



An Our Girl FanFiction

**WHERE THERE IS
LIFE THERE IS HOPE**



MISS PIONY

Where there's life, there's hope

Where there is Life there is Hope

Nov 2, 2018

A spin-off to 'All is fair in love and war' to explore what happens to those that did not get such a happy ending then. A story about Elvis, Bones and Georgie getting different kind of closures.

Where there's life, there's hope

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Chapter 1: Running away

Bones

I had packed everything that belonged to me in a few carton boxes and bags. It was depressingly little, so it would fit into a car, no moving van needed. I removed the key from my key ring and put it down on the kitchen table, while taking a last glance around the apartment. Molly's Birmingham apartment which I also had called home whenever I was in UK, home because she had been there. This was for sure the last time I would be here, the last time I would be in the presence of her things and the rooms that reflected her in a way that made it feel like she would come through the door any minute, but she was still in Afghan. I resisted the urge to go and bury my face in her bed pillow to see if I could still smell her, it would be too pathetic. I did not cry either, I was done with that, depleted of tears, but I felt immense sadness. This was the end to what I had thought would be the relationship of my life, but fate had wanted it different.

Some say that if you fall off the horse you should just try to get back up in the saddle right away, but I had no intention to. Not in the sense that I would throw myself into another relationship, or even meaningless shagging. I would focus on work and only that, I thought to myself as I drove the stuff to a warehouse for storing it. I had no intention to get a new home in UK in the foreseeable future, so I would put my things away just like my emotions. I intended to work and travel as much as I possibly could, so I would not have to be reminded of her, think of her, miss her every fucking second.

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This time when the airplane left Brize Norton, I left absolutely nothing behind that I would be missing.

Georgie

"Are you sure?" she asked me.

"Never been surer about anything in my life", I said.

But as she sighed and started moving the cold steel of the scissors through my hair, cutting it off strand by strand, I thought that was a lie. There were many other things I had been surer about.

I had been sure that Elvis loved me.

I had been sure that we were going to get married.

I had been sure that we would live happily ever after.

I had been sure that he would never let me down.

And I had been fucking mistaken about everything.

Today, however, I was sure that I wanted to cut all my hair off and no one was going to take that away from me. I was so tired of everyone looking at me like I was a pretty doll, an object for men's desire and other girls' jealousy, which I often felt prevented me from forming real friendships with either of the sexes. I wanted to be judged for the person I was, not for how I looked and definitely not for how I had been treated in the past. The pity-look was the worst of all; the you're-so-beautiful-and-yet-you-could-not-keep-the-

man-you-loved-look. Whenever I got that look, and it was quite often, I felt like just smashing the face in on the person who gave it - but I never did. Not up to now anyway.

"Are you sure you don't want to keep it in a nice bob at least?" Janine, the hairdresser asked me.

"No. All off. Short", I snapped even if I knew she just meant to be kind.

"Your mum will cry, Georgie."

"I think there are far worse things in life than cutting of one's hair."

She knew my story and understood what I referred to. I looked down, so I escaped the pity-look and she started cutting without further protests.

When she was ready, I ran my fingers through the little hair that was left on my scalp and felt more pleased looking at myself than I had in a long time. I could be mistaken for a boy. A boy with long eyelashes, but anyway. I felt prepared for the tour I was leaving for tomorrow. Finally, I would escape from home. I had been dying to ever since Elvis jilted me at the altar, because life here was now unbearable. I did not care if people thought I was running away, because I *was*. And I intended to keep running for a long time.

I joined the rest of my section at Brize Norton next day. There were many raised eyebrows but fewer comments, they were probably discouraged when Brains tried a joke;

"You know, they say when you get a new haircut, it's a sign you actually want a new life."

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"I got myself a new haircut, so I'll get a new life. One without men. Any questions on that?" I lashed out and that silenced the banter which I was not really in the mood for. I was not a funny, flirty girl anymore. That personality had gone with Elvis and now I finally had an outside which matched better how I felt inside. I felt like someone who has cried until there are no more tears. Someone who had hardened and would survive but was not very happy, and someone who never wanted to be hit on again, least of all by a fellow squaddie

Two years later....

Bones

We were in need of a medic for our ongoing operation. Or rather, I would feel more comfortable having one on the team, because I knew it was high risk and if anyone was injured, we would be far from the nearest hospital so a medic who could give acute help could make the difference between life and death.

We were on a covert op in Nigeria, me, Spanner and Peanut. I reached out to central command to see if there were any sections deployed in the not too distant area, to see if we miraculously could borrow a medic for a few days. It turned that one section was engaged in a medical outreach project and luckily, they were two medics due to the nature of the mission and we would be allowed to borrow the more experienced of them, a lance corporal Lane. There was only one disadvantage; the captain in command was one which I preferred never to meet again, but I had no choice if I wanted this medic.

We arrived at the base before lunchtime. I was eager to connect with the medic and get going as soon as possible, but it turned out that the entire section was away in a nearby

village over the day and I decided to go there. I almost immediately spotted Captain James. I knew he had been informed about the situation and given his permission for Lane to come with us a few days, but I did not think he knew I was the captain of the SF team that would come get Lane.

"Captain McClyde", he greeted me somewhat stiffly. "I didn't know that it was you who would borrow our medic."

"James", I greeted him curtly in return. "Is that a problem? That it's me?"

I could not help thinking bitterly that last time it was him taking someone away from me, but I pushed it away, did not want to go down that track.

"Of course not. We have two with us as this is a medical outreach project, but we can spare one of them for a few days and due to the nature of your mission, you get the most experienced one. Lance corporal Lane has an impressive track record."

I nodded, and then I could not resist to ask, even if I was not sure if I really wanted to know;

"How's Molly?"

"Wasn't sure you wanted to know... but she's fine. We're fine."

He looked at me searchingly, seemed to hesitate how much information I wanted, but then decided to go for the open approach.

"We're married, and we have a little girl. Another baby is on the way."

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It hurt, but in a distant way like if it was happening to someone else. Time had done its magic healing the invisible wounds to a large extent.

"And how does that work out, with you being away?"

I still nurtured some small hope he would say it was a disaster and they were rapidly drifting apart, but he smiled, a man clearly in love.

"Surprisingly well. This is my first tour since Afghan and I've decided I will try to only go on these type of missions, not outright war zones, and I keep to regimental work as much as I can. We live in Aldershot, so both of us can work there."

"Happy it worked out so well for you."

The words that came out of my mouth were delivered in a tone dripping of sarcasm, I just could not help myself. It is difficult to feel generous towards someone who won the woman you loved, but I was actually glad to hear that Molly seemed to lead a happy life. I wished her nothing else.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Sorry, you asked how she was, but I'll spare you further details. If you want to talk to George Lane you should head over there."

He nodded towards an open tent they had set up to be able to work shadowed from the blazing sun, where children seemed to be getting inoculations by a medic. When I saw the medic, who was supposed to be assigned to my team, I could not help snorting.

"It's a boy!"

James cocked his eyebrow and smirked.

"I can assure you lance corporal Lane is not a boy."

"This is a dangerous mission and I need a man, not a boy. Someone experienced."

"As I said, Lane is very experienced, has an excellent track record and is very dedicated to the job. It's also the medic I have to offer. I think you should go and have a chat with Lane."

And he turned and left. I approached the tent, watching the short, slender, dark haired boy. He had a bone structure so delicate it looked like I could easily snap him in two halves, like a toothpick. We would just have to hope that he was made of tougher material than he looked and would cut it. I watched him work, bent over a child and I had to admit that he seemed efficient and self-confident. When that child was ready, I interrupted.

"Lance Corporal Lane? I'd like a word with you."

He straightened and looked up at me, and I realised why James had smirked when he said that George Lane was not a boy. Not a man either, *she* was a woman. She seemed to do her best to look like a boy though, in a quite bad, short haircut and a size of the uniform that did not fit tight on her small frame, but even so it was impossible to hide once you saw her face and large brown eyes. It took me by surprise, which I did not like, and I could not stop myself from blurting out;

"George? Seriously?"

She got an annoyed V-shaped wrinkle between her brows at my comment.

"Georgina, Georgie or George - whatever. The lads call me George, but Captain James usually go with a formal Lane, so I'd suggest you do the same if you find my name confusing, Captain...?"

"McClyde. You can call me Bones. I'd like a word with you, Lane. I assume James has informed you I need a medic to join my team for a few days?"

I was wondering to myself if she would be fit for it, or if she would be a liability, but I had set the ball in motion and now it felt like it was too late to change my mind without seeming sexist. I knew very well there were a bunch of competent women in the army, it was just that she looked so fragile – except when I met her eyes. They were in no way soft, rather hard as flint stone and I could see that she resented being judged by her appearance. I made a mental shrug of shoulders, okay, so I would have to give her a chance and hope she did not fuck up.

A/N: Sorry that it has taken me so long to return to this story. I lost a half-written chapter, then lost inspiration and other stories popped up in my head instead. Now giving it another try and let us hope that works out better. As always glad if you let me know what you think.

x

Chapter 2: A shoulder to lean on

Georgie

Bones and I drove back to the base in silence, none of us feeling much like keeping up a polite conversation after he had informed me that rest of his team were waiting there, and we would hit the road as soon as I had got my kit together. He drove fast and stopped with squealing breaks and I had a feeling that this might be the way he did everything in life, fast and rough. He jerked his head towards the main building.

"You go inside and say hello, the boys are there."

"And you, where are you going?"

He grinned.

"To take a piss, if you must know."

I had a feeling this man would be getting on my nerves, but fortunately he would only be my CO for a short while. I went inside and was met by two familiar faces looking up from the card game they had been playing.

