

# Zodiac

What's your sign?

**TEASER!**

♍

Virgo

Cate Tyrrell

Twelve short stories

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# Virgo

From the forthcoming book, Zodiac

Cate Tyrrell

This is a chapter from a book of short stories called 'Zodiac'. In it, I have explored various genres and styles and just enjoyed playing around with ideas. Some of the stories are dark, some are romantic, some are a little kinky and some are sweet. Virgo falls into the last category; the sweet story of a geeky guy losing his virginity to a wild girl with pink and purple hair. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. I'm looking forward to sharing all twelve of the stories with you later in the summer.

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# Virgo

## Earth

*Analysing, practical, reflective, observation, thoughtful*

### Thursday

05:58 Woke up

06:10 Breakfast

- Two slices of wholemeal toast
- Two tablespoons of smooth peanut butter
- Two cups of coffee.

06:25 Bowel movement normal

06:30 Shower. Found a white hair growing on my chest

06:45 Shaved

06:50 Dressed

- White underpants
- Black trousers
- Blue shirt
- Navy tie
- Black socks
- Black shoes

07:00 Walked to train station

07:05 Caught train – was able to secure usual seat

07:25 Arrived at work

- Disinfected workspace
- Steam cleaned coffee mug

08:00 Started work

Jeremy Fitzwilliam closed his notebook and looked at the schedule for the day. His job as a lab technician at St. Edmund's Hospital was something he both despised and adored. Despised because it made him leave the safe confines of his home, travel on public transport (which is just crawling with every kind of bacteria known to man) and spend the day doing battle with the results of the despicable habits of other human beings. Adored because his work allowed him to exercise his need for absolute perfection. If one of his tests wasn't done as accurately as possible, then there were consequences. If he got something wrong, then there had to be punishment. That punishment usually took the form of denying himself something that gave him pleasure; no coffee for a week or no Big Bang Theory for six days. Or not being able to look at Delia until she smiles again. Delia never smiled.

As this thought passed through his mind, the subject of his obsession walked into the lab with a new batch of samples for him to test. "Hi, Fitz." She glanced at him before putting a medical cool-box on his bench. "A couple of rush-jobs in here – I've put them on the top."

Jeremy looked at the beautiful but distant woman who had been the subject of his fantasies for the last three years. "Thanks, Delia.

I'll let you know as soon as they're done."

"Thank you." That was all she said before she turned on her heels and walked out of the lab.

Jeremy reached for his notebook and wrote the number 16 against *Number of words from Delia*.

"Why do you always scribble in that little book whenever the Delia-demon comes in here?"

"What?" Jeremy was shocked out of his post-Delia euphoria by the voice of his lab assistant. Janice had been working with him for the last six months and he still sometimes had trouble remembering she was there because he had worked solo for so long. "Just making a note of the time," he lied, "So that I can tell her how long it took." When he said it first, it didn't sound too bad, but as he thought about it, and watched Janice's face crease with an amused smile, he realised how lame his excuse was. He shook his head and put the book back in his pocket before unpacking the box that sat at the end of his bench.

Janice came over to take the less-urgent samples from him. "You know, you're wasting your time lusting after that one."

He looked up at her, surprised that she should say something so personal. She'd only ever talked about work matters before. "I'm not lusting after her." He looked at his assistant to watch her reaction to his claim and was dismayed to see that she clearly didn't believe him.

She raised one, pierced eyebrow and it almost touched the bright pink and purple of her fringe. The heavy eyeliner she applied made the pale blue of her eyes almost too startling to look at.

“I’ve watched you. Every time she comes in here, it’s like watching a fourteen-year-old lad ogling his best friend’s hot mother. And, like I said, you’re wasting your time.”

He didn’t want to engage in this conversation; Janice was clearly far too observant for her own good, but she obviously knew something about the object of his desire and the urge to add whatever it was to his secret vault of Delia facts was just too strong to resist. “What makes you say that?”

Janice fist-pumped the air next to her thigh. “I knew it. You do obsess over her.”

“I never said that. I just want to know what you know about her, that’s all.”

She smiled and nodded knowingly. “Okay, Casanova; whatever you say. And if you ever ventured out of here to eat in the cafeteria, you’d see her there most days, holding hands with Marion Whistler.”

“Holding hands with – wait – what did you say?”

“You heard me. Even if you could venture out of the safety of your little world here in the lab and speak to her, it wouldn’t do you any good. You have quite the wrong frontal arrangement to be of any interest to dear old Delia.” She gave a triumphant smile and pointed at the general area of his groin. “You have an outie where she likes an innie.” Then she noticed the colour blanching from Jeremy’s face and she felt guilty suddenly. “Sorry. That was uncalled for.”

He lifted his eyes and forced a smile. “No need to apologise.” He turned back to his bench. “Come on – we have lots of work to do

today.”

Janice put her keys in the glass dish, hung up her coat and flopped down on the sofa with a sigh.

Her flatmate, Roz, looked up from her phone. “Bad day? What did Mr Fitzweirdo do this time?”

“He’s not that weird. He’s just OCD, that’s all.”

“I stand corrected. So, what did Mr Fitzobsessivecompulsive do this time?”

Janice put her head in her hands and groaned. “He didn’t do anything. It was me. I shattered his fantasy.”

Roz laughed and put her phone down on the coffee table. “Don’t tell me – you had to let him down gently – tell him that there was no way in hell that he’d ever get between your sweet thighs.”

Janice looked up at her friend. “What? No. I told him that Delia is a lesbian.” She sighed again and put her head down, covering her face with her hands once more. “You should have seen his face. It was just like when I told Ian that Father Christmas was made up.” The memory of that day, when she had shouted out the truth to her younger brother to punish him for using her favourite lipstick to make himself look like a clown, shot through her and filled her belly with a familiar feeling of dread. Then Jeremy’s stricken face came into her mind too, and she couldn’t suppress the groan that escaped her lips. “It was brutal. I had a suspicion that he fancied her, but he was devastated. He must be totally in love with her.”

