

A  
NEXT  
TOGETHER  
SHORT STORY

CAN KITTY AND MATTHEW

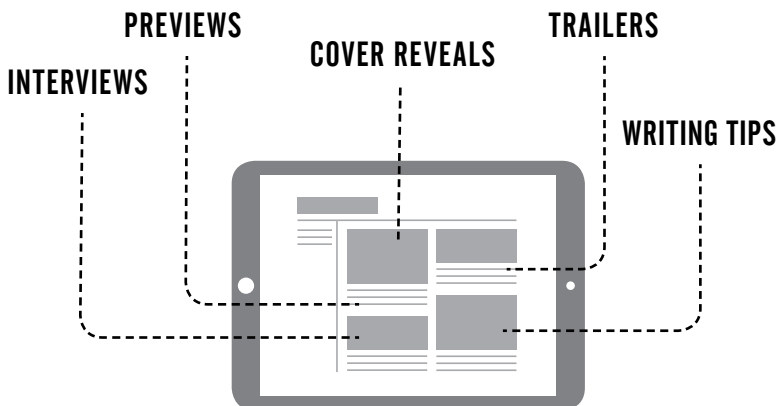
ANOTHER  
CATCH THE KILLER  
TOGETHER  
AT BLETCHLEY PARK?

LAUREN JAMES

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A  
NEXT  
TOGETHER  
SHORT STORY

# ANOTHER TOGETHER

LAUREN JAMES

WALKER  
BOOKS



# CHAPTER 1

## Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, England, 1940

“Are you absolutely *certain* this is safe?” Matthew Galloway asked, peering suspiciously out over the lake.

“Perfectly,” Kitty Finchley replied. She stepped out onto the ice, the blades of her skates flashing silver. Spinning around, she smirked at him with a familiar look of amusement – he could never decide if it was affectionate or teasing. “I say, you delicate flower, do come on – it’s not that scary. I’ll help you up if you fall over.” She glided smoothly back to him, mitten-clad hands outstretched.

Matthew readjusted the wire frames of his glasses and wished briefly that he wasn’t so invested in pleasing Kitty in every way. He gave the ice another cautious look. The thin surface did seem to be holding up well enough so far, even with the weight of Kitty twirling around on it.

It was utterly ridiculous for them to be going out so soon. The lake had only frozen the night before. No one else at Bletchley was being so risky in their lunch hour. The whole exercise was dangerous in a pointlessly thrill-seeking way. They were at war: it wasn’t really the time to unnecessarily risk life and limb in sport.

Matthew had been working as a codebreaker at Bletchley

Park for nearly a year, helping to decode intercepted Nazi transmissions. Even with such exciting work, his life had got a lot more interesting since he'd become friends with Kitty, a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service – the Wrens – a few months earlier. She was always persuading him to do irresponsible things. She was terrible.

She was fabulous.

Matthew took Kitty's hands. He blew out a nervous breath, which condensed into a white cloud in the air.

"It'll be a lark," she reassured him again, her fingers closing around his. The ice creaked threateningly beneath him as he stepped on it. He kept his gaze firmly on Kitty's hands and ignored the possibility of imminent disaster. "It's more fun if you relax," she added.

*"As the girl said to the soldier,"* he muttered.

Kitty snorted.

"If the view isn't as spectacular as you promised, there will be consequences, Finchley," he warned.

Kitty let out a warm laugh, and tugged him closer.

The two of them had been on the ice for about fifteen minutes, and Matthew was just starting to enjoy himself, when Kitty simultaneously let go of his hand and let out a gasp of horror.

"What is it?" he asked, concerned. Kitty was not the gasping sort. Matthew attempted to stop, which meant skidding across the ice before finally coming to a halt on the edge of the lake. He grabbed hold of a willow branch to catch his balance. When he looked back, Kitty was crouched

down, staring at the ice. All of the colour had drained from her face, which had been a lovely wind-chafed pink.

"There's a hand," she said.

"You need a hand?" Matthew carefully skated back to her. "Have you got yourself stuck?"

"No, Matthew. There appears to be a *hand*. *Frozen in the ice.*"

There really was a hand sticking out of the surface of the lake – a man's, judging by the width of the fingers. Its frosted fingertips, almost blue with cold, were curled up.

Suddenly Matthew felt overcome with dizziness. "*Oh.*"

"Matthew," Kitty murmured. "Oh goodness..."

After sucking in a deep breath to steady himself, Matthew brushed a layer of snow away from the ice. The dark outline of a body was just visible.

He stumbled back in horror, sinking down to sit on the ice next to Kitty. He knew that the cold must be seeping in through his clothes, but he felt numb. There was a *corpse* in the lake at Bletchley Park. *A corpse.*

"He must have died last night," he said, surprised at how steady his voice was. "The lake froze over in the early hours of the morning."

"Do you think he fell in?" Kitty asked. "What an awful way to die. I wonder who he—" She broke off.

Matthew realized she was thinking the same as him: they might have known this man. They could have passed each other in the hallways of Bletchley Park a hundred times. Matthew felt like the breath had been punched out of him. To find a body was bad enough; to find the body of a

colleague – or even a friend – was so much worse.

“We need to sound the alarm,” Kitty said, pushing herself up with a hand on Matthew’s shoulder. Her voice only shook a bit. “I’ll go – you’re too slow.”

“I’d not make it off the lake before it melted,” he agreed.

Kitty gave a small smile. There wasn’t much humour in it. Matthew didn’t blame her. The vision of the man’s hand poking up through the ice would haunt him for a long time. She squeezed his shoulder reassuringly, and then skated off towards the gatehouse to report the incident to the guards on duty, who would be able to alert the military police.

Matthew looked down at the body again. He felt nauseous but also a little curious. Who was it? Matthew hoped it wasn’t someone he knew, and then felt guilty. Whoever this man was, he had been someone’s friend, son, boyfriend or even husband.

Matthew drew in another deep breath and glanced around. How had the man got here? He must have arrived at the lake mere hours before it had frozen over. Why? His body had drifted quite a long way from the shore. He couldn’t have been *swimming*, surely? Not at night in this weather. Or was it more malicious than a simple accident?

Matthew shivered and pulled his scarf more tightly around his neck.

A rather substantial crowd had gathered on the edge of the lake. They were all watching as two of the military police officers assigned to Bletchley Park chiselled the body from its resting place in the ice. The sound of their shovels hitting



the frozen lake was like a blow to Matthew's head.

He couldn't stop picturing the frozen hand. It must have been such a painful way to die, with shards of frostbite spreading through the man's body until he finally passed on. Matthew fought a wave of nausea, and tried to put the images out of his mind.

Kitty was recounting the discovery to a group of other Wrens. Matthew pressed his shoulder against hers, seeking out her reassuring warmth. She wrapped her hand around his, tugging him closer.

It seemed to take forever, but finally the police pulled the body free from the ice. Matthew recognized it immediately.

"It's George Bowden," he said, voice trembling. Matthew hadn't known him well, but they'd talked a few times. He was a mathematician assigned to the hut next door to Matthew's. Once he had chased after Matthew to return the glove he had dropped. He had seemed like a nice man.

"Bowden is a mathematician in Hut Six, isn't he?" said one of the other Wrens, a blonde girl who Matthew thought might be called Ella.

The crowd's curiosity had curdled to shock. One expected people to die during wartime but not quite like this. As people discussed the tragic nature of the accident, Matthew found himself unable to look away from the body. He said a silent farewell to George Bowden. He couldn't help but think of George's poor family, who didn't even yet know that he was dead. The images of a man flailing around in the ice-cold water came back to him. This time the man had George's face. Matthew saw him slipping under the

surface and reflexively drawing in a lungful of liquid.

Matthew had never seen a corpse before. He hadn't imagined it would be so *human*. Somehow he had always thought of them as waxy figurines, clearly lifeless and empty. But despite the blueness of his skin, George looked like he might open his eyes and walk away any second. Matthew couldn't take his eyes off him.

Then he noticed something strange about George's neck. Some sort of *marking*...

The military police were momentarily distracted, talking to the crowd of onlookers, so Matthew leant over to peer down the collar of George's shirt. Horror rose inside him.

"It must have been somewhat of a shock for you," a voice said, coming up behind him. Matthew gave a start. It was Captain Wilkes, the head of the military police at Bletchley Park. "I dare say he was walking home after working late and tripped into the lake during the blackout." Wilkes patted Matthew's arm, in what Matthew presumed was supposed to be a comforting manner. "Do let me take you and Miss Finchley to the dining hall for a cup of sweet tea to warm you up."

Matthew nodded his agreement almost absently. His mind was still on the marks on George's neck. They looked almost like ... rope marks, as though someone had wrapped something around his neck and pulled very tightly. Had George Bowden been *strangled*?

Matthew drew his breath in abruptly. If that was the case, then this wasn't an accident at all. It was murder!

## CHAPTER 2

Kitty and Matthew settled in among the bustle of the cabbage-scented dining hall while Captain Wilkes fetched them some tea. Both were quiet, contemplating what they'd seen at the lake.

"Can you imagine drowning like that?" Kitty asked sombrely. "It would be so lonely."

Matthew shivered despite the warmth of the room. "I don't know if George did drown," he said, hesitantly.

