

The headlights of the police car were hitting the asphalt, the white marks on the wet road glowing eerily. The constant flash of white had a hypnotising effect and constable Gerry Osmond had a hard time keeping his eyes away from it. He was on the last miles of his patrol and almost at the end of his shift. Since not much happens on Mumbles Road, Swansea at 3 am in the morning, his mind had already wandered off to Elisabeth, his girlfriend, who had probably tried to stay awake until he came home. She always did that, when she had no appointments in the morning, but as always, she would be asleep on the sofa by now, the TV still on.

Even though he always told her to go to bed, the truth was, he liked it when she was doing that. He would carefully try to pick her up and carry her to bed, which he never managed without waking her. Then she would sleepily kiss him and they'll curl up in each others arms in their bed.

Daydreaming, he automatically turned into St. Helen's Road, almost overlooking the woman, that was onto the road from the direction of Victoria Park and right into his path.

"Shit!". Gerry hit the brakes. The car came to a screeching halt, a few meters behind the woman. She didn't even turn around, but kept walking with insecure steps.

"Bloody binge drinkers!" Gerry thought, and started to look around for her companions. Sometimes people hang around with a bottle of booze in the park after the pubs closed, and women on a drinking spree usually walked around in packs. But not this time. This woman was alone.

He rolled down the side window and called her. "Madam, you shouldn't be walking in the middle of the road at this time

of night!”

The woman didn't seem to hear. Gerry sighed, stopped the car, grabbed his torch, and got out. “Are you alright, ma'am?” He caught up with the woman, and as soon as the light of the torch hit her, she stopped. And Gerry saw that she wasn't alright. Her clothes were torn, her hair untidy, and her hands and face smeared with dirt. Her eyes were wide and red and she was crying silently. Clearly she was in shock.

Gerry reached for his radio, and called HQ: “Constable Osmond on St. Helen's Road near Victoria Park, got a 426, need assistance!” 426, that was the radio code for *disoriented person*. “IC1,” he added, “female. I need an ambulance.”

The radio crackled, and HQ replied. “Copy. They are on their way.”

Gerry looked at the woman again. “Madam, I'm a police constable. Help is on its way. Do you hear me?” He reached for her arm, and gently led her back to the police car. He opened the back door, and helped her to sit, then grabbing a blanket from the back of the car. There wasn't much he could do for her now, since she had -apart from a few scratches- no visible injuries. But she was in shock and keeping her warm was the obvious thing to do.

After he had wrapped her into the blanket, he asked her: “Can you tell me what happened?” The woman stared at him blankly, but eventually began to speak.

“She's gone!” The woman managed to say. “I was too late! I thought I could change it, but I couldn't.” She looked up.

“You can never change it, you know?”

“Change what?” Gerry asked.

“Time.”

That was all Gerry could get out of her. The rest of the time, she just cried. Finally, the paramedics arrived, and took over. With the paramedics, another police car arrived. Sergeant Matthew Leland and Sarah Richards climbed out of it. Leland was Gerry’s boss. A rather corpulent man in his mid-fifties, with grey temples and usually a roaring laugh. Tonight, of course, he was not laughing. Getting the graveyard shift always dampens the mood, and being called out an hour before clocking off is a real mood killer. Richards was with him. He was his usual partner when they were on day-shift patrol and Gerry liked her. It was her first job after the academy, so she was the baby, but she was quick witted, diplomatic and nice to work with, although she was English.

Leland walked over to him. “What’s going on, Gerry?”

“Hi Matt, sorry to get you out here so late.” Gerry began. “I’ve been talking to the paramedics. They say she’s in shock, and I’ve been trying to talk to her. I don’t think it’s alcohol or drugs. Something happened to her. And she suggested she wasn’t alone.”

“Did she say who?”

“She kept repeating *She’s gone* and *It’s too late*. I think there was someone with her. She couldn’t tell me who. She came from the park.” Gerry pointed towards the entrance of Victoria Park.

Richards grabbed her torch. “OK. Let’s go!”

Leland nodded to Gerry and he moved towards the gates of the park, following Richards.

Victoria Park wasn't exceedingly large, and mostly lawn, but finding something in the darkness was nonetheless difficult.

