

# **DAMAGED GOODS**

By  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### JANE MID SEPTEMBER 2016

Jane said “Michael clear an hour for me on Friday, I have a personal issue I have to attend to.”

Michael answered “Consider it done, can I ask what you are up to?”

“I will let you know what I decide to do after my designated appointment.”

Jane was Editor-in-Chief of 'EVERY WOMAN' magazine and Michael had been hired as her Personal Assistant four years ago. A better PA you couldn't find though she would not express that to him as he already had enough ego to hold his little gay pants up.

She arrived at her destination and walking in to the reception couldn't help but think “Oh my God no wonder this man charges a small fortune.” The place was amazing. It was more like a five star hotel than a Doctor's office.

She approached the reception but before even speaking the receptionist said “Good afternoon Ms Collins, unfortunately Dr. Charles is running a little late, please make yourself comfortable.” Jane sat down and was pleasantly surprised to see her magazine on the top of the pile next to House & Garden and others blah, blah, blah.

With that a woman walks in there is no other way to describe her face apart from the fact that it is absolutely beautiful. She asks if her Husband is in consult at the moment and with the answer being no opens a large door on the right and disappears. “Wow, Jane thinks, if this man can make me look like that I am in the right place.” Then thought a little cattily “She is a bit on the thin side, could even be bordering on anorexic”.

The Wife re-emerges and leaves in a wonderful scent of perfume Jane cannot recognise but wants to have.

“Dr. Charles will see you now.”

Jane's first thought is that he is an attractive man in a craggy sort of way and then he smiles and asks how he can help her. That smile, oh my God, it is melting areas in her she had forgotten about.

“Well Doctor I turned 36 a month ago and have noticed my lower face sagging and well other parts of my face I am not too happy with.”

Let's have a look at you. He faces her in to a mirror and behind her begins to check the outline of her face with his fingers.

“Quite frankly I think for your age you are doing remarkably well, however, I can see what you are

looking at. Personally I think a lower lift would pull up your jaw and give you a fresher appearance. Plus a eye lift on the upper lids may be beneficial. You do have wonderful cheek bones and I definitely do not want to tamper with them.”

They sit back in their chairs Dr. Charles says “I can place you in two weeks time if your schedule allows that. Obviously you a very busy woman.”

“I am sure that will be fine I will just double check on my return to the Office” answered Jane. With that they talked about dates, healing time, details, etc. Jane is mesmerised by his voice.

Dr. Charles asked if she had any questions and her answer was no. He then asked if she had children and Jane blurted out “What the hell has that to do with my face?”

He looks a little taken aback and says “Okay, just needing to know if you would like us to contact your children or relatives after the procedure.”

“In my particular case I have a PA who is brilliant and who is more than capable of answering any questions that are required, and no, I do not have children” she answered a little coldly.

“Well that can be a blessing in disguise. I have two and they run the household as their Mother let's them run amok and won't let the Nanny scold them in any manner.”

“Well you should put your foot down” Jane says staring him right in the face.

“You are probably right” he says and laughs. On the drive back to her office Jane has already had made up my mind to go ahead with the procedure acknowledging it was perhaps not for all the right reasons. Her insecurities over the years had gnawed away at her. She was well aware being perfect was unachievable but wondered if it was something she could aspire to.

She also recognised the immediate attraction she had had towards Dr. Charles, but hey everyone's human.

“So Michael I have to clear my schedule in a fortnight which thankfully is straight after the next deadline. Before you start behaving like a drama queen I will explain why”.

Michael was not very often quiet but he sat perched on the edge of Jane's desk listening to her every word.

“Really, I mean it's not as if you really need it, but the hours you work do take there toll” said Michael.

“Thanks Michael I will somehow try to find a complimentary aspect in what you have just said, but, and this is a big but, this in in complete confidence. Don't let me regret telling you.”

“My lips are sealed” he answered.

When she woke up in her hospital room all she could see were flowers and gift baskets everywhere. Her first thought was that she was going to kill Michael so when he sauntered in to the room she jumped down his throat.

