."

She left his office knowing that she had once again given him a lot to think about. She didn't know how her boss's head was, but Anna knew her own was spinning with all the possibilities and it wasn't pleasant.

"Milne, Danesh, Beveridge, you're all with me." Anna gestured for the three of them to follow her.

"Woah, hold on," John Hopeton protested. "You can't just walk in and take them all."

"Speak to the boss, you can take up any issues with him," Anna informed Hopeton. She didn't have time for petty squabbles.

"Just wait a minute." Hopeton was walking towards Davidson's office, but Anna had no intention of waiting, it would be a waste of time, she knew Davidson would tell Hopeton to get on with it.

Meanwhile, Milne, Danesh and Tommy Beveridge, a Detective Constable who had been with the drug squad for over two years now, were already following Anna. They knew who to take their orders from and it wasn't John Hopeton.

Using one of the empty interview rooms, Anna briefed the two new detectives on the case that she and Milne had been working on at the Garscube tower block.

"We will just watch today, then make our move next time Stuart Laing shows up."

"What if he shows up today?" Beveridge asked. Anna had worked with the wiry detective before and knew he liked to be prepared for all eventualities.

Milne answered that question, "It's highly unlikely that he will, he was at the flat yesterday, I'm guessing it will be Thursday or Friday before we see him again."

Anna looked at Milne clearly impressed with the younger woman's dedication to the job. She had shown good initiative by continuing the surveillance on her own time.

"Good work, Milne." She almost laughed at herself; she was beginning to sound like her boss.  
"If, in the unlikely event he does appear today, we do nothing."

There were nods and words of agreement.

"As of tomorrow we are ready to move, there will be an armed response unit on standby, just in case." Anna made a quick decision about the team, "Milne you take Beveridge with you and Danesh you're with me. Let's get going."

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The following morning Anna picked Heather up from outside the youth hostel. She had arrived a few minutes early and, with traffic so quiet at that time of the morning, was able to park her car and sit in it right outside the youth hostel. Daylight was just breaking as Heather walked out onto the street. She spotted Anna almost immediately and walked to the car. Anna watched as Heather opened the door and sat in the passenger seat.

"Morning."

"Good morning."

The pair smiled at each other, both happy to be in the other's company again.

"Are you hungry?" Anna asked.

Heather stifled a yawn before she answered.

"I'm still half asleep to be honest, but I could manage some breakfast."

"Good." Anna replied as she started the engine and drove in the direction of her apartment.

The journey was fairly quiet, both woman happy to chat idly, without feeling the need to fill the gaps. Anna enjoyed Heather's calm presence.

"How was the ice-skating?"

Heather smiled, "It went well, as in, no-one ended up in casualty."

"Good to hear."

Anna pulled into her usual parking space.

Heather frowned as she looked out at the building in front of her. "Is this where you live?"

"Yes, I thought we could have breakfast here, I was hoping it would be more relaxed."

Heather smiled, "That's a good idea."

Anna led the way to her flat, Heather following closely behind her, taking in the surroundings with a curious eye, as Anna fumbled with her front door keys. Heather was nervous and felt a little more at ease knowing she wasn't the only one.

With the front door open Anna gestured for Heather to enter, then followed leading the blonde to her kitchen area where a table was set ready for two, complete with a flower arrangement in the centre.

"This looks wonderful, Anna."

Anna wiped her palms down the front of her jeans as she waited for the blonde to take a seat at the table.

"Thank you."

"You've gone to so much effort." Heather remarked.

"I ah, I just wanted it to look nice."

This was new territory for Anna, going to these lengths to impress a woman, but she wanted to make a good impression on Heather this morning, it would be like a first date for the two of them.

"It looks lovely, I'm impressed."

Anna saw a look in Heather's eyes that suggested her appreciation went beyond the table arrangement.

"It's a continental breakfast, I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all."

"I'll just get the coffee, unless you want tea?"

"No, coffee is fine, thanks."

A few minutes later the pair were seated comfortably across from each other, biting into croissants topped with marmalade and sipping orange juice.

"I spoke with your brother yesterday morning."

Heather stopped chewing as she turned her full attention to Anna.

"And."

"He has given me his address and phone number to pass on to you." Anna handed Heather the details Glen had written down.

The blonde opened the piece of folded paper and stared at it. Anna noticed Heather's hands tremble as she read the details.

"He wants to see me?" She asked in a whisper.

"Very much so, he wanted to come see you straight away, but I explained you were here with work and couldn't. He told me to tell you, He's missed you."

"Thank you, Anna." Heather proclaimed as she got up from her seat and went to her companion. Anna stood and they shared a tight embrace.

"You're most welcome," she said into the blonde hair that was resting just below her lips, before she planted a kiss on Heather's head. "Come on let's eat." Anna suggested, fearing she wouldn't be able to control her hormones if they remained the way they were.

The mood turned lighter again and Heather became inquisitive.

"Tell me about your childhood? I remember you saying that your dad is Irish and came over to play football, I assume that's true?"

Anna nodded, a little embarrassed that Heather had to recheck the information she had given before, but that was something Anna would just have to endure and Heather was asking in good faith.

"Yes, my dad is from Donegal. He was playing for a local team when a scout from Glasgow Celtic came to watch the game. They signed him."

"Your dad played for Celtic?" Heather asked, clearly impressed.

"Well he started his professional career there, before moving on to Airdrie, then finally Berwick. It didn't quite work out as he had hoped. Whilst he was playing for Berwick he met my mum; she's from Duns in the Scottish borders. My dad wasn't making much money from playing football so he decided to take over the running of a pub and continued to play part-time. He asked my mum to marry him and along came my brother, Liam, a couple of years later. I was born about three years after that and then we all moved to Melrose when my parents bought a small hotel. That's where I grew up, in Melrose."

"What made you decide to join the police?"

"From about the age of fourteen I had made up my mind. I know it sounds young, but by the time I was leaving school, I still hadn't changed my mind. So I became a police cadet and moved to Glasgow to train."

"So, you have been in Glasgow ever since?"

Anna nodded, "Yes, almost sixteen years now."

"What about your brother, is he a police officer too?"

Anna laughed, "No, Liam recently retired from playing rugby. He's currently running the family hotel, but it's not working out for him. He's finding it hard to adjust after all those years in sport. I think he might try coaching."

Heather frowned as she thought about the name. "Liam Lynch? The Scottish rugby player?"

"Yes, he could have played for Ireland, but he was born in Scotland, it was an easy decision for him when he was selected."

"Such a talented bunch you are."

Anna laughed, "The men anyway. I was down in Melrose at the weekend visiting my parents; they retired when Liam took over the hotel. Liam has two boys and a girl, with another baby on the way. My oldest nephew wants to play rugby, his younger brother wants to play football and their little sister wants to drive police cars."

Heather laughed, "That's adorable."

"I thought so too."

The pair shared a longing look, which ended with a smile that promised more.

Heather noticed the time; she would have to be leaving soon to get back to the youth hostel.

"I've really enjoyed this morning."

Anna smiled, "Me too."

They stared at each other for a moment before Anna spoke again. "I'll drive you back there."

"Would you? Thanks."

Heather stood and started to clear the breakfast dishes, but Anna stopped her.

"Leave them, I'll do them later."

She took Heather by the hand and led her from the kitchen towards the front door. They stopped in the hallway.

"When can I see you again?" Anna couldn't stop her hands snaking around Heather's hips. The blonde was happy to return the favour.

"I don't know, it will be difficult with you in Glasgow and me up in Havensburgh."

"I have your number so I'll call you. Maybe I could drive up sometime... or maybe we could meet halfway?"

"We'll think of something. I don't know how welcome you will be in Havensburgh, maybe I could come to Glasgow?" Heather suggested.

"Anything, I just want to see you again, soon."

"Me too."

Anna kissed Heather; it started tentatively at first before becoming more passionate. Heather returned the kiss with equal fervour, which only raised Anna's libido higher. She groaned when the blonde released her lips.

"We have to stop, not that I want to, but if we don't I'm going to be very late."

Heather kissed Anna again, then swiftly turned and opened the door, leaving a dazed and breathless detective to follow on behind her.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT**

"That's Stuart Laing." Anna stated to Raouf Danesh, who was sitting in the passenger seat next to her. She immediately radioed Mary Milne.

"Milne, you seeing him?"

*"Yes, Sarge, we're ready."*

Anna then contacted the armed response unit who were on standby just two streets away. When Anna gave the order to go, they would pull up to the Garscube tower blocks, just in case they

were needed.

She watched Stuart Laing enter the block of flats.

"Let's go!"

With that order the four detectives walked swiftly into the block of flats and moved rapidly up the stairs. They stood ready outside the flat door. Anna adjusted her stab proof vest one last time, hating how restricted she felt in it. Tommy Beveridge had the enforcer in his hands, the battering ram that would be used to break open the door. Anna gave him the nod and with one efficient blow to the lock, the door flew open.

Anna, Milne and Danesh were through the broken door and inside before the occupants even realised what was happening. They immediately took a room each to make sure that no one else was there throwing drugs from a window or flushing them down the toilet. Each officer shouted clear and that left Anna with the only two occupants in the flat.

"Police! We have a warrant to search these premises." Anna stated authoritatively.

Stuart Laing was standing by the window, but made no move or sound. There was a younger man seated in an armchair, on the table in front of him was a large amount of cash and a bag of brown powder, which probably weighed about two kilos.

Anna spoke to the man seated in the armchair. "Are you the owner of these premises?"

"Naw, Glesga council are the owners." He replied cheekily.

"Do you rent this property from the council?"

"Aye."

Anna handed him the warrant.

"Name and date of birth please?"

"Malky Taylor. I was born on the fourteenth a' March, nineteen eighty-nine."

While Anna took down the details, the other three detectives continued to search the premises bagging anything that could be used as evidence.

"Mr Laing, nice to see you again." Anna said cheerfully to the man standing passively watching the proceedings.

"Likewise, detective."

"May I have your name, date of birth and current address?"

Stuart Laing calmly provided the details Anna had asked for and she had to admit he was one cool customer.

"Will this take long, detective, I have a dentist's appointment later." He asked.

"I think you will be keeping your toothache a bit longer. I'm going to be arresting you."

"So it's a crime to visit a friend in Glasgow these days?"

"No, but it's a crime to be involved in the supply of heroin." Anna replied easily.

Milne poked her head around the door; "We have everything in the kitchen, Sarge. Scales, bags, cutting materials."

Anna nodded and informed Malcolm 'Malky' Taylor that he was under arrest for dealing in heroin and continued to read him his rights, before placing him in handcuffs.

"That's nothing to do with heroin, those are all household items, and it's merely a coincidence." Taylor protested.

"And the roll of notes we found stashed behind the kitchen cupboard?" Anna asked.

"My holiday fund."

"Looks like your next trip is going to be to Barlinnie, you'll not be needing your passport for that."

She turned her attention to Stuart Laing and informed him she was arresting him as well for the supply of heroin.

"You're making a mistake, detective." He said menacingly, his cracked front tooth adding to the effect.

Anna didn't let him affect her. "I don't think so. I know we will find your prints all over that bag of heroin."

"I picked it up for a look, wondering what it was, Malky here will testify to that." He claimed confidently.

"You can tell that to a court." Anna answered. The day's main objective was to shut down this supply route and any others that cropped up in its place. With the capture of Jim Wallace that route was already closed down for Lachlan Brown, and Anna knew he must be getting desperate for a new source of supply. She doubted he was actually doing much trading at the moment unless he had already found a new way of getting his drugs into the country. She hoped he was tearing his hair out and the problems were piling up for him.

Back at the station, Anna was updating Bruce Davidson on the events of that day.

"I don't suppose either of them have given up Lachlan Brown?" Bruce Davidson asked after the four detectives had spent the last few hours interviewing both suspects.

"Not a chance, Sir." Anna replied.

"Aww, well, wishful thinking I suppose." Davidson was philosophical; he didn't really expect either of them to say anything about Brown.

"There is a chance Stuart Laing could walk away from this." Anna cautioned.

"I know, but you made the right call going in while he was there, otherwise we were taking him alone and I want as many of these drug dens of Lachlan Brown's shut down as possible."

"Well we have him in and out of the flat on a regular basis, his fingerprints all over the bag of heroin, hopefully it's enough to convince a jury. We've charged them both and no doubt, tomorrow morning, they will make bail. I think we should keep an eye on Stuart Laing, he might lead us to another one of Brown's dealers." Anna suggested.

"Good idea, keep me posted."

"Will that all be all, Sir?"

"Aye, oh wait, one more thing, I'll need to see you and McGinty in my office first thing tomorrow morning."

"Yes, Sir." Anna replied, wondering what she and Pete needed to see him together for.

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Heather returned home from Glasgow on Thursday afternoon, the bus journey back was a lot quieter than the one going, the teenagers having finally worn themselves out. It had been a great success all round and everyone had enjoyed themselves. It was all Heather could have asked for and more. Then she thought about the two unexpected occurrences over the last few days. In truth it had been hard to get them out of her mind long enough to concentrate on her job.

Firstly, Anna had appeared back in her life. She could hardly keep the smile from her face at that thought. It was exciting and she couldn't wait to see her again. Then there was the prospect of meeting her brother in the near future. She could hardly believe that it was going to happen. She

didn't know when or where, and the mere thought of it filled her with the greatest anticipation served with a healthy dose of fear. Her stomach was filled with the strangest sensations of fluttering, accompanied with a sense of panic whenever she thought about the future meeting. Would she recognise her brother? What was he like after all he had been through? Would they get along? She couldn't stop the barrage of questions continually invading her mind, and one produced a feeling so intense she felt overwhelmed. What would her parents say?

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"What do you think this is about?" Pete asked Anna as they walked towards Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson's office.

Anna shrugged, "I've no idea, he never said."

"Must be to do with Jim Wallace, or something that happened when we were undercover." Pete guessed.

"Maybe."

Anna knocked on the open door of Davidson's office.

"Come in and close the door behind you."

Anna and Pete looked questioningly at each other before entering and Pete closed the door.

"Take a seat."

Bruce Davidson looked the two officers over with a critical eye to the point where they both began to feel uncomfortable.

"Well, it's official, the chief constable has approved your promotions. Congratulations Inspector Lynch and Sergeant McGinty."

Anna smiled and thanked her boss, while shaking his hand. Pete McGinty was almost speechless.

"Well done, Pete." Bruce Davidson shook his hand firmly.

"Thanks, Boss."

"Congratulations, Pete."

"Thanks, Anna, you too."

Davidson stood from his seat, "May as well let the rest of them know now."

The three officers left the office and stood in the main department.

"Listen up, everyone!" Bruce Davidson called for everyone's attention and he got it.

"I'd like to introduce you to Detective Inspector Anna Lynch and Detective Sergeant Peter McGinty."

There was applause and congratulations all round.

"First drink is on me in The Pitt tonight." Davidson declared.

There were more enthusiastic cheers for this than there was for the promotions Davidson had announced.

"Nothing like a free drink to get a response around here," Anna quipped.

"The pub will be mobbed," Pete added.

At six o'clock that evening, Pete's prophecy came true. The Pitt, a bar across the road from the police station, was full of the drug squad detectives; all ordering a free drink from their boss.

"I've obviously not been giving out enough overtime hours judging by how desperate everyone is for a free drink," Davidson grumped as he paid for yet another round of drinks.

Anna laughed at her Boss's complaint. "It's the credit crunch, Sir."

"Credit crunch, I'm not even sure that last officer works in the department!"

"Hi, Dad, I hear the drinks are on you?"

Anna tried not to roll her eyes. She should have guessed Angela Davidson would turn up at some point.

"Since when were you in the drug squad?"

"Not yet, Dad, but soon." Angela answered.

"What are you having?"

"A gin and tonic."

Bruce Davidson turned back to the barman and ordered a drink for his daughter.

"Congratulations, Pete." Angela kissed him gently on the cheek.

"Thanks, Angie."

Angela Davidson turned her attention to Anna. "Congratulations, Inspector Lynch."

Anna nodded, "Thank you, Angela."

Angela Davidson smiled politely at Anna, and then turned to collect her drink from her father. Anna sighed with relief and continued chatting to Mary Milne.

A short time later Bruce Davidson decided to head home, he was never one for staying out late drinking.

"Would you like a lift, Angela?" He asked his daughter.

"No thanks, Dad, I'm going to stay and celebrate a little longer with the detectives."

"See that you get home safely." He cautioned.

"I will, Dad, night."

"I wonder who she is sniffing around?" Pete remarked to Anna.

"Maybe it's you?" She joked.

Pete took a sip of his pint, "Naw, I've been there, she will be looking for a new conquest, besides, I'm not interested."

"Got your eye on someone else?"

Pete nodded towards Mary Milne. "Just my type, a redhead."

"Ack, Pete, she's a really nice lassie."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Pete frowned.

"Nothing, just, maybe you should ask her on a proper date instead of looking for a one night stand."

"And how do you know what I'm looking for?" He had a grin in his eye.

Anna shrugged. "I've never known you to have a serious girlfriend."

Pete shook his head. "You're going soft. She's a big girl, Anna, she can take care of herself."

Anna decided Pete had a point, why should it matter to her if he chats up Mary Milne? The young woman was old enough to make her own decisions.

"You're right." She raised her glass to him in toast.

"Oh, here comes trouble."

Anna turned to see Angela Davidson join them and she prayed it was Pete she was interested in.

"Which one of you lovely detectives is going to buy me a drink?" Angie was in full sex kitten mode; all that was missing was the pout.

"What are you having, Angela?" Pete asked.

"Gin and tonic please." She smiled.

Pete left the two women standing alone and went to the bar.

"Well, well, Inspector, you're looking as gorgeous as ever." she husked, running her finger up Anna's forearm. "I was thinking we could leave this place and have our own private celebration? I would like to congratulate you in my own special way." Angela Davidson brushed her hand across Anna's breast as she leaned in to kiss her on the cheek. "What do you say?"

Anna smiled politely, but only because this was her boss's daughter. "I've told you before, Angela, your dad would kill me."

"He doesn't have to know." She batted her eyes for effect.

"I'm not going to take that risk." Anna said.

"You don't know what you're missing." Angela wasn't quite ready to give up.

"I'll just have to get over that."

Anna remained resolute, much to Angela Davidson's annoyance.

Pete returned with Angela's gin and tonic.

"Thanks, Pete." She turned to Anna, "Think about what I said, and my offer remains open."

The two detectives watched Angela Davidson walk back to the table she had been sitting at.

"Did she?"

"Yeah, but I'm not interested." Anna told Pete.

"Why not? She's good in bed." Pete leaned closer to Anna, "*Really* good in bed."

Anna shook her head, "Like you, I'm interested in someone else."

Pete took a step back. "Are you after Milne too?"

"Don't be daft." Anna quipped.

"Then who? Do I know them?"

"Actually you do." Anna smiled.

"You still pining for the little blonde up in Havensburgh? I thought she wanted nothing to do with you?" Pete questioned.

"She changed her mind."

"You're seeing her?" Pete was surprised.

Anna nodded, "I am."

Pete smiled. "I'm happy for you."

"Thanks."

"So...have you? You know?" Pete raised his eyebrows up and down.

Anna frowned, "Do you want a kick in the balls, McGinty?"

Pete laughed and spread his palms. "Keep your hair on, Anna, I'm only joking."

"You better be." She cautioned.

"I am, Heather is a really lovely, genuine person." He said, in a more serious tone.

Anna nodded, "That she is."

A short time later Anna left the bar to head home. She had drunk five vodka and cokes and was in no fit state to drive. She decided to walk to the nearest take-away for a pizza and then grab a cab home.

With her Pepperoni feast sitting on her lap, Anna instructed the cab driver to take her to the

Merchant City. She resisted the urge to open her pizza during the five-minute journey, the cab drivers usually protested loudly if you ate in their cabs. She paid him and thanked him with a five-pound tip, then walked the short distance to her city centre apartment, looking forward to eating her pizza. As she took her flat keys from her jacket pocket she didn't see the figure lurking in the shadows, walking quickly towards her. She hit the ground before her key reached the panel of the stair door.

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER TWENTY NINE**

Pete McGinty moved as quickly as his healing leg would allow him. Ever since the call from his boss he had been frantic. Now he was swiftly making his way to the Intensive care unit of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. The lift wasn't moving quickly enough for his liking and he was cursing it. '*C'mon, c'mon.*' As soon as the doors opened he was off again, his leg screaming in agony, but Pete was too focussed to pay it proper attention.

"Boss?"

Bruce Davidson was standing in the corridor shouting into his mobile phone.

"I don't bloody care! Get me the CCTV footage now!"

Pete stood rooted to the spot with fear.

Bruce Davidson noticed his chalk white appearance and understood immediately what Pete wanted to know.

"No change, I'm trying to get these bloody arseholes in uniform to get moving on this straight

away."

Pete sighed with sheer relief. He looked for the nearest available seat, he was now realising just how bad the pain in his thigh was. He rubbed the sweat from his forehead.

"What happened?"

"Someone has clobbered Anna with a blunt instrument and she is unconscious. That's all we know for certain."

"Any witnesses?"

"A guy who lives in her building, but it was too dark for him to be able to give a good description. As he opened the stairwell door to leave the apartment block, he saw the suspect strike Anna with something. He shouted and the doer ran off. He probably saved Anna from another blow. Guy's a Doctor of all things, called for an ambulance and started treating her straight away."

"Thank God for that."

