

# Funeral Circus

Warwick Wood

## PART 1

2018

### *Friends*

When is it dark, when is it light? Jane wakes early the morning of the funeral; sleep has alluded her most of the night; coming and going like a train she can't quite catch. She blames the fragility of life and memories of a dream unfulfilled, the same dream she's been having for more than thirty years, yet another train she can't quite catch. She stands alone on an empty platform watching it approach. It slows. It stops. But the doors never open. Again, it slowly pulls away and disappears in the distance. However, the fragility of life, a more recent visitor, opens its doors wide and welcomes her aboard. And, like the unwanted relative that comes to stay and stays too long, has no intention of leaving. Since the first farewelling of a close friend this is how it has been.

Andy's shoulder hurts, and his knees ache, the right more than the left. "Shit!" He grumbles, struggling to free himself from the tangle of sheets. Once free, he just lies there listening to his own breathing as though exhausted from completing some great undertaking. After raising himself from the dishevelled bed he stretches and wanders off to the bathroom and thinks about the funeral and seeing his old workmates. This is the first time he's stayed at the Ritz Hotel in London even though he was employed there as a sous chef in the eighties.

Johnny rubs his bleary eyes, attempting to remember what time he fell asleep, stares at the small clock on the beside-table a moment longer, hits the alarm and defeated, falls back asleep. He dreams of a willowy girl with hair as black as a raven's, she was thirty then. In his dream she attends the funeral and is as beautiful as ever. He has the same dream before every funeral, and, though the number is growing, she's never attended one.

Tory has a train to catch. She wakes early, feeling exhilarated rather than tired, excited by the prospect of seeing her friends again after almost six-months. As she stands over her

stove poaching a simple egg for breakfast, she remembers another kitchen where they all once toiled, and recalls each one, as they once were – vibrant and alive.

Bindi sits in front of a mirror adjusting the blonde wig that disguises her loss of hair. The piece, made from her-own blonde tresses, had cost a small fortune and is virtually undetectable. From age eighteen she has suffered from Alopecia Areata, clumps of hair fall from her scalp like pitchforked hay being tossed from a wagon, no one has ever known apart from immediate family, and that is how she intends to keep it.

Nick dreams of the wife he lost forty years earlier. He can hardly picture her face now, and old photographs do her no justice, but then he stopped torturing himself with those images more than thirty years ago. When he wonders if they'll meet in the next life, his lack of belief in anything from the moment she was taken from him shatters this aberration.

Everyone's dream, now a reality, has become too real. More real than a movie filmed in Cinemascope: not bigger, brighter or more bedazzling, just more real. They have stared in awe too long at the lives they have created. But fuck it, today's another day, another life to celebrate, another firework extinguished.

## *The Funeral*

And so it is that Kelvin Alastair Peverrel (Pervy to those who knew him best) is to be farewelled by those who knew him best. Pervy wasn't only the most senior of the group, as Executive Chef he had been their leader.

There are fifty-three still living, of those who once laboured in the kitchen at the Ritz Hotel under Pervy's critical eye, which augurs well for further gatherings to celebrate the lives of future departing souls. But several have already cast off the shackles that bound them to this earth, and more importantly, to this once-connected group of like-minded workmates. Some have died of substance abuse, others at the indiscriminate hand of fate, no matter; the end for all is approaching with the inevitability of bird defecating on a freshly polished car.

Thirty-two years earlier everyone was thirty-two years younger and as you can imagine having a disproportionately good time. But now in their seventh or, in some cases, eighth decade, feel more bystander than player in the game-of-life – spectators watching without contributing. Less laughs, less sex, a finite amount of money with which to enjoy the hedonistic pleasures that in the eighties were mandatory accompaniments pursuant to a normal life. Most have now taken on the uncanny appearance of a parent, or more upsetting, a grandparent. No one likes getting old. Jane, in a moment of uncontrolled nostalgia and quiet desperation wishes she could simply turn back the clock.

At least that's what she says after the service, sharing her thoughts over a glass of wine with Nick. Nick feels the frustration in her words and knows the look that resurfaces every time they're together. The pain of an opportunity missed throbs gently in his temples. There was a time when he had almost succumbed to that look. And there are times, even now, when he wishes he had.

She was in her late twenties then, single and a decade younger than him, and he was a recently widowed sous chef. Now she is old enough to be someone's grandmother. But she's aged well, and still dresses in a way that appeals to Nick – only more classic now

than 'New Romantic'. Jane no longer looks like she belongs in the mosh pit at a Spandau Ballet concert.

