



TLC Showcase

TLC PEN FACTOR SPECIAL

Supported by Urban Writers' Retreat and The Curved House at the Summer Digital Book Party, co-hosted with Byte the Book

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Introduction to *Sturgeon Landing*

Sturgeon Landing had many false starts. At one point it was set in America, another time I tried to write it in the first person; one abandoned draft was framed exclusively in a diary format, another featured a set of completely unnecessary twins. Indeed, it was only shortly before I got a place on the Faber Academy 'Write a Novel' course in 2011 that it all became clear to me: the where (London), the when (present-day) and the how (third person following three characters not one) of writing *Sturgeon Landing*.

30-something Stephen Dweem is diagnosed with terminal testicular cancer and given six months to live. Dweem is a contrary megalomaniacal loner whose self-declared genius is to be found in his 'projects' – plays, poems, theological and philosophical treatises, all of which have one thing in common: none of them are finished, not even remotely. Dweem takes his diagnosis in singular fashion. He hits upon the idea of taking the set of numbers that constitute his exact time and date of birth, and then using those numbers as latitudinal and longitudinal co-ordinates. Plotting these co-ordinates on a map, Dweem creates a fixed point on the horizon: a tiny hamlet in the northern Canadian wilderness called . . . *Sturgeon Landing*.

Dweem's attempts to get to *Sturgeon Landing* inevitably take him backwards. Back to his former fuller life, particularly in the shape of ex-girlfriend Helena: once a hedonistic actress, now a Highgate housewife and member of direct-action outfit 'MAIZ' (Mothers Against Imperialism and Zionism). In this multi-stranded novel, two other characters play their parts in Dweem's fall and rise. Wittingly, in the case of Clarence Mangan, the consultant who diagnoses Dweem; and unwittingly, in the case of disaffected postman Eugene Colley who has routinely begun dumping the contents of his mail-sack into the Thames.

In the penultimate chapter, Gurney and Mangan are arrested and charged: Gurney, with mail theft and interference; Mangan, with impersonating a doctor. The final chapter sees Dweem, midway over the Atlantic, with Helena beside him, utterly unaware that rather than having a mere six months to live, he has his whole life ahead of him.

Sturgeon Landing is the story of a man now no longer young, now beyond the point where it is respectable to keep talking of one's 'potential'. A dead-end man who returns to life – both metaphorically and literally.

With the help of Faber Academy tutor, novelist Louise Doughty, I was able to secure Arts Council funding to complete a first draft of the novel. I'm currently in the process of sending *Sturgeon Landing* out into the big bad world of agents' inboxes – and the boost that winning the TLC Pen Factor has given me has been both timely and considerable.

I thought the standard of the finalists' work was very high and I felt the panel's comments and suggestions to all our pitches managed to be both insightful and encouraging (no mean feat!). Special mention must go to the supportive audience and to Aki and Rebecca who made what looked like a terrifying proposition on paper – pitch your cherished idea to a panel of industry heavyweights in front of a roomful of in-the-know people – into a hugely enjoyable and rewarding one in practice.

I look forward in the coming year to availing of all the expertise and assistance that The Literary Consultancy and Byte the Book has to offer. And hopefully *Sturgeon Landing*, after its many false starts, will have a very positive conclusion.

Sturgeon Landing, by James O’Neill

1 / 29 The End

The elevator not being in working order, the Ten-Thirty Appointment took the stairs to the fifth floor of the Royal University Hospital and followed, as instructed in the letter, the yellow corridor until it intersected the green corridor, that eventually led him to the blue corridor, at the end of which, as promised, stood two heavy metal doors above which, in ageing letroset, read the inscription: *urology* (the capital ‘U’ of the original design now missing and unaccounted for). On the other side of the imposing doors was a small waiting area; the solitary line of four white plastic chairs – like the kind you’d find on a patio – occupied by a stretched-out old drunk whose duffel coat peeled back to expose a damp grey sweatshirt which bore the words *Fitness Club*. An African orderly was prodding the legs of the chairs with his mop and saying, almost whispering, “Cannot sleep *here*” before taking himself and his mop past the closed consulting rooms, through the fire-doors at the end of the corridor, and into the silence beyond. Being the type to look behind him rather than in front, it took the Ten-Thirty Appointment several minutes to notice the sign hanging above the old drunk on the wall directly opposite: ‘Urology Department – Opening Hours – Mon.-Thu. 2pm-5pm. Fri. 2pm-4pm.’ The drunk let out a sigh. The Ten-Thirty Appointment looked at his watch: ten-thirty.