Kitty looked at him, wide-eyed. "*What?*"

"I saw something strange on the body, Kitty," Matthew said, wiping the condensation off his glasses. "There were marks around his neck, as if he had been strangled."

She gasped and went pale. "Surely not! Why would someone murder poor George?"

"He was a nice fellow," Matthew agreed, tracing a line across the surface of the table with his finger.

"He used to buy rounds for everyone in the pub, even people he didn't know," Kitty said. "I just can't believe anyone would want to hurt him."

They were silent until Captain Wilkes returned with their cups of tea.

"Will you two manage alone now, do you think?" Captain Wilkes asked. "I must write a telegram to Bowden's family."

“Yes, Sir, of course,” Matthew said, just as Kitty said, “I’ll look after Matthew, Sir!”

The captain gave a wry smile. Matthew carefully avoided Kitty’s gaze. He thought it was probably an unspoken secret among their colleagues that Matthew Galloway had a helpless, life-defining infatuation with Kitty Finchley, but that didn’t mean he wanted to make it completely obvious to everyone. Especially not their superior officers.

“I hope they find out what really happened to George,” Matthew said to Kitty, once the captain had gone. “It’s going to haunt me until they do.”

Matthew spent the next morning decoding German messages. He was exhausted – he hadn’t slept well. He had dreamt he was back on the lake, watching George’s fingers wriggling and curling as they poked through the ice. It was all very unsettling.

He wondered what Captain Wilkes and the rest of the military police had made of those marks on George’s neck. They might be questioning people right now. Did they have any suspects? Was Wilkes close to arresting the murderer, or were they still at large?

Every time someone walked past his office, Matthew half expected to be called in for an interview. Perhaps the police were starting with the men in George’s hut first, although there was no sign of any extra activity in the building neighbouring Matthew’s.

Feeling uneasy, Matthew returned to his work. The radio signals were written in Morse code, but the Germans

had placed a further encryption on them using their Enigma machine. Unless you knew that day's settings, it was impossible to break the cipher. The Allies had been unable to read the messages with any accuracy until the mathematician Alan Turing had invented the Bombe machine, a giant mechanical computer that ran through all the possible solutions until it cracked the code.

Now Kitty and the other Wrens were able to calculate the Enigma's settings using the Bombe and give them to Matthew and his fellow codebreakers so they could decrypt the messages. Then they were translated from German into English – a job done by linguists, if the codebreakers didn't speak German like Matthew did. Usually the messages contained details about Nazi warships, regiments and battle orders. The information helped the Allied forces in the war.

It was vital but tiring work, because even a single mistake could ruin the entire process. The Germans changed the Enigma's settings every day at midnight, so the whole process of decryption had to start over again for the next day.

By eleven a.m. Matthew was desperate for a cup of tea and a break from the intense concentration and worry. He organized his desk, which was a mess of papers: scribbles of numbers and letters, incomprehensible even to him at times. Then he screwed the cap back on his fountain pen, and tucked it carefully into his shirt pocket. He stood up, stretching his back.

Rubbing his hands together to warm them, Matthew walked down the corridor to the tea urn. The huts were just wooden sheds with thin walls, so they were brutally

cold, even more so now that winter had come. Matthew usually worked wrapped in a blanket to keep warm, with his desk pressed up against the clanging radiator. Even then, his fingers were always frozen by the end of his shift. He had asked his mother to send him some fingerless gloves, but she was a slow knitter.

While he drank his tea, Matthew asked the other codebreakers in his hut whether they had heard anything more about George Bowden. He was surprised to hear that the general consensus seemed to be that it was a terrible accident.

“Isn’t Captain Wilkes questioning anyone, then?” Matthew asked.

The other codebreakers looked astonished.

“Why would he?” one asked. “George drowned and then the lake froze over him. What is there to ask?”

“Such a tragedy,” said another codebreaker. “Poor George.”

Matthew was shocked but didn’t know what to say. How could it be accidental? What about those marks on George’s neck?

When Matthew went back to work, savouring the last remnants of warmth leaking from the mug into his fingers, he couldn’t help but be concerned. Had he been wrong about the marks on George’s neck? He really didn’t see how he could have been. So why wasn’t Captain Wilkes investigating the murder? Whoever had strangled George was roaming free at Bletchley Park and no one was even looking for them!

By evening, it was common knowledge that George Bowden had tripped and fallen into the lake in a tragic accident, with no one to blame.

Kitty, of course, was vehemently angry about this.

“Why can’t people *see* what’s right under their noses?” she asked Matthew, as they walked home after their shifts. Bletchley Park workers were lodged with local families in Bletchley town. “What about those marks you saw? It was murder, surely! For a park full of geniuses, there are an awful lot of imbeciles here.”

“Kitty, it’s just hearsay. We have no way of knowing what the investigators are really thinking,” Matthew said. “Captain Wilkes could be about to arrest the murderer.”

Even as he reassured her, Matthew was worried. He hadn’t seen any military police searching the lake for clues. The only indication that anything out of the ordinary had happened was a newly painted sign stuck into the bank of the lake, which read, “BEWARE – RISK OF FALLING”. It did seem that the investigation had closed.

“The police – Captain Wilkes included – think it was an accident. Everyone is saying so,” Kitty said. She was bundled up in a woolly hat and scarf, with just the tip of her pink nose visible, and a few strands of hair, which Matthew always thought would be unimaginably soft to the touch. “It’s completely suspicious,” she continued. “Where did those red marks come from, if not strangulation? Some kind of cut from the *bulrushes*?!”

“Surely Captain Wilkes will have noticed the marks

too,” Matthew said, flashing his identification papers at the guards at the gate. They nodded as casually as normal as Matthew and Kitty passed. That made Matthew even more uncomfortable. Shouldn’t they be more alert if a murder had happened on the premises? What did it all mean? It was very strange.

“But we can’t be certain that Wilkes will make George’s death a priority!” Kitty replied. “We’re at *war*. There are so many greater things happening that must take up the police’s time.”

Matthew didn’t say anything, but secretly he agreed with her. It made him uneasy. He didn’t feel safe working at Bletchley in the presence of a murderer.



## CHAPTER 3

“Wilkes has closed the case!” Kitty said to Matthew the next day, as she indignantly slammed a bowlful of stew down on his table in the dining hall.

“He’s stopped investigating completely?” Matthew asked, shocked. His hands were wrapped around a warm cup of tea – he still hadn’t thawed out from a morning of working in the cold hut.

“Exactly! After only two days!” Kitty was almost bristling with anger as she unbuttoned her black blazer and sat down opposite him.

Matthew frowned. “They can’t have caught the murderer already.”

“They haven’t, Matthew! The guards at the gate told me that Wilkes has officially reported it as an accident. He’s completely failed at his job. I want to investigate,” Kitty said, determined. “For George. But I need your help.”

Matthew ran a hand through his hair. What could they find that the police had missed? Also, if there *was* a murderer at Bletchley Park, they could be putting themselves in terrible danger by hunting for them. But he did want justice for George. And he always, *always*, wanted to help Kitty.

“What do you have in mind?” he asked finally.

Kitty leant across the table, revealing the elegant line of

her collarbone under her shirt as she grinned at him, a little surprised and pleased.

“Well, first,” she said, “let’s go over everything we remember about finding the body and everything that seems suspicious.”

“We could ask George’s friends if they noticed anything strange about him that last day?” Matthew said when he and Kitty had finished going over everything. “Perhaps one of them might know whether he always walked home past the lake at night, or whether it was a change in his usual routine.” Then Matthew had another thought. “If he was stepping out with one of the Wrens, say, he might have been meeting her that night.”

Kitty’s smile sent a jolt right through him. “Excellent initiative, Mr Galloway. Surely if he was meeting someone for a secret rendezvous, he would have told one of the other chaps about it. You mathematicians do love to gossip.”

Matthew pulled an uncertain face. “What tosh. You know as well as I do that the opposite is true. You have met Turing, haven’t you?”

“Alan has never gossiped a day in his life, I’m sure,” Kitty agreed. “But you are more of a gossip than even I am.”

Matthew looked round to check that nobody was watching, and then stuck his tongue out at her.

She gasped in mock horror. “I’m supposed to be the immature one, not you,” she teased. “I’m the seventeen-year-old.”

Matthew raised an eyebrow. "You had better not say that so loudly."

Wrens were supposed to be nineteen and over, but Kitty had lied about her age when she had volunteered. Matthew, who really was nineteen, found it hard to believe that the recruiters had been passive in the deception. Kitty looked eighteen, at most.

"They wouldn't do anything even if they did find out," Kitty replied. "I discovered a *body* the other day. I'm a hero – someone should give me a medal."

"Maybe if you discover the murderer you'll be a hero. At the minute I'm not entirely certain you're anything more than a one-inch newspaper article."

"Treachery! I'm sure we've earnt at least two inches of text."

Matthew shrugged. "If only everything at Bletchley wasn't classified, then we might have a chance to find out the truth. But you know as well as I do that this won't become public knowledge."

"You're right, as always. Anyway, if we're going to catch this murderer, you'd better hurry up and finish your lunch. You can't sleuth effectively on an empty stomach."