Roz got up and went into the kitchen, returning with a bottle of

wine and two glasses. “But I thought you said she was evil incarnate.”

“She is.” She put on her best Dr Evil voice and continued, “Not the diet coke of evil.”

Roz laughed out loud and joined in, “Does she run an evil petting zoo?”

“Perhaps she might like some O-RANGE SHER-BERT.” They laughed together and drank some wine, then Janice went back to the subject of Delia. “She is though - she never even acknowledges I’m there when she brings samples into the lab.”

Roz thought about that for a moment. “So – it’s a shame that she’s a lesbo then – I mean, it sounds like the bitch from hell and Mr Fitzweirdo deserve each other.”

Janice couldn’t really explain the sudden feeling of complete anger she felt towards her friend. She stood up and looked at Roz, feeling the unexpected rage bubbling up through her. “How can you say that? You’ve never even met Jeremy. He’s a lovely guy. He can’t help being the way he is – it’s a disease. How would you feel if someone made fun of you for something you can’t control? How about I tease you every time you do that thing with your nose?”

Roz stood up to face her flatmate. “Whoa!” She raised her hands in front of her, palms out, and took a step back. “Sorry – I didn’t mean anything by it. I’m sure he’s lovely. It’s just you’ve only ever made him sound like a comedy character – I had no idea you felt like that about him. And – wait a minute – what thing with my nose?”

“I don’t have feelings for him if that’s what you mean. Though I wouldn’t be ashamed if I did – he’s actually quite hot, and he’s sweet as honey once you get beyond the handwashing. I just don’t like it when someone takes the piss out of someone else just because they’re different. And you do this crinkling thing when you’re thinking – it always looks like you’re about to sneeze or something.”

“Quite hot? You’ve never said that before. In fact, you’ve never even mentioned how he looks before. Girl – you can deny it all you want, but it sounds like you’ve got feelings for the guy. And I don’t do a crinkling thing. You just made that up to make a point.”

“I do not have feelings for Jeremy. I just ... oh, never mind. It’s late, and I’m going to go to bed. And yes, you do – when you’re thinking hard or trying to remember something, you crinkle your nose and wiggle it like you’re about to sneeze. I’ve seen you do it dozens of times.” She turned to leave, not letting her stunned friend say anything else, and walked to the bathroom, closing the door behind her with a loud slam.

After her shower, she wiped the condensation away from the mirror over the sink and looked at herself. Without the mask of her makeup, she was just an ordinary looking girl. She knew that the piercings in her brow, nose and lip, along with her neon hair and goth-style make-up were a suit of armour she donned every day. They gave her the courage to step outside of herself and be the person she wished she could be without them; someone brave enough to go after the things she wanted and not care what anyone else thought.

When she’d finished brushing her teeth, she shut off the water, and the room was silent. She became aware of a muffled sound of

crying coming from the living room. Was Roz crying? Had their argument upset her that much? She looked at herself in the mirror again and cursed her reflection. “You bloody loud-mouthed bitch. Now, look what you’ve done.” She blew out a long breath and opened the door, stepping out into the dark hallway of the flat. She listened carefully – yes, there it was again. She went to her bedroom and wrapped herself in her blue, fleecy dressing gown before tiptoeing as gently as she could back to the living room. Roz was sitting on the sofa, arms wrapped around herself, rocking backwards and forwards slightly and sniffing with the tail-end of what had clearly been a long, hard cry. Janice sat next to her, taking her hand. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean for it to get so heated.”

Roz looked up at her with bloodshot eyes. “I’m sorry too. I shouldn’t have said those mean things about your friend. Like you said, I’ve never even met him.”

“Please don’t cry. I hate it when I make someone cry.”

Her friend shook her head and squeezed her hand. “It wasn’t you. I was crying because I was angry at myself. I always have to go too far – I try to be funny, and it always goes too far. I’ve pushed so many people away like that – I couldn’t bear it if I pushed you away too.”

Janice put her arms around Roz and pulled her in for a hug. “You’re not going to push me away; I’m made of stronger stuff. And I’m sorry I got so angry. I think I reacted that way because ... well ... there’s a possibility that you’re right about how I feel about Jeremy and it was the first time I’d realised it for myself.”

Roz sat up straight and looked her friend in the eye. “Really?”

“Yes. Really.”

“I’m going to make us some hot chocolate, and then I want to hear all about Mr Fitzweirdo.”

Ten minutes later, they were both holding steaming mugs of marshmallow-topped comfort. Janice stared into the fake flames of the electric fire and sighed. “I can’t believe I only just saw it.”

“What happened? I mean, something must have happened to make you realise what was going on?” Roz reached up and tucked a stray strand of hair behind Janice’s ear. It was a protective gesture. “It might help to talk about it – you know – work out what’s really going on here?”

Janice nodded. “Yeah. It might. Okay. Well – I can’t deny that I found him attractive from the get go.”

“Really? You’ve never really talked about him other than to make me laugh with his OCD antics. I mean – writing down the number of times you go to the loo every day is kinda funny, even if he can’t help it.”

Janice laughed at the memory of seeing Jeremy’s treasured notebook left open and unguarded on the workbench. It had detailed what time he had awoken, showered, what kind of bowel movement he’d had (this particular day had read *unfulfilling*) and what clothes he was wearing. She had no idea why he noted that because he always wore exactly the same thing under his lab coat; black trousers, pale blue shirt, navy tie and black shoes polished till they shone. She had worked out that he must have numerous versions of this outfit because he always smelled of laundry detergent, so although he wore the same outfit every day, he didn’t wear the same clothes more than once. After she had

scanned the mundane details on the top half of the page, her eye was drawn to an immaculately penned table near the foot of it.