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"Spanner! Peanut!"

For a second, they just stared at me, reminding me they had only seen me in long locks, never in my boyish haircut. After two years I rarely thought about it, but it was strange how the loss of hair could be so shocking to men who constantly were faced with the worst of mankind.

"Georgie!? Are you the medic Bones was picking up?"

"Seems so."

They got to their feet and came over to give me bearhugs. I had not seen them after the break-up with Elvis, not since our supposed wedding day. For a moment the familiarity and the memories choked me, making unwelcome tears emerge in my eyes, but I would not have that. It was behind me.

"Guys, before Bones return I'd like to ask you a favour."

"Anything Georgie."

"Can you please not let Bones know of my past? Not let him know I was with Elvis and he left me? I try not to think about that and I don't like the way people pity me whenever they hear the story. I'm fine now and I'm here to do a job. I'd like to focus on that. I'd be grateful if we just let him believe you know me from work. Okay?"

They looked like they wanted to ask questions, but then merely nodded in agreement.

"I'm glad to see you, but I don't think we need much more introductions, so I'll just go get my kit and we can get going."

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"Georgie..." Spanner called after me. "You look good."

I gave him a confident smile, but as I was packing my kit, my hands were trembling. I thought I was over Elvis, I thought I had shut down all those emotions, but the unexpected encounter had stirred things inside me and I did not like it.

Bones

I returned to find Spanner and Peanut alone. Lane had gone packing. They interrupted their conversation when I entered.

"You met our new medic?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What do you reckon? Will Lane cut it?"

"She most definitely will. Tough as nails, that girl."

"You know her?"

"We've come across her through the job before, when we worked under Harte."

I do not know why I got the feeling there was more under the surface than they seemed to be willing to tell me, but as long as they thought she would be competent enough, I did not really care.

"Fine, then. I'm expecting we'll be off latest in half an hour so get some scoff if you haven't already."

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It would be the first time I had a woman on my team and I hoped it would not disturb the dynamic. I would make sure it did not.

Thirty minutes later sharp we left the base, driving towards the north eastern part of the country, towards Boko haram territory. Before we jumped inside the vehicle, I handed her a manila envelope with a briefing pack.

"Study this while we drive and ask any questions you need now. When the operation starts there will not be much time for talking."

I knew the content of the document, of course. It told about a group of school girls who had been kidnapped by Boko haram a month ago. We had localised them and had eyes on them for over two weeks, but until now been told not to act. To wait out. I had not been sure exactly what we were waiting for and this was one of these times when it drove me nuts that I had to obey orders. Ten girls were being held hostage. They could be raped or killed any day and I found it hard to motivate waiting out and my frustration built for every day we had to wait. Yesterday, we finally had gotten the order to move and I intended to move ASAP.

We knew exactly how many men that used to move in and around the compound where the girls were being held. They outnumbered us, but we had the advantage of the element of surprise and the fact that we were special forces, trained killers. We believed that would be enough to take them down, but it was still motivated to bring a medic. Not only us, but also the girls risked getting harmed.

"They've been captives for a month, and you had eyes on them for two weeks. Why didn't you make a move before?" she asked.

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The question was asked in a provocative tone and would have annoyed me if I had not wondered the same. I liked that she seemed to be on the same wavelength as us.

"Orders", I answered through gritted teeth and she shook her head.

"No other questions?"

"It seems clear enough. I understand why you wanted a medic to come along, you don't kid around with these guys. And I'll guess you'll brief us further right before the operation?"

"Yeah." Clever girl. She did not seem discouraged either.

Georgie

I like working with men, because there is no fuss. Especially not with a team as well-oiled as Bones and his men. I thought that Spanner and Peanut seemed to have accepted their new CO. I wondered to myself what had happened to Elvis, why he was not with them anymore but maybe he had needed a change of company. I sure as hell would not ask.

We stopped a few kilometres from where the Boko haram compound was located, and Bones pulled out a map. He also drew a sketch of the compound on the ground and explained how the operation was to be executed.

"We will stop here now and move right before. Lane, your part in this is to stay a bit behind the rest of us and provide medical assistance as needed. I don't want so to see any unplanned heroic deeds from you end. Is that understood?"

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His eyes were boring into me and I noticed they were bright blue. The opposite of Elvis'. Why did I come to think of that?

"Yes, Sir."

I felt the adrenaline kick I always do for an imminent mission. That and providing care in our outreach projects were the only things making me feel truly alive these days.

We waited in the vehicle and Bones told us to get some rest, he could take the first shift guarding. I do not know if he ever woke Spanner or Peanut to change places with him, but he let me sleep until dawn. I woke up because I felt something move and realised that in my sleep I had moved so I slept with my head leaned on his shoulder, and it was him wriggling a bit that woke me up.

"I'm sorry", I mumbled embarrassed, but he just grinned back at me.

"Full kit on then, everyone." Bones ordered. He did not ask me if I would be okay, if I was nervous or scared, assuming I would handle it as well as the guys. I liked that.

We moved closer to the compound, slowly, not wanting to draw attention to ourselves. Night goggles enabled us to see in the dark, the light of dawn not quite there yet. Spanner placed explosives on the south wall, one they had identified was far away enough from the girls' cell for them not to be harmed by the explosion, but so close that it would be possible to extract them as smoothly as could be expected. Not very smoothly in other ways, we were prepared for the worst.

Spanner triggering the explosion set the operation off and if the tempo had been slow up to then, it certainly was rapid after that. With a deafening sound and a pressure wave, a large hole was created in the stone wall and the three men moved inside while

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I kept some distance. There was shouting and screaming, both the voices of men and of young girls and I felt myself going all tense at the prospect of the girls getting harmed. It probably lasted only for minutes but it felt like an eternity. After some time, the fire ceased, one last stray shot and then it went silent. At least the fire and the male screaming, the girls still screamed in fear and now that it seemed safe I moved towards the cell. Suddenly someone grabbed my arm brusquely.

"Didn't I tell you to stay behind, not do any foolhardy actions?" Bones hissed.

"What with the fire stopping I thought it was safe, I just wanted to check on them."

"Don't think, Lane. Just do as you're told and wait until I tell you it's clear. We haven't checked if there is any man in there with the girls, let me go first."

He did and then called for me that it was indeed clear, but before I had time to go inside, I heard Spanner shouting.

"Man down! Peanut has been hit."

Bones turned his eyes to me, but for a moment I was paralysed. Not Peanut, no.

"Medic, you're needed. Go!"

Then my feet finally moved, and I ran.

I found Peanut on the ground, shot in his right leg and he was bleeding generously. I kneeled and immediately put a tourniquet in place, and then put some direct pressure on the wound to stop the blood flow. Within minutes I had done what I could for him then and there and we would have to return to the base, so he could get further care.

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My first assessment was that he would survive, but he would need a surgery to have the bullet removed and patch up the damaged muscle tissue and blood vessels.

"We'll get you out of here alive", I comforted him. "You'll survive this."

Bones appeared.

"Is he okay to move? We need to move now before any other Boko haram come, the explosion and shooting may have alerted other cells in the area."

"He is, but we need to support him to get him to the truck. He won't be able to use that leg and he's weak, so I barely think he can walk on the other one either."

"We have freed the girls. Lane, you take the lead to the truck and Spanner and I help Peanut. Move."

We did as he said. The distance seemed much longer now than when we sneaked our way here, because we had to drag 90 kilos of limp muscle along, with Boko haram breathing in our necks. The upside was that all the girls seemed to be in relatively good condition and could run. Finally, we were all inside the truck and Bones drove off. This time I was grateful that he was a speedy driver and the landscape soon flew by as we headed back to our base. Still the drive lasted forever, and I constantly checked on Peanut, who now had passed out, I could not do more for him here, he would need a medivac to the nearest hospital.

Bones

It was near midnight when we finally reached the base and a medivac swiftly came to get Peanut. Lane had not left his side for a minute and had seemed calm and composed

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for as long as she had to care for him. When the helicopter took off, she deflated like a balloon, no longer able to hold up crouched on the ground, her head leaned in her hands.

"Are you all right Lane?"

"I will be. It's just that Peanut means a lot to me."

I put a hand on her shoulder.

"To me too. Well done. You have proven yourself today, he wouldn't stand a chance if you hadn't been there, now he'll likely live. Focus on that. You're an excellent medic."

For the first time, she looked up and presented me a weak smile, lighting up her face and it hit me how beautiful she was, despite her tousled hair and face smeared with grime.

"So they keep telling me. Thank you, Sir."

"You can call me Bones, you know. Operation is over and you're no longer under my command, back with Captain James."

"I suppose I am."

She got to her feet, gave Spanner a hug and me a nod as good bye and strode off to barracks.

"You're not so different, she and you." Spanner said as we both watched her walk away.

"How do you mean?"

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"Both with a harsh outside, but softer inside, both bruised by..." He interrupted himself like he had talked without thinking.

I refrained from correcting him about my inside being soft because I was more curious how he had intended to end the sentence.

"Bruised by what?"

"Nothing, Sir."

"Say it. You may see that as an order."

"Bruised by an unhappy love affair."

His words stung, but I chose to focus on her.

"What happened? To Lane I meant."

"She didn't want us to tell you, not whilst we were on a mission together, but now I guess there's no harm. The last time I saw her, she was the prettiest girl in Manchester, dressed a bride in the city hall."

"And then?"

"The groom never showed up."

"Oh, for fucks sake, that's tough. Who was he?"

Already before he answered, I had a feeling.

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"Elvis Harte. Captain James was his bestman and he came telling her Elvis wouldn't make an appearance. I've never seen someone crying so much – but she seems to be done with the crying now."