"Aye."

Milne arrived at that moment to join the two men. She had been parking her car after dropping Pete off at the hospital entrance.

"How is she?" asked the young detective.

"Unconscious, no change since she was brought in."

"Have her family been told?" Milne asked Detective Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson.

"Aye, I rang her parents. They're down in Melrose so will be a wee while yet. Lesley Hamilton is making her way here too. Is there anyone else that you know of?"

Pete looked at his boss as his words registered. "Jesus, aye there is." Pete pushed his hair back from his forehead. Someone would have to tell Heather Keith.

Davidson was waiting on his reply, but got impatient. "Well, who?"

Pete thought quickly of his options. "Is Anna's mobile here?"

"Of course, I used it to call her family."

Bruce Davidson handed the mobile phone to Pete, who quickly searched the contact's list. He found Heather's number.

"I'll make the call, Boss."

Davidson nodded and Pete walked down the hall for some privacy.

He checked his watch; it was just after eleven p.m. so, hopefully Heather would be home. He rang the number.

"*Hello?*" said the distinctly male voice on the other end of the phone.

"Hi, can I speak to Heather please?"

"*Who's calling?*"

"Eh, Pete McGinty."

"*Hang on.*"

Pete listened to the garbled conversation going on at the other end of the phone.

"*Hello?*"

"Heather, it's Pete McGinty, the officer who worked with Anna."

"*Oh, is there something I can help you with?*"

Pete hated these conversations and rarely had them since moving to the drug unit almost four years ago.

"Heather, Anna is in hospital, she's taken a blow to the head. Someone hit her."

"*What! Is she going to be okay?*"

"I don't know yet, she's unconscious, that's all we know right now."

"*Which hospital?*"

"Glasgow Royal Infirmary, intensive care."

"*I'm on my way.*"

The phone was disconnected before Pete could reply and tell Heather to drive safely. He walked back to join the others. The group now included two other detectives within whose jurisdiction the crime came under.

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Heather ended the call to Pete and stood in shock.

"Is everything alright?" Greg asked.

His question brought Heather back to reality. She had to get to Glasgow. "I have to go."

Greg looked disbelievingly at her. "Where on earth to at this hour?"

"A friend needs me."

Greg became suspicious. "Who is Pete McGinty?"

"The policeman who was here with Anna, Pete Thompson." Heather began to gather herself and started looking for her car keys.

"Why is he calling you here? And where are you going?" Greg was standing right in front of Heather, effectively blocking her path. "What's is going on here!"

"Anna has been attacked, I'm going to Glasgow to be with her."

Greg was utterly confused with this situation, not comprehending why Heather would be going to see the detective.

"Why would you do that?"

"Because we are friends, Greg." Heather stated impatiently.

"After all that she has done to us, you are friends?" The disbelief was evident in his voice.

Heather shook her head, "I'm sorry, Greg, I really have to go."

"Why?" His question was simply worded, but it held so much depth.

"Because, I love her..." Heather started to cry, "I'm sorry, I know you can't understand right now, but I have to be with her."

Greg stood in stunned silence for a few moments; he certainly hadn't expected to hear that.

"Come on." He took the car keys from Heather's trembling hands, "You're in no fit state to drive, I'll take you."

"Greg, you don't have to." Heather was more than surprised by his magnanimous gesture.

"Let me drive you," he said sincerely, looking directly into Heather's eyes.

The blonde nodded as she wiped away her tears. "Thank you."

Greg hugged her briefly then guided her towards the car.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Yes, we are treating this as attempted murder, I promise you we will put all the resources we have into finding whoever is responsible for this."

"You bloody better, Paton." Davidson said to the Detective Inspector in charge.

"Who do you think might have done this?" Paton asked.

Milne, McGinty and Davidson all looked at each other, while Lesley Hamilton wondered what was going on with the three of them.

"You must be able to come up with some names." Lesley declared, frustrated at their lack of response to the question.

"Okay, okay. The obvious name would be Lachlan Brown and anyone associated with him." Davidson stated.

The two detectives shared a glance.

"I know," Davidson replied. "But that's her most recent case. Anything else goes back a good while now. The Lachlan Brown thing is more complicated than just looking at him."

"What do you mean?" Paton asked.

"We've also got a dirty cop involved, Mark McLaren. I also can't rule out the possibility that there could be another."

"So where do you suggest we start?" Paton asked.

"Stuart Laing. She arrested him just yesterday, he's out on bail." He looked to Milne, "What was the other one's name?"

"Malcolm Taylor."

"Yeah, him too. Get them to account for their whereabouts. Get the CCTV footage. Just find this bastard." Davidson finished forcefully.

"We will." Paton promised.

"I want to be involved in the investigation." Pete declared.

"Me too." Added Milne.

"Sorry, no, we'll keep you in the loop, but that's all, you can't join the investigation." Paton replied.

"The bloody hell you will, I'm coming with you." Pete added and voices were raised.

"Chief Inspector Davidson, with all due respect, this is what we do. We don't come around getting involved in your cases." Paton appealed to Davidson.

He nodded, "Milne, McGinty, back off."

"Boss!" Pete shouted.

"I said back off!"

Lesley Hamilton had heard enough and went in search of a doctor for an update.

Paton and Thorburn left the hospital to begin their search.

"This is wrong, Boss, we should be involved in this." Pete argued.

"And we will, Pete, but we don't want them to know that, so keep your knickers on. We've told them what they want to hear, now we do what we think is right."

"Thanks, Boss."

"Lesley, any news?" Davidson asked.

She shook her head, "Still no change."

Everyone took a seat in the waiting room. Milne interrupted the silence that had descended amongst them. "Does anyone want coffee, tea, something to eat?"

"That's a good idea, Milne. I'll have a coffee, anything for you, Lesley?" Davidson asked.

"Tea for me, milk no sugar."

"I'll give you a hand with that, Mary." Pete offered.

"It's okay, you sit down and rest your leg, I'll manage."

The three police officers sat again in silence in the waiting room.

"How long till her parents get here?" Lesley asked.

Davidson looked at his watch. "I called them as soon as I heard, that was almost two hours ago."

Lesley calculated the journey, which meant Anna's parents should be here within the hour; they would have left as quickly as possible. She wondered if Liam would be with them, more than likely.

\*\*\*\*\*

Heather and Greg sat in silence as the car hurtled along the motorway, her thoughts constantly on Anna. Heather knew police work came with added dangers, but it was highly unusual for officers to be seriously hurt. Now in the space of a few weeks, Pete had been shot and Anna was, at that very moment, lying unconscious in a hospital bed.

"How long?" Greg's deep voice broke through the silence.

Heather stared at him, confused by the question. "Huh?"

Greg glanced briefly at her. "How long have you and Anna, you know?"

"Oh, I see." She took a moment to gather her thoughts, "Not long, Greg. We only reconciled our differences on Monday when I was in Glasgow."

"But you love her?"

Heather nodded, "Yes, I do. I've had feelings for her for a long time now."

Greg's jaw clenched, but he remained focussed on the road ahead. Heather could literally see the thoughts running through his head and decided that Greg deserved the whole truth.

"Anna isn't the reason we broke up."

"No?"

"No, Greg," Heather replied gently.

"You said you had feelings for her for a long time, we were together not that long ago."

"I know. I was never unfaithful to you and this is the first time I've ever had feelings for another woman. Please don't think I was interested in other women while I was with you. Anna is the first. Before you, I only ever kissed one other boy, Greg. That was it."

"Were you with her while she was here?"

Heather understood why Greg wanted to know all the details. She wasn't comfortable revealing them all, but she would.

"No, I wasn't. I did fall for her while I thought she was Anna Thompson but, at that time, I believed she was married to Pete. I never would have acted upon my feelings. Then she came to me the morning after Jim Wallace was arrested. I still didn't know the real truth about who she was. She was injured and I was concerned about her, somehow we ended up kissing. Then I found out her true identity and felt betrayed. I didn't want to see her after that, or at least, not at that time. I would never have cheated on you, Greg. We came to an end for completely different reasons."

Greg nodded, "I know, Heather, I believe you."

"Thank you."

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"Where's Anna?" Asked a frantic Fay Lynch.

Lesley Hamilton went directly to her. "Come with me, Fay, she's just down the corridor." Lesley took Fay Lynch by the hand and led her to the room that held the prone body of her daughter.

As they entered a nurse moved from the side of Anna's bed after having made some adjustments to one of the monitors.

"Oh, Anna." Fay Lynch gasped at the first glimpse of her daughter's unconscious form. She took a seat at Anna's bedside and clasped her daughter's unresponsive hand between her own.

Brendan Lynch watched his wife and daughter from just inside the door. He would give his wife some time alone with Anna before he took his own turn to sit with his daughter. Meanwhile Liam Lynch was outside the room in the corridor talking with Lesley Hamilton.

"What happened?"

"All we know is that someone hit Anna on the back of the head. A neighbour of Anna's was coming out of the stairwell just as it happened. He disturbed the suspect who ran off. It was dark

and he didn't really get a good look at the person. Anna has been unconscious since the blow. The doctors are running tests."

"Who would do this?" Liam asked, bewildered.

Lesley shook her head. "Anna has been involved in shutting down the operations of a notorious Glaswegian drug baron. Obviously, he is high up on the list of suspects, but at this point in time we can't rule out the possibility that it was just a random attack. Anna might simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"But you don't think so?" Liam questioned.

"I can't be certain, but it's more than likely the suspect specifically targeted her."

"So what's being done to catch them?"

"Inspector Paul Paton is heading up the investigation, he is very experienced. He was in here earlier talking to Anna's boss and colleagues. Her boss, Chief Inspector Davidson, will hound them all the way until they get a result. He has hardly been off the phone since he got here, chasing up the uniformed division to interview any potential witnesses and to get a hold of any available CCTV footage."

Liam nodded, "Okay."

Lesley hugged him, "I'm so sorry this has happened. I'm sure she will be okay," Lesley stated, and then whispered, "She has to be."

"God, I hope so, Lesley, I can't even begin to think about anything else."

Lesley released her hold on Liam, "How are your mum and dad?"

"Mum's very upset and dad has hardly said a word since we got the news." He looked straight at Lesley, "If Anna doesn't make a full recovery, I will kill whoever did this."

Lesley wasn't surprised by his words. Emotions were running high and he was angry because someone had seriously injured his sister.

"We'll get whoever is responsible, Liam. I know you are angry right now, but you have to be strong and calm for your parents. You've also got a wife and kids to think about. You need to keep your cool and let us do our job." Lesley cautioned.

Liam took a deep breath, he was trained to control and channel his aggression on a rugby pitch, but this situation was completely new to him. Someone had harmed a member of his family and, at that moment, all he wanted was revenge.

"Come and have a seat in the waiting room, you can go in and see Anna in a few minutes."

Lesley suggested to the powerfully built man. He nodded and Lesley led him to the waiting room. There she introduced him to Bruce Davidson, Pete McGinty and Mary Milne.

"Hi Liam, I wish I were meeting you under different circumstances," said Bruce Davidson.

"Likewise." Liam shook hands with the three detectives then took a seat. "Have the doctors said anything yet?"

"Only that there's been no change in Anna's condition since she was brought in." Bruce Davidson replied.

Another hour had passed and there was still no change. Liam sat forward in his chair unable to relax. His elbows were resting on his thighs while his left hand rubbed agitatedly at the stubble on his face. He was deep in pensive thought after having spent some time alone with Anna in her hospital room, when Detective Inspector Paton and Detective Sergeant Thorburn returned.

"Any leads?" McGinty asked.

Paton replied to the question, "Nothing at the moment. We are back to interview the parents; they might be able to provide us with something. I want to talk to them about Anna's personal life.

Hamilton and McGinty caught each other's eye and Paton didn't miss the exchange.

"If either of you know something I want to hear it."

Pete deflected his enquiry, "Her personal life is sound."

Lesley chewed her bottom lip, she wasn't sure what Pete really knew about Anna's personal life and was debating with herself just what she should and shouldn't divulge to Paton.

Pete, who was sitting just inside the waiting room, saw Heather walking along the corridor towards them. He left the room to intercept her and Paton seized the opportunity to talk with Lesley.

"If you know something that could be important to this case, we need to hear it."

Lesley looked to Bruce Davidson as she considered her options.

"Tell him anything you think could be important, Lesley. We want to get this bastard."

"It could be nothing, but Anna has recently started seeing someone."

"Who?" Paton enquired, when Lesley hesitated.

"A woman." Lesley had no idea if Bruce Davidson was aware of Anna's sexuality, but with Heather on her way, he would probably have a good idea soon anyway.

Davidson frowned, not seeing the need for this information. "And this is important how?"

Lesley cleared her throat. "Ahem, this woman had a fiancé, they split up, so maybe he hasn't taken the news too well."

"Christ!" Brian Thorburn exclaimed, speaking for the first time. "Now we could be looking for a homicidal ex fiancé or a jilted lesbian lover from the past. You could have mentioned earlier that she is a carpet muncher."

The next thing Brian Thorburn was aware of were his feet dangling above the floor as the powerfully built man who had been sitting quietly was now staring angrily into his face as he held him by his jacket lapels and pinned him against the wall.

"Jesus, get him off me!"

"Don't you *ever* talk about my sister like that again!" Liam Lynch hissed through clenched teeth.

Paton and Davidson were trying to get Liam to release his vice like grip on the terrified Thorburn, but they were having a hard time of it. The ex rugby player was strong and, in the circumstances, they were reluctant to use any excessive force.

"Come on, Liam, let him go." Davidson urged while attempting fruitlessly to free Thorburn.

Meanwhile out in the corridor Pete was talking to Heather.

"Hi, Heather, how are you?" He hugged the blonde briefly.

"I'm okay, Pete, how is Anna?"

"Still no change."

"Can I see her?"

Pete nodded, "Sure, third door along on the left, her parents are in there at the moment, but they won't mind you going in."

"Thanks, Pete."

Heather walked towards the room and Pete turned his attention to the man who had accompanied her. "Hi, Greg, how are you doing, mate?" he asked cautiously.

"Not bad, Pete, how's the leg?"

"It's getting better."

Greg nodded and an awkward silence descended upon the two men.

"Look I'm sorry about everything that happened, no hard feelings, eh?" Pete offered his hand to Greg, who hesitated briefly before shaking it.

"Sure, no hard feelings."

Pete was relieved. "So how are things going for you?"

"Not too bad. Heather has been terrific helping me sort out the financial problems I got myself into."

Pete raised his eyebrows wondering just what was going on. Greg seemed to pick up on his confusion.

"I drove Heather down because she was in no fit state to drive herself. She's been there for me these last few weeks so I thought it was the least I could in the circumstances." He shrugged.

"That's really good of you, you know, after everything."

Greg motioned his head towards Anna's room, "Heather says she loves her."

Pete felt himself relax a little now that the elephant in the room was out in the open. "Yeah, sorry about that, mate."

Greg shook his head. "I'd already lost her, even before, you know, the two of them."

Pete nodded, "Right, right."

The two men looked up as they heard raised voices coming from the waiting room. Pete stared slack jawed at the sight of Liam Lynch effortlessly holding Brian Thorburn in the air, while Davidson and Paton attempted to get him to release the smaller man.

Pete turned back to Greg Moir, "That's Anna's older brother, Thorburn must have said something he didn't like."

"Christ, the strength of him." Greg remarked.

Pete nodded, "Come on, we better give them a hand to save the poor bastard."

Lesley Hamilton watched the fracas from her seat in the waiting room, she made no attempt to assist Brian Thorburn, she decided the little weed deserved it. She looked on as Pete McGinty

and another man came to help and finally, the four of them managed to free him from the powerful grip of Liam Lynch.

A ruffled and embarrassed Thorburn stood shakily back on solid ground. He pointed at Liam Lynch. "You're a maniac! I could have you arrested for assaulting a police officer!"

"Shut up, Thorburn, you insulted the man's sister." Paul Paton stated.

"Let's all calm down here." Davidson suggested. He looked at the new face in the room waiting for an introduction, which Pete dutifully supplied.

"This is Greg Moir."

"Are you a friend of Anna's?" Davidson asked.

Greg didn't know how to answer that question, so instead chose to explain his reason for being there. "I drove Heather down from Havensburgh."

Bruce Davidson looked sharply at Pete McGinty, wondering just what the hell two residents from Havensburgh were doing turning up at Anna's hospital bed.

"A word, Pete." He said tersely.

Pete followed Davidson to a quiet spot along the corridor where they would not be overheard.

"Do you want to explain to me what's going on here?" Davidson didn't take his eyes off McGinty for one second, he wanted the truth.

"Okay, Boss. Heather is Anna's girlfriend and Greg is Heather's ex fiancé."

"The same Greg Moir who was a suspect during your investigation?" Davidson asked in a deceptively mild tone.

"Aye, Boss." Pete cringed as he answered.

"Bloody hell!" Davidson hissed. "I don't believe this!" He whispered harshly, "Just what the hell were you two playing at up there? Bloody holiday romances! This is taking undercover to a whole new level!"

Pete appealed to Davidson on Anna's behalf. "It's not what it looks like, Boss."

"Oh, it's not? So Anna isn't dating the ex fiancée of a man she once suspected of smuggling drugs into the country?" Davidson held up a finger, "I tell you this, when Lynch awakens up from her beauty sleep she has some explaining to do!"

Pete blinked and said nothing.

"It clears up one thing though."

Pete was afraid to ask, but went ahead. "What's that, boss?"

"Hamilton just put Greg Moir in the frame as a possible suspect, but he could hardly be clobbering Lynch over the back of the head when he was sitting up in Havensburgh!"

Davidson stormed off back to the waiting room and Pete rested his head against the cold concrete wall and closed his eyes.

"Shit," he mumbled. This night was going from bad to worse. The day had started out so well. He had been promoted, had a few drinks, then talked Mary Milne into joining him at his flat for a coffee. Before he made a move on her, the call came from Davidson about Anna. Now Davidson knew Heather's true identity, and if Anna hadn't been assaulted, Davidson would never have been any the wiser. "Shit."

Heather entered the quiet room. Inside were a man and woman whom she knew to be Anna's parents. She couldn't stop the tears springing to her eyes as she caught her first glimpse of the woman she loved lying motionless on the hospital bed.

The man, who looked to be in his early sixties, spoke to her, while the woman glanced briefly in her direction before continuing to hold Anna's hand and gaze worriedly at her daughter.

"Are you a friend of Anna's?" he asked softly, his Irish accent very apparent despite his many years in Scotland.

"Heather nodded, "Yes, I came as soon as I heard."

Brendan Lynch introduced himself and his wife to Heather and shook her hand.

"I'm Heather Keith, I met Anna this summer."

Liam had informed his parents on the journey up to Glasgow that there may be someone special in Anna's life. Brendan Lynch instinctively knew that this was the girl.

"Fay, let's give Heather some time alone with Anna," he suggested gently to his wife. There was an unspoken communication between the two and soon Heather found herself alone with Anna.

Sitting in the chair Fay Lynch had just vacated, Heather spoke softly to Anna. "Hey, you." She took Anna's hand and caressed the back of it with her thumb. Looking over every inch of Anna's long frame, she willed a part of it to move. Anna looked so utterly peaceful. "So beautiful," Heather whispered as she ran a finger across a high cheekbone.

Heather left Anna when a doctor came in to assess her and returned to the waiting room. It was now a lot emptier than when she arrived. She recognised Anna's parents but had no idea who the other two occupants were.

"Heather, come and sit yourself down," Brendan Lynch suggested.

Heather already liked him a lot just from their brief interaction.

"Thank you, Mr. Lynch. There is a doctor in assessing Anna at the moment."

A tall broad man with dark hair walked towards her.

"I'm Liam, Anna's brother."

Heather's hand was engulfed in his, but his handshake was gentle. Even if Heather didn't know he was a rugby player, she would have guessed from looking at him.

"Nice to meet you, Liam."

The other occupant in the room greeted Heather.

"I'm Lesley Hamilton, a friend of Anna's."

"Hi Lesley."

"Greg has gone in search of something to eat."

Heather nodded, she wasn't quite sure what to say in this room full of strangers, so she sat quietly, hoping for some good news about Anna.

The Neurologist who had assessed Anna popped his head into the waiting room.

"Are you the family of Anna Lynch?"

There was a chorused reply of 'yes'.

"Anna remains in a deep coma, there is still no change in her condition. There is some swelling around the brain, but the good news is that her skull is intact and we don't need to operate. That may change depending on how Anna does over the next twenty-four hours. I'll be back to check on her later and will let you know of any change."

"Thank you, Doctor." said Brendan Lynch.

Fay Lynch stood up, "I'm going to sit with Anna."

"Would you like anything to eat or drink, Fay?"

"No thanks, Brendan, I couldn't stomach anything right now." She used a hanky to dab at her tears.

Brendan hugged his wife then turned his attention to the rest of the room. "What about you Lesley, Heather, are either of you hungry?"

"No thanks, Brendan."

"No thank you, Mr. Lynch."

"I'm going to stretch my legs for a bit, I'll be gone about a half hour, Call me on my mobile, Fay, if there's any change."

"Of course, Brendan."

Brendan Lynch stood to leave and Fay was already heading to Anna's room.

"I'll come with you, Dad."

With the two Lynch men gone, Heather found herself alone with Lesley Hamilton.

"How are you holding up, Heather?"

"I'm okay, thanks, very worried."

"Anna's made of tough stuff, I'm sure she will pull through."