*Number of words from Delia*

*Urinations*

*Hands washed*

*Cups of coffee*

Delia hadn't been in today, so there was no number written against her name. The other categories had little marks drawn neatly in groups of five – four uprights with a diagonal line to complete the group. So far today, he had peed six times, washed his hands thirty-six times and had drunk nine cups of coffee. Which might explain the six pees. She was just about to go back to her work when she spotted her name written in Jeremy's characteristic, tiny handwriting.

*Janice is wearing her purple leggings, black DMs, blue bunny sweatshirt. She smells of blueberries.*

A very quick flick through the book told her that he made a note of what she was wearing and what she smelled of every day. Damn – this guy had the nose of a truffle pig.

*She smells of raisins*

*She smells of bacon*

*She smells of blueberries*

*She smells of strawberries and blood (I believe she is menstruating)*

*She smells of oranges*

Was he picking up on what she'd had for breakfast? That was just bizarre. And the blood one was a bit creepy.

She was pulled out of the memory by Roz nudging her arm. "Well – come on – spill – what's so attractive about this guy?"

"Well," She let her mind conjure up an image of her enigmatic colleague. "He's a bit older than us – I'd say he's probably about twenty-eight, maybe thirty – but he comes across as older because he's so uptight."

"Okay – uptight thirty-year-old – go on."

"He's quite tall – when I wear my platform DMs he's a couple of inches taller than me, so that would make him about six foot?"

"Right. Building a picture. Uptight six-footer."

"He's got dark hair – almost black, which he somehow keeps the same length all the time, and his eyes are almost the same colour as his hair. Really dark and ... well ... beautiful." The last word was almost a whisper as she realised just what she was admitting to Roz and to herself.

Roz took a sip of her chocolate and nodded in a sagely fashion. "Beautiful eyes, huh? Sounds like you've got it bad for this guy. Any tats? Piercings? Facial hair?"

Janice shook her head. "No. Nothing. He's ... perfect."

"Okay – so I've got an image in my head of Keanu Reeves in Sheldon Cooper's lab coat."

"Yeah. That's ... not bad actually."

“Really? I was just kidding, but really? Girl ... no wonder you think he’s perfect.” She took a long drink of her chocolate then she raised an eyebrow and smiled slyly. “Hey – do you think he’s still – you know – perfect in another way?”

Janice looked at her friend and pulled a face. “I’ve no idea. He’s never mentioned girlfriends, but then again, he’s never really told me anything about himself. I don’t even know where he lives.” She got up from the sofa and put her empty mug down on the coffee table. “And whether he is still *virgo intacto* or not, really isn’t any of my business. Or yours, for that matter. I’m going to bed now. Goodnight Roz.”

“Goodnight Janice. Sweet dreams.”

Jeremy couldn’t sleep. He had gone to bed at the usual time – *watch News at Ten until the first ad break, brush teeth, empty bladder, wash hands enough times to make the daily count up to one hundred, apply moisturising hand cream and a fresh pair of cotton gloves to prevent contamination during the night, in bed with the lights out no later than eleven o’clock.* Tonight had been no different. But he knew the reason he couldn’t get to sleep. Janice’s bombshell about Delia had been like a kick in the gut. Even if he had managed to initiate stage one of his plan, she would never be his. She liked women. And he had an outie instead of in innie.

He remembered how Janice had looked when she realised what a devastating blow she had just delivered. She looked suddenly shocked and sad. Did she care that she’d upset him? He still wasn’t sure of his psychedelically adorned assistant. She was funny and could be very kind. She clearly felt awkward by his

obvious reaction to her news, even though he had tried his best not to show it. Her pretty face had shown her feelings as sure as if she'd shouted them at him. She'd smelled of blueberries again this morning; it must be her favourite breakfast. She wore a perfume that was light and floral, but he could always detect a trace of what she had eaten in the morning. The image of her startlingly blue eyes, surrounded by their thick frame of black eyeliner, invaded his mind again and he cursed himself for allowing it to come forth.

Turning onto his back, he looked at the ceiling of his bedroom. Light from the street lamp outside was filtering through his curtains, making the distinctive shape of an arrow above his bed. He saw it every night. He had stared at it as he formulated his plan; a plan he had recited every night since, as a mantra to ease into sleep. So – that was why he couldn't sleep – he hadn't recited the plan. It seemed pointless now that he knew it was a futile endeavour, but as the clock ticked on and the hours passed in sleeplessness, he gave in and spoke the familiar words to himself one last time.

*Stage one: gain Delia's friendship and spend some time with her in a social setting.*

*Stage two: gradually introduce some romantic elements to the relationship.*

*Stage three: ask her to accompany me on a date for dinner at Moretti's.*

*Stage four: gradually become able to enjoy more dates in less familiar places without suffering from a panic attack.*

*Stage five: begin to engage in non-threatening physical contact,*

*e.g. kissing.*

*Stage six: deepen the physical exploration with intimate touching.*

*Stage seven: lose my virginity to Delia*

*Stage eight: marry Delia*

*Stage nine: have children with Delia*

*Stage ten: live happily ever after*

It was a ten-step program to pull him gradually out of his obsessive prison. He had devised it many months ago but hadn't even been able to achieve stage one. Now he knew the truth of where Delia's proclivities lay, he was glad that he hadn't put that much effort into it. Time for a new plan. As his mind gave up its grip on his consciousness, at last, he felt himself drifting into longed-for sleep. And just before Gentle Morpheus claimed him fully, he could have sworn he smelled blueberries.

"Good morning Janice. How are you today?"

"What? Oh – yes – good morning, Jeremy. I'm sorry I'm a little late. I didn't sleep very well last night."

Jeremy looked at his watch. She wasn't late. She was bang on time. But she usually arrived ten or so minutes early, so he supposed by that measure she was a little late. "You're not late, Janice. You're usually early, that's all. Make yourself a cup of coffee and get your breath back."

"Oh – okay – sure. Can I make you a coffee?"