Naturally, it was Harte. Him and James seemed to be a recurrent ominous theme in my life and I was so fucking tired of them. I felt sorry for Georgie Lane, but I guessed that was exactly what she did not like. I felt admiration too. Obviously, she had survived and risen like a Phoenix from the ashes. Like I had. Spanner had been right, we were more alike than I had thought when I first saw her – but I did not admit that to him. Neither did I admit that she intrigued me and that I had enjoyed her sleeping on my shoulder far more than I had imagined possible. When her head suddenly leaned sleepy and heavy on me, I had not wanted to move because I did not want to wake her. Neither for her sake or my own because I found myself enjoying it. It was the first time any woman had stirred something in me since Molly and I wondered if I would see her again.

A/N: If you have not read 'All is fair in love and war' (which this story is a sequel to) before reading this chapter, be warned that this chapter is a major spoiler of events in that one.

Chapter 3: Closure

Georgie

Two months later I was back home, in Manchester. Not that it felt like home anymore and for the first time I admitted to myself that nothing did. Meeting Spanner and Peanut had made me realise that two years after Elvis jilting me, I was still running away, yet had not managed to leave him behind me. He followed me like my own shadow. I would never be able to move on with my life unless I got some kind of closure with Elvis.

Months after the disastrous wedding day, he had had the cheek to contact me, to try to explain. At that point I felt there were no words to be said that could even slightly alleviate the pain I felt that day and still felt, no words that would make me understand why he had chosen to do what he did and definitely none to make me forgive him, in case he was hoping for absolution. He had let me down in the worst possible way and I never wanted to see him again.

But that was then and now was now. My wounds were not open and bleeding, rather puckered scars – still noticeable, sometimes hurting but not life-threatening. I needed to face him and now I felt strong enough to handle it. It was not difficult to track him, I just asked Charles for his phone number and e-mail when we returned from the tour. He looked at me, serious, with his brow furrowed the way it always was when he was concerned or deliberating something.

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"So, you finally feel ready to talk to him?"

"To be honest, I don't know if I'll ever be ready, but I must. I won't be able to let go of the past if I don't face him."

Charles had never brought the subject of Elvis up after delivering the dreadful message on the wedding day. He had become my CO when I returned to work. We had silently agreed to maintain a strictly professional relationship unless I chose to talk about it and that had always been a relief. Charles had kept treating me like any of his men, which was one of the reasons that 2 section and the tours had been where I could find some peace. When I now voluntarily touched upon the subject, he said;

"Georgie, I will never ever defend Elvis for what he did, how he handled things with you, but he did have a good reason and I think it may be helpful for you to hear him out. For your sake, not his."

I noticed he called me Georgie, which he seldom did, like he wanted to mark the transition from professional to personal. I considered asking him what Elvis reason had been, as he apparently was aware of it, but knew that I needed to hear it from Elvis own lips while looking him in the eyes.

"Thanks, boss. For now, I only wanted the contact details, just in case."

He nodded and wrote it down on a note, which I had kept but not used until now, but now I had a week of R&R and knew the time had come to do something about it. I did not want to call but swayed between a text message and an e-mail. As there was a risk Elvis might call me back if I texted, I finally decided for an e-mail. I kept it brief.

Hi Elvis,

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Georgie here. I'd like to meet you. It's about time I hear what you have to say. You're not forgiven – don't think that for a second.

/G

I did not even know if he was in England or on an operation. I assumed he was alive at least, because if he had been red-misted by an IED or something similar, Charles would have said, but maybe he would not be able to see me or respond in a long time. Now when I had taken a first step, I found myself waiting with nervous impatience for him to take next.

He answered already in the evening. Wrote that he was glad I had contacted him after all this time and of course would like to meet. He was home and offered to travel to where I was, and I realised I had not said if I was home or at barracks. I wrote him back and suggested meeting in a café in Manchester two days later.

I had thought I needed a day to prepare mentally but annoyed discovered it only gave me more time to fuel my nervousness. I had tried to harden myself for so long, but the truth was I had no idea how I would react when my former fiancée walked through the door and I finally got to hear what he had to say for himself.

I came to the café on time, but he was already there, not late in his usual manner. He sat by a table, dressed in jeans and a grey hoodie, his one leg moving restlessly up and down, fingers tapping the table top. His body language had not changed over the last two years, he was nervous. His eyes widened when he registered that it was me coming through the door and he got to his feet.

"Georgie..." he seemed to aim for a hug, but his arms fell limply to his sides when he noticed I took a small step back. Awkward, but I was not ready for body contact.

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"Hi", I just said, sat down and took him in as he sat too.

It hurt to see him, hurt so fucking much. His face so familiar that it felt like yesterday I had seen him, yesterday he was mine and we were to marry. He had the shadow of a stubble and his skin still had that wonderful golden glow shade like he had been on a sunny vacation, but really just could thank his Italian genes for. His mouth was still softly curved in the same way and, I was sure, had the same ability to shift between a serious line and a wide smile. His brown eyes were still a lighter brown closer to the iris, with a dark ring encircling it – but maybe they looked a bit sadder. He had a few lines at the corner of his eyes that had not been there before, but otherwise nothing about him gave away that more than two years had gone by.

He observed me too. On purpose, I had not paid special attention to my looks because I did not want him to think I had gone to any trouble on his account. My face was stripped of makeup, my short hair without any styling products and I wore a plain black polo jumper and jeans. I was quite sure he would be able to find a few wrinkles in my face which had not been there when he knew me. Grief does that to you.

"You look different", he said.

"Seriously? That's the first thing you have to say to me two years after standing me up on our wedding day?"

He swallowed, his Adam's apple lurching.

"No, but I thought I'd start with something neutral before diving into..."

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"... the difficult stuff? The part where you betrayed me, shamed me in front of all our friends and family and made me sadder than I ever had been because I loved you and trusted you and you left me alone in the world?"

"Yes", he said weakly, then looked towards the counter. "Do you want anything? Coffee, tea, something to eat?"

I knew I would not be able to eat during this meet up but felt that a cup of tea would be a welcome distraction when facing this difficult conversation. I anyway intended for Elvis to do most of the talking.

"A tea please."

"Early grey with milk and honey?"

It disturbed me that he remembered but I nodded, and he soon came carrying a steaming cup of tea for me, a cappuccino for himself and I thought his taste had not changed either. His taste in hot drinks that is, his taste in women obviously changed a long time ago to the extent that he decided to dump me.

"So, tell me Elvis. I want to know what made you finish it with me like that. I mean if you didn't want to be together, there would have been so many less painful and public and coward ways of doing it." I heard how my voice was dripping of sarcasm and bitterness, and I saw him flinch like he had been slapped.

He stared down into his cup, like it was possible to tell the future from the shape of the milk foam, then met my eyes again.

"First you must know, that I never wanted to hurt you Georgie."

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"You mean to say I was only collateral?"

"Please listen if you want to know and allow me to tell you piece by piece – this is difficult for me too. But yes, in a way it's fair to say you were collateral. I never wanted to hurt you. I wanted to marry you and wished that I could, but it was wrong."

I stayed quiet, just watched him and listened.

"I loved you, but I didn't love you enough."

God, that still hurt.

"I realised that there was someone else I loved more. Always had loved even if I tried not to."

By now the pain was almost physical, like a punch in my solar plexus. No, something more long-lasting, like being overrun by a bulldozer. I had not expected that, the pain. Even if this dialogue was going pretty much in the direction of one of the many options I had played in my mind over the years, it was harder than I thought to hear the actual words spoken from his mouth.

"You loved someone else? When we were together? Are you with her now?"

The last question involuntarily slipped from my tongue.

"It's not like you think, Georgie. I'm not with anyone, I haven't been since I left you. The feelings are not mutual, and I always knew that."

I let the words sink in. How ironic, he had left me to find himself unhappily in love.

"So, I was always second best?"

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"No, please don't think that. I loved you and for a long time I thought that was everything to me, but then my feelings for that other person were revived and I realised they were too strong for it to be right to continue with you."

"Do I know who it is?"

He looked at me intently.

"You do, but are you sure you want to know? It may change your view of that person and it will not really change anything else."

"Tell me."

I just had to know.

He took a deep breath, like he was bracing himself.

"It's Charlie." He exhaled, and I tried to absorb what he *really* had said.

"Charlie?"

"Yes."

"As in *Charles James*, your bestman? My CO?"

"Yes." A pink tinge on his cheeks now, but he did not look away.

"Oh shit."

"Georgie, I..."

I interrupted him.

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"Please, let me just think for a while."

He nodded, and we stayed quiet, just sipping our drinks. All sorts of past situations that had involved me, Elvis and Charles together flashed by in my mind, ending with the one where Charles told me Elvis would not show up to the wedding. Now scrutinizing it all with wary eyes, but I even in hindsight I could not say that I had been blind to the obvious – because it had never been obvious. I had only ever seen the love that was friendship, kinship, brotherhood, fellow soldiers.

"Does this mean you're gay?" I finally asked.

He snorted, like something was funny.

"I don't know, to be honest. The only man I've ever been attracted to or loved is Charlie. I've been attracted to so many women and I *loved* you, I did. I'm not sure where that leaves me, except that I know now that Charlie is the love of my life."

I tried to grasp this, but it was nearly impossible.

"When did you fall in love with him?"

"First time when we were teenagers, in boarding school."

"What a cliché, a gay romance at a boarding school."

"It wasn't like that, he never knew, and I hardly admitted it to myself. Then I repressed it for many years, thought it had been a passing fancy, moved on, fell in love with you. Until I realised I was in love with him again, or maybe always had been."