Matthew grinned at her, and then obediently finished his stew. As he did so, another thought crossed his mind. Perhaps someone at Bletchley Park, or even someone within the military police, didn't want the murderer discovered.

He rejected the idea immediately. It was ridiculous.

They agreed to talk to George's friends and then meet after their shifts to compare notes.

“Oh, Matthew!” Kitty called, running after him as he was walking back towards Hut 5. “This is for you.” She pressed something into his arms, then she was gone in a cloud of curls and twirling skirts.

Matthew looked down. She had given him a ceramic hot-water bottle, already filled. For the rest of his shift, Matthew glowed with warmth.

## CHAPTER 4

Matthew sprinted to Hut 11, where Kitty was working, ready to intercept her at the end of her shift. He couldn't wait to tell her what he'd found out. He stood outside, panting for breath and shifting from foot to foot impatiently.

"Hey, Ella," he said to a Wren as she left the hut. "Is Kitty still in there?"

"You're Matthew Galloway, aren't you?" Ella said. She pulled her tie loose as she wrapped a scarf around her neck. "It's a pleasure to meet you," she continued without waiting for an answer. "Kitty talks about you a lot. Incessantly, some might say. She's still here. She's just unravelling a jam on one of the Bombes. Go on inside."

Matthew wanted to ask what she meant by "incessantly". Now was not the time, though – and whatever Kitty claimed, Matthew was *not* a gossip. Mostly. Matthew thanked Ella and darted inside. There was something unnervingly knowing about the girl.

Hut 11 was filled with Bombe machines. The computing devices were tall enough to fill the room from ceiling to floor and were covered in rows of tabulating cogs, which spun in circles with a mechanical clicking noise as the machine cycled through the various solutions to codes. The sound they made always reminded Matthew of

knitting needles tapping against each other.

Matthew caught sight of Kitty kneeling on the floor at the back of a machine, replacing a coil of red wire on one of the cogs.

"Kitty," he said, walking over to her and touching her shoulder.

She looked up, brushing an unravelling curl of pinned hair away from her face. "Matthew!" she exclaimed.

"If you can, I need you to come with me to the dining hall," he said. "I'll explain on the way. It's rather urgent." He dropped his voice. "It's about ... you know ... George."

Her eyes widened and she nodded. After passing her duties over to another of the Wrens, she joined Matthew in jogging to the dining hall.

On the way over, Matthew filled her in on his news. "I found a girl who was stepping out with George: Miss Mitchell, a linguist," he said. "I overheard someone offering her their condolences and asked her if she would talk to us after her shift. She's meeting us in the dining hall. We have about" – Matthew checked his watch and picked up speed – "four minutes until she gets there."

"Brilliant!" Kitty declared. "That's just enough time to plan our interrogation." She grinned.

"Words can't express how sorry I am for your loss, Miss Mitchell," Kitty said, pressing a handkerchief into the linguist's hand.

"Please, call me Natalie. I'm so sorry to make a scene," she said, dabbing her eyes. "It's just such a – *shock*. I haven't

quite come to terms with it all just yet.”

She spoke with a crisp, careful accent that hinted at generations of wealth. Matthew caught sight of a pearl necklace tucked into the collar of her cashmere jumper. A debutante, then – recruited for her private education in European languages.

“I don’t suppose you saw George on the day that he passed away?” Matthew asked.

“I met him for lunch, much as I did every day at noon,” she said. “He was cheerful as a lamb. It’s so hard to believe that he’s *gone*.”

“You didn’t, say ... arrange to meet with him that evening, then?” Kitty said, aiming for casual but sounding more like Miss Marple.

“I was away from Bletchley that night, dining with Lord and Lady Warwick at the Savoy. I’m absolutely wild with guilt about it. I should have been here, with him!” Natalie was clearly trying to hold back more tears.

“I’m sure there’s nothing you could have done,” Kitty said soothingly.

Ella entered the dining hall then. She waved at Matthew as she passed. She was with one of the dispatch workers, a girl called Anise. The dispatchers took messages for Winston Churchill and other military commanders between Bletchley and London on motorcycles. Anise still had her helmet under her arm. Matthew was sure he’d seen her somewhere before. If only he could remember where...

“Do you have any idea why he might have been at the lake that late at night?” Kitty asked Natalie.

“At night?” Natalie looked surprised.

“Yes – the lake didn’t freeze over until the early hours of the morning, so he must have fallen in only a little while before that,” Matthew explained. “Otherwise someone would have been sure to come across his body sooner.”

“Really?” Natalie sounded puzzled. “That is odd. Why would he be at the lake at night?”

“That’s what we’re trying to find out,” Kitty said.

“But why?” Natalie asked. “Why are you interested?” She frowned. “Why are you asking me these questions?”

“We’re trying our best to work out what happened,” Kitty said. “We – we knew him, and we want to work out who did this to him.”

Natalie looked confused for a moment, and then shocked as she registered what Kitty was saying. “You think that George was *murdered*? But that’s ... that’s ridiculous! Captain Wilkes told me that it was all just bad luck – a tragic accident!”

“We’re not sure exactly what happened,” Matthew said, trying to calm her down. He didn’t want to cause her distress unnecessarily. “But there are some things that don’t add up. Anything that you can tell us—” He was interrupted by a sudden commotion from down the hallway.

Kitty stood up and hurried for the door. Matthew sighed. Kitty could never just watch from the sidelines. She always had to dive into the action. No wonder she had volunteered for the Wrens at sixteen. But it was such an adventure being friends with Kitty, and he wouldn’t change it for the world.

After murmuring a quick “Sorry” to Natalie, he caught



up with Kitty in the library, just in time to see her push through a crowd of codebreakers. Matthew followed, and found her crouching over a body. It was the corpse of a man whom Matthew recognized as the junior mathematician Philip Townsend. He couldn't have been more than twenty, and he was lying curled up on the floor, his hands clutching his stomach. He was quite grey and obviously dead.

"Poison," Kitty whispered.

"What?" Matthew said. "No ... surely..." He stared at Philip's body. "Really?"

Kitty rolled her eyes in a "keep up" gesture. "Of course! What else could it be? Look at the way he's lying."

Two bodies in less than a week. First strangulation and now *poison*. What was going *on*?

"Did anyone see what happened here?" Matthew asked.

"She found him," a linguist said, gesturing to one of the Wrens, who was bright red and sobbing.

The girl let out a wail. "He was just lyin' there. *Dead!*"

"The murderer has struck again," Kitty said.

"*Murderer?*" someone repeated.

"There's a serial killer at Bletchley Park," Kitty said.

A gasp went around the room, and Matthew wondered if perhaps they should have kept that theory to themselves for a bit longer, just until they were sure of what was happening.

Matthew caught sight of Natalie, who was standing in the doorway. Tears sparkled in her eyes. Captain Wilkes was with her, his hand on her arm, clearly comforting her. Near by, Ella and Anise were watching the uproar too.

Matthew studied them carefully. All of them had entered the dining hall only moments before the murder was discovered. Any one of them might be responsible.

## CHAPTER 5

Kitty grabbed Matthew's hand as they were ushered out of the library by a tight-lipped Captain Wilkes. He had refused to answer any questions.

"Quickly," Kitty hissed. "While everyone is distracted, let's search Philip's desk. We might be able to find some evidence that he was poisoned."

"We don't know for certain that it is poison," Matthew said, feeling he should at least point that out before Kitty embarked on a roller coaster of intrigue of her own making.

Kitty rolled her eyes and tugged Matthew along as she headed for the huts.

The building that Philip had worked in was quite deserted. Kitty had been right about this being the perfect time for them to search it – everyone had been at dinner when the body was found, and they were still lingering there to discuss the murder.

As quickly as they could, Matthew and Kitty found Philip's office. They peeked around the doorway to check it was empty. Then Kitty started looking through Philip's desk while Matthew stood on guard. Matthew still wasn't convinced they would find anything, but he knew better than to argue with Kitty. If anyone came along, he planned to say that he was looking for a dirty mug to wash up and use – the kitchens were notorious for having a short supply.

Alan Turing was rumoured to chain his mug to his radiator so that nobody stole it.

Kitty, who had been bent over Philip's desk, let out a dramatic gasp. "Matthew, look at this!"

He took one last anxious look down the hallway – there was nobody coming – and ran into the room.

"Philip had a meeting with Wilkes this morning," Kitty said, pointing at a "to do" list jotted down in a notebook. "Don't you think that's odd? Wilkes closes George's case after two days, despite the evidence of foul play, and then has a meeting with Philip only hours before *he* dies too!"

"I don't know," Matthew said. "I think we need more proof before we start suspecting people." It seemed quite a leap to suspect a police officer of being a murderer.

Kitty's brow wrinkled, but she nodded in agreement.

There was a mug on the desk and Matthew absent-mindedly picked it up. "It's still warm," he said. Sadness washed over him. Was making this cup of tea the last thing Philip had done before he died? Was tea the last thing he had drunk?

*The last thing he had drunk! Of course!*

Matthew caught Kitty's eye and knew instinctively that she was thinking the same thing he was.

She took the mug out of his hand. "There's something in the bottom," she said, swirling the milky dregs. "Something that isn't tea."

Bending closer to look, Matthew saw that mixed into the tea leaves at the bottom of the mug was a powdery white residue. "Is that sugar? Or...?"