“No thank you. I’ve just had one.” She always offered and he always refused in the same way, whether it was true or not. Drinking a coffee that someone else had made (and that he hadn’t watched being made) was something he just couldn’t do. He was only able to buy drinks from the many coffee shops that had sprung up recently because if you stood in the right place, you could watch every step of it being made. He still didn’t do that very often, though – only in dire need.

A couple of minutes later, Janice came back into the lab, wearing her white coat, clutching a steaming mug. She put the mug down on her bench and smiled wanly. “What’s on the schedule for today?”

Jeremy looked at her. Her hair wasn’t as neat as usual, and her makeup looked like it had been applied in haste. And she smelled of ... coffee. She hadn’t had breakfast. “Janice, is everything okay?”

“What? Yes – of course – why do you ask?”

“You don’t seem to be quite yourself today. You didn’t eat breakfast, did you? And – well – you’re acting a little ... weird.”

She looked at him and both her eyebrows went skyward. “Weird? I’m acting weird? Says the man who logs every time he has a pee in that little book in your pocket. And how do you know I didn’t have breakfast?” When he didn’t answer, she continued, “You sniffed me, didn’t you? You do it every day. And you have the nerve to call me weird.”

“I didn’t call you weird. I just said that you weren’t like your usual self. I’m sorry ... I ....”

Janice let out a breath and held up her hand to ask him to stop talking. “No – I’m sorry. And you’re right. I’m not myself today. I didn’t sleep well – then I slept through the alarm – so I didn’t have time for breakfast, which means I’m *hangry*, and I have no reason to be mean to you again. I did enough of that yesterday. Please – can I just go out and come in again?”

Jeremy laughed gently at her simple admission. “No need for that. Go and get yourself something from the cafeteria – I don’t need mistakes caused by your grumbling tummy.”

She looked at him with those glorious eyes. “Thank you, Jeremy, – you’re the best. Though – the sniffing thing is still weird.”

“I apologise. I’ll try to stop doing it from now on. And if it’s any consolation, there must have been something in the air last night, because I couldn’t sleep either.”

“Really? Oh. And I didn’t mean you have to stop the sniffing. It’s kinda reassuring, actually. But that doesn’t stop it being weird.”

“Duly noted.”

Half an hour later, Janice walked back into the lab. She saw Jeremy bent over the microscope and smiled. He looked perfect as always. Yes – there was definitely something brewing. She decided to try out his extraordinary olfactory abilities, and maybe tease him a little, by walking close enough that she brushed against his ass where he bent over the workbench.

The sudden, unexpected contact caused him to stand upright so quickly that he nearly fell over backwards. When she saw his nostrils flare at her closeness, she gave herself an imaginary high-

five.

“Sorry – I should have said excuse me. Didn’t mean to frighten you out of your skin.”

“Oh – you didn’t. I was just absorbed in what I was I was doing – I didn’t hear you come back in.”

She laughed and winked at him. “That’s because I’m a ninja; one who has now had breakfast and is feeling a lot more human. On that subject,” she moved a little closer to him, “What did I have for breakfast?” She smiled playfully at him. “Come on – lean in and have a good sniff.”

Jeremy looked at her warily, then he seemed to decide he wanted to play along and he leaned in closer to her. She closed her eyes – this was the closest she’d ever been to him – he smelled of shower gel and shampoo, though she couldn’t identify the scent. “Well? What’s the verdict?”

Jeremy gave one, last lingering sniff near her jawbone then stood up straight, looking at her closely. “You had a croissant with butter and blueberry jam. Blueberries are your favourite. You also had a glass of orange juice and a milky coffee – probably a cappuccino.”

“Wow. How do you do that? That was exactly right – except it was a latte.”

“You also smell of something floral. And you use Head & Shoulders shampoo.”

Janice felt her jaw drop as she opened her mouth in surprise. “You could go on a talent show with that – I mean – it’s freaky.”

Jeremy laughed and stepped away. As he turned back to his bench, he looked at her again, and a satisfied smile lit up his face. “I don’t know how I do it. I’ve always been able to – I just have a really sensitive nose. It’s not always a good thing, though; a packed train in high summer can be a real trial.”

“God – yeah – I can understand that. But you should be working making perfume, or something. It’s a shame you’re not using it for something other than freaking out your lab assistant.”

He laughed at her again. “You’re funny, Janice. I like that about you. And I’m quite happy working here.”

He was happy working in the lab. He had stopped himself from adding ‘with you’ to the end of that sentence. He also didn’t tell her about the effect smelling her skin so closely had had on him. He was glad for the loose covering of his white lab coat because the scent of her skin and the warmth of her proximity had given him an erection – one that was still throbbing some ten minutes later. The reaction had been instant and involuntary, and it had taken him completely by surprise. He was still in love with Delia, wasn’t he? Surely, this tall, slender girl with the pink and purple hair and facial piercings couldn’t be someone he could desire sexually. But his body seemed to have other ideas as he allowed his gaze to fall on her again.

“What are you staring at?” Janice’s voice cut through the fog of this confusion.

“What? Oh – sorry – just lost in my thoughts for a moment.

Janice let her eyes follow the direction of his gaze to her chest,

then to his lab-coat-covered crotch where the evidence of the direction of his thoughts was now pretty clear. “So I see.” Her voice was uncharacteristically quiet, and she raised her eyes to meet his once more. “Jeremy – are you okay?”

Her simple question floored him. He had been caught red-handed (or perhaps red-eyed) ogling her. He had a tent in his lab coat from the almost intimate act of smelling the skin of her neck and face, and yet she was concerned that he was okay. “Yes. I ... I’m sorry ... I don’t know ...”

She moved so quickly he barely had time to realise that she had moved from her bench to his and his reactions, retarded by the redistribution of blood from brain to cock, didn’t engage in time to prevent what she did next. He was suddenly enveloped in her warm scent as she put her arms around his neck and hugged him.