"You know, she might just have something. That's not an altogether dumb idea. Think about it. Turning back the clock. What the fuck else have we got left to look forward to? More funeral get-togethers?" Andy's brain has kicked into gear for the first time since the eulogies began.

Nick hadn't realised Andy had overheard Jane. He mostly thinks Andy's losing his hearing, but maybe, like him, it's just become more selective – for some time Nick has increasingly been of the opinion most people have little or nothing to say worth listening to.

"What are you talking about?"

"Not about her still wanting to bang you."

"Seriously."

But Nick's interest has been piqued once again, although he hasn't taken the concept any further than a life missed. What would it have been like sharing his life with Jane? She's caring, intelligent, easy with people, a good listener – always has been – and far from unattractive. Why had he hesitated, rejected her advances, hidden the attraction he felt. He remembers a look from thirty-something-years earlier; from the day she first walked into his kitchen unannounced and introduced herself; a look that suggested someone seeing everything for the very first time, eyes lit with youthful optimism. From another time he remembers her backlit body, a delicate dress, the curves of a young woman, and the excitement he had felt. She reminded him of his wife so much. She did from the first time he saw her. And that, of course, was the problem. – But what about now? Is it even possible to fulfil such a dream three-and-a-half-decades on? Could he live up to her expectations? What are her expectations? Nick has absolutely no idea. Of course, it's too late, he knows exactly why he made the decision in the first place. But a man, no matter how old, has memories, and can always dream.

“I’m talking about what we’re always talking about – the good old days. How shit it is getting old. How we feel the same, but take twenty minutes longer getting out of bed in the morning,” Andy continues.

“Yeah, but you need a knee replacement.”

“Exactly. Shit on getting old!”

“And just how exactly do you propose we go about it?”

Andy has no idea.

Jane returns to the conversation after topping up her glass.

“Don’t know how you drink that cat’s piss. Gives me reflux for a week,” Andy remarks, interrupting his own thoughts.

Jane takes a sip before answering and affects a look of extreme pleasure. “Any chance we can *not* talk about health problems for the rest of the afternoon. We sound like our parents,”

“And look like them.”

“God forbid.”

At this point Johnny and Tory wander over.

“Jesus Christ! Had to get away from that crowd. All they can talk about is their latest medical procedure and getting old.”

“Well you’ve come to the right place, we’re discussing getting young again.” Andy announces, taking another sip from his glass.

Jane smiles at Nick.

“Excellent! What’s the plan?” Tory asks.

“There is no plan,” Nick explains.

“We start by getting pissed,” Andy says.

“Ha – nothing’s changed.”

“Exactly. Do you fancy going back to my place later.” Andy jokes, pulling a line from the eighties.

“Thanks – attractive offer – but seeing as you’re married and all, I might give it a miss.”

“Your loss.”

“Where’s Bindi?” Jane asks, scanning the room for her friend.

“Over there. Mal’s got her bailed up.”

“Poor baby.”

“Why don’t you go and rescue her.” Jane suggests to Johnny.

“Me? You go over. Besides, Bindi can take care of herself.”

“Wouldn’t you like to catch up with Mal?”

“I wouldn’t give Mal the steam off my piss if he had hypothermia.”

“He speaks highly of you.”

“He’s an asshole.”

“I love funerals, they always bring out the best in people.”

“Now, about that sleepover.” Tory shakes her head. Andy shrugs. “You don’t mind if I dream?” He continues undaunted.

“Dream on.”

“My glass is empty,” Nick announces. “Nobody go away.”

Nick doesn't want to begin circulating until he's had at least one more drink. In reality, he's not sure he wants to circulate at all. Just hanging with his small group of close friends is where he feels most comfortable. And besides, the rest can wait until the wake later this evening. He pushes past small groups of ex co-workers; some he recognises and remembers a name, others the name escapes him, and there are a few he doesn't recognise at all. But when challenged with a "Hey Nick!" he raises an empty glass, gives a knowing look and moves on. By the time he returns Bindi has joined the group.

"Mal's still an arsehole," she declares.

Everyone laughs and Andy almost chokes on a mouthful of ale.

"Would you like me to smack him again?" Andy volunteers, remembering an altercation with Mal from years earlier.

"Maybe later," Bindi suggests.

"So are we talking about a bucket list?" Tory asks.

Bindi looks confused.

"No starting over from when we first met," Jane says.

"The eighties?"

"Gotta start some place. Might as well be the best place."

Bindi still looks confused.