They walked down the path, lighting the left and right with their torches. "Anybody here?" Gerry asked aloud. "This is PC Osmond from the Swansea police, you're in no danger!"

The park lay silent.

"Hey, what's this?" Richards' light fell onto something in the sand in front of the playground. When they drew closer, they saw it was a shoe. It was a red trainer, with paste on it. It was model, a teenage girl would wear, but there was no sign of the owner.

"Probably some teenagers were gettin' pissed here, and one of them lost their shoe?" Gerry presumed.

"Probably," Richards confirmed. "Doesn't look much like a crime scene to me."

"What's this?" Gerry bent over to have a look on a dark spot in the sand. When his hands touched the ground, it felt hard and sharp. The sand looked scorched and smouldered, and in the centre of it, it felt like glass.

"Someone had a barbecue?" Richards looked puzzled.

"Dunno. Looks burnt." Gerry got up to his feet again. They walked around the rest of the park, but found nothing suspicious.

"Let's close the park for the night, and give this to a crime scene unit. If the woman was attacked here, it's their call, and we shouldn't be trampling on the evidence." Gerry said.

They returned to the road, and Gerry asked Leland to close down the park until the crime scene unit arrived. The park gates were locked and secured with yellow *police line* tape. Finally Gerry got to go home, two and a half hours past the end of his shift.

*I woke up in a sand pit. My hands hurt as if they had been burnt. When I opened my eyes, the world around me was turning. I tried to get up, but all that happened was that I threw up my dinner. I let myself fall backwards in an attempt to avoid falling into my own sick and closed my eyes.*

*After a few minutes, I tried again. This time the world did not spin so fast anymore, and I managed to get up. I tried to remember where I was. I had been at Mila's place and took the shortcut through Victoria Park. I remember how mom had forbidden me to use this way, or ever enter Victoria Park after dark. Just today we had a fight about it. She didn't want me to see Mila, and I yelled at her. She said, that after school I had to come home immediately, and she had told me she would ground me.*

*I yelled that I hated her and stormed off. Of course, I did not come home from school, but went to Mila's place despite mom's freak out. Mila thought that I should have asked my mom what reasons she had. After all, my mom is usually quite cool for a grown up, you know?*

*After dinner my conscience persuaded me to go home and maybe apologise. Mom had called on my mobile twice already, so I decided to call back. I wanted her to stop bossing me around*

*like I was three but I didn't want her to be seriously worried.*

*I had been talking to her on my way back, I remembered. Where was my mobile? "I must have dropped it" I thought. I searched the ground for my phone in the darkness, carefully avoiding the puddle of sick in front of me. My hands touched something cold, hard and square. My phone. I tried to pick it up, when a sharp stinging pain made me drop it again. I clenched my hand and felt warm blood dripping from it. The glass of the phone was broken, and shards stood out.*

*I picked up the phone again, more careful this time, and tried the button on the side. The display stayed dark. "Crap!" Now I had to hurry to walk home. I had no idea what time it was, and how long I had been lying in the park unconscious.*

*I stumbled up towards the park gates up Francis Street. It was dark, and there was nearly no one on the streets. I figured I must have been out cold for quite some time.*

*Finally home, I was thinking hard what to tell mom. Would she be angry? Would she believe me? I guess you believe that something bad has happened when your 15-year old daughter gets home in the middle of the night, covered in her own blood. Still, I had no explanation what had happened.*

*I tried to unlock the door to our flat. I couldn't get the key into the lock. I watched my hands. They were shaking. Mom was surly still up, worried sick.*

*I rang the doorbell. For minutes, nothing happened. I rang again. Finally, the door opened a crack, and I looked into the face of an elderly lady.*

*"Who are you?" she asked.*



Gerry had hardly time to pick up his equipment when he returned to duty the next evening, before he was called into Leland's office.

"Hello Gerry!" His boss greeted.

"Evening, Matt! You've got something for me?" Gerry had known Leland for years now, and the two men had, despite the age gap, become good friends.

"I need your report on that incident last night. But before, we have to go to the lady's flat. The situation seems to be more severe than we thought."

"How so?"

"You mentioned her rambling about someone missing. Well, it turned out someone is missing: Her daughter."