“Hold on in my defence I didn't tell a soul the truth. I just vaguely hinted at woman's problems. Everyone knows you never take a holiday or even a weekend off so I didn't have a lot to work with. Because of such I did the best that I could do under the circumstances. By the way it's lovely to see

you to” Michael said in a huff.

The next day Dr. Charles arrives and says “Well aren't you the popular one?” Jane just shook her head and said “There are a lot of people trying to climb to the top.”

Ten days later Jane arrives at the Office with everyone gushing over how well she looked to the point of it being nauseating.

## MID OCTOBER 2016

At Jane's post consultation with Dr. Charles he shows her the before and after photo's and she likes what she sees.

Then he suggests dinner.

Like tonight.

Like now.

It was approximately 6.30pm and not having had a thing to eat since lunch Jane was hungry (well that's her excuse and she was sticking to it).

“Sure, where you like to meet up?”

His answer was that he knew a wonderful place approximately 20 minutes away.

They pull up next to each other in the parking lot and he jumps out of his car and opens her door, a gesture Jane appreciates.

“Hye my name is Martin” he says shaking her hand and grinning. When they go in to the restaurant Jane mentally notes that the table he had obviously rung and booked ahead was the most discreet one in the room.

Over dinner, which is delicious, he leans over and says it's wonderful to watch a woman eat. When Jane asks what he means he says his Wife likes to eat a lettuce leaf at the best of times and if she is particularly hungry will eat two. Jane makes a note to ask Michael to arrange more time with her Personal Trainer, particularly if she was going to keep eating like this. She wonders “What the hell am I thinking?” but deep down feels this is going somewhere.

“Well I saw your Wife in reception, she is very beautiful.”

“Yes she is” answered Martin. “The epitome of the perfect looking woman who, I might add, loves to shop, lunch and generally ignore me and everything else that matters in the world.”

“Wow, that's a little harsh” said Jane.

“Yes it is but no truer words have been spoken. Can I ask you a question?” he says looking directly at Jane.

“Definitely” said Jane unsure where the conversation was going.

“You made it quite clear that you don't have children, but you are still young, are you considering them in the future?”

**AND**

**that's when the fog set in.**

## **BUT LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING**

### **JANE COLLINS BORN ON 1 AUGUST 1980**

My Father is the eminent Dr. Grayson Collins and my Mother's name is Alice.

I was born five years after my Parents marriage so I took a lot longer to arrive than perhaps they had both wished for.

My Father is a top Heart Surgeon respected by his peers, however, he had not foreseen having a child that did not come up to his expectations.

I was born female.  
Good birth weight 7 pound 6 ounces.  
10 little fingers.  
10 little toes.  
Perfect in every way but without a uterus.

My Parents brought me home and my Mother lovingly placed me in the beautiful nursery she had created, never noticing that my Father distanced himself from her and myself also.

In fact my Father did not even care to look at me.

Of course in the early days of my childhood I was not aware of this but as I grew older I came to realise I did not live in a happy home.

My Father had moved out of the marital bedroom the day I was brought home from the hospital and remained ensconced in another section of the house. As far as I knew the word divorce was never spoken or entertained so we were a family caught up in a hamster's wheel going around in circles.

Hold on, I have forgotten to speak of another person who definitely deserves a mention as she is exceptionally special, my Nanny Lily.

My Father had demanded I have a Nanny as he expected his Wife to be available to attend charity events with him and whatever other occasions that arose due to his standing. My Mother conceded to his wish but stated that she would pick her adversary, standing her ground on the matter. My Father gave in and agreed and she picked well.

Lily and my Mother quickly established a strong relationship purely based on the fact that they both adored me. They soon became firm friends and whenever my Father spent time away over night (which as I grew older happened on a more frequent basis) the two women would play scrabble and talk for hours.

Many nights when my Father was absent my Mother and I would share a bath filling it with so many bubbles we could barely see each other.

After that Mum would read me a goodnight story and not much later I would hear her and Lily falling in to fits of laughter during their conversations. I would secretly open my door and listen to them,

eventually going to bed happy knowing my Mum was happy to.

So the years passed and even though I grew up in a dysfunctional family I managed to find pieces of joy that I held on to with all my heart.

## HOW MY PARENTS MET

Alice was working at an upmarket jewellery store selling gems to people she would probably never have met in her every day life.

