

*Making out on the subway*, Jane smiled inwardly. *I feel like a teenager*. “Not worried about your public reputation?” she asked her companion during a moment’s pause.

Mark chuckled. “*What* reputation? I think being caught with a pretty woman on the Underground would do me more good than harm. Proof the old man still has it.”

“I can understand that. Law enforcement hours can be hell on a relationship.” As soon as the words were out of her mouth, Jane wanted to kick herself as Mark’s smile momentarily flickered. She sighed. “As well you know. Open mouth, insert foot – sorry.” Jane planted a quick kiss on her friend’s forehead in apology.

Mark shrugged it off. “It’s alright,” he insisted. “Divorces happen, ugly or otherwise. Don’t worry about it.”

“Mm, alright.” Jane wondered if Mark would notice if she increased her height by just an inch or so. She hated getting a crick in her neck while kissing. *Why bother?* She decided. *I don’t think we’re going to be upright much longer, anyways.*

Another break. “Jane?”

Something in Mark’s voice made her wary. Creating a few inches’ space, she regarded him carefully. Sure enough, his expression was preoccupied – and not by the immediate future, she suspected.

“What?”

“There’s something I have to ask you.” Jane was reminded of their dinner together earlier that evening, as Mark’s confidence withdrew into concern.

“I’m not married.” Jane said quickly, hoping flippancy might divert him.

Mark smiled, despite himself. “Good to know, but that’s not what’s on my mind.”

“Oh?” Jane felt him take a deep breath, clearly girding for something. *What’s this?*

“Your face...”

“What about it?” An edge crept into her voice.

Mark leaned closer; spoke in her ear, despite the empty carriage. “I know that what I’m seeing isn’t real,” he reminded her. Jane glanced at her reflection in the dark glass as the train sped beneath the Thames. “Could I see what you really look like?”

Jane frowned, shoving aside her initial urge to refuse. A moment later, she asked “This is one of those trust things, isn’t it?”

“I’m afraid so.” Mark watched her carefully.

Jane stifled a wry laugh. “Why do you have to be so reasonable? It’s much easier to say no to unreasonable people.”

Mark scowled and Jane realized that she had blown it again. “Why say no at all?” he asked, aggrieved.

*Give in gracefully, Jane, or get off the train and go back to Seattle.* “Your cop’s rhetoric wins again.” She conceded with a shrug. Her forehead furrowed in thought, “Give me a minute. It’s been a while.”

“How long has it been?”

“Uh,” Jane thought for a moment. “About five years.”

Mark’s eyes widened. “You’re joking.”

Jane shook her head, not wanting to be distracted. *Come on, you’re in there, somewhere. I know it’s been a while, but it should be like riding a bike, right? You can’t forget your own face!* Just as she was ready to panic, she felt her features shift almost of their own accord and settle into a shape that was long unfamiliar but nonetheless comfortable.

Mark's expression didn't change. Jane suppressed a moment of worry. "What? Too many noses?" she touched her face, anxiously remembering an incident from her *very* early days as a nova.

"No, no..." Mark replied slowly. "That's your *real* face. Your pre-nova face?"

Jane nodded, wondering if maybe she had put a third eyeball in her forehead. Mark really didn't seem to be taking it well. Then he grinned and kissed her again.

"I think I've got the better half of the deal," he told her. "It's a great face."

Jane didn't bother to hide her relief. "If you say so," she muttered, feeling a little uncomfortable. She wasn't used to feeling exposed.

Mark correctly guessed at the cause of her discomfort. He smiled. "Thanks."

Jane nodded, trying for an insouciance she didn't feel. "No problem."

Mark glanced at the platform as the train slowed to a halt. "We're here."

Jane twisted in Mark's arms and followed his gaze. Trademark white lettering on blue proclaimed their arrival at Wimbledon station. "So we are." She grinned and followed Mark's lead for the doors.

Jane woke up to the sound of rain splashing against the window behind her. The morning light was gray, but not oppressively dreary. *Not so different from Seattle*, she thought. Stretching, she glanced at the clock – barely 9AM, she noticed. The events of last night settled easily into her memory, provoking a smile as they settled. *I can be smug*, she decided. *It's been how long since I had a real vacation? Years.*

Her movement roused Mark whom, Jane noticed, has a similarly smug look about him. His morning greeting was lost in a jaw-cracking yawn, which threatened to set Jane off, in turn. Instead, she settled herself rather proprietarily on his chest – disturbing an otherwise phlegmatic tabby cat in the process – and waited for him to suggest breakfast, or an alternative.

Instead, Jane heard a door slam downstairs, and someone heading towards – if she remembered the layout of the place correctly – the kitchen. Seeing Mark's frown of puzzlement, followed by an unmistakable wince of incipient embarrassment, Jane knew an opportunity for good-natured fun when she saw one. Without another word, she bolted out of bed – knowing full well that a semi-sleepy human was no match for a nova with mischief on her mind – grabbed Mark's discarded shirt off the floor, and was halfway down the stairs before Mark could even voice a protest.