"Oh dear! Do we know what happened?"

"No. Richards is at the woman's flat, working with the crime scene unit. I'd like you to go and give her a hand. And we need the woman's testimony."

"I'm on it. Anything else?"

"No. But keep me informed."

Gerry nodded and headed out. The report had to wait, which meant more extra hours. But helping Richards and the others was more important now. Gerry knew, that the first 48 hours were crucial in any missing persons case. If the person didn't turn up by then, the chances of finding them alive dropped dramatically. Especially with children and teenagers.

Dark visions of former cases of raped and murdered children floated through his mind, while he was on his way to the car.

Arriving at he flat, the guys from the crime scene unit were already packing up. Richards was standing in the centre of the chaos, scribbling to a notebook.

“Hi Sarah!” He greeted. “What’s the situation? Find anything?”

“Oh, hi!” Sarah looked up from her notes. “Nothing conclusive. Smith lives here with her daughter.”

She picked a photograph from her notes. It showed a lanky teenage girl of maybe fourteen or fifteen. Her hair was plaited into a long braid and of the exact same auburn colour as her mothers.

“Striking resemblance” Gerry stated. “She looks like mom.”

“There are worse fates.” Richards stated. “She’s quite pretty.”

“Didn’t say anything else. What’s her name?”

“Pollyanna.” Richards answered.

“Uh, fairytaly” Despite the severity of the situation, he managed a smile.

“Pollyanna didn’t come home last night. So we suspect she was the person Elain mentioned.”

“Did you find something here?”

Richards shook her head. “It all looks normal. We found her diary. It seems, she had some problems with her mother, but it doesn’t read like anything unusual for a teenager.”



“Maybe they had a fight, and she ran away? Did she take any of her clothes?” Gerry asked.

“Hard to say, but according to the crime scene guys, it doesn’t look like it.” Richards frowned.

“The only person who can tell us, is the mother. Let’s hope she can hold it together long enough to tell us something.”

The two of them left the building, carefully sealing the flat behind them with yellow police tape after the crime scene unit had finished packing up.

It didn’t take long to get to the hospital. The two PC’s were greeted by a doctor and led to a ward.

“Please don’t take too long, she is still not very stable.” The doctor explained. “She was in shock when she got here, it’s possible, she doesn’t remember much.”

The two police officers entered the ward. The woman turned her head towards them. Her auburn hair was a tangled mess, and she was as white as chalk. Her eyes appeared dazed, and it was quite obvious, that she was under the influence of strong medication.

“Good Day Mrs. Smith!” Gerry greeted. “You may not remember me. My name is PC Osmond, this is my partner, PC Richards. We helped you last night.”

The woman nodded. “Yes, I remember you.” She said. “You were very kind.”

“I wanted to see if you are feeling any better.”

“Thank you, that’s very sweet of you.” The woman managed a smile. “I think I’m getting better. They say, in a few days I

may be fit enough to get out of here.”

She tried to sit up in bed, but failed to handle the remote for lifting the head of the bed. Richards stepped to her bedside.

“Can I help?”

“Yes, thank you, that’s better!” Elaine said after Richards had adjusted her position.

The pale woman closed her eyes for a moment, before she spoke again.

“You didn’t come to see, if I’m fine, did you?” She asked. “You came because of Anna.”

“Well, yes.” Gerry admitted. “You are aware that she’s missing?”

Elaine nodded.

“We have a whole police squad out there, looking for her. We will find her.” Gerry said. “When did you last see her?”

“Yesterday morning. When she went to school. I told her to come home by bus directly.”

“But she didn’t.”

Elaine shook her head. “We had a fight. She wanted to see her friend Mila.”

“Do you think she went there?” Gerry wanted to know.

“I know she did. Around 6 she called me. I told her to come home immediately, and not to go through Victoria Park.”

“Why not Victoria Park? It’s not that it is particularly unsafe!” Richards wondered.

“I had a bad feeling.” She said.

“Is this why you went to the park?”

“Yes.”

“Can you give me your daughters mobile number?”

“You won’t reach her. She’s gone.”

“Maybe we can track her phone.”