"Does he know now? God, did he know on the wedding day, when he came to tell me?"

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The mere thought was humiliating, how he would have told me, knowing Elvis was in love with *him*.

"No, he didn't. I never intended to tell him because I know he's as straight as an arrow and he always has loved Molly, ever since boarding school too even if he did an even better job of denying that. Then I was injured in an explosion in Afghan. I thought I would die and Charlie was there and then I told him. Confessed I had kept from him that I knew Molly loved him because I loved him too. It was a bit awkward when I woke up in the ICU and apparently would survive and my best friend knew how I felt about him."

"Christ, Elvis! Did you think of *anyone* but yourself in all this? Not only did you leave me, but you kept Charles and Molly apart?"

"Not exactly kept them apart but didn't help them to get together either. I know, I was an egoistic asshole and I have regretted it so many times. I've apologised to Charles over and over again, but it's only now that I have the chance to apologise to you."

"You haven't though, have you?"

"I'm so, so sorry." He looked completely sincere and I knew that it was not only words, he did regret his actions deep in his heart. I sighed.

"Charles seems to have forgiven you? That's grand of him."

"The fact that I saved Molly's life by removing an explosive vest from her and nearly died myself doing so seems to have helped."

"Is he all right with you being in love with him, then? You said it was awkward first, in the ICU."

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"It was, but he's all right with it. He asked me, once, if I understood he would never love me like that, that he didn't have it in him. I said I know that, of course, and he said he did not want to lose his best friend. After that we have not spoken more of it. We're still friends, he has Molly and I try to move on. But the one thing I regret most is you ending up in the middle of this mess and getting hurt."

"You could have handled it so much better, even if you loved him and not me. Why didn't you break up with me earlier? Why didn't you come tell me yourself? Or even call me? Anything would have been better than standing waiting alone at the registry office!"

"Two things happened right before the wedding, which sort of swayed my actions that way. The evening before, Charlie called me. Just a pep talk from the bestman to his friend on the last night as a bachelor, but hearing his voice... I didn't know how I would be able to stand there and see you walking towards me, when he was standing by my side."

I shuddered at the thought of that scene, now glad it had not happened – what a travesty it would have been.

"I still had not figured out what to do, but then in the morning of the wedding the other thing happened. This girl I used to date when I met you came knocking on my door."

"Debbie?"

"You remember? Yes, Debbie. She didn't come alone. She had this little girl with her, Laura, and she didn't even have to tell me – just by looking at her I knew she was mine."

"What?!"

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"She was a copy of photos of me as a kid. I didn't know of her before, didn't know I had a daughter, I swear."

"For fucks sake, you're truly a walking disaster. How could you not know?"

"Debbie and I just went out a couple of times, I told you that. Then I went to Afghan, met you and fell in love with you and ended it with Debbie by sending a text to let her know we were over. She was already pregnant then, but she chose not to tell me and had the daughter. Now she had changed her mind and thought I had the right to know about Laura and get involved if I wanted to."

"She really picked the right day to drop by."

We sat silent for a while.

"I used her as an excuse", he admitted when he spoke again. "Told myself I couldn't go get married after that, I had to be there for my baby girl, but really I couldn't bear to face you and tell you I was cancelling the whole thing. I knew I couldn't see you or even speak to you, because if I did I *would* marry you not to hurt you."

"And it seems that was a faith worse than death."

"No! But it wasn't right either."

"No, I can see now that it wasn't."

"I didn't know what to do. I was..."

"Weak."

"I was meaning to say lost, but yes, I was weak too."

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He was a prized asshole, but it felt like a weight had lifted from my chest. I saw things from a another angle now. There was nothing I ever could have done different to make Elvis stay in love with me, and he never had intended to hurt me, he just made a clusterfuck of everything.

"Do you stay in contact with the girl, Laura?"

"I have her as often as I can, she's the sunshine of my life", he beamed, and I thought that one beautiful thing had come out of this, a little girl being connected to her dad. One just had to hope her mother was a better influence than he was.

"I've transferred from SF into another role, didn't want to keep putting my life on jeopardy like that anymore. I want Laura to grow up with a father who's not just a photo on the mantelpiece. She has changed me in so many ways. She always comes first."

If the past had not been a barrier between us, I might have become friends with this new version of Elvis. The one who put his daughters needs in front of his own. But the past *was* still present and the only thing I would bring with me when I walked away today was closure. I finally felt I had got it.

"I know from Charlie you're still in the Army of course, but tell me Georgie – are you happy?"

"I haven't been. I haven't been *anything*, just empty. So fucking empty and tried to fill my life with work. I met Spanner and Peanut on the last tour and it made me realise I had to see you to be able to finally move on."

"You think you can now?"

"Yes."

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"Then I'm glad for you and I hope you will. I wish you every happiness. I always have."

I had a lump in my throat and suddenly could not hold back the tears I had denied myself to shed for so long. Seeing my tears, he cried too.

"Is it okay if I hug you now?"

"Yeah", I sniffled.

He opened his arms where he was sitting, and I came over to sit in his lap, one last time pulled to his chest, breathing his familiar scent. He had his lips to my hair. None of us cared what the few other guests might think.

"This is good bye, isn't it?" he whispered. "You don't want to stay friends even now when you know."

I looked up and took his face between my hands.

"You were my friend Elvis, but you were also my lover and the love I thought I would marry and have kids with. Only *friend* will never be enough. I'm only grateful not to hate you anymore. So yes, this is goodbye."

"I'm grateful too you don't hate me anymore and part of me will always love you."

Part of me would always love him too, but I did not say that. Instead I kissed him softly, one last time, a kiss full of sadness and a lost life. Then got to my feet and wiped away my tears, smiled at him and walked away.

Closure is a beautiful thing, but it hurts. Finally, I felt something again.

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A/N: So, if anyone had not read 'All is fair in love and war' and was hoping for a Georgie-Elvis reunion, that won't happen. Sorry.

Chapter 4: Moving on

Bones

I woke up to a beeping sound and everything seemed unusually bright and white. First, I had no idea where I was, but slowly took in the ECG monitor and electrodes patched to my chest, the drip and tubes connected to my arm and the crisp white sheets of a hospital bed. Next, I became aware of the dull pain in the left side of my abdomen and it came back to me. The ambush out of nowhere, the sudden extreme pain, my legs not holding up, then darkness. Becoming conscious for brief moments, in a helicopter, at a local hospital, then nothing. Now I was not sure where I was – in a hospital for sure, but not in what country.

Me waking up seemed to have set off an alarm, because a doctor and a nurse came running,

"Good to see you're awake Captain McClyde", he said.

"Where am I?"

"In England. Queen Elisabeth Hospital Birmingham."

Back to square one, the city I had avoided for years. The city I had called my home once, because Molly was home. The hospital where she had worked, but I knew she did not anymore as she was living in Aldershot with James and their offspring.

"The men who were with me when I was shot, Spanner, Peanut – do you know what happened to them?"

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"We've been informed that you were the only one with such serious injuries that you needed immediate transport back here. I don't know any details, but you can assume they're alive and quite well."

I sighed with relief, allowed myself to relax. Things could be much worse than being in a hospital in Birmingham, I could have been dead.

Different medical staff came and checked on me every now and then. A meal which looked nutritious but did not taste much was served and I thought that the last thing I could remember eating prior to this was a goat curry. I was not sure which was worst but the curry was at least spicy. The morphine drip lulled me to sleep and when I woke up again it was day, the next one I assumed. After some time, another nurse entered the room, a different one than yesterday.

"I'm here to take your stats", she said then looked up from her chart. She seemed strangely familiar, but I could not quite place her beautiful face. I wondered if it was a girl I had dated in the past, in the days before Molly. It could not be after, because then my romantic adventures had been down to nil.

When she saw my face, hers changed in recognition.

"Bones?" she said. Not Captain McClyde like the other staff here. As no one calls me Bones outside the Army setting, it must be there we had met.

"I'm sorry, my head is a bit fuzzy with all the drugs you lot so kindly are supplying me with. Do we know each other?"

"I'm Georgie Lane. We met in Nigeria. I was a medic then, assisting your SF unit during an operation. Now I'm training to be a nurse and have an apprenticeship here."

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"George!" I snorted.

"What?"

"I remember now, you called yourself George and tried to look like a boy."

She looked at me with a faint smile.

"I tried to be judged by my qualifications, not my looks. It's not always easy, being a woman."

I supposed it would not be if one looked like her, because now when she had shoulder-length hair she was really something. I imagined that many men easily stopped listening to what she said just to take in her features, meanwhile other women might be threatened by her.

"Point taken. If my memory does not fail me, you proved yourself during that operation. Peanut survived thanks to you."

"He did", she smiled. "One of the things I'm most proud of from my days in the field. I heard he recently had a baby."

"Yeah, thinking of leaving the Army. And you have too then?"

"Not really, the nurse training is within the Army, but I'm not sure if I'll ever will be going on tour again or stay working here at home."

"Really, how come? When I saw you last you seemed to enjoy army life."

"I did, but I'm done running", she smiled. "You should rest now, and I need to move on to my next patient. I'll see you again later."

She left me lying there, staring up in the ceiling thinking she was the first interesting thing that had happened since I came here. I replayed in my mind our previous encounter and what I knew of her. I remembered how surprised I had been when she was a woman and how reluctant to bring her, thinking she might be a liability. I remembered how she had fallen asleep, resting her head on my shoulder in a way I had found very pleasant. Probably because I had denied myself female company for so long. Still did. Not deliberately, I just had not come across anyone I wanted to be with in the way I had wanted it with Molly and then I would rather leave it be. I also remembered what Spanner had said about her and me being alike, rough on the outside, soft on the inside and bruised by an unhappy love affair. I wondered if she was over Elvis by now. Suddenly, I also wondered if I was over Molly. It was a long time since I even bothered to ask myself that question.