"How do you know her?"

"We started in the police force at the same time. We've been friends for more than sixteen years now."

"I see, I ah, I've only known Anna since June this year. We, ah, have become friends."

"You don't need to explain to me, Heather. Anna has told me all about you."

Heather was relieved to hear this. She was feeling awkward and out of place amongst these people, like she didn't quite belong.

"What about Anna's family?"

"They know that you are special to Anna."

Heather nodded, that was all she needed to know for now.

"You are you know." Lesley Hamilton said, "Special to her. Anna was really down when she returned from her undercover operation. She told me what had happened and how much she regretted hurting you. She was really affected by you and the village in general."

"I know. I'm just so thankful we reconciled our differences. She means so much to me and I've hardly even had a chance to really spend time with her."

Lesley lay her hand on top of Heather's. "She will be fine."

"I've never met anyone like her, so strong and brave."

Lesley had to agree; she had seen those qualities first hand. "That she is, I owe her my life."

"Really?"

Lesley smiled, "Yes." She took a deep breath before continuing. "We had been cadets together, and then we worked in the same uniform division when we finished our probation period. Anna looked stunning in her uniform, not like the scruffy stuff she has on almost every day working in the drug squad. Most of the time that lot are scruffier than the people they arrest."

The two women shared a light giggle before Lesley continued.

"There was one night in particular, we had been on the force about two years..."

*WPC Lesley Hamilton and her partner PC Nick Fallon exited the police panda car and headed for the maze of concrete buildings that made up the Drumchapel housing estate. They were answering a call that had come over the radio. A tenant had returned home and disturbed two burglars on her premises. It was unlikely that they would find the suspects. They would be long gone. Escaping easily through the many interconnecting vennels that made up the larger concrete network of drudgery that was Drumchapel. Most likely, thought Lesley idly, their suspects were already sitting at home, with their feet up, watching the telly they had pinched.*

*The two made their way on foot deeper into the estate. The air was damp and cold and Lesley could see her breath clearly with each exhale. Her black waterproof jacket was doing its job on her upper body, but her trousers were no match for the January chill.*

*Suddenly there was a noise from somewhere ahead of them and the two officers hastened to investigate its source. Two figures clad in dark clothing jumped out from behind a skip and started running towards one of the blocks of flats. Lesley and Nick pursued them and, when the runners spilt up, the officers did too.*

*Lesley found herself running down a narrow alley, grateful for her Doc Marten Gibson shoes, which allowed her to run quickly. She moved rapidly down a set of steps and was suddenly cast into darkness. She reached for her torch, which hung from her equipment belt. Finding the on*

*switch, she shone the torch ahead of her to get her bearings. She found herself in one of the many underground storage rooms. It was cast in darkness due to the overhead lights having been smashed. She moved carefully forward, avoiding the rubbish and large pieces of furniture and electrical appliances that had been dumped there. The air smelled putrid, a mixture of rotting food and stale urine.*

*Lesley's heart beat a little faster as she ventured farther into the dark space. She heard a noise to her left and swung her torch in that direction. She flicked her police baton out to extend to its full length and cautiously approached the area. She noticed an old brown, faux leather sofa, nestled near the back wall. Used glue bags strewn around it, testament to one of the favourite pastimes of some of the local youth. Lesley shone her torch behind the sofa and jumped back as a cat hissed its disapproval at her intrusion. Breathing a heavy sigh of relief, she reached again to her utility belt for her radio. Pressing the button she attempted to contact Nick, but all she got was static. She cursed as she remembered that the reception in these basements was often greatly reduced. Lifting her jacket to put her radio back in her belt she froze as she felt a hand cover her mouth. Then she felt the unmistakable press of the cold steel against her throat.*

*"Well lookie here."*

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*Nick Fallon was frantic. He had lost the suspect he had been chasing and now he couldn't contact his colleague on the radio. He made the decision to radio in his location and request assistance to help look for her. After making the call, he continued to search furiously for Lesley Hamilton.*

*WPC Anna Lynch heard the call come over the radio and immediately put on the flashing lights of the panda car she was driving. As she screeched to a halt on one of the roads into the estate, she took off on foot to find her missing colleague and friend. She came across a pale looking Nick Fallon who breathlessly explained what he could to Anna.*

*"She could be underground." Anna stated. "If her radio isn't working that's a possibility!" She took off, leaving a stunned Nick behind her.*

*Anna entered the dark space cautiously. She didn't put her torch on and listened intently for any sign of life. She thought she heard the scraping of feet over concrete, then a muffled voice. She didn't hesitate, flicking on her torch she moved quickly forward. As she turned a corner, she could see two bodies on the ground, one on top of the other. Another person was crouched at the head of them, his back towards her. Anna didn't even stop to think about it, she ran straight towards them. Reaching them just as the crouching figure began to turn. She tackled him full on, bringing him down hard onto the concrete floor and rolling on top of him.*

*"Get the fucking bitch off me!" He screamed.*

*Anna smacked him in the head with her torch, but before she could get in a finishing blow he landed what felt like a heavy punch to her back. Anna rolled with it and got to her feet, turning to face her assailant who was now standing. He came at her again, but this time she was ready. He ran at her and she spun him then propelled him back into the wall. Anna brought her fist up hard under his chin. She didn't stop to watch him slump boneless down the wall. She was already turning to the second man. The sight of him fumbling to pull up his zipper sparked a reaction deep within Anna. With a flurry of movement and a roar of rage, she had him on his back on the concrete as she attempted to squeeze his neck while pounding his head against the cold, hard ground.*

*"Anna, stop. Please stop." Lesley had managed to crawl over to where Anna was. She put her hands onto her friend's shoulders.*

*"Anna, you have to stop. Please, Anna." Anna froze as Lesley's voice finally managed to penetrate her hate filled mind. She turned her gaze on Lesley; momentarily unable to comprehend why she was there. Suddenly she snapped out of it and got up from the figure lying prone beneath her.*

*She bent towards her friend, quickly taking in her bruised and bloody features.*

*"Oh, God, Lesley."*

*Lesley sobbed in reply. "I don't want anyone to know. Please, Anna."*

*"Shhh, I promise you, no one will know." Anna soothed.*

*Anna assessed the situation quickly. She took in Lesley's dishevelled appearance and made a decision she hoped was the right one. She removed her own black trousers and underwear and helped her friend to put them on instead. Stuffing Lesley's torn underwear into her coat pocket, she then tied her shoes up for her, wincing at the sharp pain she felt in her side as she did so. Anna herself, then put on Lesley's trousers, which were a little short, but she doubted anyone would notice.*

*Grabbing her handcuffs from her belt, and Lesley's from hers, she quickly cuffed both the still unconscious suspects.*

*"I'll be right back. I'm just going to radio for an ambulance."*

*It was only when the ambulance and backup arrived that the true extent of the injuries was revealed. Anna had been slashed down her side, but one of the suspects had a six-inch blade embedded in his abdomen. He died on route to the hospital.*

Lesley finished talking and looked at Heather. She hadn't revealed every detail to the younger

woman. The rape would remain forever secret between herself and Anna, as would Anna's loss of control. "The knife must have ended up in the suspect's stomach during the scuffle."

"Oh my goodness." Heather declared. "What happened to Anna after that?"

"She was shaken up, we both were and obviously there was an internal investigation into the death, but Anna was exonerated of any blame."

Lesley frowned as she considered that incident, then found herself staring wide-eyed at Heather. "Oh my God!"

"What? What's wrong?"

"I'll be right back."

## **CHAPTER THIRTY**

Pete walked into the room that held the desks of his colleagues. He felt rough, not having slept well and his concern for Anna's wellbeing was evident. He was greeted with a few nods and mumbled "good mornings". Pete wandered over to the coffee machine in desperate need of an injection of caffeine; Raouf Danesh met him there.

"How is Anna, Pete?" he enquired respectfully.

Pete let out a slow breath, attempting to ease some of the tension from his body. "She's still unconscious, the next twenty-four hours are critical. If she hadn't been treated so quickly..." He trailed off, unable to complete the sentence.

Raouf gave a sympathetic nod.

"Any leads?" Asked Drew Jackson, looking up from where he was sitting. A Sergeant in his mid forties, his developing gut and ruddy complexion were already showing the wear on his body.

"No, nothing yet. Looking into Lachlan Brown as a possibility."

"Maybe we should start checking out her ex-girlfriend's, eh?" Jackson joked.

Pete moved so quickly, that Drew never saw it coming, until he found himself pinned to the wall still in his chair, with Pete McGinty's strong hands holding tight to a fistful of his leather jacket. Drew started clawing ineffectually at Pete's hands, while attempting to draw in enough air.

"You think that's funny? Anna's lying in the hospital in a coma and you want to crack jokes?" The spittle flew from Pete's mouth with the combination of anger and frustration he felt in that moment.

The other detectives in the room were reacting to the turn of events and helping to prise Pete from the oxygen deprived Drew Jackson. The room was silent for a few moments as Pete sought to compose himself and Jackson gulped air into his lungs.

"Jesus Christ, man. I was just making a joke!" He declared indignantly.

Pete glared at him, "One of your own has been seriously assaulted, if that means nothing to you, then maybe you had better leave this job."

Drew Jackson gave Pete a strange look; "You were making comments like that everyday before you went off on your little husband and wife undercover operation."

Pete got right up in his face and Jackson flinched. "Things change. If I had my pick of people to work with, Anna Lynch would be my first choice every time." Pete stared at him a moment longer, "Just remember, I only ever joked to Anna's face, not while she is lying unconscious in a hospital bed."

"Right, take it easy, was just a daft wee joke. I never meant anything by it."

Pete's anger eased. "I know, look I'm sorry, Drew, I'm just a bit on edge."

"No need to apologise, I was out of line. Just trying to make light of it, is there anything I can do to help?"

"I'm just waiting on the Chief Inspector to arrive back, see what he wants done."

"We'll get the bastard." Jackson declared.

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The loud banging on the front door of his penthouse woke Lachlan Brown from his slumber. He looked at the blonde lying next to him, still sleeping off the excesses of the previous night; she hadn't even stirred despite the racket downstairs. He rolled away in disgust; in the cold light of day he just wanted her gone. As soon as he got rid of whoever was at the door, he would have one of his men drop her wherever she wanted to go. His mobile was now ringing and he picked it up.

"Hello?"

*"It's the police at the door, boss. They wouldn't wait until I rang you."*

"Tell them I'm on my way down."

Lachlan Brown stood, naked, from his bed and quickly pulled on a pair of trousers, efficiently zipping and buttoning them as he walked to his door.

"Alright, I'm coming."

The banging on the door continued until he opened it.

"About bloody time!"

"Chief Inspector Davidson, good morning."

"I want a word with you."

Brown stood at his door and waited.

"Can I come in?" he asked impatiently.

"That depends. Do I need a lawyer?"

"Off the record."

Brown stood aside to allow the policeman access to his home.

"Still living in the lap of luxury I see." Davidson remarked, as he took in the opulent surroundings.

"I'll give you the number of my interior designer. Can we get on with this?"

"One of my officers has been seriously hurt, she's lying in a coma in the Royal Infirmary."

Brown shrugged, his hands in his pockets. "How is this any of my concern?"

"Because I think you had her put there!"

Brown shook his head, "Nothing to do with me." He walked towards his kitchen and started the coffee machine.

Davidson followed, "I think you had one of your henchmen do the deed."

Lachlan Brown turned to face Davidson. "You're barking up the wrong tree."

"How's that?"

Brown studied Davidson for a moment. "You said off the record right?"

"I did, so let's hear it."

"This isn't personal for me. I understand the police have a job to do and I have no problems with them doing it."

"Rubbish! You are responsible for violence all across this city!"

"You're missing the point. Going after a police officer isn't my style. There are plenty more of you. Don't mistake me for you."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Davidson watched as Lachlan Brown put two coffee cups on his marble worktop.

"You made this personal and because of that you're always missing the point. That was your biggest mistake."

"It's my job to put you behind bars."

Brown knew that whatever he said was hypothetical and off the record. He wasn't under caution and he was standing in his own home.

"You get rid of me and you think you are solving a problem, but more will just step up and take my place. You're being shortsighted, thinking you can cut off the supply and the demand will disappear. People like me only exist because of the demand. The answer to the problem doesn't lie with getting rid of people like me."

"No? Then where does the answer lie?"

Brown shrugged, "Why do people use drugs? Maybe to escape shitty lives, maybe to block out some terrible event they can't cope with. Whatever the reason, these people are always looking for a means of escape and, until a viable alternative to drug misuse is found, you will be forever pissing your budget up against a wall and chasing your tail."

"So now you're a philosopher with all the answers, as well as a drug lord?" Davidson hissed.

"Better the devil you know, Inspector. You should think about who could be replacing me. Like I said, it's never personal with me, but that's your biggest flaw, you made it personal. For the record, I never had your officer whacked, but if I disappear, the next guy might."

The coffee machine gurgled and Brown went to pour himself a cup. "You want one?"

Davidson gave him a withering look and Brown shrugged.

"Suit yourself."

Davidson decided he had heard enough, he didn't need a lesson in police work from this man. He couldn't resist a parting shot. "Mind not to choke on it."

Brown smiled as he sipped from his cup, watching Bruce Davidson retreat he had one last piece of advice. "You know, you should have stuck all the charges on Jim Wallace, it was your best chance."

"Wallace is an idiot."

"Maybe so, but he would still be a good result."

Davidson walked out of the penthouse and into the cold October morning, he was angry. He had once again let Lachlan Brown get under his skin, but he refused to listen to his rhetoric, he still wanted to nail him. Even before he reached his car, his mobile rang and he answered it immediately hoping to hear news of Anna.

"Davidson."

*"Sir, it's Lesley Hamilton."*

"Any word about Anna, Lesley?"

*"No change, Sir, but I do have something you might be interested in. I think that Jo Jo McNeil might be the attacker."*

Davidson recognised that name from somewhere, but just couldn't place him. "Why?"

*"He was released from prison a few days ago, it was his twin brother that died in that incident with the two of them and Anna and myself back in 1996."*

"And he has only just been released?"

*"He had time added on to his original sentence for murdering his cell mate."*

"I want him found immediately."

*"Already on it, Sir. I have uniform on their way to his address now and I'm about to inform Paton."*

"Good work, Lesley, I'm on my way to the station now. Let me know if there is any change with Anna."

*"Will do, Sir."*

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Heather sat in the hospital waiting room, she was tired and hungry, but she didn't want to leave the unit until there was news of Anna. Greg had left to drive back to Havensburgh, as he was due out on the boat the following day. She looked across at Liam Lynch who had fallen asleep and was now snoring. She could see the family resemblance.

"He claims he doesn't snore, can you believe that?" joked Anna's father.

Heather smiled at the genial man, whose spirits remained high despite the current situation.

"Don't look so worried, Anna's made of tough stuff, she will pull through this," he added, his voice full of conviction.

Heather nodded, "I know." She hoped with all her heart that he was right.

The room fell silent again; it's occupants weary from a night with no sleep. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity in the corridor and Heather observed two doctors entering Anna's room. Fay Lynch gasped, her hand automatically covering her mouth. Heather felt an ice-cold fear take hold in the pit of her stomach and slowly release itself into her veins. Time seemed to stand still as all their eyes remained on the door to Anna's room. It was less than two minutes later when Anna's nurse came into the waiting room to speak to them.

"Don't worry folks, it's good news, Anna is showing signs of improvement. She woke briefly whilst I was in with her and the doctors are in there now carrying out some more tests. One of them will be in to see you when they have finished."

"Oh thank God." Fay Lynch declared as she hugged her husband.

"Liam! Waken up, Anna is showing signs of recovery."

Liam woke from his slumber, initially disorientated, but his father's words soon sank in. He stood up and hugged his parents.

Brendan Lynch walked over to Heather and hugged her. "I told you she was made of strong stuff," he whispered fiercely into Heather's ear. It seemed he was finally able to release some of his pent up emotion.

As promised, Anna's neurologist made an appearance a few minutes later. He told them Anna was responding well to various stimuli and he expected her to regain consciousness within hours.

"You can go in and see her again now," he added, before leaving.

"Thank you, Doctor," Brendan Lynch shook the man's hand. "Fay, you go in and I'll call Lesley and tell her the good news."

Fay Lynch nodded her agreement to her husband's suggestion, then turned to Heather. "Would you like to come in with me?"

Heather was initially stunned by the offer; she hadn't spoken more than two words so far to Anna's mother.

"I would love to. Thank you."

The two women entered the quiet surroundings. Anna looked no different, but they now knew she was showing signs of regaining consciousness. Heather watched as Fay took Anna's hand and gently kissed her cheek. She took a moment to observe the woman. She was well turned out and, despite the night they had spent worrying about the woman lying in the hospital bed, Fay Lynch still looked elegant. She was a beautiful woman and looking at her now in profile, she could see the similarity to Anna's nose and chin. It was the eyes that were different. Anna had her father's eyes.

Fay Lynch turned to look at Heather and smiled. "I just felt her hand move."

"That's wonderful."

"She knows you're here, she squeezed my hand again when you spoke."

Heather smiled broadly.

"Come on, sit down," Mrs. Lynch encouraged. "What do you plan to do? Will you be staying on in Glasgow for a few days?"

"I, ah, I hadn't really thought much beyond being here for Anna."

Fay Lynch nodded, "She will need someone to look after her when she gets out, she is a big baby when it comes to being sick."

"I thought, I mean, I didn't..." Heather's words trailed off, unable to complete her sentence.

Fay smiled, "I'll be around until she is well enough to go home, but I don't think it's me she will be wanting to spend her time with when she gets there. Will you be able to stay around for a few days?"

Heather smiled, "Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Thank you, Mrs. Lynch."

"Call me Fay."

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"Look there he is." Declared a young male officer looking through the CCTV images.

Lesley Hamilton looked closely at the footage. "That is him leaving the scene. We need to follow his movements if we can, look for footage that we can identify him from."

She had several officers looking at the monitors, now they had located what looked to be the suspect; they had a time and location, now they needed to follow his movements if possible. After a further hour they lost him, and not one of the cameras had caught an image they could use to identify his face.

"This is hopeless, that could be anybody. Blue jeans, white trainers and a black top with the hood up. Take your pick, there are hundreds of people wearing exactly that." Lesley took a moment to consider the options. They had more CCTV footage of the surrounding area than they knew what to do with. Though helpful, because of the sheer volume of footage, it was a time consuming exercise. She drummed the table with her fingers. "What time did he arrive? Anyone?"

The officers looked at each other, no one able to answer the question.

"Let's pinpoint his arrival, see if we get anything from that."

Meanwhile, Bruce Davidson was watching the video feed of the interview taking place downstairs. Uniform had picked up Jo Jo McNeil at his home address and he had agreed to come into the station for questioning. He had little option but to co-operate since he was on parole.

"Where were you between nine and ten o'clock last night?" Detective Inspector Paul Paton enquired.

McNeil made a show of considering his whereabouts before answering. "At home. I'm not allowed out after seven. Terms of my parole and that." He leaned back in his chair and yawned.

"So you weren't in the Merchant City area last night?"

"Naw, no me." He sat sprawled in his chair with his arms folded.

"Who was at home with you?"

"Nae'body, jist me."

"What did you do at home?" Thorburn this time asked.

McNeil leered, "Watched porn, it's been a while, ken."

Davidson huffed, this was going nowhere. They would have to prove he wasn't at home, but that wouldn't be easy.

"Sarge, I've got him."

Lesley went to the monitor and looked closely at the image. "That looks like the same person we saw leaving the scene, what time is that?" She checked the onscreen digits herself; it was almost two hours before the attack took place.

"Hood is up, head down. Let's start looking backwards and trace his route to this point. All of you get on it."

It took them almost another two hours before they had a breakthrough.

"Run that back?" Lesley demanded.

"How come he just appears in the middle of the street? Run it back again?"

All eyes were on the monitor when it suddenly became apparent.

"He took a bus! What number is that?"

"Can't tell, Sarge."

"What bus runs from his address to that street? Come on!"

There was a flurry of activity as officers keyed in the route and checked the Greater Glasgow bus timetable. Finally, one bus was agreed upon.

"Get on to the Bus Company and have them give us the footage from last night for that service. Now!"

Lesley's mobile rang at that inopportune moment. "Hello?"

*"Lesley, it's Brendan."*

"Any news?"

*"Anna is showing signs of recovery. The doctor says she should regain consciousness sometime today."*

"Oh, thank goodness, Brendan. That's fantastic news."

*"You sound busy?"*

"Yes, I have a lead I'm following as we speak."

*"I won't keep you back then."*

"I'll be in later, Brendan, bye."

"Sarge, have the company, they are getting the footage for us."

"Go and collect it from them, speed them up a bit."

When the footage arrived, an officer forwarded it to the time they wanted to look at.

"There he is, we've got him! Looking right at the camera as he goes downstairs to get off the bus."

Lesley looked at the image she was being shown. There was no doubt it was Jo Jo McNeil. They had him.

Lesley, Pete and Bruce Davidson all watched the monitor as Paton and Thorburn returned to interview McNeil with the new evidence they had just viewed. They all watched avidly as Paton began.

"So, Jo Jo, remind me again where you were last night."

"Like a' says, I wiz in ma' flat watching porn."

Paton leaned in really close, loving this moment. "So, you weren't sitting on the sixty-one bus travelling into the city centre?"