He wasn’t a hugger. Such intimate contact with another human being was something he had always avoided – even before his OCD had developed to its current levels, being so close to anyone was something that made his skin crawl. So why wasn’t it crawling now? Why did he have the overwhelming urge to hug back? He wanted to put his arms around this woman who smelled of flowers and blueberries and hold on as tight as he could. He wanted it badly, but something stopped him. He just couldn’t go there. There were stages to a relationship and hugging must be stage five or possibly six. He was shocked by a voice in his head that said *fuck the stages – hold the woman* – but as he was about to listen to his heart, she pulled away.

Janice stepped back and smiled at him. “Sorry. I couldn’t stop myself.” Her smile was genuine, and he found it oddly comforting. “Wow. I mean – that was awesome – I mean – sorry, I know you

don't like to touch people. I should have asked you before I hugged you." She dropped her head and looked at the floor.

Jeremy's tummy did a flip. She was sorry she'd hugged him. "I'm not sorry."

"Excuse me?"

"I said I'm not sorry. That you hugged me, I mean. You took me by surprise, but I felt like I wanted to hug you back."

"So, why didn't you?"

"Hugging is a stage five thing." He gave her a pained look and was surprised when she relaxed and laughed.

"So – what stage are we at?"

She understood. He felt a tension release somewhere deep inside.

"Stage one."

"Do you want to get to stage five?" She said it slowly, raising one, pierced eyebrow.

"Yes. I think I do."

"Good. So do I. I want it real bad, actually. So, how do we fast-track?"

Jeremy felt himself smile. "Would you like to have dinner with me?"

Moretti's was its usual, charming self. Jeremy had managed to get a booking at short notice, which was lucky. Janice looked up at him as they walked through the door into the warm, friendly

atmosphere of the Italian restaurant. “This is lovely – I can’t believe I haven’t been here before.”

He turned to smile at her, then Lucca Moretti greeted them and led them to their table. “It’s good to see you, Fitz. I’ll tell papa you’re here – I’m sure he’ll want to say ‘hello’.

They sat down at the little table in the corner. The décor was predictable; red check table cloths and candles in wicker-bound Chianti bottles, but Jeremy liked it. It was familiar because he had been coming here since he was a kid, so it was safe. He looked over the top of his menu at Janice. She was concentrating on the large, red, leather-bound volume but he didn’t need to look at his because he always had the same thing.

Janice looked up. “What are you going to have – it all looks yummy.”

“Ravioli Moretti. It’s the house special. I always have it – it’s delicious.”

When Lucca came back, she ordered the same, then once the menus had been taken away, she took a sip of water and looked at him. “Delia called you Fitz as well. Is that a name you go by a lot?”

He nodded and drank some water too. “Yes – a lot of people call me that. You can call me Fitz if you like.”

“I think I will. I like it. It suits you.”

Before they had the chance to discuss that any further, the food arrived, brought to them by the chef himself. “Mr Fitz! How good to see you, my old friend!”

Jeremy looked up at the red face of Papa Moretti. Everyone called him Papa. “Good to see you too. How’s the family?”

The plump little Italian chuckled as he put the plates on the table. “All good, thank you for asking. Moira is well and the boys – well, you know the boys. Lucca is working here tonight, but he would rather be home making love to his Xbox.”

Jeremy laughed at his friend’s choice of words. “What about Carla? I haven’t seen her in a long while. Is she still working in the city?”

The old man’s face crinkled with a smile. “She is. And she is getting married. Adriano – he’s a good man. They are very much in love.” Papa Moretti looked at Janice and smiled. “Is this beautiful girl yours, my good friend?”

Jeremy blushed and looked over at his dining companion. “Uh – well – I ..”

Janice grinned and looked at the friendly restaurateur. “We’re working on it, aren’t we, Fitz?”

“What? Oh – yeah – I suppose we are. One stage at a time.”

Janice was smiling encouragingly. “One stage at a time.” After Papa Moretti had gone back to the kitchen, she sat back in her chair and took a mouthful of the food. Her eyes rolled back in her head momentarily as the complex flavours burst on her tongue. “God, this is really good.”

“I know, right? I always have it when I come here. It’s the best.” He took a mouthful of his own food and felt himself relax. Familiar. Safe. Non-threatening. “You like it, then?”

Janice shook her head. “No – I don’t like it. I LOVE it. We’re definitely coming here again.”

“We are? Does that mean we are going to have another date?” He tried not to take any notice of the sudden rush of adrenaline that was causing his heart to beat out a salsa. “Are we really going to do this?”

Janice put down her fork and looked at Jeremy. “I want to, yes. So, tell me about these stages.”

“It’s amazing that you don’t think that’s really strange.”

“I didn’t say anything about not thinking it’s strange. But I get it. You’re a bit OCD. You need order. That, I understand. And I think I can probably get used to it.”

“Oh. That’s ... good, I think?”

“You were about to tell me about the stages.”

“What? Oh – yeah. Sorry. Well, this isn’t something I’ve actually done before. It’s all theoretical at this point. But this is stage three.”

Janice took another forkful of food and nodded. “Okay. Stage three. Sounds good. What does stage four involve?”

He thought about his plan and felt a sudden flare of courage. “We can come back to stage four. I’d like to go straight to stage five. Tonight.” Kissing Janice was suddenly all he could think about. He knew her, knew that she understood him. He had smelled her skin, and now he wanted more. He reached over the little table and put his hand on her cheek. As he pulled her towards him, he moved too, and they met in the middle. His tie fell into his food,

but he didn't care. Tasting this woman was all he could think about. His lips touched hers, so lightly at first, then she leaned into the caress, and he tasted her for the first time. Oh god, she tasted even better than she smelled. His cock sprang into life, pushing against his fly painfully. The kiss only lasted for a couple of seconds, but he knew he'd be feeling the aftershock for the rest of his life. His first kiss. Had he ever imagined something so erotic?

Janice sat back in her seat, her eyes glistening and alight with excitement. "Wow. I wasn't expecting that."

He was filled with a sudden burst of uncertainty. "Was it alright? I'm sorry if you didn't want to."