“Dweem? Stephen Dweem?” – A slight, black man in his 40s poked out from a consulting room, with not one, but two, stethoscopes hanging from his neck.

Dweem had been in this very department just over six months ago. He’d become convinced he had testicular cancer. In truth, he’d often been convinced he had cancer of one sort or the other. A change of bowel movement (however slight), a drop in appetite (however small), an ache that didn’t go away, an ache that did, oversleeping in the morning, not sleeping well at night: even the mildest symptom cast a long shadow. The first book he ever treasured was his mother’s *Encyclopaedia of Symptoms* which had become a constant companion during his adolescent years; ready at a moment’s notice to dispense illumination or fear – like any good friend should. Nowadays he’d usually feel better after a trip to the library to peruse the big medical dictionaries that they stacked, for some misanthropic reason, on the highest shelf of the Reference Section (simply bringing down one of those beasts was enough to cause injury). If, after the

library, he was not sufficiently reassured (or exhausted) then he would make for the GP's. Which usually meant – if you didn't have an appointment, which he never did – an interminable wait in the airless surgery trying, in vain, to work out the system by which some patients are called to the light of the treatment rooms while others are left, condemned it seemed, to the purgatorial gloom of the basement reception. Often, the aggravating wait would break him and he would, begrudgingly, go home with a self-administered bill of health. Other times, he would make it through to the Promised Land only to be dealt with so peremptorily that he wondered why he had bothered to come in the first place. Six months ago, however, when he had complained of "pains – well, not *pains* – more of an ache – sort of an ache, more a *feeling*" in his groin, the GP – presumably having noted such a complaint having been lodged on at least three previous occasions – suggested that a referral to the hospital might be in order just to be on the safe side. The doctor had merely suggested a hospital trip as a precaution, but his patient bit the bait: "There's something wrong", he said out loud as he re-entered the autumnal London twilight. A trip to a consultant followed, then a series of tests and x-rays, then a three-week wait by the phone for a call that didn't come ("We'll write if there's nothing wrong, otherwise we'll call"). When the all-clear materialised, the relief was edged with something that felt suspiciously like anti-climax. Since then he'd had no more contact with any hospital. Until yesterday morning that is, and the hastily worded missive from a Dr. C Mangan requesting that "after a review of test proceejures (sic)" could he come in as soon as possible, say 10.30 tomorrow morning?

"I'll get straight to the point", said Dr. Mangan who proceeded to do no such thing. He explained that the software that had processed Dweem's original test results had proved faulty. Which is why a new generation software had been developed – but that had also proved faulty ("*But in different ways*", stressed Mangan). Consequently, Dweem's results had been run through a third operating software. Which had proved conclusive.

"What do you mean 'conclusive'?", said Dweem, when he realised no explanation was forthcoming.

Mangan didn't use the word 'cancer': he used 'seminoma'. Which to Dweem's ears sounded as if it were something incomplete, deficient, not really to be feared. Ha.

The doctor retrieved a thin green folder from a desk drawer, dropped it twice, then rose in the direction of the light box. *Aha*, thought Dweem, *Photos*. And suddenly there it was in bright hospital neon: evidence of his masculinity, and evidence

– looking shockingly harmless – of his tumour. At this point Dr. Mangan really hit his stride: stage IV seminoma with metastases in liver (confirmed) and lungs (suspected). Dweem detected a note of reproach in the doctor's voice when he spoke about the liver. As if it were all very well that his balls were cancerous – *that* the doctor could live with – but why on earth had he let it spread to his liver? *What had he been thinking?*

The doctor continued his monologue with eyes fixed on the mid-point of the desk that separated him from the enemy. Among many other things, Dweem could have been an extraordinary doctor. His physical stature, his powers of empathy, his ability to call a spade a spade no matter what the emotional or material consequences. These qualities, incidentally, could also have made him an excellent dictator. Or a priest. In fact, Dweem knew – not in a conceited way, he just *knew* – that he could have been almost anything. As it happened, he was a call-centre operative (pay band 3).