Jo Jo McNeil's entire posture changed, he sat forward in his seat, his previous laid back demeanour now changed to one of aggressiveness. "Naw, I fuckin' wisnae."

Paton smiled, his face no more than five inches from McNeil's. "Has nobody told you since you've been inside so long? All the buses have cameras in them. I've just watched you walking off the bus and looking right into the lens." Paton sat back in his chair, "You better get yourself a lawyer. Joseph Johnstone McNeil, I'm charging you with the attempted murder of Detective Inspector Anna Lynch. You do not have to say anything but, it may harm your defence if you do

not now mention something, which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say, may be given in evidence."

"Attempted murder? Is the bitch no deid yet!" he screamed.

Davidson smiled, "That will do nicely, let's go see Anna."

Anna opened her eyes and tried to take in the unfamiliar surroundings. What was that beeping noise? She was aware of someone holding her hand. Was that a blonde head leaning on her bed? She squeezed the hand holding hers and two eyes peered at her wide with shock. Heather was here, all would be fine...

Heather's felt her hand being gently squeezed and her eyes flew open. She found herself staring straight into the open eyes of Anna. Before she could even part her lips to say her name, Anna's eyes were already closing. Heather sat up and rubbed her eyes; Mr. and Mrs Lynch had gone to the cafeteria with Liam to grab a bite to eat, leaving her alone with Anna for a short while. She had obviously dosed off for a few minutes, she wondered if Anna had been awake long. Heather smiled as she looked down at the taller woman. The machines surrounding her indicated that her heartbeat was strong and steady. Heather had felt that heart beat faster as they had held each other close a few days ago. The thought that she almost lost Anna before they had even really begun was almost too much to take in.

"Welcome back, Anna."

Anna could hear voices. Her parents were in the room. What on earth were they doing in her bedroom? She opened her eyes and found her Father's staring right back at her.

"Anna!"

Anna tried to talk but found her throat was dry and her words came out just as a croak. She then tried to sit up, but found her mother was gently preventing her from doing so. Not that she felt capable of offering much resistance.

"Where am I?" God, her head hurt.

"You're in hospital, Anna, you took a nasty bump on the head."

Anna frowned, well that explained the pain at least.

A nurse arrived and fussed around her.

"Nice to see you have finally decided to join us." She stated cheerfully, before encouraging Anna

to sip a little water. Not that she needed much encouragement. "The doctor will be in to see you shortly." Then she was gone again.

Her mother had said a nasty bump, had she fallen? Anna couldn't remember. "What happened?"

"Don't worry about that at the moment, Anna, you just concentrate on getting better."

Anna tried to recall what she was last doing, but her mind felt fuzzy and she was getting tired from the effort. Had Heather been here, or had she just imagined that? "How long?"

Brendan Lynch knew what Anna was asking. "Since about nine-thirty last night. It's almost six pm."

Anna thought about that, she didn't even know what day it was, but she had been unconscious for almost twenty-four hours. She could feel her eyelids becoming heavy and she couldn't find the energy to keep them open.

Brendan Lynch left the room when his daughter fell back asleep, and went to inform everyone in the waiting room that Anna had regained full consciousness and spoken a few words.

*'Oh yeah, I'm in hospital,'* Anna remembered as she opened her eyes again.

"Back for another visit are you?" Her father joked.

"How long was I asleep?"

"Couple of hours. There are some people waiting to see you, you up for visitors?"

Anna nodded and immediately regretted it. She grimaced at the pain.

"Take it easy now," her Father cautioned. "I'll let them know they can have a few minutes, unless you get too tired."

Lesley, Pete and Bruce Davidson entered the room.

"Welcome back, Anna, we were all worried about you." Lesley stated.

"Aye, good to see you awake."

Pete nodded his agreement with his boss.

Anna looked at the three of them. "You all look like shit, but thanks."

The look on their faces was priceless, but Anna was in no condition to laugh.

"You would too if you had just been through what we have for the last twenty-four hours," Pete protested.

"Yeah, about that, will someone tell me what has actually been happening?"

Lesley spent a couple of minutes explaining to Anna what had happened and by whom. When she had finished Anna just stared unblinking.

"Are you okay, Anna?" Lesley asked.

"Yeah, I never saw that coming."

"Well obviously or you wouldn't be lying on your back in a hospital bed with a six inch gash on your head."

Anna's hand flew to the back of her head at Pete's words. She was horrified by what she felt. "Where the hell is my hair?"

Davidson cleared his throat, "Ah, they had to shave around the wound, before they could put the staples in."

Anna could feel the staples. "Come look at this, Lesley, tell me what it's like."

Pete rolled his eyes and Davidson decided the wall was more interesting.

Lesley did as asked and looked at the wound. "Honestly, Anna, it's not that bad. They haven't shaved all your hair, so the top layer covers the part that is shaved."

"Yeah?"

"Let's hope it's not windy in the next couple of weeks."

Lesley glared at Pete.

"What? She got me shot and I can't poke fun about her being bald?"

Anna and Lesley both stared daggers at him.

Pete held his hands up, "Okay, okay. I never knew you were so vain, I mean, you can wear a baseball cap or something. Anyway, it's time I was going, I'll catch you during the week, Anna."

"I'll be off as well. Listen you take as much time as you need, Anna, but I insist on at least a week. Two would be preferable, you need it."

"Right, Sir. I'll take the time I need."

The two men left the room, leaving Lesley alone with Anna.

"Anna, I am so sorry about this. All these years later and you nearly, well, God I'm sorry."

"Hey, there is nothing for you to apologise for."

"It just seems that night will never really go away. It's still haunting me."

Anna took Lesley's hand. "I know you feel guilty about what has happened and it's brought back some terrible memories for you. What happened to me yesterday is not your fault."

"If I hadn't let myself become vulnerable, if I had stuck with Nick Fallon that night, none of this would have happened."

"You're not to blame for any of it, Lesley. Those scumbags made the choices, one of them is dead and the other is about to go back behind bars for a long time. They can't get to us again." Anna said with total conviction, she knew Lesley needed to hear that from her. "We can't change what has happened and God knows, Lesley, you have done an amazing job of getting on with your life. I don't know if I could have. We put this latest incident behind us and we move on."

Lesley smiled fondly at Anna. "I've met Heather. I really like her."

"She is here? It wasn't a dream?"

Lesley nodded, 'She's in the waiting room. She came as soon as she heard and has never left.'

Anna was chuffed. "She's cute isn't she?"

"Yeah, she's cute and she's also anxious to see you. I'll go get her."

"Thanks, Lesley."

Anna felt sleepy, but this time she was able to stave it off because she wanted to see Heather. She smiled as the younger woman stepped into the room.

"Hey you."

"How are you feeling?"

"All things considered, not too bad."

Heather sat next to Anna's bed. "I was so worried."

"I'm sorry."

Heather shook her head. "Not your fault."

"Will you, would you lay with me until I fall asleep?"

Heather could not resist the request and gently slid onto the bed beside Anna. "Are you comfortable?" She asked.

"Very."

Heather kissed Anna on the lips before laying her head on her shoulder. Both women were fast asleep within minutes.

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## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)  
**CHAPTER THIRTY ONE**

Heather found herself alone in Anna's flat with nothing but the clothes on her back and her handbag. After waking up on Anna's hospital bed with the three other members of the Lynch family looking on and smiling, the doctor had insisted that they all go home and get some proper rest. Brendan Lynch had handed Heather the keys to Anna's flat and they dropped her off there before making their own journey back to Melrose. She took in her surroundings, it felt strange to be standing here without Anna, like an invasion of privacy, but it made sense for her to stay in Anna's flat for the time being. She had earlier spoken to one of the community education officers informing them that she would be taking the upcoming week off work.

She tentatively wandered around the apartment getting her bearings. Opening the door to Anna's bedroom, she initially stood in the doorway. The bed had been made, after a fashion; the duvet had been haphazardly thrown over, the pillows still askew. A book lay open, pages down on the bedside table next to a solitary lamp. Heather walked over, clicked the lamp on and picked up the book inspecting the cover, *'Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore'* by Bettany Hughes.

Heather smiled and perused the open pages before setting the book back down as she had found it. She opened Anna's wardrobe in search of something to wear. Finding a robe, she stripped off her clothing and put it on. Next stop was the washing machine; with no other clothes to wear she needed to wash the ones she had on. She left her jeans out, they would do another day and she was sure Anna wouldn't mind her borrowing a t-shirt. She slipped under the duvet and was immediately surrounded by the sweet scent of Anna; it wasn't difficult to find sleep after that.

The following day at the hospital Heather found out that Anna had been moved to another ward, which was a very good sign.

"One more day in here, then I can go home."

"That's great news, Anna."

"They just want to make sure I don't suffer any kind of relapse. Well the other thing is, I'm only allowed home if there is someone going to be with me for the next few days, so I will have a word with my mum when she arrives."

"Actually, if it's all right with you, I've taken the rest of the week off work, so I will be around, if you want someone to stay with you."

Anna looked strangely at Heather; "You would do that for me?"

"I would love to."

"That's great. Thanks."

Anna continued to look Heather over, frowning.

"Is there something wrong?"

"I have a t-shirt, just like that one. Weird isn't it, we must have similar tastes."

Heather blushed, "Ah, not as weird as you think. This is your t-shirt, I spent the night at your flat, your dad said it would be okay and since I didn't bring a change of clothes with me, I didn't think you would mind if I borrowed something." Heather stopped when she became aware she was rambling.

"It's perfectly fine, honest."

"I need to go shopping if you are getting home tomorrow, is there a supermarket near your flat? I also need to find somewhere to buy some clothes."

"There is an Asda at The Forge not far from here, it does food and clothing."

"What bus do I get there?"

"Bus? You don't have your car?"

"No, Greg drove me down, but he needed to drive the car back to Havensburgh yesterday morning, he was due out on the boat."

"My car is parked back at my flat, it's a silver Audi, you can't miss it, it's in my parking space opposite the stair entrance. If you're not sure, just point the key and press, it will soon chirp." Anna instructed Heather on where to find her car keys.

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely." Anna changed the subject, "Have you seen my head yet? They had to shave some of my hair off." She complained.

Before Heather could say anything a male voice interrupted. "Well your mother did say it was getting long."

"Dad! Mum!"

"How are you feeling, girl?" enquired Brendan Lynch.

"Definitely better, should be getting home tomorrow."

"I ah, I'm going to head off and do a bit of shopping, but I will be back later."

"Don't let us rush you out the door, Heather." Fay Lynch stated.

"Not at all, I need to go shopping before tomorrow, so while Anna has you both for company, I'll nip away."

After Heather had gone Anna tried to explain the arrangements she had made to her mum. "So Heather has volunteered to stay with me for a few days. I hope you don't mind?"

Fay Lynch smiled fondly at her daughter, "Not at all, Anna, I made the suggestion to her myself, yesterday."

"Thanks, Mum."

"She's a lovely girl, Anna."

"Yes, she is, Dad."

Heather returned to the hospital later that evening bringing with her a set of clothes for Anna to

wear home the following day.

"Jeans, a long sleeved top, underwear, training shoes and a jacket. I figured that would cover your needs until you get home."

Anna smiled at Heather's thoughtfulness. "Just perfect. The clothes I had on when I was admitted aren't exactly wearable any more."

"You have them?"

"Yes, in a sealed bag. My top and bra won't be of any use to me again. They cut them off me. I liked that t-shirt as well."

"I'm guessing from the amount of them you have at home, you won't miss it."

"What can I say, I love t-shirts." Anna shrugged.

"Would you like me to take the bag of clothing away and dispose of it? I'm guessing the clothes will be messy from your head wound."

Anna thought about Heather's offer for a moment. She hadn't considered that point. Her clothes could well be blood stained. "Eh, the jacket was black and can be put in the washing machine, the jeans will still be in one piece as will my trainers. The rest can go in the bin."

Heather smiled. "I hadn't realised you were so frugal."

"I'm not, I just like my clothes, I get used to them and hate when they wear out."

Heather went to the locker that held Anna's belongings and easily located the yellow plastic bag that was adorned with warnings of hazardous material. She thought that was a bit much, but understood the necessity in terms of preventing the spread of disease.

"I'll put the salvageable stuff in the washing machine."

"Thanks."

Heather kissed Anna lightly on the lips. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Goodnight."

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Heather watched Anna carefully as she negotiated the stairs to her flat. She seemed steady enough on her feet, but she had looked a little pale on the journey home from the hospital. Opening the door to Anna's apartment, she ushered her inside and insisted Anna sit down on the sofa and put her feet up.

"Please, just rest. Is there anything you need?"

"Nothing right now, thanks."

Anna seemed subdued; Heather decided she was most likely worn out from the day's activities. She put the television on and handed Anna the remote, then watched as she flicked through the channels, never settling on one for more than a few minutes.

"Is there something in particular you are looking for?"

"Huh?" Anna had been miles away. "Oh, not really, in truth I don't watch much telly, usually the news."

"So, what do you do in your spare time?"

"Go to the cinema, sometimes the gym."

Heather frowned. "Well both of those activities are out for the next few days at least. What about a DVD?"

Anna smiled and made to get up from the sofa, but Heather stopped her.

"I'm here to do things like that. Where are they?"

Anna pointed to the long, low cabinet upon which her flat screen television sat. "In there."

Heather opened the middle cabinet door and inside she found both shelves were crammed with DVD's. Out of curiosity she went to the next cabinet door and found it to be the same. Turning to look at Anna she indicated the five cabinet doors.

"Are they all like that?"

"Yes."

"There are so many," Heather stated wide-eyed. "Which one would you like to watch?"

"You choose."

Heather looked again in the middle cabinet. There were old movies next to classic and new titles. Anna's taste was clearly eclectic. There were some she had never heard of, but she spotted one she had wanted to see in the cinema a few months ago and settled for that. Reaching for the case,

she removed it from the shelf and held it up for Anna's approval. She nodded and Heather put the DVD into the player.

The pair settled down on the sofa to watch 'The Reader'. As Heather started to get into the movie, she smiled when she heard light snoring coming from her companion. Anna was still asleep when the credits started to roll, so Heather eased herself gently from the sofa and went to the kitchen to prepare dinner.

After dinner, later in the evening, Heather noticed that Anna was becoming restless. "Are you in pain?" The strain was showing around Anna's eyes and Heather guessed pain to be the cause.

"Just a little, but I'm trying to put off taking the painkillers for just a little longer."

"Why?"

"I wanted to wait until I was ready to go to bed, then I might be able to get a few hours sleep without waking up and needing more."

Heather considered this. She understood Anna's logic, but didn't like the idea of her friend being in pain. "Why don't we have an early night?"

"I suppose we could both do with one."

"Won't do us any harm, that's for sure. I'll go get the painkillers and a glass of water."

With the tablets taken, it was just a matter of going to the bathroom and then bed. Anna really was tired and that was all that was on her mind. Taking care of her bathroom needs and brushing her teeth, Anna went to her bedroom to find her bedding changed and the duvet folded down waiting for her to get into bed.

"What do you usually wear to bed?"

"Just a vest and some knickers." Anna was already removing the items from a drawer before Heather could ask where they were.

"Do you have extra bedding?"

Anna frowned, "Why?"

"Ah, I was going to make up the sofa."

"Oh." Anna genuinely hadn't considered their sleeping arrangements.

"I do, but why don't you share with me? It's a king-size bed, plenty of space for both of us. Unless of course you don't want too, I'll understand."

Heather hesitated for a moment, and then nodded. "I'd like to share, thank you. I'll just pop to the bathroom and give you some privacy to you know," she gestured to Anna's sleeping garments.

"Thanks."

Heather returned from the bathroom wearing a long t-shirt that she had purchased the day before. She slipped under the duvet and found herself facing Anna. They were both tired after the previous three days.

"Thanks for being here to take care of me."

"It's my pleasure." Heather laid a warm palm on Anna's cheek and leaned in to kiss her. The kiss quickly turned passionate for just a few moments before tapering to a gentle caress.

"Good night, Heather."

"Night, Anna."

Anna awoke to the smell of breakfast cooking. She put on her robe and went to the kitchen where Heather looked well in control of things.

"Good morning."

Heather turned and smiled at Anna. "Did you sleep well?"

"I did thanks. Do I have time for a quick shower or is breakfast ready?"

"You have five minutes."

"Good enough."

Anna stood under the hot spray, the shower cap Heather had purchased, firmly in place. She wasn't allowed to wash her hair until the staples were removed from her head, which was going to be Friday, another three days to go. Freshly showered, Anna put on a T-shirt and some track bottoms then went back to the kitchen.

"Thank goodness for some decent food. The stuff in the hospital was tasteless."

Heather had seen it and she couldn't disagree. "How's the head?"

"Well, apart from being in need of a good wash, it's okay. The painkillers I took earlier this morning are still working."

"It won't be long until you are allowed to wash your hair." Heather said with sympathy.

Anna sat at the table and began eating. "I feel up to taking a walk after breakfast, you want to come?"

Heather paused, her fork halfway to her mouth. "Well I'm certainly not letting you go out for a walk alone. Are you sure you are up to it?"

Anna grinned. "Yeah, I'll take it easy."

After breakfast, the pair put on their shoes and jackets, Anna put a hat on her head and they left the apartment. Again, Heather watched Anna carefully on the stairs and, when they got to the bottom, Heather opened the stair door for her and they exited into a cold day.

Anna hesitated a few seconds as the sights and sounds of a busy Glasgow morning assaulted her. The low sun seemed especially bright. She was also aware that she was standing in pretty much the same place as when the attack had happened.

"Are you okay?"

Anna nodded, but in truth she felt shaky and strangely disorientated. She took a deep breath and started walking. Heather linked arms with her, for which Anna was grateful, and she felt the uneasiness begin to pass. They strolled, arm in arm, towards Royal Exchange Square.

"Why did you choose an apartment here?"

"The area has always appealed to me, has its own unique character."

Heather had to agree, "I really like it. It's in the middle of the city, but it has a relaxed, detached feel to it."

Heather saw an empty bench and steered them towards it, Anna didn't protest. They sat snuggled closely together, watching the pedestrians walk by.

"I'm going to call my brother. I thought since I was here in Glasgow for a few days, I could meet up with him."

"Are you sure you are ready?"

"I doubt I could ever feel ready for it, but I want to meet him, there doesn't seem any point to delaying it."

"That's a very brave decision."

"I'm nervous, and I don't know what to expect, but I suppose it's better not to have any expectations."

Anna thought about Heather's dilemma. She had met Glen twice and he seemed like a decent bloke, but she knew nothing of the relationship Heather and Glen had shared in the past, nor of the hurt that Heather had endured. It was hard to imagine what that must be like. She took Heather's hand and gave it a squeeze.

"I think you will handle it just fine. Just take things slowly and see what happens."

Heather squeezed back, grateful for Anna's words of support.

Anna watched Heather walk back into the room after calling her brother.

"Well?"

"Do you know the Italian Centre?"

"Yes, it's literally around the corner."

"I'm meeting Glen in a café there on Thursday afternoon."

Heather sat on the sofa next to Anna; she was quiet.

"You look dazed." Anna observed.

"I think I am a little. Just hearing his voice gave me goose bumps."

"Come here?"

Heather moved into Anna's welcoming arms and immersed herself in the warm embrace being offered.

"Your family are so great, Anna. I wish I had that."

Anna listened to Heather's heartfelt words, full of emotion and honesty.

"I know that I am very fortunate to have wonderful parents and a loving brother. That said, Heather, as a family we have never been faced with any great difficulty. If we had, then who knows? In a lot of ways, I admire you. You have been faced with adversity and look at you, a well-rounded individual with a caring heart. And your mum and dad, look what they have been through. I know your mum can be overbearing, but who can blame her? Through no fault of hers, her son went off the rails and there was nothing she could do to stop it. That must be very difficult to come to terms with. You and your dad have had to contend with losing Glen and to a certain extent, a part of your mum too. I think you are both remarkable people."

Heather turned to look at Anna. "Thank you." She then kissed her gently and pulled back to look into Anna's eyes, they were open and honest, drawing Heather back in for more. Kissing Anna passionately, Heather wanted to devour her. As her hand crept up the back of Anna's neck and into her hair she was shocked back to the reality of the situation as her fingers found the shaved hair and staples.

"Wow."

"God, Anna I'm sorry."

"Do you hear me complaining?"

Heather smiled. "I got carried away."

"Well, as far as I'm concerned, you can get carried away any time you like." Anna attempted to kiss her again.

Heather lightly slapped her on the arm. "Behave, you only got out of hospital yesterday."

"Trust me, if you keep that up, I will be back on my feet in no time."

Before Heather could reply the intercom buzzed. They both looked at each other and Heather was first to get up and answer.

"Hello?"

*"Anna?"*

Heather depressed the button to allow the visitor entrance to the stair; it was obviously someone who knew Anna.

"Who is it?" Anna asked.

"I'm not sure, a female who asked for you. I let her in."

The doorbell rang and Heather answered.

"Hi, is Anna in?"

"Yes, I..."

"Thanks." The blonde haired woman cut Heather off before she could finish her sentence.

Anna watched as Angela Davidson walked into her sitting room with a spray of flowers.

"How are you feeling?"

"Better, thanks."

Angela put the flowers on the table in front of Anna. "I see you have a little friend," she remarked sarcastically.

Anna had finally lost patience with Angela and decided it was time to call a halt to her flirtations and innuendo. "Heather is my girlfriend. Heather, meet Angela Davidson, she works at the station."