Georgie had said she was done running. Was I? All my belongings were still stored away, in this very city. It felt like a lifetime ago Molly had a flat here which I also called my home. Thinking of it now, I did not feel the familiar ache. Maybe it was time to slow down, get a place here at home and not spend all my time away on different operations, pick up the relationships with friends and family. Well, mum at least, dad I would keep avoiding and he was hardly interested in talking to me anyway as I had not walked the path in life he had designed for me. I thought about how Molly had moved on. I knew she and James had three kids by now and according to the unavoidable gossip was one of the happiest army couples ever seen. It would have irked me if I did not wish her every happiness. I envied it because I wished for the same.

Georgie

It was a pleasant surprise to see Bones again. I had not expected it to be, but it was. He looked rough because obviously no one had shaved him since he was injured, and his face was covered by a half-beard rather than a stubble, but otherwise much the same. We did not really know each other but seeing him again reminded me of when I was with 2 section, which I liked, and I giggled to myself thinking that he was the only man I had slept next to after Elvis, if one did not count sleeping in a dorm next to an entire snoring and farting section. It was a little over a year ago that he had lent me his shoulder for the night.

Shortly after my meeting with Elvis, I had decided to apply for nurse training, to try something new and to stay closer to home. Meeting Elvis did not heal me instantly, but it initiated the healing process. The year studying in Birmingham had completed it. I had a new purpose, new friends, saw my family often in weekends and I was happy with my life. The only thing I had not done, which would be required to call my life completely normal for a single girl my age, was dating. Not that I could not imagine dating by now, but no one had been interesting enough to draw my attention from studies and friends. When I thought about that, Bones appeared in my mind for some reason; his blue eyes, his long stubble, his toned chest with ECG electrodes attached. I shook it off. Before Elvis I had had a rule not to date a squaddie. It had been a good rule which I had broken only once and see where that got me. When there are so many men out in the world, why would I date a soldier? Apart from the fact that he may understand things about me which other men did not.

I returned to Bones for the evening round. He flashed me a big smile when I entered, like I was a welcome interruption to a dreary day.

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"How are you feeling?"

"It hurts", he gestured towards his abdomen, "but it's bearable. Just lying here without anything to do, that's what drives me mad."

"Getting restless already, captain McClyde?"

"You bet."

"I don't think it will take too long before you'll be discharged, we're talking weeks maximum. It will take substantially longer before you can go back into active service though."

He grimaced, probably both at the thought of staying here for weeks and not being able to return to active service until he was fully recovered.

"I can bring you some sudoku."

He just rolled his eyes and sighed heavily in response.

"I'll change your dressing now."

I sat down on his bedside and carefully began to remove the old dressing. It felt strange to touch his smooth bare skin. I noticed that his chest and stomach were much less hairy than Elvis had been, the hairs light brown instead of black. Not sure why I made that comparison, I was not in the habit of registering the hairiness of any other patients. I noticed he watched my face rather than my hands as I worked.

"I suppose I'll have to get myself somewhere to live."

"What do you mean?"

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"If I have to stay in England until I've healed. I haven't had a real home here for three years or so. I have all my belongings stored away and I've either been away on operations abroad or stayed at barracks when I was in the country."

"Why?" I asked even if I ought to be the last person to find that strange. Only when I moved to Birmingham I had bothered to get a place of my own after the break-up.

"A long time ago, I shared a flat with my girlfriend here in Birmingham..."

"You broke up?"

"She left me for the love of her life. You know him – Captain James."

I just stared at him, paused my task then burst into fits of laughter. I could not stop myself, I laughed until my stomach hurt. He did not look as amused.

"How is that funny? It was... it was a hard break-up for me, I loved her."

I tried to pull myself together.

"I'm so sorry. I never knew you had been together with Molly."

"And what's so funny about that?"

"No, it's not that." I hesitated a moment if I should share the secret I had kept for Elvis sake, but decided it would be fair to do so. I trusted he would not pass it forward.

"I'll tell you something, if you promise never to tell anyone. It's kind of a sensitive secret."

"Okay."

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"I'm not sure if you know, but I was to marry Elvis Harte. I think you know him."

"I do." He did not sound overly enthusiastic and knew they had never been on good terms even if Elvis never said why.

"He never showed up on our wedding day..."

"Spanner told me as much."

"Damn, Spanner. I asked him not to say anything."

"He only did after the operation was over, not during, so relax. Anyway, you're telling me yourself now, so it doesn't matter – does it?"

"I suppose you're right. After I got back from the tour to Nigeria, that was two years after we were supposed to get married, I finally met with Elvis. Then he told me why he couldn't go through with the wedding."

"Why?"

"He was in love with Charles James."

He stared at me.

"Nooooo, you're kidding me?"

"I swear, I'm not."

He stayed quiet, like he was absorbing the information, then started laughing as much as I just had but soon stopped, groaning because his abdomen hurt.

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"For fucks sake, you can't tell me things like that. It hurts too much laughing like this."

"I'm sorry. I just wanted you to know you're not the only one who has been dumped for Captain James."

"Christ, I can't see what's so bloody special about him", he laughed again despite the pain, wiped away tears of laughter.

I started cleaning his wound, which was healing nicely and felt him looking at me, gradually turning serious again.

"It wasn't very funny back then, was it? On your wedding day?"

"No, it was the worst day of my life. I honestly thought I would die because it hurt so much. Like actual physical pain."

"So did I, when Molly said it was over. It wasn't public, like for you. Just the two of us but it was bad enough anyway. In Bastion, taking a walk and she said she wasn't in love with me anymore. Wanted to break off our engagement. Only later, I understood that she had met Charles again on tour, her teenage crush and there was no stopping their love. I saw them together once, there in Afghan. She was in an explosive vest and he was calming her down until it could be removed. All I wanted then was for her to survive, but it was painful to see them together because it was like no one else existed when they were close to each other. Like they were a force of nature and it could not be helped if others were harmed coming in their way. Elvis was there too that day. Saved her life and nearly died himself."

"He told me about it. How come there was always such animosity between you?"

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"Because we knew each other from boarding school, all four of us. Me, Charles and Elvis were students. Molly was the headmaster's daughter and came to live with him during our last year. I was in love with her then, but she and Charles only had eyes for each other even if they for some reason kept it platonic then. I did not like him because of that and because he reminded me I was an asshole the first year. He and Elvis did not like me because I made Charles' first year a living hell."

"In what way?"

"I bullied him. It's how it works out at these schools. You have to make sure from day one you're not the lowest in the pecking order. I was scared as hell I would be, so first day I singled out Charles as my victim."

"It's difficult to imagine Charles letting himself be bullied."

"He was only thirteen and scared like a deer caught in the headlights of a car, but he was still tough in a way I always secretly admired. Never squealed to the teachers."

"It's difficult to imagine you that mean. I got the impression you were hard but fair."

"I hope I am – now. I regretted how I treated him all my life, went to lengths to be another man after leaving school, during my travels and later in the Army. When I finally came across him in Afghan, I apologised, and it seemed like fate's irony that he won Molly back again to my loss. I hope that means I have made up for my bad karma and have a good life to look forward to."

He smiled, and again I noticed the incredible blue colour of his eyes.

"It seems to me you have made amends."

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"Molly never knew how I had treated Charles and I never told her because I was ashamed and thought she might resent me from having done that to her friend, who I knew she had been in love with even if she never said. I always hated not being honest about it but was coward to tell. It feels like a relief talking about it now."

"I guess we all have done things we regret in the past, the important thing is that we learn from them and become better persons."

I was done with the new dressing and got up from the bedside.

"It was nice talking to you, but now I need to go again."

"Georgie, can I ask you a favour?"

"Yeah?"

"Would you give me a shave tomorrow? I can barely make it to the loo, let alone stand in front of the mirror long enough to shave. I feel like a Yeti."

I smiled at the metaphor.

"I promise I'll bring a razor and shaving cream, but I can't promise you it will be a very good shave. I'm not a barber, just a nurse in training."

"Anything is better than this."

Bones

She did as she had promised. I was tired when she came. Tired from the pain, tired from restless sleep. I was not sure if it was the memories our conversation had brought up,

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or the thought of seeing her again that made it. Maybe both. The momentous secret that Elvis loved Charles had also spun around in my head. Who would have thought? Anyway his secret was safe with me. I would not betray Georgie's confidence and did not wish to do any harm even if Elvis was no favourite of mine.

She prepared a bowl of lukewarm water and a towel and sat down on my bedside again. I liked having her that close. She added shaving foam to my face and carefully began.

"Ouch!"

She looked horrified, thinking she had cut me.

"Sorry, just kidding."

"Please stop that, or I'll leave you half-shaved."

She continued with careful moves, sometimes stretched the skin to get better access. The touch was both relaxing and exhilarating. She was focussed on her task, but I was focussed on her and could not help reacting to her closeness. She was only inches away as she scrutinised her work and dabbed my chin dry with the towel. She smelled so good, a faint smell of shampoo.

"Now you look much better", she said with satisfaction.

I stroke my chin, now smoot again.

"I *feel* so much better."

She reached out her hand to feel too. Before I could think, I covered it with mine and held it there. Her smile vanished, her eyes widened in surprise, but she kept my gaze

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and did not withdraw her hand. With my other hand, I cradled her head and softly pulled her the last few inches towards me and kissed her. Soft, amazing lips and for a few seconds she responded. Then suddenly withdrew and gasped for air.