"We're going to reboot our lives. Sort of pick up where we left off."

"Maybe avoid some of the pitfalls."

Bindi begins to sparkle. "Sounds excellent."

Johnny seems distracted. Nick asks if there's a problem.



“Have we forgotten anyone?”

“How would we know? – We’ve all got Alzheimer’s.”

Everyone ignores Andy’s quip and begins to search the room seeing no more than a sea of aging faces; magenta balloons near bursting, or papier-mâché death masks bleached of colour.

“No, let’s just keep it to the six of us.”

Jane’s suggestion is followed by simple smiles of mutual understanding.

“Bummer Craig can’t be here.”

Only recently they were the *Magnificent 7*. – Now 6. And that is how they once believed themselves to be. Magnificent. Talented. Indestructible. – The world at their feet. That was, until eighteen-months ago, when Craig swallowed a bottle of pills. Then, suddenly, their perfectly styled lives seemed nearer the end than the beginning. It became all too clear something had changed, emphatically, forever. Like with the death of John Lennon, when one was struck for the first time The Beatles could never be The Beatles again, that Lennon and McCartney would never pen another melody or lyric together, or share the same stage, and that their song was at an end. And now, once again, the grey pall of a funeral service is casting its malevolent shadow: dark fingers reaching out, beckoning. They stand on the threshold of an opaque, unknown world.

“Are you staying in town for the wake tonight?” Bindi asks Tory, changing the subject.

“Yes, I’m staying with my brother.”

“Have you got a costume?”

“I brought it with me.”

## *Fancy Dress*

The idea of a fancy-dress wake had been Jane's. Some of the less imaginative – 'boring arseholes' was how Andy described them – questioned whether it might be in bad taste. But Jane and her friends just ignored them, naysayers would attend no matter what, not wanting to miss out, or paranoid they might be talked about behind their back. It will start after dark at the chosen venue – a well-known art gallery – giving everyone time to go home, or wherever, freshen up, and regale him or herself in appropriate costume.

This, as Jane imagined it, before being diagnosed with a particularly virulent strain of bone cancer, was to be the first of an ongoing series of theatrical wakes, each one an excuse that would allow her to spend more time with the people she loves most: her friends, and, in particular, Nick. Of course, now she realises the next funeral will in all probability be her own.

Jane has lived her life on the big screen without ever being a part of the big screen. In the years prior to her parents purchasing a television they would go every Thursday evening to the Palatial Picture Palace on Railway Parade, in the next suburb but one, to see a double feature. An art-deco auditorium with a gently sloping floor populated with dozens of rows of individually numbered red-velvet seats. Jane imagines rows of British soldiers marching off to do battle with Napoleon's French troops. Princess Jane sits on her throne enthral, her feet dangling above the floor. Even in her early teens the actors were her idols, her heroes, knights in shining armour riding powerful steeds as white as snow. Jane loves them unreservedly. And in her dreams, they worship her in return. The movie house (now a discount carpet-warehouse) shrine to her earliest fantasies and romances. But unlike the old movie house, the curtain will never fall on Jane's fantasies or dreams.

Andy rings Bindi and Tory to see if they want to share a ride to the wake. Bindi accepts, and Tory doesn't have to be asked a second time.

"My brother offered to take me, but dressed like this, I'd prefer to go with someone else who looks like a complete twat. I haven't looked this stupid since I was a teenager."

"I'll call when I'm outside." Andy says.

Johnny has the same thought and makes the call.

“Andy’s already organised a cab for 7.00, why don’t you join us here and we’ll all go together.”

## *The Wake*

The evening is cold; the wind brings a chill to the streets that suggest it may snow at any moment. At an earlier time, certainly in the eighties, Nick wouldn't feel the cold. He could wear a light sweater over a T-shirt no matter how low the mercury – but that was then. Now the bones in his legs hanging from his brittle hips feel as frozen and fragile as stalactites in an arctic cave.

He arrives at the well-known art gallery, dressed as a Salvador Dali melting watch. Having cut a hole in the centre of a large circle of cream felt, he painted a clock-face on it, pulled it on over his head, and wears it hanging limp like a poncho. Jane has chosen early twentieth-century art as the theme for the wake. The gallery owner is an acquaintance, for whom, she has catered several events and openings. The venue made her choice of theme easy. Nick is on time. He has always been punctual, always the first to arrive at work, and pretty much every other occasion irrespective of importance. He counts the steps leading up to the gallery entrance: another piece of trivia filed away for no apparent reason. Obsessive, and on occasion self-absorbed, he collects pieces of information that others consider useless, as some might collect butterflies or stamps. He's lived alone since the death of his wife, Susan, never remarrying, never wanting to suffer such pain again.

