

**Bourne**  
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## Keys

by Victoria Cooper

“We’re late.”

“Did you hear me? We’re late, Geoffrey.”

“What are you looking for?”

“My keys of course.”

“Your keys?”

“Oh, for goodness sake Daphne stop standing there with your hands on your hips in judgement of me and bloody well help look for them.”

Daphne is standing on the stairs with her hands on her hips in judgement of her husband. She is older than she looks and today she feels like a giant oak.

“We’ve waited months for this appointment with Mr McGregor,” she scolds.

“I know.”

“He’s the best .... B-b-bowel man in the country, we’re lucky to see him.”

“Yes. I know that too.” “He’s also a colorectal surgeon, not a bowel man. Just help me look”

Daphne takes a step towards him; she is magnificent in stilettos; always a natural in heels. She puts an age-freckled hand on the bannister and silver bangles jingle with annoyance.

“Have you looked on the hook?”

“Of course, I’ve looked on the bloody hook.”

“Don’t get all hissy with me, it’s not my fault. I didn’t lose them.”

“You know, we’ll never get a parking space now.”

Geoffrey stops looking and loudly slaps his hands on the sides of his thighs in dramatic fashion. Thirty-two years of exasperation is etched on his face, stained on his fingers and probably lurking in his bowel. He stares bewildered at her, it’s the same expression she sees every day and she cowers from it.

The slap makes a familiar jangle.

“Right, let’s go.”

“Oh, I need to finish my face.”

He stops and fixes his gaze upon her. He sees hair piled up high on her bony head, it’s been that way since 1975. Her face impeccable as always. This perfection dished up before him is like something stuck in aspic. But behind the thick black lashes and foundation, he suddenly sees it.

“You look beautiful love, like always.”

His voice is soft now.

The bracelets slide up her arm as she puts a palm on his face.

He smiles and remembers her, her tiny waist and the softness he felt, his hand on the small of her back. Now it’s all blood pressure tablets and broken veins.

“Do you know something else, Daphne Carter? My poor old mum used to say, it had taken me a year to learn to tell the time. You would have thought I’d have mastered it by now!”

He chuckles and she smiles back at him.