"What are we doing?! You're my patient, I can't be doing this. We shouldn't... I have to go."

She got up, took the bowl and towel and hurried for the door.

"Georgie, I'm sorry."

She turned her head and looked at me, then disappeared out the door. I was caught in my bed, my heart thumping, cursing myself yet unable to regret the kiss because I had enjoyed it too much. She stayed away after that and I did not see her again before I was discharged.

Chapter 5: Curiosity

Georgie

I got a postcard with a cute puppy, looking sad and the text "MISS YOU". When I flipped it around, the other side said;

You're family – please come to Family Day.

XXX

Your fav section of all times

And below that, the details for the upcoming regimental family day.

It was heart-warming. I had not seen 2 section in nearly a year and the boys wanted me there. Some squaddies thought these days were dreadful if one did not have family, but I always found them quite nice. Liked to see a different side of everyone than you did on a normal day on duty. See a strict major having fun with his kids, or a humourless sergeant laughing with her boyfriend. It made everyone seem more human. After Elvis it had hurt a bit to attend. I had tried on one occasion but felt like his hand was missing in mine and the next year I did not go. Now I felt ready for it, though. To reunite with my second family – because I was sure missing them too.

I still was not dating anyone, so I would go alone. Two months, one week and three days had passed since Bones kissed me in the hospital and I still thought about it every now and then. It had made me panic, for more than one reason. Besides the obvious thing that he was my patient, it scared the hell out of me. It scared me because I liked it so much. When I felt his lips to mine, I just wanted to sink into him, deepen the kiss, but I was afraid what would happen after, when the kiss was over. So, I did the easiest

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thing - ran again. Left the room and later asked for the patient to be transferred to someone else. A week later I was still debating with myself whether I should go and see him, but when I finally decided to go, I found the room inhabited by another patient and he had been discharged. I do not know which feeling was strongest: relief or disappointment.

It was a sunny Saturday, one month later, when I drove all the way to barracks to meet with my friends and I was enjoying the freedom of being able wear a dress with floral print instead of a uniform for the event. It did not take me long to localise them even in the crowd, sticking together as usual in one corner of the lawn, just about to get something to eat and have sort of a picnic together, some of them with their families in tow.

"Hi guys", they turned at my voice but then there was a silence.

"Georgie, shit! I didn't recognise you looking so nice." Brains found himself first. I had not thought about that they had not seen me in a feminine haircut and clothes for the last three years.

"Well, it's me." I felt a bit silly, suddenly wishing I was like they were used to, but on the other hand I did not feel like I had to look like a boy to keep men at a distance anymore. There was hugging and catching up, it was so great to see them all and I realised I had missed them even more than I knew. Rab got me a plate of grilled meet and salad, Fingers got me a beer – I really got the royal welcome.

"Georgie Lane – great that you join us on Family day. Does this mean you plan to return to 2 section?"

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I recognised the dark male voice already before looking up with a broad smile.

"Captain James, good to see you too."

He looked the same as always, the chiselled features in combination with a smile was gorgeous. No wonder both Molly and Elvis had fallen for him. I had never looked at him that way as he was first the friend of my fiancée, then my CO, but now I scrutinised him as said fiancée had left me for him.

"How have you been?"

Spontaneously we stepped away a bit from the others to be able to talk slightly in private.

"Good. And I don't just say it, this year has been really good. I needed to take a break from the army, do something new. Root a bit you know, have a flat not just stay at barracks."

"I know you saw Elvis finally. He told me."

"Yeah. It was hard, but also good. I needed that to move on."

"So, now you know... why he didn't come that day."

He looked at me searchingly, maybe for signs of anger towards him, but I did not feel any.

"You and a baby girl. I didn't see any of those things coming." I was able to laugh at it now without feeling hollow.

"Neither did I. It was quite a shock."

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"I'm glad you're still friends."

"He's the friend I've known for longest in my life. I can't imagine to be without him, but it took some adjustment."

"It helped me though, like you said it would. To know the truth, helped me leave everything behind."

"Then I'm happy as a clam, I think it's about time. Now Georgie, I need to have a serious talk with you. We're being deployed in a month, an outreach project in Kenya. Our new medic just broke his leg and won't be able to go. It's always a nuisance to introduce a new member in the section when everyone knows each other and work so well together. Having you here, I'm thinking if you would take a break in your studies and join us? It's only two months. It would be so perfect."

"I don't know, boss. I'm happy where I am right now."

"I know, but it's a great opportunity. You don't have to answer now, but think about I, will you? I need your final answer on Monday. If you don't want to come, I need to find another medic."

"Okay, I'll think about it."

It had definitely not been on my radar to take a break in my studies, but the thought tickled me. Suddenly we were interrupted by another familiar voice.

"Charles James, is this where you're hiding? You're very welcome to take care of at least one member of your family on Family day."

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A smiling Molly handed over their second youngest child to Charles. The youngest was a baby of only a few months, lying in a stroller, the eldest girl was holding on to Molly's skirt. I could see why she wanted some assistance, her hands had been full to say the least. I had met Molly several times through Charles and within her role as army doctor. I really liked her and had always thought they seemed perfect together. Now I looked at her too with different eyes. Tried to imagine that she had been the fiancée of Bones but was so stricken with love for Captain James when they met on tour that she left Bones. In one way it seemed out of character for both her and Charles to fall so madly in love, to the extent that they hurt others, but on the other hand the magnetism between them was undeniable. Even now when they were parents of three toddlers, something which could wear any couple down, sparks were flying between them.

Now she smilingly turned to give me a hug.

"Georgie, so glad you came today. Come, let's sit down and tell me everything about your new life in Birmingham. I used to live and work there you know."

I actually did know, as Bones had told me. We sat down and talked. Charles went for a stroll to buy ice-cream with the two eldest girls, the baby slept in the stroller.

"I love these moments, when I have some peace and quiet. Then after five minutes it feels empty and I wonder where they've all gone. Isn't that silly?"

"Will you go back to work or be a stay-at-home-mum?"

"With three kids, it would be enough to keep me occupied but at length I would go crazy. I'll probably start working at least part-time when Sam is around one year. And your plans – when you're ready with your nurse training, where do you think you'll work?"

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"Don't know yet. Charles just asked if I would consider taking a break and come on the next tour."

"I would be glad if you did, then I know the boys are in safe hands."

We looked over at the lads. Those who had not brought any family members were starting to get slightly drunk after a few mid-day beers.

"I met your ex", I suddenly blurted out.

"John?"

I had never called him that but had seen in the medical records that it was his Christian name.

"Bones, yes."

She looked curious, so I continued.

"He was my patient. He had taken a shot in the abdomen."

"Oh God, not John." Her eyes widened in fear and I realised she still cared deeply for him.

"Don't worry. He'll be fine. He had surgery and will recover just fine. He'll definitely return to active service. At least if he wants to."

"How was he? Besides the injuries? I haven't spoken to him for years, but I wonder sometime."

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"Quite okay, I think. He's been working and travelling mostly, but now he said he would get himself a place as he would have to stay home for the rehab. It seems he never did that after your break-up."

It seemed like that piece of information disturbed her, she furrowed her brow and bit her lip, her eyes looked sad.

"I wish he did. I only want him the best and I wish I had not hurt him, but Charles was the one for me, so I never had a choice really."

"So... you think he's a good guy?"

"The greatest, well, second to Charles that is", she giggled. "At least when it comes to myself."

Suddenly she looked like she realised something and bored her eyes into me with a mischievous smile.

"Georgie, do *you* like him? Do you have a crush on John?"

I felt my cheeks turn hot.

"I wouldn't go as far as crush, but I liked him, yeah....and he kissed me once."

She clapped her hands together.

"He kissed you?! Oh, I love this. What happened after the kiss?"

"I panicked and left him, and I haven't seen him since. It's been three months."

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"If you like him, he's too good to be left with just that. You should see him again. I can actually picture the two of you together."

I knew I had brought up Bones with her to get some kind of indication on if he was a guy one would want to date or someone who should be avoided. Now when she confirmed that he was dating material, it almost made me stressed. I was not sure why, if it was because I had let him slip away or because it made him even more interesting.

"Will you tell me a bit about him?"

"I'll tell you as much as I have time for before Charles returns. He has a jealous streak you know, so even if he knows I chose him he does not like to be reminded I was engaged to John once. It's not like their exactly friends."

And so, we sat on a blanket, on a lawn in the sunshine and Molly told me about the man she once had left but still was fond of. When Charles finally returned, and we quickly changed subject, I was even more curious about Bones than before and wished I had not let him leave the hospital without talking to him. I wondered if I would have the chance to meet him again and what that would be like.

Chapter 6: After darkness comes light

Georgie

It was black, just a tiny bit of daylight seeping through the rough canvas of the bag they had put over my head. I knew, logically, that I could breath, but I did not feel like it. The bag over my head made me feel like my entire body was confined in a very small space. Not that I knew exactly how small the room they had locked me up in was, because I had not seen it. My hands and feet were tied so I could not move, only lie still on the hard ground. That was one of the few things I knew of the room, there was no real floor, just stamped earth and the chill radiated from it at night leaving me trembling with cold in contrast to the heat of the days. The sparse light had been enough to keep track of how long I had been their captive though, three days and three nights now. I had no idea how long they planned to keep me alive, but chances were they would kill me soon unless someone came for me. If they had known I was a soldier they would for sure have killed me already, but I was dressed like one of the aid workers of the camp – a change of clothes had saved my life. So far.