The woman sighed and gave them the number. Gerry patched it through to headquarters. After this, there wasn’t much more information Elain would give, so Gerry and Richards left, to talk to the girl’s friend.

“She knows more than she’s telling us.” Richards observed on their way out.

It was getting dark already, when they rang the bell on Mila Turner’s house. A woman in her forties opened the door.

“Yes?”

Gerry showed her his badge. “Good evening, Mrs. Turner. I am PC Osmond from the Swansea Police Department, and this is my partner, PC Richards.”

“Are you here because of Anna?” The woman asked.

“Yes, we have a few questions for your daughter.”

“Mila is very upset about all this.” Mrs. Turner said. “I don’t know if this is a good idea.”

A girl’s voice was sounding from inside the house. “Mom, is that the police? Are they here ’cause of Anna? I want to talk to them!”

The woman sighed. “Come in.” She stepped aside to make way for the two police constables.

Mila was a pale blonde fifteen-year-old with thick glasses. Her eyes were reddened from crying, and she was extremely nervous.

“Hello Mila!” Sarah took the initiative. “I’m PC Richards and this is my colleague PC Osmond. Can we ask you a few questions?”

“Will you find her?” The girl asked.

“We will do everything in our power to find her.” Richards promised.

“You were, as far as we know, the last person to see her.” Gerry explained.

“What do you want to know?” Mila replied.

“Did anything unusual happen last night? Like, a fight, or did she tell you anything out of the ordinary?”

The girl shook her head. “We never fight, we’re BFF’s.”

“BFF’s?” Gerry asked back.

“Best friends forever.” Richards explained.

“Oh, OK.”

“There was something though.” Mila continued. “She did have a fight with her mom.”

“Her mum usually is quite cool. And it was never a problem to come over to my place. She allowed her to sleep-over even on school nights.”

“What did they fight about?”

“That’s the point: Her mom didn’t want her to come see me. Anna said, that she was really crazed. She said, something bad would happen, or so. As if anything bad could happen to Anna, when she’s here! Of course we laughed about it, but then she was late, and she said she’d better go home. And tell her mom she’s alright. And then she left, and never got home!” The girl talked hastily and was close to tears now.

“It’s OK. We will find out what’s happened.” Richards tried to calm the girl. “Did she say anything about running away?”

“No!” Mila seemed to be offended. “She loves her mom. And she felt really bad about lying to her. I mean, she didn’t want to let her boss her around, but she surly didn’t want her to worry sick! Anna is a very good girl. A bit too good sometimes.”

“Do you think she might have had plans to run away?” Gerry dug deeper. “Plans she didn’t tell you about?”

“Oh, she would have told me” Mila insisted. “I am the one she trust most! If she planned anything, she would have told me!”

Gerry nodded. “Do you have a special hideout, you sometimes go to?”

“We sometimes hang out in the mall. Or in the park. But usually, we’re here, or at her place. But I’ve already checked everywhere she might be. She wasn’t there.”

“Thank you.” Gerry said.

“Is that all?” Mila wondered.

“For now, yes.”

“Do you think something bad has happened to her?”

“It’s too early to say.” Richards said gently. “Very often, people run off for a while, because they need some time on their own. Most of them reappear a day or two later, and everything is alright.”

“What if not?” Mila said, in a quivering voice.

“We investigate in all directions, but for now, it doesn’t seem that someone has harmed her. We found no traces of a fight, so she is probably just wandering around somewhere. Maybe something her mother said upset her.”

“Why didn’t she call me?” Mila wanted to know.

“Maybe she will.” Richards looked at her encouragingly, without telling her, that locating the missing girl’s mobile had been tried in vain.

They thanked Mila’s mother, and left the house.

“You think she was lying?” Richards asked, when they were back at the car.

“No.” Gerry sighed. “If our girl is a runaway, she didn’t tell her best friend about her plans.”

This darkened his mood. It made the scary possibility that he girl had been attacked uncomfortably likely.

“Or.” he thought. “That the mother has something to do with it.” A thought even less reassuring.