Grayson arrived looking for a present for his Mother's birthday. The cost of which was not a matter that needed to be discussed.

Alice smiled at him and showed him some beautiful pieces. Grayson had already decided on a particular item but pretended to hesitate so he could spend more time with this beautiful girl.

Eventually he picked out a yellow gold bracelet with dark blue sapphires inlaid around it and left.

When Alice locked up that night she was surprised to see Grayson standing at the front of the shop with a single rose in his hands and one word on his lips "Coffee?"

Coffee ended up with them going to dinner to a restaurant that Alice never knew existed and never expected to be in.

After that their relationship progressed to more dates, eventually becoming lovers.

They were two people falling in love.

When Grayson proposed with a huge diamond ring asking Alice to be his Wife she replied with a resounding yes.

## **JANE'S GRANDPARENTS ALICE'S MUM AND DAD**

Agnes and Rab married on a cold winters day in Scotland. Rab placed a small argyle ring with tiny diamond chips on either side on to Agnes's finger and she felt like the luckiest girl in the world.

They both decided to take the leap and emigrate to Australia, the land of milk and honey.

Rab soon procured a job in a mine in Queensland and they settled in to their small miners cottage with the arrival of Alice soon after.

Two years later there was a mining accident which ended Rab's life abruptly.

Having no miner to inhabit the cottage any more Agnes and Alice were unceremoniously booted out. However, Agnes was given a payout for the accident and with that she grabbed her Daughter and moved to Sydney believing there might be better pickings there for a Mother and young Child to get ahead in life.

Agnes hired a young girl to care for Alice while she took cleaning jobs. Some of her employers were kind enough to give her clothes they no longer wore. Agnes purchased a second hand sewing machine, remodelling the dresses for herself and out of the rest made beautiful dresses for her little angel.

One day the girl that cared for Alice rang and said she was too sick to come to work.

Agnes said "Get well soon, let me know when you are better."

Agnes pushed the pram towards her employer Mrs. Cartwright's very large home.

When Mrs. Cartwright opened the door Agnes profusely apologised and explained the circumstances.

"She is a good sleeper and shouldn't bother you at all" said Agnes.

"How old is she?"

"Three years old" answered Agnes expecting the door to slam in her face.

"Oh don't be silly, bring her in. My Daughter is soon going to be four and I am sure her Nanny will be more than happy to have a little friend to entertain her."

Agnes cleaned the place thoroughly, occasionally hearing laughter coming from the nursery.

When she was leaving Mrs. Cartwright asked where Agnes had bought the dress Alice was wearing.

"I made it myself" declared Agnes.

It is absolutley gorgeous. As I told you earlier it will be my Daughter's fourth birthday in a couple of weeks, would it be possible for you to make her a party dress and perhaps a few day dresses? I am more than pleased to pay for the privilege."

"I would be happy to, though I am not sure if my old sewing machine is up for it" said Agnes.

Mrs. Cartwright looking delighted said “I can handle that.”

Early the next morning a new sewing machine arrived on Agnes's doorstep with bales of material in an array of colours. Agnes cancelled her two jobs for that day and got down to work. She made several dresses making the party dress the outstanding piece.

When Mrs. Cartwright arrived to pick them up she exclaimed “These are exceptional, I have no words to say.” With that she handed Agnes a cheque.

Agnes looked at the cheque and handed it back saying “I can't accept this, it is far too much. After all you supplied the sewing machine and the material.”

Mrs. Cartwright looked at Agnes stoic face and realised she was standing in front of a very proud woman and said “Then please keep the sewing machine and the rest of the material, will that suffice as payment?”

A grin came to Agnes's face and she replied “More than enough, thank you.”

Thanks to Mrs. Cartwright Agnes soon had orders coming in thick and fast, enough to end her cleaning career. She decided to take the bull by the horns and leased a small shop with a living area in the back that suited her and Alice perfectly.

## **JANE'S GRANDPARENTS GRAYSON'S FATHER AND MOTHER**

Grayson's Father, Joseph Collins, was a Supreme Court Judge and his Mother Claudia was, well, a Lady who lunches.

Their home was a large sprawling gated house with servants to attend to any matter required.