If I had not been so furious with Bones, so eager to prove that I was not total shit, maybe I would not have insisted to be in the camp that day. Maybe I would not have been abducted, but I blamed myself for that, not him.

I had not been able to resist Charles James offer. I called him the Monday after the Family day and told him I would join him and 2 section. I had not arranged everything with school yet but felt quite confident I would be able to as it was the army who supported my studies, and this would be something I did for their benefit. As it was a

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humanitarian mission it would also add on to my experiences as a nurse. We were to be part of an outreach project in a refugee camp on the Somali border.

The barracks where we were to be based, were in Kenya and we were to be working jointly with the Kenyan army. Despite that this was a humanitarian mission, it would not be a walk in the park and it became apparent during our first mission briefing that we would be able to let ourselves relax. We were also to be working closely with the N.G.O. Kenya Crisis Care.

Captain James held the briefing together with a Kenyan officer, Captain Osman, who now pointed to a map pinned on the wall.

"Kenya Crisis Care are working here at the large refugee camp. It's a breeding ground for Al Shabaab and many NGO workers have been killed, many more have fled leaving the camp very unstable."

"Primarily, our job is to support the Kenyan army in restoring the order in the camp and assist Kenya Crisis Care to deliver medical services to the tens of thousands inhabitants", James filled in.

I had not realised the camp was that huge, nor had I realised this humanitarian mission would be so dangerous as it seemed when they described the volatile conditions in the camp.

"This is effectively a war zone. Many in the camp are very hostile to the military - it doesn't matter if it is Kenyan or British and it doesn't matter that our purpose is to help them", Osman's face was serious.

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"We need to stay focused, stay alert and stay alive." James' mantra, but it was as true as ever. "We will stay based here and move in and out of the camp for specific missions. The NGO's staying there can't be seen as taking sides with us, that would put them in increased danger."

James told us to get some scoff and sleep as we were leaving at zero six hundred next morning for our first visit to the camp. We all did as he said but I was not the only one feeling tension at the thought of entering that huge camp where we would be far from welcome and finding it hard to sleep.

Already during the drive to the camp, the heat became searing. As I sat in the back of the open-sided truck moving forward on bumpy roads, I tried to take everything in, the vast dusty landscape passing by, the huts people seemed to live in, the apparent poverty, the hostility in the eyes of many of the people we drove by, even kids. I had not come here fully prepared for that. And then I had not even seen the camp, nothing could have prepared me for *that*. When the trucks were pulling into the camp I saw a chaos of thousands of primitive homes, hordes of people, looking suspicious at best but many of them hostile. However, in great need of medical help. I had to overcome my fears, do the job I was here to do.

Kenya Crisis Care had a primitive med centre in the camp, with make-shift beds, poorly equipped and under-staffed. We learned there were no doctors there anymore. They had either been killed or fled. Currently two female medical workers, Kicki and Nafula, were holding up best they could but the situation was obviously a disaster. They had eagerly been awaiting the equipment and supplies we were bringing.

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The following days we went in and out of the camp daily. I worked alongside Kicki and Nafula, trying to help as many as I could but felt a growing desperation over the endless need. This was truly hell on earth. On the third day, a young girl was brought to us. She had been mildly injured by an IED. I understood from the way they talked to each other that she knew Nafula and Kicki from before, it was not the first time she had been their patient.

"As if there isn't enough shit here, there's also wonderful dad's like hers who sometimes beat the crap out of their daughters, so we've had to patch her up a few times."

My own body hurt at the thought of her being frequently beaten, and now an IED.

"How did you come across the explosives?" I asked and Nafula translated.

I saw the girl's face filled with fear and first she did not respond. I sat down in front of her and carefully caressed her cheek, meanwhile Nafula continued to clean her wounds.

"You can trust us, you can tell us" I said.

She sobbed and said something. Nafula translated when I looked at her.

"She says her dad makes them. He has a bomb factory. He plans to blow up the soldiers."

Fear gripped my heart, but I fought not to panic, because I needed more information. I needed more information about the whereabouts of this man and the factory. Someone who cared so little for his daughter was certainly a dangerous enemy to us, completely ruthless.

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"Nafula, can you ask where it is? Tell her that we need to know, that we need to stop them from making bombs – or they'll hurt you and Kicki. Maybe that can make her tell you."

Nafula spoke softly to the girl, she hesitated but I held her hands and finally she spoke and apparently asked for a piece of paper where she also drew a primitive map. Nafula repeated the directions to me.

"Thank you both, I need to inform Captain James right away."

Later that evening, James and Osman held a mission briefing with the platoon.

"Private Lane has been able to obtain trustworthy intel from a child in the camp, indicating there is a bomb factory in this area." He drew a circle on the map. "There is a compound which could fit the bill. We need to eliminate this factory and confiscate the bombs they've already produced or our continued job in the camp will be very dangerous to say the least."

"We will strike tomorrow morning. Be prepared to leave at zero five hundred. No need to add that this will be a very dangerous mission. We have no intel how many they are, but assume they are armed and have no hesitation to kill you."

I went to bed with a lump in my stomach. James had told me I should be proud I had obtained the intel, but I was just really, really scared that I was endangering my friends' lives, as well as my own. This tour had spun in a completely different direction than I had imagined. It would have been wiser to stick with my studies.

We drove off as planned and within an hour were getting close to the compound. We left the vehicles and travelled the last bit on foot, so they would not be alarmed. However,

as we finally entered the compound we found it empty and deserted. It seemed like they had left in a hurry and there was evidence of what had been going on, so we clearly had found the right place, but the bomb makers were nowhere to be seen. Neither was any IEDs.

Suddenly Brains shouted a warning;

"Vehicle approach, vehicle approaching."

From nowhere, a truck came driving in full speed and stopped with squealing breaks. We all aimed our weapons at it, but out jumped the last person I had expected to see here.

His chest was heaving, breathing angrily. A blood vessel throbbing by his temple. I don't think I ever have seen a man looking so absolutely furious.

"What the fuck are you morons doing here?" Bones growled. His eyes fell on Captain James.

"You! For fucks sake, what do I have to do to get rid of you. Can you tell me exactly WHAT THE FUCK you're doing here?! We've had eyes on this terror cell for over a month and suddenly yesterday they packed everything up and moved before we could do anything. Apparently, they had been warned someone was on to them – and now I find out it's you incompetent bell ends!"

"Private Lane got trustworthy intel this was a bomb factory and we had to try to stop them before they used it in the camp." James stated, not backing an inch.

Bones seemed to flinch at the mentioning of my name, his gaze moved from Captain James face and found mine. His stern face did not soften one bit.

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"And do you see any bombs still here? Do you?! You've missed them! We missed them because of you! All our work for nothing. You've put yourself in danger, you've wasted our mission, why don't you keep to your humanitarian mission?"

In two long strides he was next to me, in my space.

"What the fuck where you thinking, Lane!? Don't stick your nose where it doesn't belong!"

I felt his breath on my face as his lips moved, the same lips that once had kissed me, but he sure had no intention of doing so now. His entire body language radiated contempt and fury, nothing else.

Captain James appeared next to us.

"It's one of my men you're speaking to, so back off Bones. Lane received the intel while doing her job, taking care of a child in the med centre. Acting on it was mine and Captain Osman's decision and I'm sorry if it does not please you. We acted as we thought was best based on the intel we had."

Bones had not broken eye contact with me even as James spoke to him, completely ignored him. For a few seconds he just remained there in front of me, equally upset, then warned, in low voice;

"I hope to God this doesn't mean that innocent people will die, because those bombs are now on the loose. Please stick to the job you're good at, whatever that is, and leave operations like this to SF."

"We didn't know you were here..."

Bones interrupted James, still looking at me.

"It's not mission impossible to find out information about someone if you really want to."

Then he stormed out, Spanner and Peanut in tow, the two of them threw me apologetic smiles behind their boss' back but I still felt like a bloody schoolgirl having been told off by the headmaster. A very threatening headmaster.

That evening I lay awake in my bunk. When Bones had uttered his last words, I had not been sure what he was talking about anymore. Was it possible that he wished I had come looking for him when he left the hospital? Seeing him today, I wished I had. This was not the situation I wanted to meet him in, him being mad at me for fucking things up, looking like my sole existence was a nuisance to him. Like a mosquito he would like to crush between his palms. Despite that I was angry with him in return, because I thought his reaction was disproportionate and unfair even if he was frustrated over his operation having been blown up, I also felt something else. When he was standing so close to me, breathing heavily, I had been so attracted to him it was like invisible strings were pulling me to him and I had to fight to stay away. If all the others had not been there, I would have wanted to put my finger to his lips to hush him, then put my arms around his neck and kissed him. But that was a fantasy, the state he was in he probably would have pushed me away and walked out. He despised my part in what had happened today.

Yet, I fell asleep and had a very vivid and realistic dream of Bones. He came striding into a room where it was just the two of us, looking as furious as he had done earlier that day.

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"Lane, I wasn't ready with you", he said then pinned me against the wall and caught me off guard as he went straight for a kiss. He kissed me hard and angrily, pressing his body to mine. I was unable to move because I was so shocked – mad at him, but also wanting this, wanting him. Then he suddenly paused with his face inches from mine and I saw his features soften, meeting my eyes. When his lips touched mine again, they did so softly, with tenderness that stayed in it even when the kiss deepened with passion. I returned his kiss, held around his back, willing him to me and then he suddenly lifted me and carried me to the bed which conveniently had appeared in the room. He undressed me gently, only stopped kissing me when he pulled my uniform shirt over my head and then he made love to me until I shuddering came undone around him. I do not know if I ever had experienced something like it in real life, not even with Elvis.

"Please don't run away from me", he whispered in my ear – and woke up, bereft of his touch and shaken.