In reply, she reached for his sauce-covered tie and pulled him towards her again. Her lips fastened over his, and she pushed her tongue into his open mouth. He'd never felt anything like it. His senses were working overtime as his nostrils flared, taking in her scent in all its glory and his tongue tasted her mouth. He wondered what her other mouth might taste like; the thought filled him with equal amounts of shock, shame and desire.

As they both sat back in their seats, a chorus of applause filled the small restaurant. Jeremy looked around to see that the other diners were all watching them and clapping. He looked over to Lucca who was pressing buttons on the CD player and, moments later, the opening lines of Dean Martin's *That's amore* filled the room. The applause was replaced by good-natured laughter, and he reached over, taking Janice's hand in his. "Do you want to get out of here?"

They didn't say much on the journey back to Jeremy's flat. The air was so thick with expectation and desire that there hardly seemed to be room for words. When he opened the door and ushered Janice inside, the familiar smell of his home acted like Valium on his terrified mind.

She took her coat off and looked around the small, immaculate space. "I'm guessing this is the first time you've brought a woman here?"

He nodded and took her coat, hanging it on the hooks behind the door. "It is."

She smiled and walked around the small space. "So, you've never had sex before?"

He felt himself blush and his chin dropped onto his chest. A man of his age should have lost his virginity long ago. "No."

She came to him and put her finger under his chin, lifting his face so that her eyes met his. He had expected to see amusement or a mocking grin but saw neither. She was smiling sincerely, and she lifted her hand to stroke the skin of his cheek in a move that was both comforting and reassuring. "It's nothing to be ashamed of." She kissed him softly, rubbing her denim-clad hips against his erection. "So, what stage would losing your virginity be?"

"Seven."

She nodded and stepped away a little. "Kissing is stage five." She reached for the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head, revealing a beautiful pair of breasts encased in a deep purple bra. "Fair warning, Fitz – I'm initiating stage six." She chuckled at the sudden look of complete shock on his face. She stepped forward

and took his hand in hers, placing his open palm over the swell of her satin-covered breast, pushing gently so that he could feel the firm flesh and her nipple as it hardened beneath his touch.

Jeremy looked down to where his hand was being pushed against Janice's beautiful body. She removed her hand, and he looked at her for further guidance, but she said nothing. She simply leaned into his touch, increasing the pressure of her hot globe against his palm. She held his gaze as she reached behind herself and unfastened the purple satin that was the only thing between his hand and the skin of her breast. He watched, unable to look away, as she pulled the thin garment off her shoulders and dropped it on the floor.

His hand came into contact with her hot skin, and he pulled it away as if he'd been burned. "I'm sorry. I'm not sure what I'm doing here."

Janice didn't say anything, she just reached for his hand and placed it back over her breast, urging him to begin to stroke gently, moving his hand slowly over the landscape of her warm flesh. "Do you like that?"

His mouth was dry, and he didn't have the words to say what he was feeling, so he just nodded. He barely noticed that Janice had unfastened his shirt until her fingers began a slow journey over his chest and down his abdomen. Jeez, it felt like the whole of his blood supply had pooled in his cock, and that something was going to burst down there. He watched as her hands moved to unfasten his belt. His mind was racing; overloaded with new sensations and feelings. He still had his hand on her body, stroking her skin and he felt the urge to find out if she smelled the same all over. He bent his head so that his nose was millimetres away from

the skin at the base of her throat. He followed a path down her sternum until he nuzzled against the soft curve at the top of the breast he still held in his hand. "You smell so good. I want to smell you all over."

"Okay."

"Is that weird?"

"A little bit – yeah – but I think it could be really hot. But it would be easier if we were lying down."

"Yes. Of course, it would. Sorry."

"You've got to stop saying sorry, Fitz. And if you want something, say it. Never apologise for your desires. We're all made differently, and there is no right or wrong way to do things." She rocked her head from side to side as though she was considering what she'd just said. "Take that back – there probably are lots of wrong ways to do things, but half the fun is finding out. Now – come on – take me to your bedroom."

Jeremy took her hand and led her through the flat to the small room he slept in. It held a double bed, one nightstand and a lamp. The fewer things in the room, the less dust they attracted and the easier it was to keep clean. It was how he lived – how he had always lived – but looking at his Spartan room now, adorned so beautifully by the girl with the pink and purple hair, he felt something inside him release. Like a coil that had been wound so tightly for so long, finally giving up its hold and releasing years' worth of tension. "Come here."

She came to him with an easy grace and settled into his arms. "I want you, Fitz. I know this is all new to you, but I'm not in any

hurry. If there's something you want to do, then say it."

"Okay. Right now, I want to kiss you. Then I want you naked on my bed so I can see if you smell good all over." Was that his voice? Had he really expressed his desires so easily to her? He pulled her up close to him and slanted his mouth over hers. The kiss started slowly, an easy exploration of her mouth with his, but as he deepened the kiss, pushing his tongue deeply into her open mouth, that feeling of total release came over him again. Then he realised what was happening; he was going to come. Her scent filling his nostrils and the taste of her filling his mouth overwhelmed his senses. He shuddered as his cock jerked inside his clothes and he filled his underpants with semen. He pulled back from Janice's embrace and looked shamefully down at the patch of wet that was spreading out on the front of his trousers. "Oh god, I'm so sorry. I don't know wha..."

Janice put her finger over his mouth, stopping him from finishing the apology that wanted to spurt out of his mouth as surely as his cum had spurted from his cock moments before. "What did I say about apologising? It's perfectly okay. In fact, it's probably just as well."

"It is?"

"Yes. Now we've got that little crisis over and done with, you can relax a little bit and enjoy the ride."

"Oh." She had stunned him again with her honesty and gentle encouragement.

"Come on – let's get you out of these clothes."