Kitty pulled a pair of tweezers from her skirt pocket – all the Wrens carried them, as the delicate Bombe machine mechanisms were constantly jamming – and carefully pulled out one of the white crystals. She sniffed it. “It’s not sugar.” Then she dabbed her finger in it and put it in her mouth. She immediately pulled a face. “That ... tastes awful.” She looked at him over the tweezers.

“Yes, but do you think it’s...? I mean could it really be poison?”

Kitty shrugged. “I can’t tell, but I’m not trying any more of it, just in case.”

“Please don’t,” he said, taking the mug away from her as a precaution.

“Matthew, we have to do something,” Kitty said, as they left the hut. “If our suspicions are right, then the murderer might strike again before we are able to find them. We’ve wasted so much time already.”

“We’re going to get to the bottom of this,” he reassured her. He patted Kitty carefully on the back, which had the lovely result of making her move nearer to him. “We shan’t give up, not until we find out what’s going on here.”

“Do *you* think Captain Wilkes is involved?” Kitty asked.

“I don’t know.” Matthew felt sick at the thought of it. How could they possibly hope to stop someone with such power? But it was better not to jump to conclusions until they had more information.

“What if they try to kill you next?” Kitty asked, looking up at him. Her hair brushed his jaw. He ignored the twist it caused in his stomach.

“It won’t get that far. I promise.”

Kitty rested her head on his shoulder. “I can’t lose you,” she whispered, so quietly that he nearly missed it.

Matthew could feel his cheeks turning red. He had never minded that he blushed easily until he met Kitty. They lingered a long time outside the hut. Matthew always found it so hard to tear himself away from Kitty’s side.

## CHAPTER 6

The next lunchtime, there was a sign in the dining hall which read, “NO HOT MEALS TODAY.”

“Why is there no food, Mrs Needham?” Matthew asked the cook.

“There was a case of food poisoning yesterday,” she replied, looking tired and fraught. “Someone died. We’ve thrown out all the food until we know what caused it.”

Kitty and Matthew met each other’s eye, both thinking the same thing. This was related to Philip’s death.

“But—!” Kitty started saying, until Matthew squeezed her elbow warningly. She fell silent.

“I hope you find the cause of the problem soon,” Matthew said to Mrs Needham and tugged Kitty away.

“It was *poison!*” Kitty hissed at him. “We saw it in his mug! It’s nothing to do with the dining hall. What is happening?”

“It must be a cover-up,” Matthew said, reluctantly. He hadn’t wanted to believe it, but there were too many coincidences.

“And Wilkes is involved?” Kitty asked in a whisper.

Matthew shrugged. “Maybe. He is the head of the military police, after all. He would have been investigating both deaths.”

They sat down at one of the tables, both chewing dolefully on plain, slightly stale slices of bread, which was

all the kitchen was running the risk of serving. Neither of them spoke for a while. Matthew knew they were weighing up the seriousness of a cover-up at Bletchley.

“We need more evidence,” he said finally, pouring them both a glass of water. After what they had found in Philip’s mug yesterday, the tea didn’t look as appetizing as it usually did.

“How are we supposed to get that?” she asked.

Matthew swallowed a lump of dry bread. He knew what they had to do, but just the thought of it was terrifying. He wasn’t sure if he was brave enough. But he would never forgive himself if someone else was murdered because he was too cowardly to take action. He pushed away his doubts and nerves, and said, “We have to break into Wilkes’ office. We need to find out once and for all if he is involved.”

“It’s an enormous risk,” Kitty said. “If we get caught, who knows what they will do to us?”

“I know. There might be something in the police reports that gives him away, though – or maybe more information about the bodies that we can investigate.”

Kitty was quiet, thinking this through for a moment.

“You’re right,” she answered eventually. “We have to take the chance. We can’t let this go on any longer. What if someone else gets killed?” She nudged her shoulder against his. “I don’t want anyone to hurt you.”

Matthew touched the back of her hand with his thumb. When she didn’t pull away, he gathered his courage and wrapped his hand over hers. She let out a soft sigh and turned her hand in his, pressing their palms together.



The old manor house at Bletchley Park had originally housed the offices for Alan Turing and the codebreakers. Over time, the number of workers had increased and huts had been built around it. Now the huts crept across the manicured lawns and around the lake to fill the entire estate. They were all very rough and ready, however – the house was much more elegant and sophisticated. Kitty and Matthew met outside it in the dim light of dusk.

“The game is afoot, Watson,” Kitty said.

“*You’re* Holmes?” Matthew said, disapproving. “Surely not. I’m taller.”

Kitty ignored him. “Here,” she said, passing him some papers as they went inside the building. “Go in with these, and if anyone stops you, pretend you are dropping off a leave request form. Just say you went into the wrong office.”

Matthew swallowed. “You’re not coming in?”

She shook her head. “I’m going to stand on guard in the corridor. I’ll be able to hold anyone off much better than you would.”

“You can talk anyone in circles,” Matthew agreed.

“Copy out anything that seems useful. We’re going to need all the evidence we can find.” Kitty nudged him towards Captain Wilkes’ office door.

He nodded, more to himself as encouragement than anything else, and then knocked carefully on the wooden frame, just in case Wilkes had stayed late.

There was no reply, so he turned the doorknob. The door was locked.

Matthew grimaced. He knew the trick to unlocking the doors in the mansion – the building was so old that all of the locks were easy to jimmy with a careful push – but he hadn't wanted to break in if he didn't have to.

He looked at Kitty, who smiled and mouthed, "Go on."

Most of the staff had gone home to catch a few hours' sleep. They were alone. With a sigh, he pressed his shoulder into the door as he lifted it up by its handle, twisting the knob at the same time. The lock lifted out of its fitting and the door opened. He took a final glance at Kitty, who winked at him.

Matthew went inside.

He walked over to the neat desk and began searching for any documents about George Bowden and Philip Townsend. He flicked through a stack of papers and found two thick case files about the deaths. There were statements from Matthew and Kitty about their discovery, sketches of the bodies, and an interview with Natalie, who had told Wilkes the same thing she had told them: she had been in London on the night of George's death.

To Matthew's surprise, the police report on George's body did make note of the marks around his neck. Matthew had assumed that Wilkes would have hidden that piece of evidence.

Philip's autopsy hadn't been completed yet, so there was no mention of poison anywhere in his file. Perhaps the police hadn't found the mug like Kitty and Matthew had.

Matthew put the reports back into the pile of papers and started looking for any other clues on Wilkes' desk.

There was a blank notebook, with a pen beside it. Matthew wondered whether he should try that trick that always seemed to be done in murder mysteries, where a message could be read from a notepad by tracing the indents left on the sheet beneath. He discarded the idea. That sort of thing only really worked in books.

Then Matthew spotted Wilkes' diary. It was open to the current day. Matthew flicked back to the day before – the day of Philip's murder. Philip had met with Wilkes an hour before he died. Even more interestingly, Wilkes had written "witness interview" next to Philip's name. Had Philip known something about George's murder? Was that why he had been killed? Could Wilkes, the captain of the military police, really be involved?

Matthew turned back to today's page and noticed that in the section for evening appointments, Wilkes had written Natalie Mitchell's name in pencil and underlined it twice.

*Natalie.*

Matthew's heart jumped. It could all be perfectly innocent. He hadn't found anything to link Wilkes to the murder, apart from that suspicious interview with Philip. Despite this, Matthew was worried. He couldn't explain it, but he felt that he was missing something ... something vital. The idea of Natalie meeting Wilkes alone made him feel uncomfortable.

He was looking through Wilkes' address book for Natalie's contact details when, out in the corridor, Kitty cleared her throat loudly. Matthew jumped, an electric shock of fear rising up the back of his neck. Heart pounding, he scanned

the *Ms* until he reached Natalie's name, memorized the address, then shut the book and ran for the door, pulling it closed behind him.

A secretary was walking down the corridor towards them. She was looking at some papers in her hands and luckily hadn't noticed Matthew come out of Wilkes' office. He raised his hand to the door as though he was knocking.

"Good evening," the secretary said to Kitty as she passed them.

"I don't suppose you know whether Captain Wilkes is in, do you, ma'am?" Kitty asked her. She sounded as if she were out for an evening stroll, not committing some light trespassing.

Matthew's heart, meanwhile, was racing. He thought if he spoke his voice would come out shrill and nervous.

The woman stopped and shook her head. "He's gone home, love."

Matthew inhaled, and then said, in a carefully deep voice to keep the tremors out of it, "We'll just give him the form tomorrow, Kitty."

The woman smiled and carried on walking down the corridor.

Kitty blew out her cheeks in relief. "Did you find anything?" she asked under her breath, as they left the building – Matthew was barely able to stop himself from breaking into a sprint.

"Wilkes is meeting Natalie this evening," he told her. He was slightly out of breath with nerves.

She gaped at him, wide-eyed.

“It’s probably nothing,” Matthew added. He realized he was trying to persuade himself more than Kitty.

“But what if it’s not?” Kitty asked. “Wilkes could be the killer!”

“I got Natalie’s address from Wilkes’ office,” Matthew said.