Angela blinked, then caught up. She shook Heather's hand. "Nice to meet you."

Heather shook the hand offered, but in truth, she didn't much like this young woman.

"Well, anyway, I can't stay. I just popped by to see how you are doing and if there is anything you need."

"I have everything I need, thank you, Angela."

"I see that."

"Heather is taking good care of me." Anna smiled lovingly at Heather.

"I'm sure. Well, I'll see you back at work soon I hope, Inspector."

"Yes, you will."

Finally the line had been drawn and Angela was stepping back on the correct side of it.

After she was gone, Anna turned to Heather. "I'm sorry about that. She has been chasing me for a little while now. I think she has finally got the message."

"Good."

Anna smiled, she hadn't realised Heather could be a little feisty. She liked it.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY TWO**

Heather made the short walk to the Italian Centre with a feeling of trepidation. Her mouth was dry and her stomach was churning but, despite her nerves, she remained optimistic. Glen wanted

to see her, which was a good omen. Entering the café, she looked around the place hoping to recognise her older brother. She saw a face looking back at her, one she found familiar, despite the years that had passed. Glen smiled and stood up from his chair and watched Heather walk towards him. With each passing step Heather felt her heart beat faster and then, almost before she knew it, she found herself standing right next to him.

"Glen?"

He nodded and instinctively went to hug her, but hesitated, uncertain as to what was appropriate in the circumstances. Sensing his predicament, Heather took the lead and briefly hugged him.

"Hello, Heather," he rasped, his voice tight with emotion.

They parted and took a seat, sitting opposite each other. A silence hung between the siblings as they both found themselves lost for words. Heather took in Glen's appearance. She knew he was thirty-two but, in truth, he looked a little older than that. He was casually dressed with a little stubble and something told her that this was his preferred look. The important thing, Heather thought, was that he looked healthy.

"How are you?"

"You have grown up."

They both spoke at the same time, creating an awkward, clumsy moment, which was covered with nervous laughter.

Glen spoke first. "Sorry, let's start again. You look great, Heather, beautiful in fact. When I last saw you, you were my annoying little sister, now look at you."

A waitress arrived at their table to take their order, interrupting Heather's reply. After ordering a tea and a coffee the pair continued.

"You look well."

Glen smiled, "Thanks, I've been taking good care of myself these last few years."

"So Anna tells me."

Glen nodded, "She tells me the two of you are involved romantically."

"Yes. I was engaged up until recently, but it wasn't working out. I spent a lot of time with Anna over the summer and I fell for her." Heather shrugged and smiled.

"She's a lovely woman."

"Thank you, I think so too."

The waitress returned with their order and Heather watched as Glen took a sip of his black coffee. He looked around the café and she could tell he was as nervous as she was.

"Do you have anyone special in your life?"

The question relaxed Glen a little. "I have a girlfriend, Josie, we have been together almost five years. She's a little older than I am." Glen paused, "We have a two year old daughter, Lilly. You'd really like them." Glen waited for Heather to absorb the new information.

"I'm an Auntie?" Heather was shocked having never considered that possibility.

Glen's smile got wider, "Yes, Lilly Keith-Harvey. We gave her both our surnames.

"It's a lovely name."

Glen hesitated before asking his next question. "Will you come and meet them before you return to Havensburgh? I know you said on the phone that you would be leaving after the weekend."

Heather didn't hesitate. "I would love to."

"What about Saturday, you could bring Anna too, we could all have lunch at my place?"

"I will definitely come, unless Anna needs me. I'll ask her, but after the attack she might not feel up to it."

Glen frowned, "What attack?"

"That's the reason I'm in Glasgow. Anna was hit over the back of the head on Friday night. She was unconscious for almost twenty-four hours, but she is home now and recovering well." Heather watched as Glen paled in front of her.

"Do the police know who did it?"

"Yes, a man who just got out of jail. It was retaliation for something that happened over thirteen years ago."

"You're sure?"

"Yes."

Glen blew out a long breath. "I'm sorry, I still worry about my past catching up with me and, after my recent contact with Anna, well, you know."

"I understand. After what has just happened to Anna, I definitely understand."

"Send her my best."

"Thanks, I will."

There was silence once more as Glen hesitated about asking the question he'd been dreading.

"How are mum and dad?"

Heather sipped her tea before answering. "They're both well."

"Do they ah, ever, you know, mention me, or..." Glen trailed off, unable to properly finish his question.

"It's a complicated situation."

Glen nodded, "That's very diplomatic of you. I'll take that to be a no, can't say that I blame them. I wasn't exactly a good son."

Heather clasped her hands in front of her on the table and gave Glen her full attention. "Like I said, it's complicated. Dad never says anything judgmental and mum is in total denial. If anyone asks about you, she tells them you are working in the United States."

"Well, I understand why she would do that. No one wants to admit that their son, who they handed every opportunity to, turned out to be a drug addict and a thief."

Heather heard the guilt and regret in Glen's voice. "It hasn't been easy on us, Glen, I'll admit to that, but you have turned your life around. I have a niece and they have a granddaughter. I want to get to know you and your family and I'm sure, with time, they will too."

"It's more than I deserve, but it's what I want."

"Everyone deserves a second chance. When I get back home, I will speak with them and tell them that we met up. I'm not exactly sure how they will react to the news, but it will give them time to think about the situation and let it sink in."

Glen wiped at his eyes. "Thank you, Heather."

"You're very welcome."

Glen composed himself and sat back in his chair. "You know, I have a feeling that one of my biggest regrets is going to be not having known you for the last few years. You've turned into an exceptional human being."

Now it was Heather's turn to cry at her brother's heartfelt words. "We can make up for lost time."

"I'm looking forward to that."

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"So what do you think?"

"Well he seems really genuine about wanting to get to know you and your parents. So long as he doesn't let you down, that's good enough for me."

"And what about lunch, will you come with me?"

"Of course I will."

Heather threw her arms around Anna. "Thank you."

"I'm really pleased for you, I hope it all works out."

"I'm concerned about how my parents will react, especially my mum. I shouldn't say this, but with a grandchild in the equation, it might make a difference."

Anna had leaned back on the sofa and closed her eyes.

"Is everything okay?" Heather asked, immediately concerned. Now that she looked closely, Anna seemed tired. "Are you in pain?"

"No, I'm fine, honest."

"Something is wrong. Did something happen?"

Anna sighed, "I went for a walk while you were out and I had a little panic attack as I was leaving the stairwell. It's stupid, it will pass."

"You've have had a little trouble at that same spot for the last two days."

"I know, and without you there, linking arms with me, it was a little more severe this time. I hadn't realised that was making a difference. I have been feeling safer with you around."

"What did you do?"

"Took a few deep breaths to help me relax, then I told myself it was broad daylight and I wasn't in any danger and then I went for my walk. It wasn't pleasant. What am I going to be like when it's night? I have to get over this!" Anna was clearly frustrated with her body's reaction.

"Anna, you only just got out of hospital after a serious assault, you are still recovering. It's not

surprising that you are suffering; you have been through a lot. Not just the assault, there was Pete getting shot as well."

Anna rubbed her face, "I suppose. I'm sure it will pass; it was just a bit disconcerting. It's thrown me off balance."

"Isn't there a psychologist at work for issues like this?"

"Yes, but I won't be telling anyone on the force about this."

Heather frowned. "I think you're being stubborn. Isn't it compulsory to see someone after what happened to you? Surely Pete has been getting help from someone?"

"Not that I would know of."

"You could ask him."

"I don't think so." Anna sounded petulant.

Heather got up from the sofa and went into the open plan kitchen. She started to make the evening meal, with a little more energy than was necessary, but the cupboard doors would live. Anna remained in the living room, staying out of Heather's way. She knew Heather was mad at her, but Heather didn't understand. She flicked on the television and put on the news on.

"Dinner's ready."

Anna joined Heather at the table. "Thanks, it looks wonderful."

Heather didn't acknowledge Anna's compliment and proceeded to stab her pasta. Anna watched her; she didn't have much of an appetite after their difference of opinion.

"You don't understand, Heather."

Heather looked at her companion, "What don't I understand?"

"The nature of my job. It's difficult enough being a woman in the police force; you always have to work that much harder for whatever comes your way. It's a very macho environment. I can't be seen to be weak."

Heather thought about what Anna was saying. "So this isn't about you being stubborn or attaching any stigma to any kind of mental health issue?"

"Absolutely not." Anna said firmly.

"Then see someone privately, outside of the police force."

Anna knew she had just been totally outmanoeuvred by Heather. She was impressed but, at the same time, she was kicking herself.

"How about I give it a few days and see if things improve?"

"It's your choice, Anna. I can't make you do it and I certainly won't push you either, but I am asking you to seriously consider seeking help if you need it."

"Thank you."

Heather looked at Anna; she was surprised to say the least. "Why are you thanking me?"

Anna smiled. "For caring and for not over reacting."

Heather looked bashful. "Well I was a little angry."

"I noticed, but I think my kitchen utensils are up to it."

"Eat your dinner, it's getting cold."

They both sat there, grinning like idiots, whilst they finished their pasta.

That night they went to bed early and lay awake chatting.

"Staples out tomorrow." Heather remarked.

"I wonder how they do it?"

"Eww, I don't want to think about that."

Anna laughed, "Don't think I haven't noticed that you won't look at them."

"I know, I'm just a bit queasy with that sort of thing."

"It's okay, I won't make you look."

"I will hold your hand if you like, when they are taken out."

Anna looked horrified at the thought. "Ah, thanks for the offer, but I'll be fine."

Heather giggled.

"You are a brat."

"Just a little."

Anna leaned on her hand, facing Heather. "I was thinking."

"See, I knew you were getting better." Heather's eyes danced around.

"Hey!" Anna protested and tickled her bedmate.

"Stop! Please, stop. I give in."

The pair took a minute to get their breath back.

"Anyway, as I said, I was thinking and I have a question."

"Okay."

"If your parents had gone beyond two kids, I wonder what the names would have been?"

"Why?"

"Well, Heather and Glen, I mean, come on. What was next? Loch? Ben Nevis? Bluebell? Thistle?"

Heather laughed with Anna, "It is a thought, isn't it?"

Anna pulled Heather closer to her. "I'm so glad that you are here with me. Getting to know more about each other."

"Me too."

They kissed slowly, languidly, taking the time to explore the other's mouth fully. Anna rested a hand on Heather's hip and slowly moved down towards her thigh, massaging the muscle and caressing the skin. She manoeuvred Heather onto her back and gently settled her longer frame on top of her. Heather's legs parted and Anna's lean thigh nestled between her lover's. She rolled and pushed her hips into Heather and the blonde gasped with the pleasure she felt. Anna continued to seek stimulation on Heather's thigh and was breathing heavily. Their mouths parted as they both sought more air. Anna's hand covered one of Heather's breasts, the nipple instantly hardening under the touch of her finger and thumb.

"Anna," Heather whispered. "Oh, God, we should stop. You're not, the doctor..."

"Shhh, I just want to taste you." She implored.

Heather bit her lip as she watched Anna move down her body, sliding her underwear down her legs on the way. She grinned at Heather before nestling her head between her thighs. Heather

groaned as she felt Anna's tongue slide over her clit, then circle it. It wasn't long before her orgasm was ripping through her body and Anna was pinning her hips to the bed.

As Heather lay quietly recovering from her exertions, Anna moved back up to her, her lips glistening. Heather kissed Anna, tasting herself, which she enjoyed immensely. She had never been with a woman before, but Anna was so soft and giving, Heather was eager to explore her. She reached out and caressed one of Anna's cotton covered breasts. She was hesitant at first, but was soon encouraged by Anna who lifted her top to expose them. She looked at Heather, inviting her to touch. Anna hissed when Heather became bolder and pinched her nipple.

"Did I hurt you?"

"Only in a good way, they are very sensitive."

"Oh."

"Use your mouth." Anna suggested.

Heather took one of Anna's nipples into her mouth gently sucked on it. She was encouraged by the noises of pleasure coming from her lover and the way Anna pushed her breasts into Heather's mouth. Anna parted her thighs and thrust against Heather's leg while the blonde sucked her nipples, the combination of stimuli quickly bringing her to climax.

Rolling off Heather's body, Anna lay on her back catching her breath.

"How do you feel?"

"Bloody fantastic."

Heather giggled, "That's not quite what I meant. How is your head?"

"It's fine, really."

"Good." Heather was quiet for a moment. "That was..."

Anna turned to her lover. "Amazing, fabulous?"

"Unexpected."

She frowned, Anna hadn't been thinking about making love, it had just happened and she hoped Heather wasn't disappointed at how quick it had been. "In a good way I hope."

"Oh, most definitely." She replied.

"Good."

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Anna stood under the hot spray luxuriating in the feel of the water rinsing the shampoo from her hair. It was her third wash and rinse, but she hadn't been able to wash her hair for a week and wanted to make sure it was clean. It was also the first time she had actually touched the wound on the back of her head and was relieved to find it didn't feel too bad. A little bumpy, but that would settle down in time and the hair would grow back.

Anna stood on the bath mat and gently rubbed her wet hair with a towel. Having the staples removed that morning had been a fairly painless exercise. Heather had accompanied her, but had looked away whilst they were being removed. That had made Anna smile. She hadn't realised that Heather was squeamish until the previous night. She thought back to what had happened, they had made love and, wonderful as it was, it had been quick and rushed due to the suddenness of it. They would have time to rectify that before Heather returned home. Anna didn't want to think about that, but she knew Heather would be leaving soon.

Pulling on her robe, Anna put her feet into a pair of flip-flops then made her way to the bedroom. Taking the hairbrush from her bedside cabinet, she began to gently brush her damp hair.

"Need some help?"

Heather came into the bedroom and took the brush from Anna's fingers, then began to carefully brush her hair.

"Thanks."

"Let me know if I hurt you."

"Kay." Anna mumbled, too busy enjoying Heather's gentle ministrations. It was a secret pleasure of hers, having her hair played with and Heather's fingers smoothing over her locks was close to perfect.

"Would you like me to dry it?"

"Huh? Oh, yes, thanks." Anna had been miles away.

Heather briefly moved from her position on the bed behind Anna to get the hair dryer. She returned and started to dry Anna's hair, using the soft touch of her fingers to help. Anna was close to heaven and let out a soft groan of pleasure.

The hairdryer stopped. "Am I hurting you?"

"God no, it's fantastic." Anna's tone practically pleaded for Heather to continue.

Heather resumed her activity. "Your hair is so soft and silky." she remarked, as her fingers ran through the long strands. She caught sight of the healing scar as the hot air blew the top layer of Anna's hair away from the back of her head. Heather ran a finger over the scar. Switching off the hair drier, she asked, "Can you feel that?"

"Not really. I'm aware that you are touching the scar, but the sensation is dull."

Heather put the hairdryer to one side and used both hands to continue to massage Anna's scalp, careful to keep her touch light. Anna's head moved into her touch as she released another groan of pleasure. Encouraged, Heather moved her hands down to the back of Anna's neck and massaged the muscles there, pushing the robe from Anna's shoulders to allow her access.

"Your skin is so soft."

"Mmm." Anna was beyond anything more coherent. Heather's touch having reduced her to jelly. When she felt Heather's lips trail kisses along her neck and shoulders and her hands move round towards her breasts she began to tremble with need, struggling to remain passive. Anna just wanted to pin Heather to the bed and ravish her, but she knew Heather needed the time to explore, so she grabbed two fistfuls of duvet and willed her body to stay in place.

Heather slowly trailed her hands down towards Anna's breasts, she wasn't tentative, she was filled with a mixture of curiosity and wonder. As she felt the nipples harden under her palms, she kneaded both breasts, encouraged by the sounds emanating from her lover. Anna turned her face towards Heather's and they kissed passionately, Anna's knuckles turning white from the effort needed to keep her hands from grabbing Heather and taking control. Heather had no such difficulties as she deftly manoeuvred Anna onto her back, taking a moment to look directly into her eyes, which were full of trust and want.

Anna watched as Heather untied her robe. She was pleasantly surprised by this turn of events, the bold move from her lover who was leaning over her, taking in every part of her naked flesh with hungry eyes. Anna sighed with pleasure when Heather took one of her nipples into her hot mouth. Anna was desperate to feel Heather's bare skin against her own. Grabbing the hem of the blonde's T-shirt, she quickly pulled it off over her head. Heather stopping what she was doing just long enough to allow the garment's removal before returning to her task, becoming more and more emboldened with each new murmur elicited from Anna. Anna shuddered as she felt Heather's breasts touch her stomach, the nipples drawing crazy patterns across her sensitised skin, moving ever closer to her pelvis, her thighs parting in anticipation.

Heather ran her hands down the sides of Anna's body, marvelling at the softness of her skin. She dipped her tongue into Anna's navel as she moved ever closer towards her goal. As she reached Anna's pubic hair, she noticed that it was very short, trimmed in a neat 'v' shape, her labia protruding ever so slightly. She wanted to savour the moment a little longer and took her time to kiss and caress Anna's inner thigh, enjoying the sounds coming from above her. No longer able to hold back, Heather tasted her lover for the first time.

Anna looked down at the blonde head between her legs. God, she couldn't believe this was really happening after all they had been through. Her head flopped back onto the pillow as she felt Heather's tongue caress her clitoris. It was hard to believe this was her first time. She had assumed Heather would be more hesitant and this turn of events was both unexpected and mind blowing. Anna's hand found its way into Heather's hair and her hips pushed upwards to meet Heather's mouth.

"Oh God, I'm going to come."

Anna's orgasm tore through her and she groaned loudly as her body became rigid with pleasure. Heather continued to use her mouth until Anna released her head and flopped back onto the bed. She laid her head on Anna's thigh and looked up at her lover in wonder. Anna's response to her had been amazing and had left Heather feeling giddy. Heather decided the lazy, contented smile Anna was sporting was the sexiest thing she had ever seen

"Come here." Anna rasped as she slowly regained her senses.

Heather joined Anna and they shared a slow, passionate kiss. Anna lazily draped a hand over Heather's buttock, pulling her closer, urging her to lie on top of her. Anna held on to Heather's ribs as she used her tongue and lips on her breasts. A long, taut thigh slid between Heather's legs as she continued to stimulate her breasts. Heather moved urgently against Anna's thigh, panting, her hands planted on the mattress. Anna slipped a hand between Heather's legs and entered her with two long fingers. Heather cried out and continued to thrust frantically. Anna could feel Heather pulse and tighten around her fingers and then she was coming, jerking against Anna, teeth gritted, before letting out a scream of sheer pleasure and slumping down on top of her. Her muscles so relaxed she was no longer able to support herself. Anna felt Heather mould into her and held her lovingly. It was sheer bliss.

## **CHAPTER THIRTY THREE**

"I'll drive."

"Are you sure?" Heather was still a little concerned about Anna after the blow she'd had to her head.

Anna smiled indulgently. "Isn't it better that I get back behind the wheel while you're still around?"

"That does make sense." Heather conceded.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" Anna looked at the items Heather was juggling in her arms.

Heather nodded towards the coffee table. "Could you take the flowers down to the car?"

"Of course, why don't I take that bottle of wine from your hands as well?"

Heather blew out a breath that lifted the front of her hair. "Too much?" she asked, referring to the items she had purchased that morning.

"I'm sure your gifts will be very much appreciated."

"I'm sorry, I'm a little nervous."

Anna kissed Heather on the cheek. "Don't worry, it will be fine."

Anna drove over to Kelvinside, one of the more affluent areas of the city. Heather looked pleasantly surprised as they drew up outside the property. A two-storey mews cottage with its own gardens.

"It looks lovely."

Anna nodded, "It's a great area, full of academics due to its close proximity to the university."

Heather smiled as she took in the quaint exterior and the busy garden. She was tempted to sit on the pale green bench that sat under one of the front windows it looked so inviting. She turned back to Anna who was removing Heather's gifts from the boot of the car.

"I'm nervous."

"I know, you have told me already."

"It's a good nervous I think."

She could sense the anticipation coming from Heather in waves. "Yeah, I think it is." Anna handed Heather the flowers and wine, taking the other parcels herself. "Come on, let's do this."

Heather took a deep breath and knocked on the white front door. She waited just a moment then heard the door being opened from the inside. Glen stood smiling at her with his daughter balanced in one arm.

"Heather, Anna, come on in." He moved aside to allow them access, then closed the door behind them. "Come on through and I'll make the introductions."

They followed Glen into a bright sitting room that was banked with windows on one side, all looking out onto the back garden. The smell of home baking filled the house; someone had been busy. A woman in her mid to late thirties joined them. She was carrying a tray full of food, which she proceeded to deposit on the large, wooden coffee table before turning to greet them.

"Heather, Anna, this is my partner, Josie. Josie, this is my sister Heather and her partner Anna."

"Pleased to meet you both." Josie stated as she shook both their hands with a confident, firm grip. "Glen has told me a lot about both of you. Welcome to our home."

"Thanks for inviting us." Heather replied as she handed Josie the flowers and bottle of wine.

"Thanks, how sweet." Josie smiled politely, "I'll just get a vase."

Anna watched the woman leave the room; something about her response had irked Anna. She looked around the room, it was full of various types of robust green foliage in big planters and there were lots of candles and decorative pots and plates. Mixed with the smell of herbs and spices, she decided the room had a distinctly earthy feel to it.

"Lilly, I want you to meet someone very special, this is your Auntie Heather."