Mangan was now running through the limited range of treatment options on offer. The bad news: Dweem's disease was aggressive. The good news: with radiotherapy and surgery he could have a year and a half – if he was, quote, lucky, unquote.

Dweem had no intention of lying down and letting imbeciles like the one opposite slice him open and cut him apart. He had watched them do that to his father some eighteen years previously. Had sat by his bedside for days after the operation as his father veered from morphine-induced paranoia to vomiting up cardboardishful after cardboardishful of green bile while silent nurses tended to him brusquely and gangs of doctors surrounded his bed every morning for two-and-a-half minutes, before shuffling off to the next bed and the next wretch.

"Without treatment", Mangan concluded, now staring quite confidently at the plant-pot on top of the filing cabinet to the right of his desk (or perhaps it was the framed medical qualifications above it he was gawping at?), "You've got six months. Twelve at most."

Finally, a pause. Which lengthened. This threw the doctor a bit. He summoned the courage to focus on Dweem's left shoulder. Then cleared his throat. Then waited. For what, exactly? Questions? Tears? Applause? We shall never know. For Dweem got to his feet, raised himself to his full impressive height, and said in a clear, articulate voice "I am thirty-eight years of age". Mangan blinked at the vacated seat. Dweem pressed home his advantage: "Thank you for everything," he said, before heading unsteadily for the door...

It seems he passed out in the elevator. And not just *any* elevator, but the service elevator. And not just any *service* elevator, but the one primarily reserved for transit between the surgical wards in the floors above and the morgue in the basement. Apparently the lift door had opened at Basement Level and there he lay, for who knows how long, directly opposite the closed black doors to the mortuary.

He was taken into one of the mortuary offices, offered tea, given water, promised assistance, then left there alone while the phone rang intermittently without answer. After a while a hassled-looking woman in a lilac uniform came in and asked him if he felt okay. Before he could answer, the woman said that she was sorry but that she had to lock up now, and would he mind if -?, and that she was so sorry, and that he was looking much better now, and that they had to lock the offices whenever there was no-one on the mortuary floor because there had been thefts (of what?, thought Dweem), and did he know the way out?, and that she was really sorry, and that he was looking much better now, and that it was just left out of the lifts then right through Reception to the big double doors that you can't miss, goodbye-thank-you-very-much.

Later, he would say to himself that he had never left the hospital at all; indeed, had never even left the consultant's office. That somebody else had come out, someone called 'Six-Months-To-Live'. That he – Dweem – was still in there crouching underneath the desk, or peering fearfully out from the side of the filing cabinet, or failing to make himself inconspicuous behind the curtains; that he was still crammed in there, wall-to-wall, with all the other ghosts who one moment were men and women – real and actual – knocking for entrance on the door, but whose ceaseless tick-tocking lives had ended abruptly and pitilessly with the words "*I'm afraid it's bad news . . .*" or "*There's no easy way of saying this . . .*".

Whoever – or whatever – it was that had come out onto the dreary drag of Holloway Road had turned right, down the slope, past the swill of schoolchildren by the bus-stops outside the tube, then right again into Junction Road and was gone. Tired-looking double-decker buses pushed slowly through the stuttering traffic. Airplanes, like dissatisfied gods, rumbled anonymously in the low clouds above.

About the Writer

Originally from Ireland, James has spent most of his adult life in London. He works mainly as a comedy and drama writer for radio, but sometimes TV. He has also written for travel guides and advertising agencies. James's TV work has included shows as diverse as *Big Train* and the Golden Rose of Montreux-winning *Lenny Henry In Pieces* (for which he was a core writer). For radio, he has written (and co-written) a host of one-off plays, comedy series and a well-received two-part adaptation of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. His children's book *The Wolf Who Cried Boy* will be published by Random House in early 2016 and will be illustrated by the brilliant Russell Ayto. James has recently moved out of London (something he is still in denial about) to Gloucestershire, where he lives with his wife, their two sons, and a thoroughly uncooperative dog.