Without another word, they both started running for the exit of Bletchley Park. As always, they seemed to understand each other perfectly. Matthew had never grown so close to anyone in such a short space of time as he had with Kitty. He had known her for scarcely two months, but sometimes it felt as if it were several lifetimes.

They flashed their passes at the guards, barely breaking stride. As they ran towards Natalie’s lodgings, images flew through Matthew’s mind: Natalie collapsed on the floor, foam brimming from her mouth onto her silk scarf; Natalie’s face turning red, eyes bulging, as rope was pulled tight against her neck; Wilkes thrusting a knife into the soft flesh of Natalie’s stomach, blood spilling from her lips.

His brain told him it was illogical to be so worried, and yet he increased his pace. Something wasn’t right – he just knew it. Beside him, Kitty’s breath was clouding white in the cold air in quick, frantic pants.

If Natalie died tonight, Matthew would never forgive himself.

Up ahead, he spotted a dispatch worker. It was Anise, her motorcycle idling beside her.

“May we borrow your cycle?” Kitty asked her, gasping for breath. “It’s an emergency!”

“Of course,” Anise said. She had a Scottish accent, like Matthew.

After murmuring a thank you, Kitty jammed her head into Anise’s helmet and sat on the motorcycle. Matthew jumped on behind her just as she revved the engine.

“We promise to bring it back soon,” he yelled over his shoulder at Anise, grateful that she hadn’t asked any questions. They sped off in a gust of petrol fumes and roaring tyres.

“I say, how do you know how to drive a cycle?” Matthew shouted, wrapping his arms around Kitty’s waist as she leant forward over the handlebars. “You’re *seventeen!*”

“My older brother taught me!” she answered, turning a corner so fast that Matthew’s scarf hit him in the face. “I’m much better at it than him, to be perfectly truthful!”

Matthew thought her brother must be a very bad driver indeed then. He closed his eyes and held on tight.

## CHAPTER 7

When they arrived at Natalie's lodgings, Kitty barely paused to turn off the engine before running to the door. She banged on it with both fists, but however violently she knocked, there was no answer.

"We can't just leave," she said. "What if she's in danger? What if Wilkes has already got to her?"

"We don't know anything for sure." At Kitty's glare, Matthew took a deep breath. "You want me to kick down the door, don't you?"

"Oh, *would* you?"

Matthew took a step back, and ran at the door. A terrible pain shot up his calf when he kicked it. "Bloody hell," he hissed as the door opened. "That hurt quite a bit more than I imagined it would."

Kitty just pushed past him. "*Hello? Miss Mitchell?*" she yelled. "*Are you here?*"

At her shout, there was a muffled cry from the back of the house, and then a sudden, frightening silence. Kitty looked back at Matthew, and then sprinted down the hallway. He followed her, ignoring the pain in his leg.

They burst into the kitchen to find Wilkes and Natalie engaged in a struggle. Matthew grabbed Wilkes and then stopped short, reprocessing what he was seeing.

Wilkes wasn't attacking Natalie. *Natalie* was attacking *him*.

The linguist was tightening a length of red wire – the kind they used on the Bombe machines – around Wilkes’ throat. He was fighting to get free. His skin was bright red and mottled with white, and his eyes bulged as he gasped for air.

Kitty was quicker to adjust to what she was seeing than Matthew. While he stood frozen in shock, she charged at Natalie and punched her in the stomach. Natalie roared but kept her grip on the wire. She shoved Kitty away with her elbow.

Matthew jumped into the action then. He grabbed Natalie’s arms, twisting her wrists in an attempt to make her let go of the wire. Natalie was strong, though, stronger than her pink cashmere jumper and pearls implied. But she couldn’t fight them both, and Matthew finally pulled the wire away from her, releasing Wilkes, who doubled over, gasping for breath.

Looking very red in the face, Wilkes stumbled a few steps before collapsing against the door frame. His eyes slid shut. He had fainted. Before Matthew could go to him, Natalie lunged at Matthew, knocking him to the ground and pouncing on him. She pressed something cold and metallic into his jaw.

It was a knife. She must have grabbed it from the kitchen table.

“Stop,” Natalie hissed, easing the knife closer to Matthew’s throat.

He froze. He could feel the sharp edge of the knife biting into his skin. He was more shocked and confused



than afraid. It was hard to believe that this poised, elegant woman – who had sobbed as they interviewed her – was braced to cut his throat, her teeth bared in a grimace.

Matthew's mind was suddenly full of Kitty: her dark brown eyes and the full curve of her cheeks when she smiled. He was glad that it was him Natalie was threatening and not her.

He swallowed. There was a sharp pain as the knife nicked his skin. One flick of Natalie's wrist and Matthew would be dead.

He had no idea what to do.

Then, over Natalie's shoulder, he caught sight of Kitty creeping towards them, a saucepan raised. Matthew felt calm. Kitty would rescue him. She always did.

"Don't," Matthew pleaded with Natalie, trying to distract her. "Please. We can help you. You're only going to bring more attention to yourself by killing me too."

Natalie opened her mouth to speak, just as Kitty brought the saucepan down on her head. Matthew grimaced as it smashed into Natalie's skull. The knife jumped out of her hand as she fell to the floor, unconscious.

Matthew touched his neck gingerly.

"Natalie," he said to Kitty. "It was *Natalie* all along."

Kitty looked as astonished as he felt. "We are officially the worst of all possible detectives," she said, pulling off her tie. She bent down and wrapped it around Natalie's wrists in case she woke up.

"I don't think we deserve to call ourselves Holmes and Watson," Matthew agreed as he stood up. He grinned at

Kitty, filled with a huge rush of affection. She had rescued him. Without her, he would be dead. "What should we do with her?"

"Pantry?" Kitty suggested.

After heaving Natalie's body up by the armpits, they carried her over to the store cupboard and gently rested her on the floor inside.

"You have to be more careful," Kitty said to Matthew in a quiet voice as they came back into the kitchen. Wilkes' eyelids were flickering. He was coming round. Kitty pulled a handkerchief from her pocket and held it against the wound on Matthew's throat. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

He pressed his forehead to hers. "I'll try my best." He turned to Captain Wilkes. "Are you injured, sir?"

"Not fatally," Wilkes said hoarsely. "Thank God you two arrived in time to stop her."

"We—we thought you were the murderer," Kitty admitted, in an embarrassed voice. "We were actually coming to save *her* from *you*."

Wilkes let out a wry laugh. "Well, well. I'm thankful either way."

"We had completely the wrong end of the stick," Matthew said, shaking his head. "How did you work out it was her?"

"I had my suspicions after Mr Bowden's death. Then Philip Townsend said he saw Miss Mitchell with George at the lake at approximately two in the morning as he was walking home from a night shift. It was too much of a

coincidence, especially when Philip was then poisoned. I knew Miss Mitchell must be responsible. That story of hers about going to the Savoy didn't hold up either. They had no record of her staying there. I came here to arrest her, but I didn't expect her to be so prepared. She took me by surprise with the wire."

Matthew processed this. He felt shaky and upset.

"So you were investigating this whole time?" Kitty asked. "We thought you had closed the case."

Wilkes shook his head, and then winced as he touched his neck, which was raw and dripping blood. "We decided to announce at Bletchley Park that both deaths were accidents, so as not to cause a panic. We couldn't afford to distract anyone from their work. Decoding Nazi messages is too vital to the war effort to risk a reduction in efficiency, even if there is a murderer on the loose."

"But why?" Matthew asked. "Why was she doing all of this?"

Wilkes frowned. "I'll be very interested to ask her that myself."

"Do you think she's a spy?" Kitty asked.

"Natalie?" Matthew asked, surprised. "She's so ... English. No German spy would have an accent like hers, surely."

"Oh, Matthew, don't fall for that load of tosh. There's no reason for the rich to be any more loyal to king and country than the rest of us. Besides, wouldn't her position in British society make an awfully good disguise? No one would suspect her of such a thing." Kitty turned from him then

and headed out of the room. “I’m going to look through her things – for evidence,” she called over her shoulder.

“Wait!” Wilkes said, alarmed. “You can’t interfere with a crime scene!”

She was already gone. Matthew shrugged at him, like Kitty was completely beyond anyone’s control. “I’ll fetch her,” he said.

When he got upstairs, he found Kitty rifling through a stack of books and papers in Natalie’s bedroom.

“Kitty,” Matthew began, but before he could say more, she held something up and yelled victoriously. It was a small transistor radio, and a piece of paper.

“What does it say?” Matthew asked, concerns about crime scenes and tampering forgotten at the sight of the note. “Has she been receiving messages from someone?”

“Sending them, I think,” Kitty said, and then added, “It’s in code.”

MOCC ELHY VNKF LSPN MZYC IZQJ  
RWXT XBFG VOXV AUPO GAMH MBOB  
IVGG LCUX UTRI EEZX GXZG WAXF  
YQAE KNMB PIHS OVAM GXDW OHFM  
JRHO ESVF PLIK XFMH URON TBXS  
LEQK FQHS MOTB FERL TKSC CZDK  
CVKP JRGT DYS

“Do you think it’s the Enigma code?” Matthew asked, horrified. “Why would she have that? Has she stolen a message from Bletchley Park?”