At the end of the room, on a large wooden easel, perches a life-size, cut out caricature of the deceased, Kelvin Alastair Peverrel. Nick thinks Pervy has never looked better.

In less than an hour the room is filled with slow moving, human works of art. Nick fantasizes Jane will come as a Modigliani nude so he will no longer have to imagine how her body has survived the rigors of time. But she doesn't. Instead, she comes dressed in a fitted black dress with stripes of ultramarine and red paint daubed on it, with vertical slashes that reveal glimpses of a pale thigh. But without the screaming mask no one would guess she is the Edvard Munch masterpiece. Jane is unaware *The Scream* was painted late in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century not the 20<sup>th</sup>. Johnny comes dressed as the Lone Ranger replete with white Stetson hat. And because it is one size too big has to continually push it back on his head.

"The Lone Ranger wasn't a work of art, or an artist," Jane points out when he comes ambling over.

"I'm not the Lone Ranger, this is Kandinsky's, *Blue Rider* period."

Jane looks unconvinced. “If you say so.” Johnny is the only person dressed as a cowboy from the Golden Years of Hollywood.

“Well at least under all this make-up we no longer look like a bus load of Bingo day-trippers.”

Andy arrives covered in large pieces of brightly coloured paper and rides a pushbike. He creates havoc careening through the gathered mourners spilling wine. “Jean Metzinger’s, *At the Cycle Race Track*,” he happily announces, ringing his bell as he spreads chaos throughout the room.

Tory comes as Matisse’s, *Spanish Woman with Tambourine*, and later, after one wine too many, will make a great deal of discordant noise. Bindi wears a massive gold collar that hides the full length of her aging throat and a black wig that looks like, at one time, it may have belonged to Jimi Hendrix: Gustav Klimt’s, *Judith I*, her excuse.

Of course, until all is explained, apart from Jane’s, no one has a clue which piece of early 20<sup>th</sup> century art, artist or movement, anyone is dressed up as. But the fun is in the guessing, and, for the most part, everyone seems to be having a good time. Jane almost feels it’s the eighties all over again. In reality, every time she gets back together with her old friends, she feels the resurgence of youth. The skin on her face feels as if it might be visibly tightening: a euphoric transient facelift. For just a moment she stands alone untouched by the years, embracing her young friends, and the past.

Mal appears from nowhere sporting a false black beard with matching moustache and eyebrows, what may be a garland of dead poison ivy, and a wooden frame that hangs around his neck. He – he explains to Jane in nauseating detail – is Georges Rouault’s, *The Holy Face*. Jane thinks, Holy Christ, avoiding the obvious and saying nothing.

“Great idea Jane,” he continues, as he stares at the exposed thigh beneath the slashes in her dress.

“Thanks Mal.”

Jane suddenly wishes the slashes in her dress would slam shut. Where’s Nick gone? She wonders, avoiding eye contact with Mal, while attempting to see through the tangle of human art.

“You know Jane, I used to fancy you,” he ventures.

“Fancy that.”

Jane’s search for a friendly face becomes more imperative.

“How about you and me…”

“In your dreams Mal.”

“…Hit the dance floor.”

“No. But thanks anyway.”

“Just one dance? – Please. For old time sake.”

Jane suddenly feels sorry for Mal; in her eyes he’s inexplicably taken on all the attributes of a homeless old hound. So reluctantly, and against her better judgement, she accepts his offer. But as they dance, and his hand slides down the small of her back getting perilously close to the cheek of her left buttock, and she whispers: “Go there and die.” Mal lifts his hand and finishes the remainder of the dance without another word being spoken.

“Scumbag,” she whispers under her breath after he excuses himself and walks away.

“What were you doing dancing with that sleazoid?” Bindi asks.

“Just shoot me.”

Then, spying Nick approaching from the corner of an eye, she lifts her chin and pulls herself together.

In fantasising about Jane’s arrival as a Modigliani nude, Nick’s original idea for a costume had ventured no further than coming as Modigliani’s, *The Peasant Boy*. Regaled in white shirt, yellow tie, yellow trousers, blue-grey vest and coat, topped off with a brown felt hat. He had pictured them together in his dream, but on waking thought better of it.

“I know I’m only a soft clock who’s running out of time, but would you do me the honour?”  
He asks Jane.

“A soft what?”

“Clock.”

“Right.”