Claudia gave birth to Grayson. She had found the whole pregnancy and delivery entirely distasteful, handing him over to the Nanny and only entering the nursery for appearances sake.

However, the Nanny became aware Grayson was no ordinary child, perceiving him to be bright beyond his years and she was right.

### **GRANNY AGNES**

Granny Agnes arrived on the doorstep three days after my birth holding a suitcase which contained a teddy bear and beautiful dresses she had made for me.

My Mother chastised her for taking the long journey, well aware it had entailed a train ride and then a bus trip.

“Mum I could have arranged for a car to pick you up” said Alice.

“And let my neighbours thinking I am getting a bit above myself, not on your Nelly. Besides there wouldn't be any public transport if it wasn't for the likes of me to enjoy it. Now stop your blabbering and show me my Grandchild.”

“Well look at you, you are the spitting image of your Mother, welcome to the World” said Agnes picking up the precious little bundle.

The next day Alice explained the circumstances of Jane's birth.

Agnes sighed and said “Aye, well that is sad, but look at her she is perfect and anyone saying less of her will get a clap around the chops and it will be my hand doing it.”

Much to my Father's chagrin Agnes visited often making herself quite at home. The only time she felt uncomfortable was while sitting at dinner with her Daughter and Son In Law. Eventually she couldn't stand the silence between meals and announced she would prefer to have dinner in the nursery if that was fine by them. Grayson gratefully replied that would be acceptable.

“Sorry Lily” said Agnes “I hope I am not intruding on your space. I just couldn't bear to go through another dinner downstairs. Honestly I felt like farting just to clear the room.”

Lily burst out laughing and said “glad for the company.”

Two years passed. One evening my Mother knocked on my Father's study door asking if she could speak with him.

“Yes, yes, but I have papers to go over, make it quick.”

Alice took a deep breath and said “Grayson I would like another child.”

His answer was almost a shout “Holy Mother Mary of God are you expecting the second coming because that is the only way it is going to happen under our living circumstances!”

Alice answered softly “You chose to leave our bedroom immediately after Jane's birth. Something I never asked or even wanted you to do. If I was caught up at the time, finally having a child in my arms after so many years and did not recognise that we were drifting apart, I apologise. However, Jane is now of an age that it would be a good time to give her a sibling and therefore I was hoping that we as a couple could get back on track.”

“No, not ever” was Grayson's adamant answer. “Why would you consider such a folly?”

“What happened to us Grayson? We were originally so happy together, is it because.....” but trailed off before finishing.

“Life” was his answer.

Alice looked at him directly and asked “So what do we do from here?”

For a moment Grayson looked confused and then said “Do? We will carry on as we always have, like two grown adults. I won't divorce you. You will be my Wife as you have been for the past few years and will continue to be so. Nothing needs to change.”

And so there it was. Two people standing opposite each other with a raging river running in between them, with no safe crossing in sight.

Soon after I started primary school my Father declared it was time for me to attend family dinners proclaiming it would teach me good table manners. My Mother was delighted though I desperately preferred having my dinner with Lily in the nursery.

One night my Father started talking about a new Doctor called Ethan Dawson who had joined the ranks several weeks earlier. Father talked of him in glowing terms saying that he was more than happy to take him under his wing and that he was a smart young man going places.

“It is almost like you are talking about him as if he is your Son” said Alice.

Father answered “Well if he were I would be a very proud man indeed.”

“You Bastard” said Alice, the expletive coming out of her mouth without realising it.

Father raised his hand and said “Jane you may be excused.” Though Jane had only had a few mouthfuls of the main course she gladly fled the room realising a storm was brewing and wanting no part of it.

Alice looked at Grayson and was shocked to see the look of such venom on his face and wondered if he would actually hit her.

Grayson stared at Alice and in a low controlled voice said “Never use that word again in my presence or I shall kick you to the kerb where you belong. There you will stay on your own. I will ensure that your little princess will be brought up here so I can keep a watchful eye over her and nip any bad habits you have brushed on to her in the bud.”

So there it was, the unspoken threat that had hung over Alice's head for years, finally finding a voice.

With that Grayson briskly left the room leaving Alice in a state of panic.