Next day, I threw myself back into work. Frustrated over the dream, frustrated that the real, live Bones was gone and was very unlikely to think well of me, even less likely to want to hold me. A year ago, I had not wanted him to look at me. Well, not him specifically – I had not wanted *any* man to look at me and had been relieved when he seemed completely disinterested, an officer doing his job, doing it well and nothing else. I was angry with myself because it mattered *now*, mattered more than I would admit to anyone but could no longer deny to myself.

When I worked with Kicki and Nafula in the camp, I had made it a habit to change to the same type of clothing as they wore, because I had noticed that my uniform made the patients uncomfortable and hostile – and I did not want that. Captain James had

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been against it, but when I pointed out that my presence there would be pointless if they refused to get help from me when I was in uniform, he had reluctantly agreed. This day, I went alone, escorted by Kenyan soldiers. The rest of 2 section would be involved in tracking down where the bombs from the factory might have been taken. It seemed like a joint operation was planned with Bones and his team, who obviously still were around. Part of me would have liked to join them too, but I thought it was for the better that I went to the camp as planned, where I could be of most use and also avoid Bones. I was not sure I could look him in the eyes after the night we, him unknowingly, has shared.

Mid-day, when the sun was blazing, a series of IEDs went off in the camp, causing total chaos. The Kenyan soldiers tried to restore the order, meanwhile Kicki, Nafula and I did our best to tend to the casualties. Some were beyond saving, some could be patched up with the small means we had at the camp, but a few would need ambulance transport to the hospital. When the ambulance arrived after a long wait, it was obvious that one of us needed to go to be able to keep the injured alive during the drive. It was all so primitive that my heart was bleeding, the chances so bad for those hurt, with the heat, the infection risk. I could not let them leave alone when I might help to save their life.

"We have to stay here, we must stay and try to stabilise the camp." Captain Osman told me.

"Can you spare one of your men to go with me? I have to go to keep them stable during the transport."

He gave it some consideration, then nodded in agreement.

"You're putting yourself in danger, Lane."

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I knew I did, I knew it was foolish, but I could not let them die on my watch, not without trying to save them. So, I went and it all went well until the ambulance was pulled over by armed men, the driver and the Kenyan soldier accompanying me shot and I roughly pulled into another truck with a bag over my head.

Time passes very slowly when you cannot see or move and when you are waiting for death to come.

I finally got some food and water, for now they wanted to keep me alive.

I figured my abductors were Muslim terrorists, when I was taken before one of them who seemed to be a leader and was ordered to treat a bullet wound. I did as best as I could with the little equipment they had and was rewarded by getting beaten up because I eased him pain removing the bullet.

They threw me into the cell again and now when I had fulfilled my purpose I was sure it would not be long before they killed me. I just waited, crouched into foetal position, like that would protect me when they came for me. I thought of the driver and the Kenyan soldier, wondered if they had survived. Those we transported likely had not.

Finally, they came for me, but not the terrorists. The door flew open and someone knelt beside me, pulled the bag off from my head. I was dizzy and weak from the physical abuse, lack of water and food, so I almost thought I was hallucinating when I heard Bones voice.

"Georgie, we've come for you. Everything will be all right."

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As he took my limp body in his arms and carried me, I knew it would, everything would be all right. I leaned into him and felt him put the harness around me, so we could be winched up into a Chinook hovering above. He did not let go, he went with me and held me all the way to the hospital where I half unconscious was transferred to a stretcher and taken away.

Bones

When they finally told me, she had regained consciousness and was well enough to have visitors, my relief was palpable. A few days earlier, when I had been briefed that she had been kidnapped, it had affected me physically to the extent that I nearly vomited. I should have declared interest and walked away from the rescue operation, but I could not leave it to someone else to try to save her when I knew that me and my team were the best ones around. The angst I felt before we located her and got her out safe was indescribable. I think it all got worse just because I had seen her the day before the kidnapping and been so fucking mad with her – partly because they blew up my surveillance operation, but mostly because she was there putting herself in danger and disturbing my equilibrium, preventing me from staying focused at the job. That night I dreamt such a realistic dream of her, dreamt we made love. She was under me, over me, moving with me in perfect synchronicity until we both climaxed, and I whispered to her;

"Please, don't run away from me."

I woke up to an empty bed and later that day received the news she had been taken. I knew I just had to find her. Now, when she was here in the hospital, I could breathe and think like a normal man again.

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"Roles reversed" I said leaning in the door, watching her in the hospital bed.

She looked up, first surprised, then gave me an insecure smile like she was not sure what I would be like. The Bones who had given her the bollocking before she was kidnapped, or the one who had held her in my arms when we freed her. I knew which one I wanted to be this day, if she wanted me to be.

"How do you mean?"

"You in a sick-bed and me coming to see you."

"Well, I wish I didn't have to be in this bed but it's nice that you're coming by."

She patted on her bedside, offering me to sit down there instead of in a chair and I did.

"I wasn't sure I'd see you again. Wasn't sure if you would want to come and see me. You were so mad at me when we had jeopardised your operation. I thought you really hated me that day and I felt like such an idiot. I never wanted..."

"Hush, I know." I took her hand. "I was furious like hell, but not only because of the operation. I was mad because you had put yourself in a dangerous situation by being there. If the whole cell we had been watching had been there, they would have outnumbered you, it was lucky they were gone."

I paused and swallowed before I continued.

"I know we're not really anything to each other, at least not yet, but I don't want to lose you. Least of all to a bunch of terrorists. You scared the hell out of me when you were kidnapped. I couldn't rest until we had found you, alive. Christ, I could barely breathe."

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She looked at me searchingly.

"You want us to be something to each other?"

I felt my cheeks heating.

"I thought that was pretty obvious in Birmingham, but you left a bit abrupt that time."

Her eyes met mine, my heart thumping loudly, nervously waiting for what she would say.

"I know... I freaked out. I regretted it afterwards."

"But you never came back?"

"I did, but you were already gone."

"I don't think I would have been *that* hard to find if you had wanted to."

"I wasn't ready. Wasn't ready to find you."

We kept our eyes locked, I still held her hand.

"I was afraid what would happen if I did", she added.

"What did you think would happen?"

"This."

She mirrored what I had done that time, curled her hand around the back of my neck, buried her fingers in my hair and pulled me to her in a kiss. Our lips brushing against each other, then touching full on, but still soft. I did not want to hurt her where her face

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was wounded, and her lip split after the punches she had taken. I smiled with my lips on hers.

"Why would you be afraid of this?"

"I was afraid I wouldn't know how to stop."

"I don't want you to."

It was the truth. I wanted to keep on kissing Georgie Lane. I wanted to get to know her, take her out on a proper date when we returned home, and then another and hopefully one day bring her to my bed. I had not felt like this since Molly. For the first time I felt hope that there could be someone after her, because I was ready to let her into my heart and it seemed like she wanted to be there. She had been hurt like me, both of us turned down by the one we loved, and we knew trust is a fragile thing – because of that I thought we would be able to care for each other in the tender way we both needed. Beyond that, this woman was courageous, smart and fun, able to challenge me and make me mad in ways Molly never did, beautiful and, let us face it, amazingly sexy, causing all sorts of confusing and passionate feelings inside me. For all those reasons, she was not a rebound, she was the one woman I wanted and who I would fight to have by my side. When she kissed me again, pouring even more passion to it this second time, not seeming to mind her split lip, I knew that it was what she felt too.

"Then I won't", she whispered.

A/N: I know a lot of OG fans don't like Georgie stories much (although this is as much a Bones and Elvis story to me). For me, I see her a bit like two

characters – one I really enjoyed to follow on screen, a brave girl more focussed on her work than on her love life, choosing neither Cole nor Elvis at the end of series 2; and another who was just running around disobeying orders without real repercussions in a quite annoying and unbelievable way, with men more than the job in focus. So, to being able to write a story about the Georgie I like (like in this one and 'She didn't see it coming' and '25 days...') I focus on her earlier days, and when I write her as a bad character (like in 'She's nothing but a dirty mind...') I focus on the latter part of series 4. However, I feel that it is difficult to make her come alive like Molly no matter how hard I try. I simply feel more for Molly, so her stories come flowing to me more naturally. That's why I'll in the end write more of those.

Epilogue: The purest love

Elvis

With her next to me I'm utterly happy. With her tiny hand in mine I feel complete. When she cuddles up in my lap and buries her face by my neck and ask me to read Peter Rabbit to her, there is nothing I would rather do.

I'm not sure where everything else in life is going, but I know for sure that she is at the centre of it. I loved her from the very first moment I saw her, and I'll love her to my very last. It is amazing how such a small person has the capacity of changing everything in a grown man's life just by making an appearance; my priorities, how I see things, how I think about the future. I never considered giving up being an SF soldier for Georgie's sake, not even when I thought I was madly in love with her. Now it was not even a difficult choice, it just grew on me as the natural thing to do and almost seamlessly I transferred to a role which would enable me to see her more often and not risk my life so frequently.

The first time she smiled at me I nearly died of happiness. The first time she cried it nearly killed me because her pain was mine ten-fold. The first time she brings a boy home I'll probably kill him, because she is my everything and I want to protect her and always be there for her.

In the end, she is the true love of my life – my daughter, Laura.

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A/N: That's the end of the third part of this trilogy. Really just wanted to end things a bit happier for Bones, Georgie and Elvis than I did in 'All is fair in love and war'.

All my completed stories are also to be found in a more reader friendly e-book format on www.misspionyff.wordpress.com

I'm on Twitter under my pen name @MissPiony if you wish to follow for story alerts.