Nick takes her hand. Jane wishes as he holds her and they move to the music, that his hand against the small of her back might wander, and her flesh was firm and thirty-years younger. Jane still wants what she’s always wanted, what she’s dreamed of from the time more than thirty years earlier when they first met: Nick. – The always just out of reach, Nick.

Dance like no one’s watching; love like you’ve never been hurt. Jane silently whispers these words to herself not remembering where she’s heard them before. For now, she’s happy to be lost in a romantic fantasy of her own making, her own moment on the silver screen in the arms of the man she loves, when, without warning, the curtain falls. The light is snuffed out as quickly as the flame from a candlewick pinched between two fingers. The room is pitch: the gallery in complete darkness. Jane’s delicate hold on Nick, just as quickly, becomes an uneasy yet definite grip.

“It’s okay, it’s just a blackout,” he says predictably.

Nick’s voice, reassuring as it sounds, has little effect. Jane feels queer all over: her body in shock, her breathing suspended. She thinks she might be having a stroke, a heart attack; a life-threatening seizure – something; perhaps the cancer in her bones bearing its malevolent teeth. Yet actually the opposite is surging through her body. The skin on her face begins to tighten. Not just her face, her whole body. Her breasts are lifting, stomach flattening, thighs smoothing with re-formed muscle. Each cell begins to charge with renewed energy, the pigment in her hair begins to return, and the jaundiced whites of her eyes become white again. Youth is returning to Jane in unexpected paroxysms for no apparent reason, and each tremor hurts like no pain she has ever suffered before.

Why? – The question that appears on every child’s lips, Jane wants the answer to. Why? Why me? Why now? What’s the point? It’s too late. She begins to ponder the meaning of life. How can life end with a question and not an answer? Every decision she has ever made, every step she has ever taken, the result of research, and careful planning and consideration have worked to her advantage. Not that now, as she looks back, she doesn’t have regrets – the most painful: Nick. No amount of planning or manipulation can guarantee love.

She remembers a movie, *The Razor's Edge*, and another, *Lost Horizon*, where the protagonists discover the meaning of life – neither fills her with hope. Jane isn't part of any Lost Generation, and doesn't belong to Generation X, Y, Z or iGen, she's a Baby Boomer, one of millions, some ambiguous place in-between. Too young by a few years to embrace the Make-Love-Not-War, Wear-flowers-In-Your-Hair, Shower-With-A-Friend, or Psychedelic-Hippy-Love-In scene with any clarity or conviction, Jane worships at the alter Greed-Is-Good, or, perhaps as a lapsed Catholic, Greed-Is-God. She didn't reach her peak until the eighties, doesn't remember Jefferson Airplane's, *White Rabbit*, has never burned her bra, smoked too much weed, or fucked in the mire at an open-air rock concert. In the late-sixties, accidentally stumbling across a moratorium outside the Dow Chemical Company (the manufacturer of napalm used in the Vietnam war) and snorting a line of coke at work in the eighties – which she found repellent – the only events that have taken her to the very edge of her own personal risk-taking. But the end comes quickly and stalks us all; a meteor from deep space on a collision course with our fragile life on earth. This is how Jane now sees her future.



## PART 2

1942

### *Another Time*

When light finally illuminates Jane's world, she isn't sure if she is still among the living. Along with everything else her grip on Nick's hand has tightened. They are still on a dance floor, she knows that much, but what dance floor? – The music, now unfamiliar, a shadow on a distant wall. Where are they? She takes in the opulent room – blue, daubed with cream and gold, a blue iridescent enough to hurt the eyes – but recognises no one. The scent of amber floats on the rarefied air. She looks at Nick, but it isn't Nick. A man in uniform she has never seen before holds her close.

“Are you alright my dear? You had a turn.”

His breath smells sweet and warm against her cheek. His hold, firm and secure, yet gentle.

Jane studies his face; a hard face, but with kind eyes – perhaps eyes you can put your trust in. His dark hair shaved high above his ears gives him the appearance of a young soldier she remembers from a movie about a war she has never seen.

“Where are we? Who are you?” Jane asks.

“We're at a party my dear; you're here with me.”

“What are you talking about?” Jane's clothes weigh heavily on her slender frame, what she sees she has never seen before. The long satin evening gown embroidered at her left hip with delicate butterflies is unfamiliar. She touches the string of pearls at her throat that seem to drag her down. She feels faint and wants to throw up.

“Where's here?”

“The Ritz Hotel.”

Jane knows the Ritz Hotel, and this isn't it.