The little girl looked shyly at her new Auntie. Heather was instantly smitten. Lilly was beautiful; a heart shaped face surrounded by a mop of light brown curls and two large brown eyes the size of saucers peered at her.

Heather held out her hand, which was gingerly taken by a much smaller one. "Pleased to meet you, Lilly." She said softly, giving the child her full attention.

"Hello," replied a shy little voice.

Glen was moved by the moment and planted a soft kiss on his daughter's head. "She's usually a bit shy to begin with, but she will soon warm up."

"I have a present...for Lilly." Heather said hesitantly, "Would now be a good time?"

Glen nodded and placed Lilly on the floor. "Auntie Heather has some presents for you."

The child's eyes lit up and she walked towards her Auntie. Anna handed the parcel to Heather who knelt down to be closer to Lilly. The little girl looked suspiciously at the parcel, but was soon enticed by the bright wrapping paper. Glen joined the pair and helped Lilly open her gifts.

"I didn't know exactly what would be appropriate, so I got a few items for her age group. I hope that's okay?"

"Absolutely. Thanks, Heather, she will love them."

They looked on at Lilly who was already enthralled with the books and crayons, not yet taking an interest in the larger items, a wooden shape stacker and a Miffy tote bag.

"Say thank you to Auntie Heather, Lilly."

Lilly looked up at her father who nodded towards Heather, "Go on."

"Thank you." Her small hand returned to the task of selecting a crayon, which she held in a little fist.

Josie returned and put the flowers that were now in a large vase on a table by the windows.

"Have a seat, make yourselves comfortable. I'll take your jackets."

Anna and Heather removed their coats and handed them to Josie. Anna again had to wonder what the woman's problem was as she gingerly took her leather jacket and held it away from her as if it had the plague.

With Lilly fully occupied, Glen took the opportunity to get some food from the kitchen.

"I hope you're hungry," He stated, returning with the starters in his hand. "I've made some bruschetta and a sun dried tomato and olive tapenade. Tuck in, but remember to leave some space for the main course." Glen cautioned. "Can I get you both something to drink? We have wine, water, home made lemonade?"

"I'm driving so I'll have some water, thanks."

"I'll have some white wine, please."

"Glen says you are a policewoman, Anna?"

Anna nodded as she finished her mouthful of tapenade. "That's right, drug squad."

"Interesting work."

Anna eyed Josie, something was nagging at her. She watched as the woman slipped her bare feet from her sandals and folded her legs on the sofa beneath her long floral skirt.

"It can be."

"I'm a social worker, that's how I met Glen."

"Josie has helped me through a lot. We met prior to my release from prison." Glen added, as he put their drinks on the table.

"What is it you do, Heather, youth work?"

"I'm a community worker."

"Here in Glasgow?"

"No, back home in Havensburgh."

Josie nodded as she sipped her wine. "You never think about taking on a bigger challenge? Moving to an inner city project?"

Anna waited to hear Heather's response, but she was tempted to answer Josie herself.

"In the future I might want to work in another area but, for the moment, I'm in the right place."

"Havensburgh has a sense of community the likes of which you would never find in the inner city." Anna had caved, no longer able to hold her silence.

"I'm sure, but does it not get a little mundane?" Josie directed the question back to Heather.

"Not for me, I find that a community like Havensburgh brings with it a unique set of circumstances."

Josie frowned, "Like what?"

"Well one of the biggest problems at the moment is the loss of the young people to larger cities. There is no affordable housing and jobs are at a premium. The professions that had, in the past, been the lifeblood of a community like Havensburgh are dying out. We are in danger of losing the very heart of our community within a generation."

Anna bit into her bruschetta to prevent the words falling out of her mouth that she so dearly wanted to say and also to hide her delight with Heather. Josie had no answer to Heather's reply. Not everything was about dysfunctional families. While Anna would have been that blunt, Heather had much more finesse.

"That's what I miss most about living in Glasgow, that sense of community." Glen added.

"Where did you grow up, Anna?"

"Melrose."

"Looks like you're the only city girl here, Josie."

"Yes, I grew up here in Glasgow."

"Hungry." Lilly climbed up on the sofa next to Josie.

"Looks like it's time for the main course." Glen remarked, smiling at his daughter. "Let's all go through to the kitchen."

The kitchen was big, with a large, rustic wooden table sitting easily within it. The room was warm from the oven and the smells wafting from that were heavenly. The table was set; all that was missing was the main course. Anna and Heather sat next to each other smiling at Lilly who was waiting patiently in her high chair for the arrival of her food.

"She is adorable, Josie."

"Thanks, Heather, we think so too."

"She looks a lot like you."

"I think she has Glen's temperament, which is probably a good thing, but yes, she does tend to look more like me."

"Will you be having any more?"

Glen turned round from where he was removing the dish from the oven to look over at Josie.

"Well if it was up to Glen we would have a few more, but I'm getting on a bit, I think one is it for us." She smiled at Glen before returning her attention to Anna and Heather. "What about you two, are you planning to have any kids?"

Both Anna and Heather were stunned by the question; they looked at Josie, and then stared at each other. It was Glen that came to the rescue.

"I think it's a bit early in the relationship for them to be discussing children."

"Oh, I don't know, what if they don't and a couple of years down the line one of them wants to start a family? I always think it's best to get these things out in the open." She turned her attention back to Anna and Heather. "So, do either of you see children in your future?"

"Yes."

"No - ah, maybe."

All eyes were on Anna, including Lilly's, but only because everyone else was looking at her.

"That is to say, I hadn't ever really thought about children until recently."

Heather's eyes were glued to Anna's, Glen looked sympathetic and Josie looked eager.

"I really do like kids but, I'll be honest, I have never considered a future with them in it and I certainly have never considered becoming pregnant. The prospect of carrying a child is completely alien to me."

"It's a wonderful experience, bringing life into the world," Josie enthused.

"I'm sure it is, I just don't feel the need or urge to experience it for myself."

Heather intervened, "Childbirth isn't for everyone, not all women feel the pull of it."

"But you do." Josie stated.

"Yes, I see children in my future, I always have."

Josie sat back in her chair. "Well, that's certainly something for the two of you to chat about."

"And we will," Anna concluded as she took Heather's hand and smiled at her. She turned back to Josie, "It's not like we have to worry about Heather accidentally falling pregnant." She felt a reassuring squeeze of her hand from Heather.

"Lunch," Glen declared, happy to move proceedings along. He served each of them a large slab of vegetable Lasagne.

"There is a bean salad and crusty olive bread on the table. The Parmesan there is vegetarian."

"We're vegan's, Glen cooks most of what we eat. He made everything we are having today, including the bread."

Anna now understood why Josie had acted the way she did when they had arrived. They had handed her dead flowers and a dead animal. She clamped her jaws shut to prevent her laughter bubbling up.

"As you can see, I have swapped one addiction for another, but this one is better for me. I'm at the local health food shop buying fresh ingredients almost everyday."

"I've been a vegan since I was a teenager, Glen decided to join me and has never looked back."

"I hope you don't mind the lack of meat." Glen remarked.

"It's never been a problem for me." Anna said with a grin on her face.

Glen laughed, while Josie and Heather just looked puzzled.

"Well, what do you think?" Heather asked as they made their way back to Anna's flat.

"I like Glen and little Lilly is adorable, but the jury is out on string bean."

"Anna, don't be petty." Heather tried to remain serious as she told Anna off.

"Okay, Josie then, but I remain to be convinced."

"Well, in truth, I have to agree with you. They want to eventually meet mum and dad. Josie and Mum are never going to get along."

"Not in a million years."

"You don't have to sound so happy about it."

"Sorry."

"No you're not."

"True."

Heather smiled indulgently at Anna. "Did you enjoy the afternoon?"

Anna concentrated on the road ahead. "I did. Even the verbal sparring with Josie, I liked that too."

"So you don't dislike her?"

"Hmm, no, not dislike. Obviously as people, Josie and myself are very different, but I don't see that as a problem. On the other hand, I don't think we are ever going to be best buddies either. What's important is her part in Glen's life and they seem to have a solid relationship."

Heather nodded, "They do, I like that."

"Not forgetting that food. Your brother can cook. I never imagined that vegan food could taste so wonderful. That lasagne, I wanted to ask if I could take the leftovers home with me."

"It really was a lovely meal. I'll ask for the recipe and cook it for you sometime."

Anna beamed a hundred-watt smile at Heather, before turning back to concentrate on the driving. "Thanks."

## **CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR**

"I am going to miss you so much."

Anna hugged Heather as they stood together on the platform of the Queen Street train station. Heather's train would be departing for Aberdeen in ten minutes.

"I'm going to miss you too."

"I wish you had let me drive you home."

"Anna, it's a six hour round trip, I just think it's too soon, I would be worried about you."

"I know, but still."

"I'll be home in less than three hours, I'll call you when I get there."

"Thank you so much for spending the week with me."

"I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else."

She kissed Heather on the cheek, wanting so much more. Her mind was screaming the words *'Please don't go'* but she knew Heather had to get back home. People were boarding the train and their time was running out. Anna looked around nervously, uncertain if her next move would be received well by Heather. She needn't have worried; Heather laid the palm of her hand on Anna's cheek and kissed her softly. The both lost track of where they were, only interested in each other as they kissed passionately on platform twenty-three, in full view of everyone.

"Well I never!"

Anna looked behind Heather to find a woman in her late fifties staring at them, a look of disgust on her face.

"I'm sure you haven't, but you don't know what you're missing."

The woman tutted and looked away and Anna turned her attention back to Heather. "Don't mind her, she probably hasn't been laid in years."

Heather laughed, "Behave."

They shared a long look, one full of passion, want and promise. Heather sighed, "I have to go."

Anna nodded and picked up Heather's bag, there wasn't much in it, but she had accumulated a small amount of possessions whilst in Glasgow.

"I'll call you."

Anna nodded and they walked towards the train.

"Take care of yourself, Anna."

"I will, you too."

Heather took her bag from Anna and turned to board the train, only to be stopped by a hand on her arm. Heather dropped her bag and they kissed again. Anna's hand moving into Heather's hair, she didn't want to let her go.

"I love you."

Anna looked stunned by her own words, but Heather smiled her delight.

"I love you too."

They kissed once more, but time had run out.

"My train."

"I know, go."

Heather grabbed her bag and boarded the train. Anna watched as she found a seat, the train was already starting to pull away. Heather waved and blew her a kiss, and then she was gone.

Anna reversed her car into her parking spot opposite her building. It was already getting dark as she sat in her car staring at the spot where she had been assaulted just over a week ago. She wasn't looking forward to going home now that Heather was gone. Anna unclipped her seatbelt, but changed her mind; removing her mobile phone from her pocket instead.

"Hi, it's Anna, are you busy?"

*"No, not really, what's up?"*

"Just looking for a little company. Do you mind if I come over?"

*"Not at all."*

"I'll bring some food, Chinese okay?"

*"Great, see you soon."*

Pete opened his front door to let her in and found Anna holding up the bag of Chinese food. "King Prawn Chow Mein, a portion of barbeque spare ribs and prawn crackers."

"Oh, my favourite."

"I remembered." Anna replied as she walked into his living room.

Pete grinned, "You'll make someone a good wife."

"Do you want to wear this or eat it?"

He laughed, "I'll get some plates."

Anna looked around the living room and something caught her eye, there was a hair clip on the bookcase.

Pete returned with plates and cutlery, "How are you feeling?"

"Not bad," Anna looked towards the hair clip, "You get lucky?"

Pete shrugged, "It's Mary's."

"So, you persuaded her to sleep with you?"

Pete finished his bite of spare rib. "Actually we're kind of seeing each other."

Anna raised her eyebrows. "Dating? I didn't think that was your style."

"It wasn't yours either."

"Touché."

They ate in silence for a few minutes.

"You gave us all a scare."

"Apparently so."

"Davidson knows about Heather by the way."

Anna nodded, "Okay, she said she met him." She put a forkful of chicken and rice into her mouth.

"No, I mean he knows exactly who she is. As in, the ex fiancée of a previous suspect."

Anna stopped chewing and stared at Pete. "Shit."

"Exactly."

"That's one conversation I'm not looking forward to having."

"Sorry, Anna, when he heard Greg and Heather were from Havensburgh, there was no denying it. He bloody cornered me in the hospital, demanding answers."

"No need to apologise, Pete. If I hadn't been assaulted, he would have been none the wiser."

"That was my thinking exactly."

"Well, I will face the music tomorrow."

Pete looked confused. "You're coming back tomorrow? Is that not a bit too soon?"

"Heather has gone home. What would you have me do, sit around my flat all day thinking about what happened?"

"I see your point."

"Do you?" She held eye contact with him.

"Aye, I do."

"Did Davidson, you know, make you see anybody?"

Pete nodded, "He will refer you and make it clear you have to go."

"How did you find it?"

"Helpful."

Anna nodded, "You know what it's like, if you go you are thought of as not being up to the job."

"I didn't have a choice and neither will you. This isn't self-referral and it's confidential."

"Yeah, I suppose."

"Anna, what we've gone through isn't easy, and I know talking it through isn't for everyone, but if it's helpful, you should make the most of it."

"I'm finding it tough to walk out of my building, how stupid is that?" The frustration was evident in her voice.

"Not stupid at all considering someone tried to murder you there just a few days ago."

"When you put it like that."

"That's the cold hard fact."

Anna had eaten enough and sat back from her food. "Doesn't bear thinking about too much, does it?"

"I'm with you on that."

Anna sighed, "Well I'm off home, I'll see you tomorrow."

"You not going to finish that?" Pete pointed to her lemon chicken with fried rice.

"Help yourself but, I have to say, you might want to watch the waist line a bit closer."

Pete frowned and looked down at his stomach. "Cheeky bitch."

Anna laughed, "I'll see myself out. Oh, you don't happen to know of a good tobacconist, do you?"

"Yeah, St Vincent Street. What do you want a tobacconist for?"

"To say thank you to a Good Samaritan." She stood to leave, "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yeah, oh and Anna."

"What?"

"You're bald."

She could still hear him laughing as she closed his front door.

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Heather parked in front of her parent's house, she had decided that there was no time like the present. She had taken a taxi home from the station, dropped her bags off and driven straight there in her car.

"Hi, girl, I've missed you." Heather received her usual welcome from the golden retriever. She bent down to rub Milly's shiny coat. "Aren't you beautiful."

"Heather, is that you?"

Agnes Keith appeared in the hallway. "Where on earth have you been? No word from you, just a

quick call to say you would be gone for a few days!"

Heather gave the dog one final pat. "Let's go through to the sitting room."

Her mother gave her a puzzled look and followed.

"Hi, Heather, how are you?"

"I'm good thanks, Dad."

"She is just about to tell us just what on earth she has been up to."

Heather took a seat on the sofa opposite her parents, who were both looking at her expectantly.

"I was in Glasgow looking after Anna."

Malcolm Keith registered his acknowledgement straight away, but his wife was puzzled.

"Anna?" she questioned, and then it dawned on her, "The policewoman?"

"Yes."

"Why would you be looking after her?"

"She was attacked last Friday and received a nasty blow to the head. I stayed in Glasgow for the week to make sure she would be okay."

Mrs. Keith was still puzzled. "But why would *you* be looking after *her*?"

"Because I love her." Heather stated simply as she dropped the bombshell.

"What?" Her mother stated, the word came out in a stunned croak.

"I'm in love with her, Mum."

Agnes Keith turned to her husband and muttered his name helplessly. "Malcolm."

He in turn looked at her with a mixture of sadness and practised patience. "Agnes, the girls have settled their differences. Heather can't pick and choose who she falls in love with and she has fallen for Anna."

"But she is a woman!"

Malcolm Keith nodded, "Yes and that is something you will have to learn to accept and respect."

"You knew!" Agnes Keith accused.

"I knew Heather had feelings for Anna, yes."

"I don't believe this! How can you be so calm and accepting? Your daughter is a lesbian!"

"Our daughter is a lesbian," He replied forcefully, much to his wife's shock.

Agnes Keith had a face like thunder, but he waited her out.

"You approve!"

"Yes, I do."

"But it's wrong, Malcolm." She stated, pleading with him.

He shook his head, "I disagree, I've never understood the problem people have with same sex relationships. I think it's small minded."

Heather was surprised to hear her father make such a judgmental statement, but she was glad he had. It was so unlike him, he was always so diplomatic but, on this issue, he clearly had something to say. She watched as her mother sat slack-jawed staring at her husband. In that moment Heather made a decision, she didn't want to have to go through all this again when she told them about Glen, it might as well all come out now.

"There is something else I have to tell you both."

Agnes Keith looked fearfully at her daughter. "What else could there possibly be?" She thought for a moment, "Are you pregnant?"

"No."

Heather took a deep breath, the look of concern on her face made Malcolm Keith move closer to his wife, fearful of how she might react to whatever Heather had to say. He himself was perplexed.

Heather swallowed nervously, and then spoke. "On Saturday, I had lunch with Glen...my brother."

Agnes Keith paled so quickly Heather thought she might faint. The woman sat back as if someone had landed a physical blow to her face, She looked absolutely shocked. Malcolm Keith had a look on his face Heather had never witnessed before.

"Goodness, that is a piece of news." Malcolm Keith ran his hand over his neat, thinning hair, showing a rare lapse in composure.

Heather looked cautiously at both her parents. She was biting her bottom lip, knowing this news was an awful lot for them both to take in, but she couldn't keep it from them.

"How?" Agnes Keith muttered.

Heather cleared her throat. "Anna came across Glen as part of an investigation."

"I don't want to know." She cut Heather off immediately.

"Mum, it's not what you think. Glen has got his life together."

"Then why would a drug officer be talking to him?" She accused.

"I don't know the details, but it was to do with something in his past."

"Tell us more, Heather." Malcolm Keith requested.

Heather nodded, "Glen has been clean for over ten years. He has a partner, Josie, she is a social worker." Heather paused, becoming a little emotional. "They have a daughter, Lilly, she is absolutely adorable."

"I'm a grandmother?"

"Yes."

Agnes turned to look at her husband, "I'm a grandmother. We're grandparents."

Malcolm Keith nodded and smiled at his wife, who began to cry.

Heather watched as the floodgates finally opened. Her mother was sobbing in her husband's arms. She went over to the sofa and sat on the other side of her mother.

"I know there will be a lot more to talk about, but I'll leave you both to have some time to think about what I've told you. Give me a call and if I don't see you before, I'll be over on Wednesday as usual for dinner." Heather rubbed her mum's back and laid a gentle kiss on her cheek. "I love you both."

Agnes Keith was too upset to respond, but Malcolm Keith looked up at his daughter. "I'll call you tomorrow, Heather, we love you too."

[Concluded...](#)

## ~ Innocent Catch ~

by weebod

**DISCLAIMER:** [See Part 1](#)

**FEEDBACK:** If you enjoy the story please let me know: [weebod@mac.com](mailto:weebod@mac.com)

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### CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

Anna stood at the bottom of her stairwell looking out at what she had come to think of in her mind as 'The spot'. She wanted to take her time and not rush out, like she had been. Running from the problem she was facing. *'I can do this, no one is going to leap out and hit me.'*

"Morning."

Anna almost jumped out of her skin. "Jesus, you nearly gave me a heart attack."

"Sorry." Anna's neighbour held out his hand. "I'm Gordon, Gordon Galloway. I was the one who found you."

Anna shook his hand. "Pleased to meet you and thanks."

"Still a bit jumpy, I'm not surprised. It was quite a blow you took."

Anna subconsciously rubbed the back of her head. "Yeah." She shrugged, "I guess it will take a little time to get over it."

Gordon smiled, "I shouldn't imagine too much longer."

"You're a doctor, right?"

Gordon nodded, "Accident and Emergency."

"Wasn't that handy?"

Gordon shrugged, "I got a lift to work out of it."

"So you were with me all the way?"

"Yes."

"You're not going to tell me how lucky I am?"

"We all have our near misses. I just happened to be around to help with yours. I'm guessing you have helped with others?"

"True." They shared a smile. "Can I give you a lift somewhere?"

"I'm on my way to work, I was planning to walk."

"It's pouring with rain, I could drop you off?"

"Okay, thanks."

Anna pointed her keys at her car and pressed for the locks to open. They both ran over to the Audi and got in.

"I didn't realise the rain was so heavy." Gordon brushed the raindrops from his short dark hair.

Anna looked at the sky, seeing nothing but dark grey. "I don't think it's going to let up any time soon." She started the engine and began the short trip to the hospital.

"I'm sorry I wasn't able to be of more help identifying your attacker."

"Not to worry, they identified him from CCTV. He was someone I had a run in with years ago, seems he held a grudge for a long time."

"And you're okay, no headaches or dizzy spells?"

Anna smiled at Gordon, "Honestly, I'm fine."

"Good, that's good."

Anna pulled up in front of the Accident and Emergency department. "Here we are."

"Thanks, Detective."

"It's Anna, and thank you for all you did for me."

Gordon nodded and unclipped his seatbelt, hesitating. "Would you like to grab a coffee sometime?"

Anna thought for a moment, she always found these situations a little awkward. "If I told you I have a girlfriend, would you still want to go for coffee?"

"Ah, that does change things a little." Gordon looked chagrined.

Anna smiled, "I'll see you around, Gordon."

He opened the car door and got out. "Thanks, Anna, take care."