Kitty swallowed so hard that Matthew saw the line of her throat dip. "Either that or she's written to the Nazis! We need to see what it says!"

"We have to decode it," Matthew said. "Now."

"But how? We don't know what encryption she used."

"She must have her own Enigma machine," he said. "We just need to find it."

As Kitty pulled Natalie's expensive skirts and blouses out of her chest of drawers, Matthew knelt down and peered under the bed. There, lying in the dust, was the black metal casing of an Enigma machine.

He tugged the box out and heaved it onto the bed. The machine was in pieces, to Matthew's relief. Natalie had clearly been in the process of preparing the machine when Wilkes had arrived and interrupted her. Whatever the message said, she hadn't sent it yet.

He put the Enigma machine together, and then read out the code to Kitty, who typed the letters one by one into the machine's keyboard. The decoded message appeared lit up on the letters that ran above it. After pulling his fountain pen from his shirt pocket, Matthew wrote it down.

DIEB RITE NHAB ENDE NENI GMAC  
ODEG EKNA CKTW IRMU SSEN DRIN  
GEND UNSE REKO MMUN IKAT IONS  
METH ODEA NDER NICH HABE ZYAN  
IDIN DENT EEGE TANC ODEB RECH  
ERWE RDEN BISZ UMEN DEDE STAG  
ESTO TSEI NNM

It was in German.

*"The British have broken the Enigma code,"* he said, translating the message aloud. *"Change – I think it says – change the method of communication urgently. I have put – zyanid? – in the tea. Codebreakers will be dead within the day. N.M."*

"Zyanid. Cyanide!" Kitty cried in horror. "The tea! She's put poison in the urns!"

Matthew thought of how many cups of tea their co-workers must drink every day. His blood ran cold. If there was poison in the tea urns, many of them could already be dead.

"We have to raise the alarm," he said. "Before it's too late!"

## CHAPTER 8

Kitty stopped the motorcycle outside Bletchley Park and started running for the gates. They had left Wilkes at the house, guarding Natalie and waiting for the police to arrive.

“A spy has poisoned the tea!” Matthew yelled to the guards as he darted past them, following in Kitty’s wake. “Warn everyone!”

Matthew was terrified they would find the huts full of bodies. He just hoped that by eight in the evening most people would be at home. The night shifts were smaller. With any luck, no one would have stopped work for a cup of tea yet.

He and Kitty split up, each heading for a different hut. As Matthew entered the first one, he shouted out to a codebreaker crossing the corridor. “The tea urns have been poisoned! Tell everyone!”

The codebreaker gasped, and then nodded, before sprinting down the corridor towards the kitchen. The news was not as shocking as it might have been. The staff at Bletchley knew that their work made them vulnerable to attack.

Matthew turned and left the building, then darted across the footpath to sound the alarm in another hut. He bumped into Kitty in the entrance to Hut 8, after he’d given the message to codebreakers in half a dozen different buildings.

“I’ve told all the Wrens!” she said. “This is the last hut.”

Together they raced down the hall towards the kitchen. There was no sign of anyone, and Matthew felt a moment of relief, until they turned the corner and saw him: Alan Turing, at the tea urn, about to take a sip from a mug of tea.

"No!" Kitty yelled, and dived for him. She knocked the mug from his grasp, and an arc of brown liquid flew through the air. Turing's face turned from surprise to outrage to horror as the metal mug hit the wall with a hollow thud. He fell backwards, catching his balance on the table.

His gaze darted from Matthew to Kitty. "What on earth is happening?"

"The tea is poisoned," Matthew said.

"What?" Alan asked.

"It's true," Kitty said breathlessly. "We've uncovered evidence of a spy. She's attempting to kill all the codebreakers."

"Goodness," Alan said. "I hadn't drunk any yet, thankfully."

Kitty gave a shocked half laugh and then covered her mouth. Matthew found himself laughing too, in horrified relief. They had just rescued *Alan Turing*, the inventor of the Bombe machine – the mathematician who was single-handedly winning the war.

Outside, a loud horn sounded, and then another, and another, until the air was filled with sirens. The alarm had been raised by the guards. Bletchley Park was initiating emergency procedures.

"Oh, gracious," Turing said. He blinked once, twice, and then started laughing too.



## CHAPTER 9

Later that evening, once the furore had died down, Matthew walked Kitty home.

Natalie Mitchell had been arrested. She had denied her Nazi connections at first, but the evidence – the code and Enigma machine in her room – had been overwhelming. She had eventually admitted to becoming a spy during her time in Berlin as a student on her Grand Tour. When she had found out that the Allies were working on decrypting the Enigma code at Bletchley Park, she had felt compelled to help the Nazis.

George Bowden had found out the truth about Natalie. He'd given her two days to turn herself in. When she hadn't, he had tried to take her to Wilkes, and in desperation she had strangled him with some Bombe machine wire she had in her pocket. When Philip had confronted Natalie after witnessing this, she had poisoned him. Then, knowing that Wilkes was on her trail, she put cyanide in the tea urns.

It was one last desperate attempt to kill as many mathematicians and codebreakers as possible before she was caught. She had hoped that by telling the Nazis that their Enigma code had been broken, and then eliminating the codebreakers, she could buy the Germans some time to develop a new code.

Luckily, Matthew and Kitty had raised the alarm before

disaster struck. No one had drunk enough of the tea to die, and only one person was being treated for low-level toxicity poisoning. They had saved everyone – including *Alan Turing*, which Matthew was still feeling a little star-struck about.

Kitty and Matthew stopped at her front door. “It’s been an eventful few days, hasn’t it?” she said, looking up at him and rubbing her arms to fend off the cold.

“It was all because of you,” he said. The words came out lower than he had intended. He cleared his throat. “It was ever so clever of you to work out that Natalie was a spy. If you hadn’t found her message, who knows how many people would have drunk the tea? You were amazing today, Kitty. Absolutely incredible.”

“As were you,” she replied in a soft voice. Her eyes were dark, shining in the moonlight.

“Kitty...”

“Yes?”

Matthew cleared his throat for a second time, trying to summon the courage to do what he’d wanted to do for weeks now: kiss her. He thought he must be brave enough, after he had seized a murderer, but – he still couldn’t do it. What if she reacted with horror? What if she only saw him as a friend? What if he spoilt their wonderful friendship?

He lowered his gaze to the ground. “You’re my best friend, you know,” he said.

Kitty squeezed his arm and let out a long sigh. “And you are mine,” she said. Had he imagined the note of disappointment in her voice? Was it just tiredness?

She turned her key in the latch and stepped inside, giving him a small, almost sad smile before she closed the door. “Good night, Matthew.”

Matthew walked home alone, feeling as though he’d let her down somehow. He tried so hard to keep up with Kitty, to be as bright, as wonderfully brilliant as she was – but often he felt utterly inadequate. Even on those days when they disarmed a murderer.

It was one in the morning when the knock sounded on Matthew’s door. He blinked awake and lurched out of bed before he even realized what was happening.

Pulling on an old flannel dressing gown, he opened the door. Kitty was standing outside, her red hair flying in the raging wind. Her face was fraught.

“What is it?” he asked, immediately worried. “What’s wrong?”

“There’s something I need to know, and I can’t wait any longer,” she said.

Matthew suddenly went hot all over. “Ask me.”

Instead of answering, she took a step towards him. Her lips touched his, carefully at first, and then harder. Her fingers traced the hairline at the nape of his neck.

Despite everything that had happened that day, kissing Kitty was the most unbelievable thing of all. Matthew eventually managed to get himself under control, and his hands, which had been grasping at thin air, finally came to rest on Kitty’s lower back. When she pulled away, he had to catch the door frame to stop himself swaying towards her.

He felt dizzy. There was a strange, golden feeling spreading through his brain, like a thread unravelling. Memories pulled themselves loose. *Running down a corridor, pressing a hand to Kitty's back. Someone chasing them. Kitty saying, "It's happening again."*

Another flash of memory: *A laboratory. Kitty wearing a science lab coat, pouring a viscous liquid into a beaker...*

Matthew blinked, and— *He holds Kitty's hand as she steps out of a carriage wearing an old-fashioned dress, her cheeks stained with tears...*

Matthew jerked back. What was going on? He gaped at Kitty. She was staring back at him with wide but relieved eyes.

"Matthew Galloway, do you remember our past lives?" she whispered, kissing him gently once more. "Do you remember us?"

To learn more about Kitty and Matthew's past lives, read the opening chapters of *The Next Together* and its sequel, *The Last Beginning*, for free in this eBook.



**“A FUNNY, GRIPPING, AND INCREDIBLY IMAGINATIVE  
STORY OF TRUE LOVE AND REINCARNATION.”**

LOUISE O’NEILL AUTHOR OF *ONLY EVER YOURS*

Katherine and Matthew are destined  
to be born again and again.  
Each time they fall hopelessly in love,  
only to be tragically separated.  
Maybe the next together will be different...

Read the opening chapters of *The Next Together*...

# PROLOGUE

The last time they were together, it was late evening and they were being followed.

“It’s happening again,” Katherine said, and immediately regretted it. Matthew didn’t reply, only squeezed her hand a little tighter. She knew what it meant. They were going to die.