*She had called the police. Of course she did. Had told them I was breaking an entry. What else would a blood-covered, frightened teenage girl want when she rings your doorbell in the middle of the night?*

*And of course no one believed me, when I told them I lived there. The old lady lived there for 30 years now, they told me. So they brought me to police station.*

*I had no clue what had happened, so I couldn’t tell them what they wanted to hear. I was on my way home from my friend’s place and took the shortcut through the park. Then I felt something touch me. I can’t say what it was, and when I say it touched me, I don’t mean like a persons touch. It felt more like being engulfed in something. It was dark and incredibly hot. Then it lifted me off my feet, and for a moment I felt as if I was*

*weightless. The next thing I remember is waking up in the sand pit.*

*Of course they thought I was drunk, they wanted to know what drugs I take, and who my parents are. I told them that I didn't know my father, and who my mother was. Then they let me wait in a grey office. At first I didn't pay much attention to my surroundings, but as time passed I began to look around the room. The police was still using stone age computers and the wall calendar was a staggering 17 years old. "Must be a ton of dust on it!" I thought. Looking around further, I found an equally old newspaper. I don't know why this came to my attention, but it stuck there. As a thought. An idea.*

*Finally the door opened and a grey-haired woman with enormous glasses came in. She introduced herself as Abby Montgomery from the child care service. She told me, that I would be brought to hospital for my injuries, and then to a care-home, until I was ready to tell them, who I really was. I shouldn't be afraid, they wouldn't send me back to my family against my will, she told me. And that I should tell her, if I was scared of someone.*

*"Is there anything you want to know?" She concluded her speech.*

*The idea that had stuck in my head surfaced again. "Can you tell me what day it is?" I asked.*

*"Friday." She said.*

*"What year?"*

*She stared at me quizzically. "Are you alright, love?"*

*I nodded. "What year is it?"*

*"Well, 1997 of course!" she answered, still mystified.*

*That was the moment I fainted again.*

Gerry sat on the kitchen chair and stared at his tea cup. The past few days had been among the weirdest in his career. Sure, he had been involved in several missing person cases in his time, even the occasional killing. But this case had been growing weirder every day.

Gerry had spent the day digging up Elain's past. Strangely, there was no record of her before 1997. He couldn't even find a birth certificate. Elain had been growing up in several different orphanages, and had returned to Swansea at age 17 to give birth to her daughter. She had had relationship with one of her classmates and become one of the many teenage mothers in the UK.

Perhaps that was not so surprising, given that she didn't grow up in a normal social environment. When she knew she was pregnant, she had severed all ties to her then boyfriend, who was supposedly the child's father. Gerry still waited for an address, because this was the only lead he had. Maybe the girl had found out about her dad, and ran off to see him.

"Your tea doesn't get any hotter by staring at it!" His girlfriend Elisabeth entered the room. She poured herself a cup of tea and sat down at the table, while stroking her boyfriends hair with one hand.

"I can't put it together!" Gerry said frustrated. "She disappeared on an early evening from plain sight. Victoria Park is



not that big. Someone must have seen or heard something.”

He sighed. “And then there is the thing with her phone. She was talking to her mother when it happened. If she was attacked, the mother must have heard something! The phone company says, the connection was not hung-up. It terminated, due to signal loss.”

Elisabeth listened to him. Gerry did not often speak of his work, but when he did, it was usually because he needed to solve a puzzle and order his thoughts. Elisabeth was a psychologist, so she knew how to direct a persons thoughts in the right direction. Sometimes by giving a hint, sometimes by plain listening. Elisabeth listened.

“The reception in the park is superb. If she dropped the phone, they would have found at least parts of it.” Gerry continued to think aloud.

“Maybe the kidnapper picked it up?” Elisabeth suggested.

“Even the shards of broken glass?” Gerry asked back. “While holding a struggling 14-year old?”

“Maybe he drugged her?”

“And carried a lifeless body across Mumbles Road without being seen? Unlikely!”

Elisabeth pondered. “What if she wasn’t taken by force? Maybe she knew her kidnapper?”

“Still doesn’t explain the broken phone connection.”

“Unless the mother lies.” Elisabeth stated.

“Exactly.” Gerry nodded. “What I don’t get is: why? For all we know, she has been a good mother for 14 years, given the circumstances. Why would she bring her child to harm?”

“Maybe she was over strained with a rebellious teenager?”