Anna sat at her desk in Strathclyde CID headquarters. It was a little after eight in the morning and the place was quiet. She sipped her coffee as she looked around the space, smiling as she thought about Doctor Gordon Galloway asking her out. She doubted he would have many women turn him down, he was handsome, just not her type, she was sure the nurses were all in love with him at the hospital.

"Anna, good to see you back."

She looked up and saw her boss walk past her. "Morning, Sir."

"My office in five minutes."

"Okay."

He wasn't hanging about, she thought to herself. She watched as he hung up his raincoat and started his coffee machine. She thought about Gordon Galloway's question. '*Any headaches or dizzy spells?*' She hadn't been completely honest, she was still suffering headaches, but they were lessening in severity as the days passed. She felt as though her head was still jumbled up inside from the blow, leaving everything feeling slightly off-kilter. Her hand again went to the back of her head where she rubbed her scar, feeling the soft bristle of the new grown hair that was now covering it. She glanced back into Davidson's office, only to find him scrutinising her with a keen eye. He motioned for her to come in.

"Close the door, Anna and take a seat."

She did as he requested.

"Are you sure you're well enough for work?"

"Yes, Boss. I'll take it easy for a few days."

He nodded, playing with the pen in his hand, twisting it as he contemplated her. He signed a form in front of him, and then handed it to her.

"Just go. You turn up and that's all I need to know."

Anna looked at the form; it was a referral for counselling services.

"It's mandatory after what happened."

"I understand."

He sat back in his chair and Anna assumed he was finished. She stood from her chair to leave.

"Eh, not so fast." He waited until she sat back down. "Heather Keith, tell me what happened there."

Anna sighed, "As you know I befriended her to find out more about her fiancé. We became good friends, but I remained professional, nothing happened whilst Greg Moir was a suspect, I swear. Actually, Boss, nothing happened between us until three weeks ago when..."

"Right, Lynch. I'm not asking for the details of your love life!"

"Sorry, Sir."

Davidson shook his head. "I never expected this from you."

Anna looked contrite and held her tongue.

"She's a nice lassie, I'll say that much. Better for you than that daughter of mine."

Anna looked surprised.

"What? You think I don't know anything? I didn't make DCI by keeping my eyes shut."

"I know, Sir, sorry."

Davidson shook his head, "Go on, get out of here."

"Thanks, Sir."

He watched her leave before picking up his pen to sign more forms.

Pete looked over at Anna, as she walked straight back to her desk after leaving Davidson's office.

"Alright, Anna, how are you feeling?"

"I'm okay, Pete, thanks."

"How did it go with Davidson?"

"Not bad all things considered. I'll tell you this though, not much gets past him."

"Yeah I know, I've already had the dressing down about departmental romances."

Anna rolled her eyes, "What are you working on?"

"I'm co-ordinating Operation Cannonball. It's one of those high visibility procedures. We make a big song and dance about arresting a few small time dealers. The media will be invited along to film and take pictures. It makes the evening news and everyone thinks we are winning the battle for a little while. Good public relations, but really a waste of our time."

"I hate that stuff."

Pete rubbed the back of his neck. "You don't want in on it do you?"

"You have got to be kidding."

"Och, come on, Anna, you don't have anything else happening at the moment."

"Will it involve any weekend work?"

Pete frowned, "I wouldn't think so."

"Okay I'm in, unless something else comes up."

"Great."

Lunchtime found Anna driving up St Vincent Street looking for the tobacconist Pete had recommended. Spotting it she pulled into the side of the road, much to the annoyance of the driver of the car behind her who beeped loudly. Ignoring him, she parked and got out of her car making her way quickly into the shop.

There was a smartly dressed elderly man behind the counter. "May I help?"

Anna removed the empty packet of tobacco from her pocket and put it on the counter top. "Do you sell this brand?"

"Oh yes, it's very popular. Now we have the Mac Baren Gold Blend in the packet or a tin. Do you have a preference?"

Anna considered the question. "What keeps best?"

"Ahh, now, there is a question. The reality is, it all depends on the smoker. Some like their tobacco dry, whilst others prefer it moist."

"I'll stick with the pouch then, as I have no idea."

"A wise choice. Is it just the one?"

"No, I'll take three pouches, thanks."

"Very good."

The elderly tobacconist put three pouches of pipe tobacco into a brown paper bag. "That will be £29.91 please?"

Anna gave him thirty pounds and waited on her change. He handed it to her along with the bag full of tobacco.

"That's nine pence change."

"Thank you."

"Come again now."

Anna returned to the station just after lunch feeling only a little bit better than she had earlier that morning. Her mood was flat and she couldn't quite shake the blackness that seemed to be hovering over her.

"Where have you been?" Pete leaned back in his chair, stretching.

"Shopping. I went to the tobacconist you recommended."

"What is with that any way? Is it for the doctor who helped you?"

Anna laughed, "No, but I did give him a lift into the Royal Infirmary this morning."

"Yeah?"

"He asked me out on a date."

Pete laughed. "I wish I had been there."

"I handled it well I thought."

"Yeah right, did you stare at him until he squirmed?"

"No, I told him I had a girlfriend. I was nice."

Pete looked disbelievingly at her.

"I was!"

"Sure you were, so who is the tobacco for?"

Anna laughed, "It's really getting to you isn't it, not knowing?"

Pete rolled his eyes, "Yes, I admit it, now tell me."

"It's for Finlay, the old guy who helped me find my way out of the woods. The one who helped save your life?"

"Oh yeah, the mysterious Finlay. The boss thinks he was an apparition."

"So does Lesley, but he is real and I'm going to find him."

"If you do, tell him I will be forever grateful."

"I will."

"Anna, maybe I could meet him sometime?"

"Sure, I'll mention it to him."

Pete drummed his fingers on his desk. "You really think you can find him?"

"I'm going in the daytime. Should be easier to spot his place."

"Take a compass." Pete suggested.

"Yeah, I'll..."

Anna's voice trailed off as she caught sight of her boss through the open blinds of his office. Pete turned to look at what had grabbed her attention.

"He looks like he's about to have a heart attack."

"Something is up." Anna felt this was bad. She watched as Davidson took his phone and slammed it against the wall. "Shit, I wonder what's happened." She looked at Pete who shrugged.

Detective Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson sat dejectedly in his chair and stared out the window. He didn't move.

"Go see what's happened?"

"You go, you're the one that always has to know everything."

"You're the DI, it should be you, next in the chain of command and all that."

Anna had a bad feeling about this. "Maybe we should just wait, I don't want to get hit with a flying phone."

At that point Davidson turned and looked straight at her. Anna held eye contact with him, then started to walk towards his office.

"Everything okay, Sir?"

"No. Jim Wallace is missing."

"Missing?"

Davidson raised his voice. "As in, vanished from the safe house he has been living in."

"Without him we have nothing."

"Don't I bloody know it! Our entire case was pinned on his testimony against Lachlan Brown."

Anna sat in the chair opposite her boss. "Foul play?"

Davidson was staring at a blank spot on the wall. "I'm never going to get that bastard." He fumed through gritted teeth.

Anna asked again, "Do you suspect foul play?"

"Doesn't look like it, but I'll bet that bastard was behind it."

This really was bad news, "What now?"

"I don't know, our main witness is missing and he could be anywhere."

"We could try talking to Mark McLaren, see if he will turn state's witness?"

"We could," Davidson agreed, "but with his son involved, I don't see him giving up Brown."

"On the other hand, he could be out sooner if he does give him up."

Davidson sighed. "It's worth a try I suppose."

"Why would Wallace disappear now? It doesn't make sense."

"I don't know. We have been running around in circles from the start on this case." Davidson held up his index finger to press home his point. "Lachlan Brown has always been one step

ahead of us."

"It still doesn't make sense, Wallace disappearing now."

"We're going to end up with nothing from this."

"Well we do have the heroin we seized and a dirty cop. If McLaren had remained in the department who knows what else he could have done." Anna tried to rationalise the situation.

"Aye, that's true." Davidson had a faraway look in his eye. "All we can do is hope that Wallace turns up."

"Where was he?"

"A safe house in Edinburgh."

"Any bodies turn up there today?"

"I'm waiting to hear back."

Anna removed her mobile phone from her pocket and looked up her contacts. She pressed the number she wanted and waited for an answer.

*"Anderson?"*

"This is Detective Inspector Lynch from Strathclyde. Have you got any unidentified bodies there today? Specifically a white male early fifties?"

*"Business I see, someone with you?"*

"Yes."

*"There was a jumper early this morning who fits your description. No suspicious circumstances."*

"There could be if he turns out to be our main witness in an up and coming drugs' trial."

*"You want to come and have a look at him?"*

"Yes."

*"Give me a call when you get near Edinburgh, I'll meet you at the morgue. If it is your witness, I'll need details to investigate further."*

"Okay, I'll be leaving in the next few minutes, see you soon."

Anna ended the call and turned to her expectant boss. "An, as yet, unidentified jumper in

Edinburgh who could fit Wallace's description."

"Let's go then."

Anna was doing eighty miles an hour east bound along the M8 towards Edinburgh.

"Who will we be meeting?"

"Detective Inspector Maddie Anderson."

"You make one call and here we are chasing our strongest lead whilst those bastards I spoke to still haven't got back to me. Bloody useless idiots."

"It's just luck that I happen to know a detective in the Lothian and Borders murder squad who makes it her business to know everything going on in the city, and the prospect of a murder case will always get her interested."

When Anna made the call s they approached Edinburgh, Maddie arranged to meet her at the entrance to the morgue in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. She was already there when Anna and Davidson arrived.

"Detective Inspector Maddie Anderson, this is Chief Inspector Bruce Davidson."

The pair shook hands and Maddie led them into the morgue, giving details as they walked. "He was found this morning, at about six-thirty, by a woman walking her dog at the foot of Salisbury Crag. It's a popular spot for dog walkers...and jumpers."

The mortician had the body ready for Anna and Bruce Davidson to view; as the tray was pulled open they waited with baited breath until the face came into view.

"That's him. Bloody hell!" Davidson cursed.

Anna was more philosophical. "Well at least we know what's happened to him." She turned to Maddie, "When's the post-mortem?"

"I'll ask for it to be done as soon as possible. Now that we know there are suspicious circumstances we will want to determine the exact cause of death as soon as we can."

"I'm betting he was dead before he hit the ground." Davidson declared.

"He could have been pushed off the cliff, whilst still alive." Anna speculated.

"Or it could be a suicide. The post-mortem will tell us." Maddie stated coolly. "Tell me what you know about him?"

Anna began to fill Maddie in on some of the details whilst Davidson took another look at the body. Whatever the cause of death, their case was all but over.

"I'll get back to you as soon as I have the results of the post-mortem. If there is any hint of foul play, we may be looking at a joint investigation. I know that your witness turning up dead may well end your case, but if this becomes a murder enquiry, you may still get some kind of result."

"Lachlan Brown would never dirty his own hands, but we will give you everything you need to assist your investigation."

"Good enough."

"Thank you, Anderson"

"I'll call you with the results, Sir."

Davidson was already walking from the morgue; no longer interested in anything it held.

Maddie turned her full attention on Anna. "Congratulations on the promotion."

"Thanks, Maddie. How are you keeping?"

"I'm well, and you, have you sorted out your previous problem, or are you looking for some more assistance?"

Anna smiled, "I ah, I'm getting all the help I need with that."

Maddie raised an elegant eyebrow. "Really?"

"Ah, yeah, seems she feels the same way."

"Lucky you or, should I say, lucky her."

"I'm the lucky one."

"Indeed."

"Thanks for your help today, Maddie."

"Anytime, Anna."

## CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

"Thanks, George."

"There are a couple of nice ones on the market, I can get you a good price. One in particular you might be interested in. Just a couple of years younger than Bessie."

"Bessie?"

George Robertson looked embarrassed and Anna couldn't believe it. Standing there in his oil stained overalls with an oily rag in his hand.

"Ah, well you see, I'm very fond of her. I named her Bessie a few years back. I don't know why, the name just seemed to fit." He ran his hand over the bonnet of the Land Rover, and then gave it a solid pat.

"You know, George, I think I am in the market for one."

"Oh, you won't regret it, Anna."

"Can I leave you to pick one up for me?"

"Absolutely, would be my pleasure. I'll make sure you get the best deal and of course, I will check it over myself, it will be running good as new."

"What kind of price are we talking?"

"With all the bodywork done and a fresh paint job?"

Anna nodded.

"Will cost you less than three thousand."

"Does that include your bill?"

George smiled. "I'll work with the budget of three thousand, that should cover my time as well."

"You will be sure to let me know if it comes to more?" Anna wanted to be certain that George would be fair to himself.

"I will, but it won't." He stated confidently.

"Thanks, George. Is early Monday morning okay to return, ah, Bessie?"

"Perfect, Anna, you have a great weekend."

Anna was taking the day off work, not that her boss minded, the week had turned into a nightmare for them. Jim Wallace's death appeared to be suicide. DI Anderson said she would make enquiries, but Anna wasn't holding out much hope for any more information. Jim Wallace was dead and so was their case. There wasn't much going on at the moment so making an early start to the weekend made sense and Davidson had readily agreed, telling her he was fed up looking at her miserable face. She had to laugh; the man didn't pull any punches. He was right though, she had been miserable all week and, as she began her journey North, it was no surprise to her that she felt her mood lift with each passing mile.

Anna parked on the grass verge at the side of the A92. She was sure this was the spot where Finlay had asked the Montrose police to stop the car; he had then disappeared into the woodland. There was a gap in the trees on the other side of the road and Anna contemplated driving through it. Now that she was here her plan seemed crazy, but she just knew Finlay was in there, despite the peculiarity of the situation. She grabbed her binoculars and compass from her rucksack and stood on the bonnet of the Land Rover. Peering through the trees and over some of the treetops seemed fruitless, she couldn't see any kind of building, but something else caught her eye. She looked more closely and was sure she saw smoke. Anna pointed the compass in that direction and took a reading. She intended to take the Land Rover off road and drive straight to the source of the fire. It seemed as good a plan as any.

After a ten-minute drive, Anna came across a stone building in a clearing and she instinctively knew this was Finlay's home. Exiting the vehicle, she walked towards the house. She heard a dog barking then saw a Border collie come into view, just before Finlay himself opened the door. *'I bloody well knew he was real'*, she reassured herself, but a small part of her was relieved to know she hadn't been losing her mind.

Anna waved. "How are you, Finlay?"

He scrutinised her for a moment as she continued to walk towards him. "Ah, Detective Anna. Come away in. Don't mind, Gus, he has a mind o' his own."

"He wasn't with you the last time we met."

"He usually stays around the house, Like a' said, he has a mind o' his own. Pleases himself. Always lets me know when a'body is approachin' though."

Anna followed Finlay inside the house while Gus remained outside. There was a roaring fire in the hearth, with a pile of cut wood waiting to be added.

"Tea, Anna?"

"Please, Finlay, if it's not too much trouble."

"Nae trouble at aw'."

Finlay lifted a kettle that was sitting by the fire keeping warm. "So to whit dae I owe the pleasure?"

Anna smiled at Finlay. "Maybe I just had to make sure you were real."

He let out a hearty laugh. "It wouldnae' be the first time."

"Also, I brought you a little something."

Finlay frowned. "Oh, an' whit would that be?"

Anna removed the pouches of tobacco from her rucksack and handed them to him.

He opened the bag with a curious look, before eyeing Anna suspiciously. "An' how did ye ken whit to be getting' me?"

"Nothing too mysterious, Finlay. There was an empty pouch of that brand lying in the Land Rover, I guessed it was yours."

"Much appreciated. Thank you, Anna. And how is t'other one? An dare a' ask, the shooter?"

"Pete has made a really good recovery, he is back on full duty. The shooter was found dead at the bottom of a cliff on Monday. An apparent suicide."

"You dinnae think so?"

"Can't be sure, Finlay, but he was a vital witness to us."

"A pity then."

"You could say." Anna sipped her tea and grimaced; it was like tar.

"Puts hairs on yer chest."

"No disrespect, Finlay, but I'm not looking for any. How on earth do you drink that?"

"So long as it's hot an' sweet, it's guid enough."

Anna could tell Finlay was a proud and independent man, but there was no denying he was getting on in years. She had questions, but knew she would have to tread carefully.

"You manage fine out here on your own?"

"I do, an I'm no' lookin' fur any change."

"I understand. Do you get many visitors?"

Finlay nodded, "Aye, two or three a week."

"Could you stand another?"

"Aye, if she is a non interfering one." He warned.

Anna smiled, Finlay was quite the character. "She will be."

"Giud, cause I'll no have a'body meddling in ma' business."

"Understood. Oh, Pete would like to meet you sometime, I don't think he believes you exist."

"Bring him by. No much fun being shot, fresh air will dae him good."

Anna watched as Finlay's steady, but gnarled hand raised a chipped, white enamel cup to his lips.

"Did you never marry, Finlay?"

Finlay got a far away look in is eye, the ghost of a smile crossing his lips. "I wis engaged tae be married when I left for the front. A lovely lassie she was."

"What happened?"

"I didn't come back the man I was when I left."

"The war affect you badly?"

Finlay looked at Anna for a full minute, but she kept eye contact with him, despite finding his scrutiny a little uncomfortable.

"I saw many things in the war. I also killed because it was a case of kill or be killed. The smell o' rotting flesh, the noise, the filth an' squalor, I saw it all. War is a nasty business, but a necessary one. Killing a man, taking the life o' anith'r human being, it was almost ma' undoing, but I coped, after a' fashion. That wisnae whit did fur me tho', Anna. I was captured, became a' prisoner o' war. I tried tae escape and was punished. When a' got back home, I was of nae use tae her as a man. She wanted to go ahead wi' the wedding, but a' couldn't. She married somebody else."

Anna was struggling to get her head around what Finlay had told her. Castration, it was just so bloody awful. She had heard of this, but to see a man sitting in front of her, who had actually gone through such a thing, Anna could understand why he would remove himself from society.

"I'm so very sorry, Finlay."

He shook his head, "Was a long time ago."

Anna couldn't say exactly why, but she found herself opening up to Finlay, most likely because he had been so honest with her. "I know what it's like to kill a man."

"When a' looked at ye, I could see it in yer eyes. The sorrow an' regret."

Anna nodded, "It changes something fundamental inside you."

"That it does, lass."

"I was acquitted of any wrong doing, it was ruled accidental, but I never told anyone, I *wanted* to kill him. I was in such a blind rage, I can never be sure what really happened."

"We are capable o' things we could never imagine, but in a certain set o' circumstances, things change."

Anna nodded; she knew exactly what Finlay was taking about.

"Do ye have a man in yer life, Anna?"

"No, Finlay, I have a woman."

He looked at her as he thought about her answer. "Oh, now there's a thing." Finlay nodded to himself. "Makes sense, yer too much fur any man tae handle, yer a free spirit, Detective Anna, an a' reckon a woman will gie ye the freedom ye need."

"I think you could be right, Finlay."

Anna left Finlay's house and drove the short distance back to the main road; she was very much looking forward to reaching her final destination.

As the last few miles passed by, Anna felt her anticipation heighten and, when at last she saw the sign for Havensburgh, she couldn't keep the smile from her face. Taking a right turn, she drove down into the village and headed straight for Heather's cottage. It was almost winter now and, with no passing tourist trade now that summer was over, the village was visibly quieter.

Anna parked in front of the cottage. She knew Greg wasn't around, so that was no longer a concern. Heather had told her he had made arrangements to move out. Anna hadn't asked for any more details, but she was admittedly happy that Heather and Greg were finalising the last remaining facets of their relationship.

Anna knocked on the front door and waited. She had arrived earlier than arranged, hoping to

surprise Heather. She looked at her watch; she had said she would drive up after work, which meant Heather wouldn't be expecting her until almost nine p.m. It was now just after one. She knocked again and waited, but it seemed Heather wasn't home. Anna sighed, lamenting the loss of her surprise. She unlocked the keypad on her mobile phone and called Heather on hers.

*"Hi, Anna!"*

Heather sounded happy to hear from her, Anna smiled, "Where are you?"

*"At work, sorting out the upcoming month's activities."*

"Are you alone?"

*"Ahh, yes. I'm alone. Why?"*

"No reason. Do you plan to be at work much longer?"

Anna waited; Heather was obviously wondering where this conversation was leading.

*"I was planning to work for another hour or so, why?"*

Anna could hear the smile in Heather's voice despite the blonde's suspicions. "No reason, I'll see you later then?"

*"Looking forward to it."*

"Bye."

Heather stared at her phone wondering about the strange call she had just received. Shaking her head she continued with her work on the up and coming calendar of events.

Anna got back into the Land Rover and drove the short distance to the local grocer's shop. She chose a bunch of the flowers that were on display outside and entered the shop.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey eyed her cautiously from behind the counter. In her excitement Anna had all but forgotten that she was *persona non grata* in the village. Taking a deep breath she steeled herself and walked confidently to the counter.

"Hi."

"Will that be all?" Mr. Ramsey obviously wasn't in the mood for small talk.

"Yes, just the flowers."

"Four pounds ninety-nine pence, please."

Anna handed him ten pounds and waited for her change. He gave her the money without further comment.

"Thank you." Despite the obvious hostility towards her, Anna remained courteous.

Anna entered the community centre, pleased to be back. She peeked in at Heather, who had her back to her, working at the computer.

"Be with you in just a moment," Heather called out, before finishing off whatever it was she was working on. She swivelled round in her work chair to greet her visitor, a smile already on her face, which quickly turned into a look of genuine surprise. "Anna!"