They ran. Katherine tried to be quiet, but her breathing was dangerously loud in the silence. Her heartbeat pounded in her ears. Matthew pressed a palm against the small of her back, urging her on.

She could hear footsteps behind them, growing faster and faster, gaining on them.

They turned a corner and ducked into a room. Matthew locked the door behind them with trembling fingers. They stared at each other, listening for the sound of their pursuers. For a moment there was silence. They had a few minutes, but that was all. They were going to be found. It was just a matter of whether they could finish their task first.

“Next time, we’re moving somewhere hot and quiet before any of this happens,” Katherine declared breathlessly.

“I like Spain,” Matthew said and pulled her into one last, desperate kiss.

# CHAPTER 1

K,

I'm going out to get some lunch. If you touch my bacteria cultures again you aren't getting any of my pancakes for at least a month and this time I'm serious. It wasn't funny the first time and it isn't getting any more hilarious, despite what you might think.

No more hiding my experiments.

Love you.

Matt



## UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM CAMPUS, ENGLAND, 2039

Kate poured glycerol into a beaker, measuring out what she would need for that afternoon's experiment. She wasn't really in the mood for labs today, but it was only her second session of biology practicals since university had started and she couldn't miss it. It didn't help that she was the only person without a lab partner, so she had to do double the work of the other first-years. Not that she minded the extra work particularly. She'd just enjoy having someone to gossip with, which – judging by the crowd gathered by the ice machine – was all the other students were doing.

She was opening up her lab book on her tablet when a harried-looking supervisor tapped her on the shoulder. She dropped her stylus and turned around. At the same time, she stuck her hand into her pocket, fingers catching on the locket she'd stuffed in there last week when it had annoyed her while she was working at a fume cupboard.

The supervisor gestured to the boy standing beside her. "Here's your new lab partner. He's just transferred from chemistry. You can get him settled, can't you?"

Then the supervisor disappeared in a flurry of stress and steamed-up goggles to deal with another fresher, who had just managed to drop a beaker of something foul on the floor and then stand in it.

Kate stared at the boy.

"Hi," she said dubiously. She fished out the locket and put it back on.

He stared back at her, his expression indecipherable.

Then he nodded hello. He was wearing a tweed waistcoat, of all things, over a ratty band T-shirt. His light-brown hair hung over his eyes in a retro fringe that seemed to be based on something from the late noughties. She was delighted to note that despite his doubtful fashion choices he was exactly her type.

“Welcome to my lair. Make yourself at home.” Kate gestured to the lab, which was filling with the soft scent of rotting manure. Near by, a cluster of the Ice-Machine Gossipers, lab coat sleeves over their noses, were gathered around the spillage, offering advice to the flustered supervisor.

Kate turned back to the boy, who’d dropped his lab coat onto the bench like he’d been waiting for her permission. The coat was sparkling new, and he’d apparently been using it as a kind of satchel, as he pulled out an assortment of notebooks and what looked like his *lunch* (in a *biology* lab; did he have no survival instincts at all?) from its depths. As he rescued an apple from where it had bounced across the floor, she found her gaze lingering on the way his hair curled over the back of his collar.

He actually blushed when he noticed her watching him – a vivid pink staining cheekbones that she was frankly jealous of. Bone structure like that was wasted on a *chemist*. Kate pulled off her goggles to cover up the fact that she’d been caught watching him. She fought for a moment to free them from their determined grip in her tangled red hair.

He had *blushed*? She wasn’t sure what to do with that, actually. Was it a good thing, a guy blushing when you

looked at him? He might as well have a name tag saying, "Hi, I'm a shy, socially awkward scientist. Please don't look me directly in the eye or I might faint." Kate was just imagining him introducing himself as "a socially awkward scientist", his Scottish lilt skipping quickly over the words, when he cleared his throat and spoke.

"I didn't actually download a copy of the lab book. What experiment are we doing today?"

That was a bit odd. He sounded exactly as she had imagined he would: the same soft Scottish brogue. She frowned. Why had she assumed he would be Scottish?

"Cleaning up horse muck, by the look of it," she joked, glancing over at the students still gathered around the spillage.

He dimpled a smile at her, and relaxed a little as he pulled on his lab coat.

"What's your name?" he asked, looking her up and down. His eyes lingered on her lab-coat collar, which was decorated with badges and beads, but he didn't mention it. Which was good. He was hardly one to judge her for accessorizing her lab coat – there was half a ham sandwich poking out of *his* pocket. It should have been strange, but it wasn't.

"Kate Finchley," she said brightly, trying to convey a more normal aura.

His eyebrows rose in what looked like surprise at her answer. She wasn't sure why her name would be surprising.

"Matt," he replied. "Matt Galloway."

"Hi, Matt, nice to meet you. Welcome to biology, etc., etc. I know you from somewhere. Have we met before?" Or instead of being normal she could just act like his own

personal stalker. That worked too.

"We haven't met before. I would have remembered." He blushed again and then stammered, "I mean, I haven't even been to this country before. I moved here for university."

She eyed him speculatively. He must be particularly intelligent to have got permission to study abroad. Since Scotland had gained independence from England after the last world war, almost twenty years ago, it had been practically impossible to get permits to study internationally.

Hmm. He didn't seem like he was lying. Where did she know him from?

She should probably get back to work and give him a week or so to settle in before she began to torment him more by *chatting* to him any further, or doing something equally terrifying like nodding to him in the corridor. It was obvious he was completely overwhelmed by her raw sexuality – or that was what she was telling herself, anyway, and no one could prove otherwise. But she couldn't look away. There was something ... *familiar* about him.

He made no attempt to say anything else, just looked at her, nonplussed. Kate was afraid to continue any line of conversation in case he actually died from the blood rushing to his face, but the silence was awkward, so eventually she said, "Why are you transferring over to biology, anyway?"

"There weren't as many explosions as I was hoping for in chemistry." It sounded like a prepared response; he'd probably been asked that question a lot recently.

"Well, there aren't nearly as many giant octopuses as you'd want in biology either, sorry."

He grinned. "Shame. How's the physics department here?"

She could sense him eyeing her, and she tried not to feel uncomfortable. Her grandmother had once described her as a perfect Pre-Raphaelite beauty, which she took to mean that her figure was a little too soft around the edges to conform to twenty-first-century perceptions of beauty, and her hair was a vivid shock of red. Sometimes people at school had teased her for being ginger, but she'd always loved her hair too much for it to bother her. Either way, she was secure in her body image a lot of the time, but it didn't stop her feeling self-conscious when there was a cute boy looking at her like she was the most interesting thing he'd seen all day.

"I'd give the physics lot six out of ten. There aren't enough brunets," she said. There'd been a disappointing mixers event in freshers' week.

He grinned again, and Kate smiled back. Then she said, "But I hear their MRI research rivals Cambridge's."

"I'll look into that, then. If the octopi don't work out."

"I'm sure they will. No sea monsters today, though. We're testing fertilizer effects on the development rates of bacteria cultures."

"Sounds a lot easier than chemistry labs. I had to bring an acid to boil. On my *first day*."

"Ouch. Well, I'll look after you today." She handed him a pair of latex gloves. Their hands touched, just slightly.

Kate shuddered, closing her eyes for a moment. She felt a little strange.

## Carlisle, England, 1745

Katherine stared vacantly out of the carriage window, taking in the bustling streets of her new town. It was raining heavily, thick droplets momentarily cleaning the dirty cobblestones. They pulled to a stop with an abrupt clatter of horseshoes, and the coachman came around to hand her down. He smiled gently at her as she held tightly to his hand for balance.

> First contact established in time-landscape 1745

Katherine could feel herself relaxing in response to his touch and her expression softened, although she couldn't muster up a smile. She hadn't smiled properly in several weeks now.

"We must have the dressmaker sew you a new dress first," her aunt Elizabeth said, climbing out of the carriage behind her. "You simply can't wear that old thing when you're introduced into Carlisle society."

Katherine nodded vaguely. Elizabeth was so excited about taking her to parties and lunches, as if it hadn't been barely a week since Katherine's whole life had changed.

The coachman escorted them to the dressmaker's below a wide umbrella. Before leaving them, he confirmed that he

would collect them later in the afternoon. He had a Scottish accent. In an attempt to cheer her up, the housekeeper at her grandmother's house had told Katherine stories of mysterious and dangerous Scottish savages while they were packing up her belongings. It hadn't worked. She'd been too distracted – her home was being disassembled around her and her grandmother was dead.

As they entered the dressmaker's, Katherine put her hand into her pocket to feel for the advertisement for the sale of her old home – the only home she'd ever known. It was to be sold, along with all the furniture.

## CUMBRIA, ENGLAND,

*17 miles from Carlisle:*

**A** DELIGHTFUL COUNTRY RESIDENCE, furnished  
—The lawyer of Miss Finchley respectfully  
announces that he is authorized on the direction of  
the devisees in trust for sale under the will of Mrs  
R. Finchley, lady, deceased, late of Cumbria. This  
valuable property consists of five good sleeping  
apartments with dressing rooms, sundry servants'  
bedchambers, a spacious entrance hall, large  
dining and drawing rooms, kitchen and all other  
suitable domestic offices; detached is a single coach-  
house, four-stall stable and various commodious  
outbuildings; together with lawn, paddock and ten  
acres of capital meadow land. For particulars and  
terms application can be made to Durrant & Sons  
solicitors, and to the auctioneer at Carlisle.