My Grandmother Claudia Collins passed away when I was eight years old. Being her only Grandchild I was expected to attend the funeral.

I had never met my Grandmother Collins. Unbeknown to me my Father had visited her shortly after my birth explaining my 'defect' so to speak.

“It took nearly five years for you to have a child and now this. That is shocking news” Grandmother Collins had said. “What will happen from here? I mean divorce is out of the question.”

“Mother I do not intend to get a divorce, however, I have moved out of our marital bedroom as I do not want to sire another unhealthy child. Hell Mother if she had had a heart problem I could have probably taken care of it but I am not leaving myself open to having another child not knowing what the end result could be.”

“Very wise Martin. However, you are a man and in being so I ask that you be discreet” said his Mother.

“That goes without saying” Martin answered.

My Grandmother Collins never met me and as far as I know never wanted to.

At such a young age I had never attended a funeral before but my Father schooled me on how to behave.

“Don't forget Jane you are grieving for your Grandmother and therefore you should act appropriately.”

I was not sure what to do so I placed the sternest look on my face and hoped that would suffice.

After the service I was picked up by Lily and returned home, my Mother and Father attending the wake at the Yacht Club.

Mum got home stating she never wanted to see the sight of caviar again let alone taste it.

“She threw her high heels off and picked me up telling me I had been a perfect angel.

Granny Agnes declared “When my time comes I want people to sing and dance” doing a strange little jig that made Mum and Lily laugh.

When Granny Agnes passed two years later it was a very different story. There was tears and tantrums on my part, not wanting to believe that someone I loved so much was gone. I realised I was being selfish when my Mother looked at me with sad eyes and declared she was hurting to.

Mum and Lily bundled me in to the car and we headed to the funeral.

The wake was held at Granny Agnes's home. There was a small crowd inside and outside of where she had lived. Styrofoam cups were passed around for coffee and tea and plastic glasses for wine, beer and such like.

Neighbours and friends brought platters of sandwiches, homemade sausage rolls, pastries and other delights.

And yes there was dancing. The music was played on Agnes's old cassette player, the songs she used to dance to with Rab back in the day.

Later when everyone had left Alice and Lily sat down together with Lily stating "She had a good send off."

Alice smiled and said "It was exactly what she would have wanted."

Agnes didn't have much to leave behind. She had left a note of some sort to her friends and neighbours stating take what they wanted and what no-one wanted leave for the Salvo's.

Her dearest possession she left to Alice, the argyle ring that Rab had lovingly placed on her finger many moons ago.

## CHAPTER TWO

I was soon turning 13 years old.

Father had rung ahead one night announcing he had news to share and would expect us for dinner at 7.00pm sharp. As we had never broken that particular curfew in preceding years the call seemed ominous. I noticed my Mother taking a huge deep breath and hugged her and said it might not be too bad.

Father announced after dinner “Jane you are starting secondary school after the Xmas break, and I have arranged what school you will be attending.”

“I was hoping to be attending Mitchigon as several of my friends are going there” I said.

“Well what you hope for and what you receive can be two entirely different things, keep that in mind” he said. “I have managed to pull a few strings and you will be attending Bradbury Park.”

A pin could have dropped in the room and we would have heard a symphony.

My Mother stood up so violently her dining chair fell backwards. “No Grayson, that is so far away, are you saying she will be boarding there?”

“Yes my dear that is exactly what I am saying. It will do her good. She is now at an age you should not molly coddle her any longer. For God's sake pick up your chair. That's my final say” and with that he got up and left the room.

My Mother went to sit in her chair but forgetting she had upended it fell on to the floor where she erupted in to tears.

I called out for Lily and we picked my Mother up from the floor and replaced her seat before firmly placing her in to it. Mum explained to Lily what had just happened.

“It might not be a bad thing for Jane to get away from her Father's influence and allow herself to have friends, maybe even enjoy life. It won't be easy for you, I know that Alice, but I am not going anywhere and I will be around to help you through the rough patches” said Lily.

My Mother nodded her head and apologised to me for making a spectacle of herself.

“Don't be silly Mum. Besides I am going to treat this whole thing as an adventure” I said not feeling as nearly as brave as I sounded.