Heather jumped straight out of her chair and ran across to Anna. They hugged tightly, both delighted to see each other again.

"I missed you," Anna said as she inhaled the scent of Heather's perfume. She then took the blonde's lips in a long passionate kiss that left them both a little breathless.

"I, ah, got you some flowers." Anna handed the slightly crushed bouquet to Heather, who just beamed her delight. She wouldn't have cared if they had been weeds.

Anna was stunned when her lips were taken in a hard kiss.

"Wow, do you have to stay and work?"

"No, let me shut the computer down and lock up."

"You have the Land Rover?"

"Yeah, it belongs to a friend of my boss. He loaned it to me for the weekend. I had to make a stop on the way up here. It meant going off road, so I needed this." Anna thought for a moment. "Have you heard of an old guy called Finlay? He lives in a wooded area about ten miles from here."

"Yes, but I've never met him."

"That's who I went to see. The night when everything happened and Pete ended up getting shot, I was frantically trying to find my way out of the woods to get him to a hospital. It was Finlay who came to my rescue. He is a remarkable person."

"Well that puts paid to the rumour that he passed away."

"He is very much alive, trust me. I feel like it's a privilege that he has granted me permission to

drop in on him now and again. He made it clear that it was only on the condition that I didn't meddle in any of his business. The feisty old codger."

"My dad knows Finlay, but he never tells my mum anything about him despite her questions. He is the stuff of rumour and legend around here."

Anna smiled, "I can see why after meeting him. Words of warning though, if you ever get the opportunity, say no to the tea. It's ghastly."

Heather laughed, "I'll keep that in mind."

Anna parked in front of Heather's cottage. She took her rucksack and the pair went inside. Heather immediately went for a vase to put her flowers in, while Anna looked around the cottage. Everything was as it had been before, with the exception of a couple of photographs that had shown Heather and Greg in each other's arms, smiling. Heather returned to the sitting room and put the vase of flowers in the window.

"They are beautiful, thank you."

Anna looked at Heather, they had so much to talk about, but all she really wanted to do in that moment was make love to her. Anna didn't know if Heather read the look on her face, or if she simply wanted the exact same thing, but she found herself being manoeuvred down onto the sofa with Heather following her. With urgent hands, they divested each other of all clothing, desperate to reconnect after a week apart. As they lay in each others arms, sweating and breathing heavily, Anna knew she wanted Heather in her life completely, she doubted she could ever get enough of her.

Heather laughed as she looked at the clothes strewn around the floor. She made a half-hearted attempt to pick them up, but Anna had other ideas and pulled her back onto the sofa.

"Don't waste your time doing that," she declared as she captured Heather in yet another passionate kiss, which led to them making out on the sofa again.

"Wait, I have a better idea."

"You do?" Anna's raised eyebrow suggested she was more than intrigued.

Heather took her hand and the pair walked naked to the bedroom, which was lit by a solitary lamp. Anna closed the door behind them before wrestling Heather to the bed, while declaring that she was about to ravage her, much to the blonde's delight.

"God, I love you." Anna took Heather's lips in a hard fast kiss before moving to her breasts. She sucked them fervently, the nipples hardening in her mouth. She kissed Heather again, and then sucked the pulse point on her neck before returning to her breasts. Heather was being driven insane and desperately wanted to touch Anna, but she remained elusive, constantly removing Heather's hands from her body or squirming out of reach. Anna began to make her way down

Heather's body, trailing a path of kisses as she went, licking and sucking the inside of Heather's thighs until the blonde was dizzy with need. Anna pinned Heather's hands to the mattress with her own as she took her clit into her mouth, using her tongue to circle and lick it. Heather screamed her pleasure and begged Anna to stop when she could take no more. Anna released her hands and moved back up to look at Heather, hovering above her and smiling down at the spent woman.

Anna lazily trailed her fingers over Heather's stomach. They had been making love for most of the afternoon and it was now past dinnertime. Heather turned and smiled at Anna, momentarily taking her breath away. She continued to smile at Heather.

"What?"

"I'm just happy to be here with you."

"I'm delighted you're here."

Anna kissed Heather on the lips. "Not everyone is so happy about that."

Heather frowned, "What do you mean?"

"I had quite a frosty reception from Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey in the shop today. I suppose that is something I will have to get used to if I'm going to be spending time here."

"They will come round, just like the kids did."

"What about your mum?"

Heather thought back to Wednesday evening when she had gone to her parents for dinner as usual. Initially the evening had gone well. Agnes Keith had been in a good mood, delighted after looking at pictures of her granddaughter Lilly, that Glen had given to Heather. The mood turned sour when Agnes Keith had asked her daughter when she would next be seeing Anna. When Heather had told her about the planned visit she vowed not to come near the cottage all weekend upon hearing Anna would be there. Her father had said he hoped she had a lovely time and to tell Anna he was relieved to hear she was doing well after her attack. It was such a contrast between the two. She knew her mother was going to need a lot more time to come to terms with all the changes that had occurred in such a short period of time. Her father seemed to be taking things in stride, as was his way.

Heather sighed, "My mum is struggling at the moment, Anna. Hopefully that will change over time. She liked you before, I think she can again."

"I hope so." Anna held Heather's hand and rubbed her thumb over the back of it. "What about your brother? How is she taking that news?"

"I honestly don't know, she didn't even mention Glen when I spoke to her on Wednesday, she only talked about Lilly."

"It is a lot for her to take in."

"Yeah it is."

Heather's stomach rumbled loudly at that moment causing them both to laugh.

"I suppose it has been a while since we have eaten."

"You stay there and I'll make us something to eat."

Anna was about to protest, but Heather stalled her. "I'll just be five minutes, I'll make some sandwiches."

Anna lay in bed thinking about how her presence in Heather's life had affected her relationship with her mum. She really did hope that the woman came around; otherwise she would feel responsible for causing pain to Heather.

Heather returned with a plate full of sandwiches, which the pair tucked into.

"How was your week at work?"

"It was, ah," Anna paused, searching for a word that would best describe how her week had gone. "It was disappointing."

"Did you not feel up to it?"

"No, it wasn't that. I actually feel quite good. It was disappointing because our case is falling apart."

"Oh."

"Heather, Jim Wallace is dead."

"Dead?"

"As in jumped off a cliff dead."

"He committed suicide?"

"It looks that way. He was put in a safe house after he had turned state's witness in the case I was investigating. But then, on Monday morning, he was found dead at the bottom of some cliffs. An apparent suicide however, because he was the main witness, we suspect he may have been pushed. But there are no signs of foul play."

"That's awful, Anna."

"I know, we bloody needed him alive."

Heather looked horrified, "I meant it's awful that Jim Wallace is dead."

"Well, yeah, that is tragic but, Heather, he was in this up to his neck and only giving evidence to save his own skin."

"Well, I suppose."

"Anyway, with Wallace dead, we have no case."

"All that work for nothing."

"I wouldn't say that. It brought us together." Anna smiled.

Heather was touched by Anna's heartfelt words. "Well there is that."

"You don't have any regrets?"

Heather gave Anna her full attention. "Why would you ask that?"

"Your relationship with your mum has suffered. What if she doesn't accept us?"

Heather took Anna's hand. "Obviously, I want to have a good relationship with my mother, but the truth is, Anna, we haven't had that, well, since Glen left all those years ago. If she chooses not to accept our relationship, I won't allow her disapproval to affect what I have with you. I allowed her to take too much control with regards to my relationship with Greg, especially the wedding arrangements. That was a mistake, and it was also very unfair of me."

"Why was it unfair."

"I allowed her to go on thinking I was going to marry Greg long after I knew it wasn't going to happen. I shouldn't have done that, but it was the easiest thing to do at the time. The truth is, Anna, my mum can be overbearing, but part of the blame lies with me, because I allowed it."

Anna pulled Heather to her and they lay naked in each other's arms. "You didn't want to hurt her, Heather, you shouldn't blame yourself."

Heather was silent for so long Anna thought she had fallen asleep, until she spoke against Anna's chest. "Who knows, maybe by Christmas we could all be sitting around the same table."

Anna dearly hoped that Heather got her wish.

## CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

Anna walked into work on Monday morning, her mood vastly improved after the weekend she had spent with Heather.

"Morning, Pete," Anna greeted him with more cheer than usual.

Pete raised an eyebrow. "Looks like someone got laid."

Anna didn't take the bait and instead she simply smiled.

Pete shook his head, "Nice one, Anna."

Anna had arranged to meet Lesley for lunch; they had a lot to catch up on and Anna decided to make the most of her lighter work schedule.

"You're looking well, certainly a lot better than the last time I saw you." Lesley observed as she took a bite of her hamburger.

"Thanks, Lesley, I feel pretty good. How have you been?"

"Oh, you know, the usual. Busy with work and family."

"And how are the family?"

"The kids are doing well, as is Gordon. He was asking after you."

"Did you tell him the bad news, that I have made a full recovery?" Anna punctuated her words with a smile.

Lesley playfully swatted her arm. "Stop that, he was glad to hear you were going to be okay. You had us really worried, you know?"

"Yeah, sorry about that."

"You know something, you don't just look well, you look...radiant. What gives?"

"I'm in love."

"I've known that for a while." Lesley waved her finger. "But something has changed."

Anna knew Lesley had a keen eye; she read people well and was rarely wrong. "I just spent a fantastic weekend with Heather."

"Well that is different, you actually spending an entire weekend with the same woman."

Anna laughed, "I suppose." There was a silence between them for a moment and Anna picked up the saltshaker and pretended to examine it whilst she considered how best to continue.

"Lesley?"

Anna had her friend's full attention.

"I want to be with her."

"That's fantastic, Anna. It's about time you had a girlfriend."

"No, I mean I want to be with her, as in everyday."

"Oh, wow." Lesley was genuinely shocked by her friend's words.

"It just feels so right, you know?"

Lesley nodded, "It's a shame you both live so far away from each other and, in your job, even weekends aren't always your own."

"That's why I have decided to put in a request for a transfer."

Lesley sat there, completely stunned at the thought of Anna actually leaving Glasgow... and for a woman. "You're kidding?"

"No, I'm absolutely serious. I won't ask Heather to move here, not after everything that happened and what I put her and the kids at the community centre through. That just wouldn't be fair. I'm going to transfer up to Aberdeen or Montrose and move up there."

"Will you move in with Heather?"

"Truthfully, if she asked me, I would, but if it's too soon for her, I will find a place close by."

Lesley became emotional. "Anna, I'm just so happy for you. I will miss you when you go, but I'm delighted that you have finally found someone."

"Thanks, Lesley. I'll be back in Glasgow frequently. I plan to keep my flat and I imagine that

Heather will want to visit her brother regularly."

"You have really given this a lot of thought."

"It just all became so clear to me as I was driving home from Havensburgh last night. I'm absolutely certain that it's what I want and the right thing to do."

Lesley stood up. "I'm so pleased for you, give me a hug?" She pulled Anna out of her chair and hugged her tightly in the middle of the canteen, planting a kiss on her cheek. They sat back down and Anna distractedly picked up one of her now cold chips and dipped it in the mayonnaise.

"When will you tell Davidson?"

"I was thinking this afternoon." Anna popped the chip in her mouth and grimaced. "Yuck."

Lesley laughed; Anna's head was clearly elsewhere.

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The knock on his open door made Bruce Davidson look up from his paperwork.

"Sir, a word?"

"Come in, Anna."

She entered and closed the door behind her. Taking a seat opposite Davidson, she fidgeted under his scrutiny.

Davidson frowned. "You're acting like a school kid who has been sent to the headmaster for smoking in the toilets. Come on, out with it."

Anna cleared her throat, "Sir, I want to request a transfer."

Davidson stared at her, clearly dumbfounded. "A transfer? Out of drugs?"

"No, Sir, out of Glasgow."

He frowned, "Is it because of the bloody attack because, I tell you this, transfer isn't the answer. You need to confront your fears."

"I'm aware of that, Sir, it's nothing to do with the attack."

"Then what the bloody hell for?"

Anna swallowed nervously; this was a lot tougher than she had imagined. "I want to transfer to Aberdeen or Montrose."

She watched as the expression on Davidson's face turned from one of confusion to realisation.

"You want to be nearer to that wee lassie, Heather?"

Anna nodded.

"And you're absolutely sure about this?"

"Yes, I have no doubts, Sir."

He sat back in his chair and stared at her. "Well I never saw this coming." He rubbed his chin, "Have you told anyone else?"

"Just Lesley Hamilton."

Davidson nodded, "Well, I never thought I would be saying this, but McGinty is going to be really cut up when he hears." Davidson sighed as he played with the pen in his hands. "Okay, Anna, I'll approve the transfer but I'll be sorry to see you go, you're a damn good detective."

"Thank you, Sir." Anna got up to leave the office.

"Are you going to tell McGinty now?"

"I thought I might as well, would you prefer that I wait?"

"Oh no, no time like the present." He motioned with his head, "Go on."

Anna frowned, "Yes, Sir."

Pete watched Anna walk towards him after leaving Davidson's office. "Everything okay?"

"Oh yes, Pete, fine."

He flicked his eyes towards Davidson who was standing at his office door. "What's up with the boss then?"

Anna looked behind her; she couldn't believe he was watching. "Oh, nothing, I was just in having a chat with him."

"Aye, and...?"

She took a seat opposite Pete at his desk. "I, ah, put in a transfer request."

"A transfer? To where?"

She bit her lip, "To Aberdeen or Montrose."

Pete stared wide-eyed at her, and she waited until he found his voice. "Jesus. I never considered that you would move up there...Jesus." Pete looked like someone had run over his dog.

Anna tried ineffectually to lift the mood. "I'm not going yet, I've only just made the transfer request." She rambled on, "I'm keeping my flat in Glasgow, I mean, after all, I have friends here and Heather's brother is here. We can meet up for a drink whenever I come down." She waited for Pete to talk.

"Would you excuse me for a minute, Anna?"

"Sure." Anna watched Pete leave the department. She turned helplessly and looked to Davidson for some assistance. The man never cracked a smile, but she knew he was laughing inside, she could see the merriment in his eyes.

She wanted to go and find Pete, but had no idea as to what she would say to him, if she did. Deciding it was best to give him his space, she returned to her desk, and pretended to work, but she was really watching the door and waiting for Pete to come back. When he finally returned he didn't even look her way. Just took a seat at his desk and ignored her.

John Hutton entered the department some time later, greeting Pete as he passed his desk. Getting no response, he walked towards Anna. "What's up with McGinty he looks like his best pal just died?"

"Shut up, Hutton." Anna glared at him.

Hutton stood in the middle of the room and looked from Pete to Anna, then back again. He shook his head, "Jesus, the two of you should have shagged months ago," he declared loudly.

Both Anna and Pete stared at him, then at each other.

"Eww that would be like incest!" Anna declared.

They both laughed, the ice between them finally broken.

"Would be like kissing my sister." Pete added.

Hutton shook his head at the pair of them and walked on.

They shared a smile; everything was going to be okay.

Anna took a walk outside the building; she wanted some fresh air and privacy. Dialling the now familiar number, she waited on an answer.

*"Hi, Anna, how is your day going?"*

Anna smiled upon hearing her lover's voice. "It's a lot better now."

*"Such a charmer."*

Anna cleared her throat; "I was wondering if you would be able to come to Glasgow this weekend?"

*"I would love to, I miss you already."*

Anna kicked a pebble that was at her foot, "I miss you too. I love you."

*"I love you too, very much."*

"I'll see you Friday?"

*"I'll drive down on Friday afternoon and leave on Sunday."*

"Fantastic."

*"I might pop over to see Glen on Saturday, would you like to come?"*

"Do you think he will do lunch?" She could hear Heather's laughter down the phone.

*"He might."*

"I'll go regardless."

*"Thanks, Anna."*

"I'll see you Friday. I plan to leave work early but, if I'm held up for any reason, I'll give you a call."

*"Thanks, Anna, till Friday, then."*

"Till Friday. Bye, Heather."

*"Bye, Anna, I love you."*

Anna doubted she would ever tire of hearing those words. "I love you too."

Putting the phone back into her pocket Anna tilted her head back and looked up into the sky. The sounds of a busy, bustling city filled her senses and the first spots of yet another shower began to land on her face. Anna produced a full-blown smile, knowing she was making all the right decisions. As the rain got heavier she spread her arms and enjoyed the sensation, only to be brought back down to earth with the sound of a familiar voice from her left.

"Jesus, Lynch, get a grip. That bump must have affected you worse than they said."

Anna turned to look at a bewildered Bruce Davidson and burst out laughing as he shook his head, before turning quickly to walk towards his car, muttering about people around him losing their minds.

"Boss!"

He stopped in his tracks and turned to look at the now soaked with rain Anna Lynch, who was grinning at him like an idiot.

"Give me a smile?"

"Away with you, ya bloody eejit!"

"Come on, just one smile?" she encouraged.

He grinned and shook his head, then outright laughed at her antics, before giving hell to a passing uniformed police officer who was staring at them, open-mouthed. Anna laughed harder. Life was good.

## **EPILOGUE**

"Well that was interesting." Anna declared, as she removed her jacket. "I have to say, I was impressed with your mum. Despite all her earlier complaining, she made a big effort to accommodate everyone with the menu and I thought she was very tolerant of String Bean."

Heather looked indulgently at Anna, "You could take a leaf out of her book."

"What can I say, the woman rubs me up the wrong way." Anna took a seat on the sofa and waited for Heather to join her. She removed her boots, wriggling her toes, relieved to be free of the restricting footwear.

"You looked lovely tonight, Anna, I like it when you dress up, it's a rare treat." Heather took a seat next to her, folding her stocking clad legs up onto the cushions.

Anna looked down at herself. In a change from her usual casual style, she was wearing a damson coloured fitted shirt and black dress trousers. In truth, she was desperate to get into something more comfortable but she loved seeing Heather in her dress and was keeping her own clothes on for a little longer so that she could continue to enjoy the sight before her.

"It was wonderful to see a smile on my mother's face again."

"Little Lilly adores her, she brings out a side of your mother I have never seen before."

Heather smiled at the memory herself. There had been quite a few changes in the Keith family of late, including Anna turning up regularly for Wednesday night dinners at her parent's house.

"She's also warming to you."

Anna gave that some thought, "Hmm, I suppose my slice of nut roast was delivered to my plate with a little less venom than usual. You could be right."

The pair shared a laugh. Anna leaned her head back on the sofa and fell silent. Heather observed her partner who was staring at the ceiling, deep in thought.

"A penny for them?"

Anna turned to look at Heather. "I was thinking about when we first met. I never imagined that I would be living here in Havensburgh, almost a year later, with the woman of my dreams."

Heather instantly moved into Anna's waiting arms. "I can't believe you are here either, sharing my home, my life. I'm still overwhelmed at the fact that you actually transferred your job just to be with me."

"It was an easy decision."

Heather kissed Anna on the lips, moved by her words. "When were you first attracted to me?"

"Truthfully? The first time I ever laid eyes on you. I turned up at church and saw you a few seats ahead, you caught my eye straight away."

Heather looked surprised. "That was before we were introduced?"

Anna nodded, "It just grew from there. I found myself falling more and more for you with each passing day. When we were finally introduced, later that very Sunday, I couldn't help but notice the cute way your nose crinkled when you smiled."

The pair fell silent, content to be in each other's arms.

"Do you remember the time we went to the 'Spice of Life' restaurant?"

"Yes, it felt like a date." Heather pulled Anna closer with the memory.

"That it did, and I wanted it to be. Do you recall you asked me how I knew Pete was the one?"

Heather frowned, wondering where Anna was going with this. "I do."

"The answer I gave was true but I was actually describing you."

Heather leaned back to look into Anna's eyes, searching.

"Almost from the moment we met, I have been drawn to you. Your zest for life and natural enthusiasm, it is infectious and it has rubbed off on me. You care about people and you want to make a difference. Not forgetting that you're beautiful, inside and out, it's all of those things and more."

Anna watched as tears welled up in Heather's eyes. "You told me I was very lucky, but I felt like a fraud, and far from the happy person you perceived me to be. But, since the day you came back into my life, I feel like I'm the luckiest woman alive."

Heather had no words, Anna had rendered her speechless, and instead she took her lover in a passionate kiss.

"I love you so very much, Anna."

"I love you too."

Heather kissed Anna once more. "I'm going to have an early night, will you join me?"

"Like I could refuse."

Heather smiled and got up from the sofa. She held out her hand for Anna, but her lover didn't move.

"I'll follow you through in a few minutes."

Heather knew Anna sometimes liked a little solitude and was happy to give it to her. "Don't be long."

"I won't."

Anna watched Heather leave the room, a lazy smile on her face. She looked around the cottage that she and Heather had shared for the past three months and felt a warm glow inside at the realisation that she had finally found her 'home'. Something she had been craving for so long without even realising it. Anna stood up from the sofa and stretched out the kinks from her body.

She looked at the pictures around the room and smiled as she saw her family looking back at her alongside pictures of Heather's family. Pride of place on the mantelpiece was a shot of herself and Heather both smiling happily for the camera. It had been taken on a night out in Glasgow with Pete and Mary. Anna shook her head as she walked towards the bedroom. What a difference a year made. She had set out to catch a drug smuggler and ended up with so much more. Standing at the bedroom door, she watched Heather slide naked under the sheets. She smiled...so very much more.

**THE END**

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