“And then she stages a plan to let her disappear? No, I don’t think we’re on the right track here.”

“What about the father?” Elisabeth asked.

“Haven’t found him yet, but she broke up with him before the girl was born. He probably doesn’t even know that he is a father.”

“If she found out about him, she might have gone to see him.”

Gerry had considered the thought. Probably the girl was just on a trip to find her roots and would reappear in a couple of days.

It turned out, the father was a dead end. He had moved to Poole after finishing school, and the girl had not turned up. For the time of her disappearance, he had been in a business meeting, with 9 witnesses to testify.

Gerry’s attention turned back to the mother. Maybe there was something in her past. Something, that could give a hint. While Richards was out, trying to find a witness to what happened, he went through the old case files. Interestingly, she had turned up exactly at the same place she now lived in. Maybe, there was a connection.

Albert, the grumpy old keeper of the evidence vault, stepped at his desk and set down a dusty cardboard box.

“Ere,” he growled. “Contains the girl’s belongings.”

“Thank you, Al!” Gerry signed the receipt Albert handed him wordlessly and then removed the seal from the box and opened the lid. They had put everything in there that Elain

had been carrying with her the night she appeared. It wasn't much. A wrist watch, that had stopped at 18:21, a set of keys, a few quid and. . . Gerry's eyes went wide- a mobile phone. It was a smart phone, one of these touch screen things. The glass was broken, and the device was dead.

"Al!" Gerry called after his colleague. Al turned around. He didn't seem too happy to have to talk to Gerry again. Or to anyone, for that matter. Albert was happiest downstairs between folders of files and his cardboard boxes.

"Are you sure, you gave me the right box?"

Albert looked offended. "Of course! It's got the case number on it, see?" He pointed at the label on the box. "I have packed and sealed this one myself!"

"Was this inside, when you packed it?" Gerry showed him the plastic bag with the broken phone.

"Yes, I think so." Al confirmed. "It's my 'andwritin' on the bag!"

"Then," Gerry thought, "I only have to cope with the question how a teenager in 1997 get's her hands on a phone that isn't invented before 15 years later."

*Of course they didn't figure it out. I tried to explain what had happened, but nobody believed me. I don't blame them; I wouldn't have believed myself.*

*At first they were angry with me, told me I shouldn't lie, and I had to tell them who the hell I was. I learned quickly that there was no use in insisting on my story. I began telling them that I couldn't remember anything before the evening they found*

*me, and that I had made up the story of being for the future, so I didn't have to cope with my amnesia. I started using my mothers first name, I don't know why, maybe because I didn't like to be called Polly by others.*

*For about four months I was shipped from one hospital to another, even as far as London, but nobody could explain my condition. The psychiatrist I went to last was convinced I lied about my amnesia -he was a bit more clever than the others; his theory were, that I had been traumatised by some horrific experience, and faked the amnesia to avoid confrontation. Which was, to be honest, not too far from the truth.*

*They tried to find my family, but of course, they didn't. After a while, they must have gotten to the point where they decided they couldn't help me, and I was released from hospital. The social workers who cared for me asked me a lot of questions. Suspicion was, that I was an illegal alien, a theory that was thwarted by my appearance, and the fact that I could speak welsh.*

*Long story short. they put me in an orphanage. And no one would want to foster a girl who claimed to be a visitor from the future anyway.*

*I was brought to an orphanage north of Swansea. We were eight kids in there, most had been taken from their families, because of domestic violence. I was the weirdo from the beginning. Gossip travels at light speed, so everyone knew who I was even before I got there.*

*It was at this place, where I met Angus. He was a year older than me, and practically the only one who wasn't a moron.*

*Angus' parents had died in a car crash when he was eleven, and he had been a problem child ever since. Traumatized by his parents death, he grew introvert and had started cutting himself. His foster parents had been unable to cope with him and his often violent mood swings, so he ended up in the dump, as he called it.*

*I don't know what it was that brought us together. Maybe he was fascinated by me, because I had no parents too. He had, of course, heard my story. I think he was the only one except me, who actually believed it. Or maybe he wasn't, but he had genuine interest in me.*

