HEAR MY WORDS

BY

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As she walked out into the cold, damp and murky winter night, the dense fog wrapped itself around her. She didn't care that she was disappearing from view, she just needed to keep walking. Her mind was confused.

"Why can't they help me? Why can't they?" she thought.

She glanced back, the lights of the big old house were soon swallowed up. She could no longer see the gated driveway, no longer hear the sound of talking; she didn't want to hear them talking.

"This can't be true," she sobbed.

Her lips could taste the salty tears that streamed down her cheeks. She struggled to see through her watery eyes. The thick, heavy air made her feel cold, lonely and scared, but she couldn't stay. She couldn't listen to them any longer. They were cruel. They were heartless.

When she arrived earlier in the afternoon, she thought the old house looked different. It seemed a lot brighter, warmer and inviting, but that all changed when her mother walked in. The room went dreary and bleak, just how Jane last remembered it. Her mother had not changed. Her eyes were piercing and loveless.

Jane thought her brother and sister would support her. She thought they would understand, but no, they turned on her too. They didn't give her time to ask questions. They didn't listen.

"Why?" she cried. "Why didn't they listen?"

She had no one else she could turn to now that her family had turned on her. She thought going back was going to help her. She thought *they* would help her, but they didn't.

Jane needed time to gather her thoughts. She needed to find a place to stay. She walked for miles, blindly, not knowing where to go. Many cars had passed her on the unlit, country road, their engines muffled by the suffocating, damp, night air, their lights suddenly glaring in her face as drivers sped out from behind the curtain of fog.

"It would be so easy to step into the road before the next car arrived," she thought. "So easy to end all this."

She stopped and listened. Should she do this? Could she do this? Her mind was heavy, her eyes were tired. The lights glared, and she froze, with one foot on the road.

A car screeched to a halt and the door opened.

"Are you alright?" asked the man.

"I … erm ... I don't know!" cried Jane.

She broke down in floods of tears. She shook from head to toe and fell to the stony ground onto her knees. "I just don't know."

The man came over and helped her up. She felt he was kind and caring. His arms were strong and it was easy for him to sweep her up. He held her lightly when she was on her feet.

"Here now, don't get upset," he said quietly, as he wrapped his arms around her shoulders in the most caring hug. "It's dark, cold and foggy, things will look better in the morning. Would you like me to take you home?"

Jane tried to think. She couldn't think. She was too tired and confused to think. She mumbled and stuttered, "I ... I have nowhere to go," her head dropped as she continued to sob. She leaned her head on his chest and for a brief moment she longed for some loving affection.

"Oh, well then," replied the man. "In that case, if you have nowhere to go, I suppose I better drop you off at the nearest hotel. Is that OK with you?" He smiled the gentlest of smiles.

His car was warm and his choice of music, soft and soothing. She soon closed her eyes and began to relax into the seat to the sound of 'Only Time' by Enya, but the lyrics only teased her addled mind. The gentle drumming of the engine helped to calm her down. Tiredness flooded her body. As she felt herself drift off, she briefly thought that she shouldn't be in this car with this man. She didn't know him, but she was too weak and weary and her head ached so much. Sleep finally overcame her.

"I know, I know," she could hear him say. "No, I can't just leave her."

Jane pretended to still be asleep.

"I'll be home as soon as I can," he said, "I love you too."

She heard him put his phone down. She stretched and moved.

"Oh, hello there," he turned and smiled. "I wasn't sure how long to leave you sleeping."

"Where are we?" she asked. "What time is it? How long have I been asleep?"

"It's late. You've been asleep a little while and we're here now."

Jane wiped the car window and looked out. She could see the large entrance to a hotel and she thought she recognised it. Had she been here before?

"Thank you," she said to the man. "Thank you for your help."

"No problem at all," he replied. "Can I help more?" he asked and he got out of the car and walked round to help her out.

"I'll be fine now. I'm sure I'll be OK once I've had a good sleep."

They ascended the four concrete grey steps, his hand on her back, gently guiding her in. The lady behind reception greeted them with a smile. Jane thought she recognised her.

"Just a minute," he said, as Jane walked off. "I'll come by tomorrow, if that's OK with you?"

"I … I don't know. Maybe." she replied. She never looked back.

The hot water soaked her body. The fragrant smells swirled around her and floated up into the whispering steam. She tried hard to relax her mind. The day had been long and very difficult. She didn't know what she was going to do next, but just now, right this minute, she couldn't think straight enough to deal with it all.

The bath had eased her body, but her mind continued to control her sleep. Another restless night, with no answers to her problems.