Jeremy looked down as she started to unfasten his belt. The sight

of her fingers so close to his cock made it spring to life again, and she grinned as she saw his reaction to her touch. She unzipped his fly and swiftly pushed his trousers and briefs down to his ankles and held them while he stepped out of them. She stayed on her knees, removing his socks and shoes as he pushed his shirt off his shoulders. "This is the first time I've been naked in front of anyone other than my mum and my doctor."

Janice looked up from her place between his feet and smiled encouragingly at him. "Relax. We don't have to do anything you don't want to do."

He reached down and cupped her cheek, stroking the soft skin of her face. "I think I want to do everything with you."

She stood up and kissed his mouth. "Good. Me too." She made short work of removing the rest of her clothes then she pulled the duvet off his bed and laid down. "I'm all yours. Put your amazing olfactory skills to work."

Jeremy stilled for a moment, but he knew what he wanted to do. He knelt beside her on the bed and dipped his head to run his nose along the base of her neck again. He felt her relax as his skin touched hers and felt emboldened to continue his journey down the length of her body. He nuzzled against one erect nipple then sealed his lips over it, sucking it into his mouth. He felt it harden under his tongue and a groan escaped his lips. Janice groaned too, rolling her hips and urging him to do the same to her other breast.

The taste of her skin drove him wild. His cock was now at full hardness again as he pulled his mouth reluctantly from her nipple, releasing it with a soft pop. He continued his journey down her abdomen – the scent coming off her warm body was incredible, and he knew where he wanted to go. Moving so that he was

positioned between her open thighs, he bent his head again, hovering close to her pussy, and breathed in deeply. The aroma of her arousal, hot and spicy, assaulted his nose and another groan erupted from his throat. He knew what he wanted to do. “Can I taste you here?”

Janice looked down her body to where he was pushing the tip of his nose into her neatly-trimmed bush. “Yes,” she panted, “Please. Lick me.”

Jeremy couldn’t hold it back any longer. He put out his tongue and pressed it against the swollen lips of her pussy. Her flavour hit him like a truck, and his cock begged him to bury himself in the warm, wet flesh he had just tasted. “God, Janice – you taste amazing.” He returned to his licking; sampling her and allowing her scent to invade his senses. “I want to ... I don’t know what I want. I just need you.”

She reached down and pulled him up so that they were face to face. “I think I know what you want.” She took one hand from his face and put it between them, taking his cock in her hand. “I’m on the pill. And I’m clean – I promise. I want your first time to be skin to skin.”

Before he had time to process what she’d said, he felt the tip of his cock nudge against her moist opening – the same one he had kissed just moments before. He locked his elbows, looking down at the glorious sight of Janice spread out for him. Her wildly coloured hair fanned out on his pillow, and her abdomen rose and fell as she dragged air into her lungs.

“Push, Fitz. Fill me up.” She guided him to her, placing the head of his cock just inside her hole. “Push.”

He did as she asked and – oh god in heaven and all the saints – her hot, wet flesh gripped him as he pushed himself into her as far as he could go. Once he felt his balls touch the soft cheeks of her bottom, he stilled, looking down at her, trying to catch his breath. “Janice! Oh god! That feels incredible!”

She smiled slyly and started to rotate her hips, taking his cock with her as she moved in slow circles. “Good, isn’t it?”

He tried to answer but couldn’t make any noises that were more intelligible than grunts. Some instinct took over, and he began to thrust deeply into her. He could feel her muscles squeezing his cock as he ploughed her again and again, the friction working on him leading him to the point of no return. He was going to come inside Janice, and there was absolutely nothing he could do to stop it. The first warning shot pulsed through his cock, and he felt his balls draw up, tucking tightly against his body. “I’m going to come.” It was all the warning he could give her before he felt it roaring through his body. He pushed into her as far as he could and cried out a sound that was maybe a strangled version of her name. He rocked into her as his cock emptied, then he fell helplessly against her, his head resting between her heaving breasts.

“Is that better?” She was stroking his hair gently off his forehead as he tried to catch his breath. “Was that how you imagined stage seven would be?”

He shook his head against her sweat-dampened breasts. “No. Not at all. It was way, way better.”

He felt her chuckle, the vibration of it purring against his cheek. “Good. Your first time should be something you’ll never forget.”

The full meaning of what she had said hit him then. He raised his head and kissed her mouth passionately. “God, Janice. You’re incredible. That was completely selfless. Show me how to do it so that you enjoy it too.”

A broad smile broke out on her face, and she stroked his hair. “Who said I didn’t enjoy it?”

“I ... I just thought ...”

“I didn’t come, no. But it was a mighty fine effort for a first attempt. And we have the rest of the night for you to discover how to give me an orgasm.”

“Really?” He got onto his knees, looking down at her soft body. As his eyes travelled the length of her abdomen, he watched as she bore down, pushing a steady stream of his cum out of her still-open hole onto the dark blue sheet of his bed. The sight was so erotic – he had marked her with his semen, and now, he wanted to do it again. He ducked down and ran his tongue along the length of her slit. He knew what his semen tasted like – he had often licked it from his fingers after masturbating and knew that the salty, musky flavour was guaranteed to inspire another erection. But he wasn’t prepared for how it tasted when combined with Janice’s sweet secretions. As the honeyed mixture spread over his tongue, he felt like his whole body was having an erection. “Oh, god, Janice. That is so sexy.” He delved into her again, pushing his tongue into her slick hole as far as it would go.

Janice reached down and began to circle her clit with a damp finger. “Here. Lick me here.”

He watched where her finger was stroking across the little nub of flesh then sealed his mouth over it, swiping his tongue back and

forth.

Her body went into spasm beneath his caress, and she cried out, wrapping her thighs around his head, pulling him as close to her contracting hole as she could. “Yes! Oh god, Fitz! Yes!”

He continued to tongue her, letting her body relax under his hold, then he climbed up her body and claimed her mouth with his cum-covered lips. “I need to fuck you again.” It was a breathy request, and he wasn’t sure she’d heard him until he felt her hand encircling his cock again, guiding him to her. As he pushed inside, he marvelled once more at the sensation of the skin of his penis rubbing against her hidden flesh. That something should fit him so perfectly, give so much pleasure, was a shock and a delight.