In the dressmaker's, Elizabeth settled on a light-green silk with pink braiding, and Katherine stood still while the dress was adjusted to her measurements. Katherine took care to express her gratitude to her aunt, but she felt awkward in the close-fitting, expensive clothing. She hadn't worn anything this fine when her grandmother was alive.

Katherine had a small circle of acquaintances, having spent the last few years looking after her grandmother. She didn't regret it, but now that she had to face the rest of the world she realized how introverted she had become. She was nearly eighteen and it was time to grow up. She shifted in the new clothing, suddenly feeling ready to start a new life with her aunt, uncle and cousin.





Folios/v3/Time-landscape-1854/MS-2

File note: Clipping from *The Times* classified advertisements

## Southampton Harbour, England, 1854

Katy glanced up from *The Times* advertisement that was clutched in her hand. She felt displaced and self-conscious amid the crowd of red-coated soldiers boarding the steamer. She was suddenly aware of the boys' clothing – the dull-brown breeches, shirt and jacket that she'd been wearing for years without worry. It had been a long time since she'd met new people. She'd grown complacent about her ability to pass as male. It was easy to keep up the act of being a pre-adolescent servant boy when people already believed it. It was entirely different to persuade new people. What if the journalist took one look at her

and laughed her away, saying he'd wanted a man, not a skinny little girl?

Katy knew that her features were quite feminine, but with cropped hair and male clothing she hoped she would easily pass for an undernourished fourteen-year-old boy, instead of a girl of sixteen years. If she hadn't been so proud of herself for her achievement, she might have been a little offended by it.

She squared her shoulders and berated herself for being stupid. Then she went to find her new employer, weaving her way through the crowd of tearful families waving off the soldiers. Near by, a horse was being led reluctantly up the ramp to the ship. It paused every few feet to stare at the waves below as they crashed against the dock.

Katy climbed onto a crate of supplies waiting to be loaded onto the ship and looked out over the crowd. She spotted the journalist straight away. He was reading a newspaper with bags of luggage at his feet. He wasn't what she'd been expecting, but she knew instinctively that it was him. He looked completely out of place in his crumpled shirt and waistcoat amongst the crisply dressed soldiers.

He was young, only a few years older than her, and almost as thin. He was a mess of scruffy hair and spectacles and looked barely strong enough to withstand the sea breeze that swept through the harbour, let alone a war. She suddenly felt a lot more confident. There was hardly anything to him!

"Mr Galloway?" she asked. The man looked up from his newspaper and smiled at her. He had high cheekbones that

defined his face and – oh! – dimples. Those were definitely dimples. *Oh.*

“You must be Christopher Russell! Matthew Galloway. Pleased to meet you.”

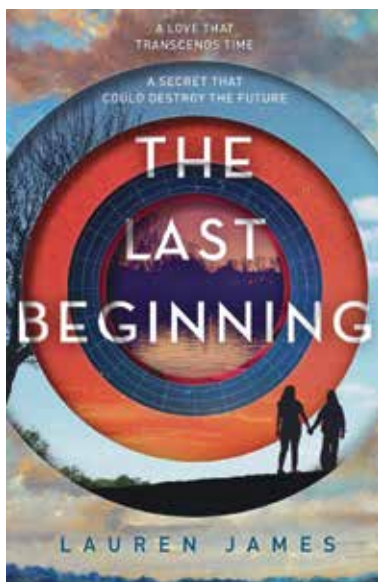
“I— Hello.” She mentally shook herself. She sounded like a fool. She was all flustered, just because he was quite striking, in a posh sort of way, if – if you liked that sort of thing. She swallowed.

She took his proffered hand a little distractedly.

> First contact established in time-landscape 1854

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**The epic conclusion to Lauren James' funny and romantic debut *The Next Together***

Sixteen years ago, after a scandal that rocked the world, teenagers Katherine and Matthew vanished without a trace.

Now Clove Sutcliffe is determined to find them.

But in uncovering their secret, she could destroy the world and lose the love of a lifetime...

Read the prologue of *The Last Beginning*...

# PROLOGUE

## University of St Andrews, Scotland, 2051

“Dad, I’m bored,” Clove whispered into her father’s ear. It was nearly dinnertime and Clove was starving, but the evening talk – a very long and technically complicated speech that her mum, Jen, was giving to a group of fellow scientists at her university – wouldn’t finish for another half an hour. Her parents had insisted she come, even though she had been in the middle of a Sim with her best friend, Meg. Apparently, aged eleven, she wasn’t allowed to stay at home on her own, even if she promised not to move from the sofa the whole time they were gone.

“Shh,” her dad, Tom, said. He patted Clove’s arm consolingly. “The exciting bit is coming up.”

Clove didn’t see what could happen to make this evening interesting. It was annoying, and the exact opposite of exciting.

The lab was a lot tidier than usual. Whenever she’d come down to the basement to visit her parents at work in the past, it had been a mess of wires, discarded circuit boards and empty cardboard boxes. Once she could have sworn she saw a mouse nest inside an old computer case, but her dad had resolutely denied it.

Clove tried very hard to tune back into the speech,

which was about some kind of grant the university had just received to further fund her mother's research. ". . . there are, of course, still many issues to be overcome," her mum said, "especially with regard to radiation leakage. However, a huge amount of progress has been made. In fact, the rest of the group and I are delighted to be able to give you a demonstration of the technology here this evening."

The crowd gasped.

"If you would all like to gather round." Her mum sat down at a large computer in the centre of the laboratory. It was connected to an enormous piece of equipment that took up half of the lab. People moved in closer to watch, wine glasses in hand, as Jen started running a program on the computer screen.

Clove snuck a glance at the buffet table, which was set up near the entrance. There were chocolate eclairs. Surely no one would notice if she started eating now. She had to listen to her parents talking about work every day – there was nothing remotely exciting about it. She didn't understand what they even did. They worked on something called Einstein-Rosen bridges, whatever those were. At a push, she was more interested in her father's work, which seemed to have something to do with computer programming.

A blonde teenage girl saw Clove eyeing up the buffet table and winked at her. Clove twisted back around, trying not to blush at being caught out.

Her dad nudged her arm. "Look, Clove."

Clove reluctantly turned to see her mum type a final command into the computer. Noise filled the lab – a



whirring groan that seemed to shake the walls and vibrate the air. The scientists shifted, expectantly, and then Clove saw what they were all staring at.

A light had gone on in some sort of glass box in the piece of equipment attached to her mum's computer. Sitting in the centre of the box was a single red rose. The noise was coming from that machine and it grew louder until Clove could feel the vibrations in her eardrums and chest. The wine glasses trembled, adding a faint high-pitched screech to the sound.

Everyone seemed to be holding their breath. As Clove watched, the machine's noise cut off all at once, and the rose—

The rose disappeared.

Everyone exclaimed in unison. There was a moment of complete silence. Another moment. Then the air inside the glass box shuddered and blurred. When it cleared, the flower had reappeared.

Clove couldn't believe what she'd just seen. Around her, the audience burst into enthusiastic applause.

Her mum stood up from the computer, a proud smile on her face. "What you just witnessed was the world's first ever public demonstration of time travel."

Clove drew in a sharp breath. Time travel? She hadn't realized that was what her parents were working on. She hadn't even known time travel was possible.

Her mum was talking again. "It has taken many, many years of research by a dedicated team of physicists and computer scientists to get to this point, and our work has

only just begun. The current technology only operates on a small scale, in terms of both object size and time travelled. With our new research grant, we hope to improve the equipment to allow for travel of living objects, and through time periods of more than a few seconds. We will also target the biggest issue with the current technology: survival.” She gestured back to the glass box.

Clove’s mouth gaped open. The rose’s once vivid red petals had curled up and faded to a putrid brown, the stem was shrivelled and black. The rose was dead.

“Radiation levels experienced during the transfer are too high for anything to survive,” her mum explained. “We will need to eliminate this issue in order to achieve our ultimate goal: human time travel. But I have high hopes that we will all be back here in several years to celebrate just that success.”

The crowd burst into applause once more. Clove, completely overwhelmed with amazement, clapped as hard as she could. Once everyone had quietened down, her mum began answering scientific questions about the equipment, but Clove wasn’t listening. She couldn’t take her eyes off the time machine and the withered rose inside it. Her mum and dad had built an actual time machine.

As Clove watched a dead petal slowly fall from the flower, she made herself a promise. When she was older, she was going to work here with the machine – even if it meant spending all her free time between now and then studying. Then one day, when she’d helped to get the machine working, she was going to be the first person to travel through time.

*The Last Beginning* publishes in October 2016.  
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**LAUREN JAMES** was born in 1992, and graduated from the University of Nottingham, UK, in 2014, where she studied chemistry and physics. Her first novel, *The Next Together*, a YA reincarnation romance, has been translated into five languages worldwide. It was also longlisted for the Branford Boase Award, a prize given to recognize an outstanding novel by a first-time writer. Lauren lives in the West Midlands. You can find her on Twitter at @Lauren\_E\_James or her website, [laurenejames.co.uk](http://laurenejames.co.uk).

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