“What Ritz?”

“Paris.”

“Yeah, right.”

“I beg your pardon.”

Where are her friends? Where’s Nick? Jane struggles to remember. Has she been the victim of some date-rape drug? But who would want to rape a woman almost sixty? Maybe Mal? Surely even he wouldn’t go that far.

“I need to use the bathroom,” she says, excusing herself.

“I’ll be just outside in case you need me.”

“Whatever.”

Jane wants to be alone to think, to clear her head, pull herself together, but most of all, remember.

The two women in the powder room hold ivory cigarette holders between thumb and index finger like they are about to drag on a spliff. When was the last time she saw anyone using a foot-long cigarette holder? Never. They look elegant though, and relaxed, not ridiculous like they should. They are speaking French and Jane understands every word even though she has never spoken French in her life before. She checks herself in the mirror and holds her breath. She looks away, hesitates, and comes back to the reflected image. She moves one step closer, followed by a second more tentative step. She leans in and raises an uncertain hand. With the tips of her fingers, she touches the smooth skin on her cheek, then her lips. She tugs gently on a pearl earring she has never seen before and feels her lobe resist. “It’s me!” She recognises the isabelline face from thirty years earlier, the long-forgotten highlights of copper-penny in her hair, and the furtive eyes with green-grey irises staring back. Jane becomes aware of the two French women watching her. Sinews of white smoke cloud the questioning look on their powdered faces.

“*Excusez-moi, savez-vous quel jour c’est?*” Jane asks what day it is in perfect French.

“*Vendredi.*”

“*Pardon, quelle date?*”

*“16 Mai.”*

*“Et l’année?”*

*“Mille neuf cent quarante deux.”*

The women still look puzzled.

“I wasn’t born in 1942?”

*“Pardon Mademoiselle?”*

Jane stares at the gold swan-shaped faucet as though it might hold the answer, then back at her reflection in the mirror. What’s happening?

When Jane finally pokes her head out of the powder room the soldier is still waiting.

“Are you feeling better Jane?”

He speaks perfect French, but with a distinct German inflection, a bastard-file brushing velvet-cloth. Was he speaking French earlier? She can’t remember.

“Why don’t I take you home? You’ll feel better after a night’s rest.”

Jane agrees, not knowing what else to do, wondering when she will finally wake from this dream. Or has she died?

When she exits the hotel the world outside is Paris, or, at the very least, a life size hologram of it. A large black sedan pulls up to the curb. To Jane’s horror it carries the insignia of the Third Reich. A Citroën Traction Avant: a small red and white flag with a black spider fluttering on its mudguard in the late twilight. Jane becomes even more horrified when the driver gets out, opens the rear door and ushers her and the officer inside. For the first time she studies her escort’s uniform: a white summer tunic with a stand collar and decorative piping, a German uniform.

Jane has no idea where she’s being taken. She stares out the window too frightened to acknowledge the elegant looking officer sitting beside her. The dimly lit streets exude menace; eerie pools of blue light form on the pavement beneath masked streetlamps. Emptiness catches in her throat. She tries to beat away the claustrophobic fog engulfing her.

None of this is real, just a dream, or a movie set, or some sort of elaborate prank – or purgatory. There has to be a logical answer. Doubt is beginning to invade a tiny corner of Jane’s reasoning. For now, she seems to have no choice but to go along with whatever ride she is on until she can find a place to jump off.

She remembers the funeral and the wake, and dancing with Nick. He was dressed as a melting clock. Surely these things happened. – But not this. The car pulls over outside a five-storey apartment building. No windows are lit. The soldier escorts Jane to a small wooden door cut into a much larger wooden door. Instinctively Jane fumbles in a purse she has never owned, takes a key she has never seen before and hesitates before slipping it into the lock. She opens the smaller door onto an unfamiliar courtyard. A minute later on the second floor she removes a second, smaller key from her purse and tries it in the lock. It also works. Jane has no idea how she knows this is the apartment where she lives.

“Thank you for bringing me home 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.” Jane also has no idea how she knows the soldier’s rank.

“Karl, please call me Karl, Jane. You have known me long enough.”

Jane lies in bed trying to remember another life. Why hadn’t she liked it? Why had she been so desperate to change it? And now, why does she want to return to it? Is she hallucinating? She doesn’t think she’s schizophrenic, like someone’s demented sibling. Does she really have two lives, think she is two different people, or is she just nuts; some uncontrollable chemical imbalance, a short-circuit; two wires that don’t connect, or do connect and shouldn’t.