“That's the spirit” said Lily.

Alice helped herself to a couple of more wines before saying she was going to bed.

Two days later my Father spoke to my Mother saying that now I would be attending boarding school they no longer needed a Nanny and that in fact Lily had been a dead weight for years. My Mother stood up to him and said “If Lily goes I go to” with such sheer determination on her face that my Father was taken aback,

When he replied that things would remain as they were for the time being my Mother quickly left the

room hardly believing she had won the battle she was so sure was about ensue, unaware my Father had other things on his mind at the time.

## THE SECRET

Two weeks after the event in the dining room I could hear my parents arguing. I was unable to hear what my Father was saying as he was obviously talking in his low controlled voice.

Suddenly I heard my Mother shout “Damaged goods, how you can even say that. What kind of Father are you?”

After that I could not hear anything, only my Mother crying as she passed my room.

I lay in the dark feeling miserable, not understanding what my Father had meant with that phrase regarding me but realised it had caused my Mother grief.

Before I was due to leave for Bradbury Park my Father requested my presence in his study.

He was short, curt, straight to the point.

“You are becoming a young Woman now Jane and before you leave for school there are some things you should know.”

He turned his laptop around to face me and on the screen was a females anatomy. “When you attend school some of the girls around you will experience a change in their bodies. They will start to go through menstruation which will result in them having a period.”

Seriously. Was my Father giving me a talk about periods and if so why not my Mother? She had never uttered a word on the subject. I was not completely blind to the matter, Lily handing me girls magazines on the sly but I was astounded that it was my Father having the conversation with me.

My Father carried on completely oblivious to the fact that I was almost in a state of shock.

“However this bodily function will never happen to you as you were born without a uterus. That is probably best kept as a secret so people are unaware that you are, well, different. I imagine it may affect you later in life but whom you wish to share that information with when you are older will be your decision.”

So I would never have children. I was damaged goods!

## BRADBURY PARK

A fortnight passed after that and I stood in the driveway saying goodbye to my Parents. My Father had arranged a car for me to be taken to the boarding school.

My Mother clung on to me as a drowning person does going down for the third time. Father barked "That is enough Alice."

Lily put her arms around me, kissing me on the cheek, while slipping something in to my coat pocket.

In the car I checked my pocket and found a new mobile phone with a note from Lily explaining how to top it up. I blessed her with all my heart.

On my arrival at the school forms had to be filled out, dietary requirements, any allergies and so on and so on.

The House Mistress took me to my room and introduced me to my room mate Fiona adding that she had already arrived a couple of days earlier before me so she had already settled in. "Perhaps Fiona you could show Jane the ropes around here?"

Fiona gave a dazzling smile, showing the most pearly whites I had ever seen and said "Sure Ms Lovett, I am to happy to".

"Here" said Fiona "I will help you unpack your bags" and without waiting for me to assure her I could do it myself she opened one suitcase and starting throwing things in to a cupboard. Having been brought up to place items in neat and tidy piles I was aghast.

Fiona seeing the expression on my face sat cross legged on her bed and said "Whoops. Don't worry about me. I will just sit here and watch how it is done properly. My Mum was never a stickler for that sort of thing."

After emptying my suitcases and placing my belongings in a neat and tidy state Fiona said it was time for her to take me to the dining area so I could explore the culinary delights on the menu.

I followed her with trepidation, thinking plastic cups and plates, but oh no, that wasn't the case. The dining area was beautiful. Each table was made of light wood with matching chairs and comfortable inlaid cushions.

The meals were set up as a foodie's delight. There were bain maries full of an array of different dishes. There was a salad bar and next to that was a desserts table that would make Willy Wonka's treats tour die a quick death. "Didn't believe me did you, huh" asked Fiona and I answered honestly no.

Our friendship blossomed. However I did come to realise Fiona was not particularly fond of study or any form of school work. When I asked her if her Parents had forced her to attend the school she had laughed and said it had been her idea.

"I thought having time to myself would be great. I have six siblings and God they never shut up but I miss the little fuckers." The swear word came out of her mouth as easy as saying thank you.

Jane laughed and couldn't help but say "Fiona you wake up talking, you go to sleep talking and all the hours in between."

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