“Janice – I think I want to do to this with you over and over again. Please say you’ll want me again. Please say I didn’t mess this up.”

She pulled his head down to hers and kissed him in a wild, open display of what she was feeling. When she broke away from him, she was panting, her breasts rising and falling in ragged judders. “Oh yeah. We’ll definitely be doing this again. You’ve got a lot to learn, and I want to be the one who shows you.” She kissed him again, then wrapped her legs around his waist, linking her ankles together across his back. “Now, fuck me, Fitz. Just go with your instincts. Do what your body is telling you to do.”

His instincts were telling him all sorts of things, so he wasn’t quite sure what to do first. But his hips seemed to have developed a mind of their own, so he answered their primal call, thrusting hard against her so that he felt the tip of his cock touch bottom.

She felt it too. “Oh fuck – you’re as deep as you can be. I’m going to feel this in the morning.”

Jeremy stilled for a moment as a sudden rush of an unfamiliar emotion flooded his brain. “Am I hurting you?”

“What? No! Just the opposite of hurting.”

“Oh – when you said you’d feel it in the morning, I ...”

“Fitz – it’s fine – I *want* to feel it in the morning. There’s nothing like going through the day enjoying the echo of the magnificent fuck you enjoyed the night before. Especially if you know that there is a very good chance you’ll be getting the same again once the day is over.”

He looked at her for a moment, then when he was sure she was okay, he gave in to his instincts once more. When his cock was buried deep inside her, his mouth began watering to taste her again. He latched on to the soft patch of skin that marked the place where her neck met her shoulder. After licking and sucking her for a few moments, he surrendered his last ounce of control and sank his teeth into her soft flesh. He heard her hiss and felt her inner muscles clench around his cock as she began to climax around him. He didn’t release his bite until she had stilled beneath him, then he loosened his hold and came up onto his elbows, giving himself more room to plough into her with everything he had. The bed was shaking and creaking, and the headboard was banging against the wall, but he didn’t care. All he could think about was getting his seed inside this woman; marking her with it, searing her flesh with the hot spurts. He felt it begin; the familiar rush of pleasure that spread out from his balls as his orgasm built to its inevitable crescendo. “Fuuuuuuuck!” He drew the word out as he came long and hard, filling her again with his hot semen.

As the morning light filtered through the curtains of his bedroom, Jeremy stirred, waking the girl in his arms. It was real. He hadn't dreamt it. He had made love to Janice, and she was still here.

"Good morning."

Janice yawned and snuggled into his arms. "What time is it?"

Jeremy looked over at the clock and squinted to see the time. "It's just after nine."

She sat up quickly, shocking him out of his reverie. "What? We're so late for work." She started to move, swinging her legs over the side of the bed and bending over to find her discarded clothes.

Jeremy pulled her back into his embrace. "Janice – relax. It's Saturday."

She sat still for a moment then he saw her shoulders fall with relief. "Thank god for that. My boss is insufferable when I'm late."

He fastened his arms around her and kissed the tousled pink and purple cloud on the top of her head. "You've never been late." He began to stroke idle circles around her nipples, and she relaxed further, moulding herself to fit against him. "But let's say you were, what would you do to make it up to me?"

She didn't say anything, just smiled knowingly then climbed over him, straddling his legs. He had no idea what she was planning, so when she took his cock in her hand and leaned over to suck the tip into her wet mouth, he nearly came on the spot.

"Steady. Try to enjoy the sensation. Try not to come too quickly."

"That's far easier said than done." He pulled in a shuddering breath as she went to work on him once more, pulling his entire

length into her mouth, opening her throat to take him as deeply as she could.

She sucked him tenderly, stroking the underside of his cock with her tongue until he had no choice but to give in to the incredible feelings she was eliciting. He thrust up with his hips, pushing himself to the back of her throat and came with a groan, spilling himself into her. She held on to him until he was done then he reached for her, covering her lips with his, pushing his tongue into her semen-filled mouth. He tasted himself on her tongue, and he knew she was his. He was hard again within a minute, and he rolled her over onto her back and mounted her quickly, filling her pussy with the urgency of someone who needed to stake his claim.

“So, what comes after stage seven?” Janice was lying in his arms again, tracing little circles around his nipples with her fingertips.

“I don’t think I want to think about the stages anymore. I wrote them down when I thought Delia was what I wanted. I don’t want her anymore. I want you.” He leaned over and kissed the top of her head.

“Good. I like the sound of that. But can I suggest something?”

“Go ahead.”

“Stage seven and a half. A long, detailed exploration of giving each other as much pleasure as possible.”

“Sounds good.”

“I have some really filthy ideas.”

“That sounds good too.”

After she had demonstrated one of her filthy ideas, she lay back in his arms. "Fitz?"

"Janice?"

"You haven't washed your hands in well over twelve hours."

"I know."

"And they must be covered in all kinds of stuff."

"I know that too."

"Are you okay?"

"I'm perfect."

"Yes, you are."

## **Monday**

05:58 Woke up with Janice

06:10 Janice made me come with her mouth

06:20 I made Janice come with my fingers and my tongue

06:30 Decided I don't need to write down the minutia of my day anymore. That was part of my life before.

06:45 Decided instead to write down a list of challenges for every day. Today's challenges are:

- Stop counting urinations
- Only wash hands when I really need to

- Drink more water
- Fuck Janice as many times as possible
- Get an early night

Jeremy only managed two of his challenges on that first day. He drank a whole large bottle of water; the extra fluid had the predictable effect on his bladder. Urinations: eleven. He washed his hands many times, but at least he didn't keep count. And he didn't get an early night – he was far too busy working on the remaining challenge. He achieved that one to the best of his abilities and fell into a much-needed sleep with the taste of her juices still alive in his mouth.