Breakfast was brought to her room in the morning; the sweet smell of hot buttered toast and strong black coffee filled her room. Daylight flooded in through a crack in the curtain. She asked the room service lady what time it was?

"It's 8:45 am," came the reply. "Did you have a good sleep?"

She lied, "Yes, fine thank you."

The lady knew different.

"I shouldn't still be in bed though, it's quite late," added Jane.

"I have a message from Mr Wilson for you," the lady said, tentatively passing a piece of paper to Jane.

Jane opened the note: *Hope you managed to sleep last night. Would you mind if I came back to see you today?*

"Is that the man who brought me here last night?" she asked. "I wonder who he is?"

The room service lady gave a hidden, gentle sigh and left.

Jane opened the curtains fully. There was no sign of the miserable fog that engulfed her last night. It looked quite bright and brisk for a winter day. She read the note again. Why would a total stranger want to come to see her? Who was he? Then she remembered his phone call.

"I love you too," he said.

Has he got a partner, a lover, a wife? He shouldn't be wanting to come here to see her. He shouldn't! She wanted to tell reception that she wouldn't be available for him if he arrived, but then she remembered his gentle smile and comforting hug. She remembered putting her head on his chest and longing for love and affection. It seemed a long time since she had felt any love and affection ... a long time.

It took her a while to decide what to wear. She changed a number of times before choosing a soft, pale blue winter jumper and denim skirt. She only had casual clothes in the wardrobe. Why hadn't she brought something better?

The lift in the hotel made a slight squeaking noise as it descended from the top floor. She glanced in the mirrored wall and for a split second she saw the old Jane. The Jane who was a successful business woman, a wife, a mother, but suddenly it all became muddled and was wiped from her mind … Gone. The image was back to this Jane, confused, lonely, tired and weary.

She looked and thought, "I really do need a good night's sleep. I'm looking old."

The heavy, metal doors opened slowly and she stepped out into a plainly decorated lounge area, with a variety of different styled couches and armchairs. There were a number of people milling around, a few sitting reading books or newspapers, others standing and staring out of the many windows. Some smiled and gave welcoming gestures to her, as she walked to a high backed, comfortable looking armchair by the window. She didn't recognise any of them and she couldn't see that they recognised her.

She sat at that window for hours, just staring and waiting. The events of the night had faded away, except she could still remember the man. She could remember his warm embrace, his soft voice and his gentle smile. She could remember him bringing her here and asking if he could return to see her.

The imposing old grandfather clock loudly struck five.

Jane couldn't hear the telephone conversation taking place.

"Yes Carl. No Carl. Oh yes, she's sitting here, downstairs. Of course, you can, you know it helps her after she's had one of her bad nights. I'm sure she's looking forward to your visit."

An hour later, the car pulled up outside. A glimmer of excitement swelled up inside her. Jane smiled as he waved to her and started to walk in. His walk was strong and bold. He stood tall and handsome. She felt warm just looking at him, but who was he?

"Hi, Jane," he said brightly.

"Hello," she replied.

"How do you feel today?" he asked.

"I'm fine thank you."

"It's a pleasant winter day today. Would you like a walk outside?" he suggested.

The dark heavy feeling in her head lifted completely.

"Yes please," she replied. "I believe this hotel has some lovely gardens."

Carl Wilson took Jane Wilson out into the garden again, as he had done many times over the last five years since finding her in the country lane and bringing her here. They walked slowly along gravel pathways that wound through alpine rockeries and mature evergreen shrubs, talking about this and that, but

always avoiding her past life. She never wanted to talk about her past life. It confused her too much. She was just Jane Peters, her name before marriage.

In her mind she had no friends, or family. Five years ago, she had left Carl and gone back to her mother, hoping she could ease her pain. She could no longer remember the reason for her pain, but her mother had no answers at the time, her brother and sister the same. They couldn't help her and no matter what they said, they were unable to comfort her. In her mind they were cruel and lacked love and so she detached them from reality and that night, five years ago, she ran from them and they asked Carl to find her.

Carl talked about living with his sister, who he loved a lot. He carefully mentioned his daughter had died and because of this, his marriage was temporarily on hold while his wife was away getting help. His eyes were searching for a glimmer of acknowledgement, but it never sparked any emotions. Her incomplete memories were trapped in that one nightmare and she didn't know why she repeatedly had that nightmare.

He was prepared to visit Jane after every bad night, in the hope that one day, this would all change. He hoped she would eventually remember who he was, but most of all he hoped that one day, she would hear the words he always whispered to her when he held her lightly before leaving the psychiatric unit ...

"I love you Jane, I always will. Please come back to me."