*"So, what's it like?" He asked.*

*"What's what like?" I replied.*

*"The future." He said. "They say you claim to be from the future."*

*"Sod off!"*

*"I'm serious." It wasn't so easy to get rid of him. "I believe you!"*

*"Yeah, sure."*

*"I bet no one else does!"*

*"Can't you leave me alone?"*

*"No."*

*"It's just like now, just more people are unemployed, and everyone has a mobile."*

*"No flying cars?"*

*"Didn't I tell you to sod off?"*

*"So no flying cars then. Disappointing."*

*I couldn't help but laugh. "No. Not one."*

*He could be very funny, and I liked that. We began talking, and it turned out he was a really nice guy. I asked him everything about his family, and he asked me about my mother in return.*

*Someday, he came up with the weirdest idea. "Have you tried to find her?"*

*"Who?"*

*"Your mum. If she was in her thirties when you left, she must be our age by now."*

*"I don't know if that's a good idea. Wouldn't the space-time-continuum explode or something, if I met her?"*

*"No idea." He laughed.*

*"And what will I tell her? Hi, I'm your daughter from the future. Never mind that I'm older than you, it'll pass?"*

*He smiled. "Maybe it's better to leave that part out. At least in the beginning."*

*So him and I started searching for clues for my mother. We never found anything, although he was really obsessed with the idea at times. Maybe for him it was some way of coping with the loss of his own parents.*

*During our wild goose chase, we grew closer, and eventually he became my boyfriend. I remember the first night we spent together, secretly, because nobody in the house must know. It was the night after my sixteenth birthday.*

*Later that night, he when he held me, I remember how I first spoke of the fear that had never left me ever since.*

*"Angus, do you believe me?"*

*"Believe what?"*

*"That I'm from the future."*

*"Course" He said in earnest. "Why?"*

*"I'm scared." I confessed.*

*He was alarmed. "Did I do something wrong?"*

*I shook my head. "What if it happens again? Whatever happened to me."*

*He looked at me quizzically. "What happened to you? You mean the time travel?"*

*I nodded. "I have no idea what caused it. What if it's not something in Victoria Park. What if it's something in me?"*

*"I don't think so. I mean this doesn't happen very often, or we would know about it."*

*"People are disappearing all the time. Do you know where they go? For all I know, next time I could end up in the cretaceous!"*

*"Don't worry." He stroke my hair. "I will come for you then."*

*"Really?" It was very sweet, although I knew he wouldn't be able, if I was really gone.*

*"I promise."*

Gerry entered the lab. It smelled of chemicals and hot metal. The smell always reminded him of chem-class at school, although the latter never had an adventurous feeling about it. He knew that this CSI-feeling wasn't real. It was what you get as a visitor. The normal routine of the lab-guys was rather boring. Doing standard tests, most often testing blood from traffic

offenders for drugs or alcohol, or looking for known fingerprints in a burglary case.

But for him, the lab-guys job was the really exciting one. No one would oppose more to that view, than Cythia Gravenor, the head of forensics in the Swansea area. She was pragmatic to the bone, and had certainly no sense of romantics about her work, or his.

"Hi!" Gerry greeted her. "PC Osmond. I'm here for the Smith case."

When Gravenor looked at him quizzically, he added: "Missing girl case."

"Ah, yeah that one!" Gravenor nodded. "Pretty much of a mess you left us with there!"

"How so?"

"Your guys brought in all sorts of samples. All carefully labelled. And all wrong!"

"What do you mean my wrong?" Gerry asked.

Gravenor searched a stack of papers on her desk, and then handed him one sheet of paper.

"Here!" She said. "We analysed this. It was labelled to be from the girl's room. Just it isn't."

"And how do you know that?"

"I have 20 samples from the girls place here. And all of them are from the mother."

"You mean?"

"I mean, your colleagues didn't pick a single hint on the girl. I found some DNA from other people, but nothing from the daughter!"



Gerry was confused. “If you don’t have a sample from the daughter, how do you know, the DNA which isn’t the mother’s it’s not hers?”

The woman sighed. “First of all, it’s not enough. We each loose between 400 and 800 hairs a day, and several million skin cells. The girls DNA should be all over the place. And secondly, half of her DNA should be identical to the mother’s. So if it is there, we would find it. Even without a sample from the girl herself, we would be able to identify her.”