When Jane strode into the kitchen – briefly pausing to make sure that her 'vacation face' was back in place – Mark was still floundering upstairs. Jane couldn't suppress a wicked smile as she walked in on the eighteen-year-old boy who stared gloomily in the fridge.

"Your dad's a total bachelor," Jane said in greeting. "Nothing but fixings for tea and really old takeout."

The young man whirled around, and Jane bit her lip hard to suppress a laugh. She could see the resemblance, although his blonde hair and slighter build must have come from his mother - Mark's ex-wife.

"You're Andrew, right?" *If not, I'm going to be the one looking like an idiot.* The youngster nodded mutely, the obvious conclusion having been reached and the notion of one's parent having sex clearly freezing his brain. "Great," Jane smiled, turning on the charm. "I'm Jane. I'm a friend of your dad's."

Andrew regained some of his composure, grinned slightly and shook her proffered hand. “I guessed.” He glanced at Jane’s – Mark’s – shirt and blushed slightly. “I usually come by on Saturdays, but maybe I should have called...”

Jane giggled, surprised by how much she was enjoying this. “Don’t feel bad. Didn’t Mark ever embarrass you in front of your girlfriends?” Andrew’s rueful grin was all the confirmation she needed. “There you go then.”

“Actually, it’s boyfriends but, yeah, I get the gist.” Andrew replied.

Jane regarded Andrew anew. “Pardon my heterosexist assumptions.” She said mildly. *Dad’s a cop and he happily gets along with an openly gay son? Mark’s winning points all over.*

“No offense taken,” Andrew smiled. “First meeting and all. D’you want a cup of tea?”

“I’m glad to see that you two are getting along,” Mark finally came into the kitchen, tying a battered bathrobe as he joined the duo. He glanced quizzically at Jane, noticing her changed features, then nodded almost imperceptibly as Jane made a slight gesture in Andrew’s direction. *And quick on the uptake, too.*

“He takes after his dad,” Jane replied with aplomb. “Although he’s got a way to go before he becomes totally unflappable.”

Mark chuckled at that. “Give him time.”

Jane nodded, then peered into the fridge that still stood open. “Unless you guys are really keen on old Chinese food, why don’t I buy you breakfast? It’s the least I can do after almost stopping Andrew’s heart...”

Breakfast was found at a nearby café. Jane didn’t bother to stifle her relief at finding real coffee, although she knew better to express surprise at the quality of the food. The Brits were still a bit sensitive about that stereotype of being lousy cooks, she had noticed. Not that it was justified, here. The usual staples of bacon, eggs, sausage and more were very fresh and cooked with imagination and Jane enjoyed indulging her weakness for newly-baked croissants. Furthermore, compared to the average capacity of a teenaged boy, her appetite was modest in comparison, so she could eat without causing a scene. All in all, Jane couldn’t have hoped for anything better on such short notice.

“So, what do *you* do, Jane?” Andrew asked, reaching for another slice of toast. “Since I’ve told you everything there is to know about the life of architecture students.”

Jane glanced at Mark, sharing a moment of unspoken communication.

“I’m a security consultant,” she replied easily. “I fly around and tell VIPs how to avoid kidnappings, how to protect their families, assess their safety measures. That sort of thing.”

“Is that how you and Dad met? As part of your job?”

“No. Your dad I picked up at some bar in Oxford Circus.”

Mark choked momentarily on a mouthful of eggs.

Jane grinned as Andrew regarded his father with a mixture of shock and admiration. This mischief thing really was fun, she decided. “Was I not supposed to be that honest?” she asked with a show of artificial innocence. She poured herself another cup of coffee. “I’ll know better, next time. Anyways, sometimes I have gigs here in the U.K., but not that often...”

After breakfast and a phone call to Seattle reassuring the team that she was all right, Jane and Mark went for a walk, heading nowhere in particular through the neighborhood. Settling deeper into a warm coat, Jane gave silent thanks for having some disposable income and clothing

stores that took travelers' checks. Bearing the slightly damp, slightly windy winter's day in last night's date-wear would have been a bit much.

"So, why the secrecy with Andrew?"

"I would think that's obvious." Jane replied. "Security. Yours and mine."

"Oh?" Mark's tone was casual, but Jane was learning that a calm demeanor didn't always mean a calm interior where Mark was concerned.

*Finer feelings be damned.* "Suppose I tell Andrew that I'm a member of the Foundation. Sooner or later, he's going to tell his friends at the local bar that he's dad's dating a nova – I mean, how cool is that, right? Then it's on the internet..."

"You're kidding."

"No, I'm not. Our-" she paused for a second "Relationship gets all over the Internet and some stupid fuck-head with a grudge decides to take out his irritation on Jane's new buddies because why go for the kill when you can go for the hurt?" She scowled. "Not good. Not good at all."

Mark nodded. "I understand. I just wanted to be sure you weren't just indulging in secrecy for it's own sake. Longtime paranoia can be a tough habit to drop."

Jane tried to lighten the mood. "Look who's talking, Mr. Hard-bitten Detective."

"That's different!" he protested. A moment later, "Okay, it isn't really." He admitted.

"You've said before we've got more in common than I give us credit for," Jane teased.

"True, true..."