Don’t Look Now 28  
  
‘Don’t look now. Turn your face away. Leave this for another day.’ That’s what she said as she patted my bandaged hand in response to my request for a mirror. The midwife had only been there for three minutes. Enough time to take my blood pressure before moving on to those who were meant to be in her care. ‘Short of beds,’ someone had said at some point during the night.  
I lowered my legs over the side of the bed and pulled myself out, stumbling slightly whilst impossibly trying to hold the back of my gown shut with a padded hand.   
There was a head rush and a flash of memory that I tried to block. Teeth sinking into my face. The high pitched keening of Dusty at my feet. I sank back down to the bed, waited to feel normal, then pulled myself up again. I could feel the eyes of three jaded new mothers watching me. Each woman having just been through the most momentous moment of their lives. Sliced and stitched back together, never to be the same again. Not knowing the words needed to reach out to me because at least they had a new bundle to show for it.  
My legs were unstable as I shuffled across the loose linoleum floor towards the nurses station which was unmanned. I carried on past to the only loo on the ward and was relieved to see it was vacant. Using my elbow to push down the handle, walk in and then close it behind me with my bottom.   
There was a small, water droplet smeared mirror in the strip lighted room. I stepped towards it and peered in. My face looked bulky with the dressings on it and I was ridiculously reminded of a papier mache mask project we’d done in art class at school. I reached up and touched my face tentatively with my fabric covered hands. My throat was dry and I shut my eyes, which was a mistake because it took me back to the liquorice black park, the cool night air sweeping past my face and the bulk of weight that bounded into my side and gave me a stitch. I rubbed my right hand, the one that was now a mixture of burns from holding onto Dusty’s lead so tightly and deep teeth shaped holes that sunk right down to the bone on the back of the hand. I flickered my eyes back open and stared at myself in the mirror, surveying the features that before I had found less than adequate. The large nose, thin lips and wonky left eye. Half an inch higher and that wonky eye would now be an empty socket.   
I tipped my head and sucked some water into my mouth from the tap to try and get rid of the dry sensation, and turned my attention back to the job in hand. I used my teeth to unwind the bandages of my right hand, although the dressings were left beneath, it was now much easier to take the bandages off the opposite hand.I let the bandages float to the floor. I had been uncharacteristically savvy during the attack and had balled my hands into fists which had saved my fingers. Now I reached them up to my face and began to pull at the dressing on my left cheek. It was stuck fast and I sensed that this was not one of those rip it off in one go situations. It gradually came away revealing severe back stitches puckered into a messy line. I had an unworthy thought. It was because I’d been stitched on the maternity ward and they were used to sewing areas that weren’t often seen.   
I knew I was going to be left with a scar. Everyone I’d come into contact with was extolling the virtues of Manuka honey. All of those caesarian ladies had it smeared on them in the operating theatre. Perhaps that would do the trick? I looked again at my face and doubted it. Then I had a sudden wave of guilt, tears rolling down my face stinging the wound. There was me thinking about my face and I didn’t even know if Dusty had survived the attack. I jumped about ten feet in the air when there was a loud, impatient knock at the door.  
‘Amy, is that you in there?’   
It was the Midwife who’d told me not to look. I felt like a school girl smoking in the toilets. Especially as she’d used my first name which I hadn’t thought she remembered. I also realised that one of the main reasons she didn’t want me to look was because she’d have to redress the wounds.   
I opened the door, wiping my eyes. Her eyes surveyed the bandaged mess on the floor.   
I went to bend down to pick it up and she stopped me, grabbed some gloves from a box on the side and bundled up the pile of fabric and threw it in the bin along with the gloves.  
‘Come on, let’s get you back to bed and I’ll redress them for you.’ She put her hand on my back and guided me to the ward.  
Standing next to my bed was a man in a brown suede jacket, around my age I supposed, no more than thirty. He held a notebook in his hand. I felt the midwife grip the fabric together at my back to save my modesty which I was silently grateful for.   
‘This was why I came to find you. Sorry I forgot,’she whispered.  
‘I’m Steve Langton. I’m a Police Investigator. I need to get down on record what happened.’   
‘Have you heard anything about my dog? My husband is with her at the vets but I haven’t heard anything yet.’ The midwife had pulled back the covers and was settling me back into bed as I spoke.  
‘Yes, I’ve just spoken to the vet on the phone and Dusty is doing well. 50 stitches I’m afraid, but she’s a fighter.’   
I felt the wound start to sting again and relief rush over me.  
‘I’m going to get some more dressings and when I get back you’ll need to leave. I think the shock is setting in and Mrs Morley needs to rest,’ the Midwife said formally.  
Steve Langton nodded his understanding and then settled himself into the chair taking a pen from his jacket pocket.  
‘Are you able to tell me what happened please Mrs Morley?’   
I nodded, my hand involuntarily going to the wound.   
‘We’d just got back from a day out. Hampton Court. Dusty had been on her own and needed a walk. It was really dark, no moon, but we like to make sure she gets a walk every day. My husband Darren went to pick up a Chinese we’d ordered and I decided to walk her across the park and back. We were about halfway through and I felt this huge weight bundle into me and then heard Dusty screeching and a pull on the lead. Then I punched out in the dark and suddenly the dog was attached to my fist and I shook it off and reached down for Dusty and the dog started biting my face. I managed to shout, ‘call off your dog’ and a horrible man’s voice said, ‘come ere’ and then I felt that it had gone. I bundled up Dusty and sprinted to the gate where we literally bumped into a couple and they called an ambulance and took Dusty to the vets. That dog. Have you found it?’  
Steve Langton stopped writing and looked up at me and nodded.  
‘It’ll be destroyed I imagine,’he said.  
I took that in and then said, ‘I thought they’d never find it.’  
‘The owner’s mother made him turn the dog over. There are kids in the house.’  
I heard a gasp next to me, looked up and smiled. It was Darren holding a massive bunch of purple chrysanthemums.   
‘That psycho needs locking up, keeping a dog like that in a house with kids. You’ve seen what it’s done to my wife and look what it’s done to our dog.’  
He put the flowers on the end of the bed, pulled his phone out of his trouser pocket and held it across to Steve Langton. I sat up quickly and intercepted it just as the Midwife bustled back in with a trolley of dressings. She took the phone out of my hand before I could look at the picture, passed it over to Steve Langton, and said gently to me, ‘Don’t look now, love.’