Gravenor shrugged. “But it isn’t there. So either the crime scene guys did a really bad job, or you searched the wrong flat!”

Gerry bit his lip. “That’s not much. I need something I can work with. I mean, we can’t even identify traces we found in the park, right?”

Gravenor nodded.

“Damn. That’s not helping.”

“I’m sorry PC Osmond, but that’s all I can give you.” Gravenor handed him the file. “Maybe next time you’re field units do their job properly.”

Gerry nodded absent mindedly. “Thank you, Doctor!”

He was convinced, that the crime scene unit had done a very proper sweep. He had been there after all. But somehow, this was the last piece of puzzle. The conclusion he drew, when he looked at the whole picture was so fantastic, that he wouldn’t even been able to tell Elisabeth about it. Everyone would think he was mad. But it was the only explanation.

Gerry knocked on the door to the hospital room, in which Elaine was staying.

“Come in!” A voice answered.

He entered. “Good evening, Miss Smith!” He greeted. Then, to the other woman in the room.

“Ma’am!”

The woman nodded.

“Miss Smith, can we talk in private?”

“Of course.” Elaine raised from her bed. “If it’s OK I’m in my bathrobe?”

“No problem, ma’am.”

Elain led him to a small common room, which was empty.

“I hope I’m getting this right, Miss Smith,” Gerry began. “But I think you know, what happened to your daughter - and I understand, that you don’t wanna talk about it.”

Elain gave him an annoyed look. “Do you?”

“Yes, I believe so.” Gerry nodded. “I know how you were found in the same area, you’re daughter disappeared. Your parents were never found, right?”

“True. What does that have to do with my daughter?” Elaine said.

“You know what.” Gerry said, still not able to speak the unthinkable.

Elain nodded. “Are you going to press any charges?”

“No.” Gerry replied. “I’ll file her as a runaway. We’ve got plenty of these cases. You’ll be free.”

Elain sighed. “Yeah. Free.”

Gerry raised from his seat. “I wish you the best for your future, Miss Smith.”

“Thank you, Constable.”

“Good night.”

Gerry left the room and, on the way to the lifts, thought this was the weirdest conversation of his life.

*I woke up that morning with a terrible taste in my mouth. I felt like I had been hit by a truck, and my stomach was going up and down. I told Melanie, that I wasn't feeling well, but she said, I needed a good breakfast and I'd be better. Melanie was the social worker who lived with us in the orphanage. I call it an orphanage, although Angus and I were the only actual orphan there. Everyone else had parents they couldn't live with for different and mostly nasty reasons.*

*I sat down at the breakfast table, although the smell of fried bacon alone made me want to throw up, and tried a bowl of cereals. I hadn't swallowed the second spoonful when I knew this wasn't going to end well. I jumped up from the chair and ran for the bathroom, pushing Valerie, one of my flatmates aside, and just made it to the toilet in time.*

*I kept vomiting several times; every time I got up, it started over.*

*“OK, that's it.” Melanie said. “You are going to see the doctor.”*

*I sighed, but obeyed. I put on some clothes and followed her to the car, while she ushered everyone else towards the school bus. I'd rather gotten back to bed, to pull the covers over my head and die, but Mel was unforgiving.*

*Strange enough, moving around seemed to make it better. I didn't need the bag she had given me, during the drive, and I almost felt normal again, when we arrived at the hospital. After what seemed like hours, a doctor finally came to see me. I told him that I was much better, and I probably just did eat something wrong. He examined me anyway, pressed my belly in different places and asked if it hurt.*

*"Mmh," he said. "Let's make sure you don't have a concretion." Even though I had no real idea what that was, I was scared. I had heard the term, and I knew it was something old people get. I wasn't old.*

*An ultrasound would reveal if it was a concretion or just yesterdays supper. After the examinations the doctor told me to wait, and that I could get dressed, before he vanished from the room.*

*A couple of minutes later, he was back. A stern expression on his face. "The good news, Miss Smith, is that it's not a concretion."*

*I came full circle when he told me his diagnosis:*

*"You're not sick. You're pregnant."*