MEET THE TLC PEN FACTOR 2015 FINALISTS

Kate Ansell, *The Inventorist*

Synopsis

The Inventorist is a darkly comic novel about a woman trying to kill a cat. In order to inherit her dead father's money, the narrator June has to take an inventory of his house and look after his cat. Unfortunately, the house is full of junk, and June hates cats.

Biography

Kate Ansell is a full time filmmaker, and part time writer, who used to live by the sea but doesn't anymore.



Quote

"I've been calling myself a writer for the best part of a decade, and a member of Byte the Book since it began but, more recently, life has got in the way. I haven't written as much as I've been thinking about writing. I wanted to do something that would kick start the writing process again for me, so entered the TLC Pen Factor. I was thinking about focusing on my novel, really not the possibility of pitching it front of scores of people. When it came to it, it was only mildly terrifying, and did focus my mind. Since then, I've found myself thinking solidly about the edits I need to make to my novel, and I'm figuring out a way of finding time to make them."

Opening Extract

1. *Cat: Evil*

Firstly, I didn't know Dad did Premium Bonds. Secondly, I didn't know he'd won. Also, he never used to eat peanuts, but clearly he'd had a change of heart

since I last saw him because it was a peanut he was eating when he choked to death, and not even a fair trade one.

Grandma declared we would be civil about it. We would take tea, the three of us – me, Monkey, her. We would sit in her back garden with our legs folded. We would pretend it wasn't about to drizzle. Her neighbour had baked us a carrot cake. She cut me a square and dumped it on my plate like a turd. "Eat it," she insisted. "It's vegetables."

It's not like I didn't care. My father gave me a lot: my crooked nose, my middle class pretensions, my self-assembly CD rack. He would've given me much more, I know that, but I hadn't seen him in three years.

There wasn't a problem. We hadn't argued. Just didn't have much to say to each other:

"Hi. How are you?"

"I'm well."

"Good."

After a month or two that's not worth wasting your phone bill on. It's not like I'm awake at night with the guilt of it and neither was he, even before he was dead.

"Vegetables," said Grandma. "And sit up straight please. That chair won't take your weight if you lean back on it." She dabbed her lips with a carefully folded serviette.

I did not lean forward. Grandma grabbed the back of the chair and it sunk into the grass with a squelch. I screamed. She sipped her orange juice.

The garden furniture had belonged to my dad, but practically the first thing Grandma arranged post-peanut was that it be transported to her place. At the age of eighty-three and with a dodgy hip, she carried most of it herself.

I said because it was in her garden I couldn't put it on the inventory.

She told me not to worry about that. "Write it down," she said.

"That goes against my better judgement," I said.

Monkey did not speak. Grandma cocked her head.

I said, "I'm only inventorising what's in Dad's house."

Grandma smiled. "June, if I say it is going on the inventory, it is going on the inventory. Horace agrees with me."

She looked at my brother. My brother looked at the lawn. Our grandmother was the only person who ever called him Horace. That was his name, yes, but to everyone else he was Monkey. Always had been. I wish I could say we were in this together, me and him, but we weren't.

God knows why my twat of a father had the inclination to write a will, but he did. And in that will he asked me to take an inventory of his house. Obviously this was taking the piss, but I had to do it anyway. Me. Not Monkey. Apparently Monkey had more important things to do.

"It's a record of our family life, June." My grandmother was executor of the will.

I had no idea why the life and times of the Vaughan family were suddenly worth recording, but my incomprehension was irrelevant. The Vaughan family hadn't existed as more than a theoretical concept for several years.

Grandma said, "No inventory, no inheritance. That's what the lawyers say."

This was a shame.

The cat trotted out of the back door, all arrogance and swagger. He was a sorry creature, droopy-eared and bald, an encyclopaedia of feline disease. He was the one my father left the money to. Really. Dad wins on the Premium Bonds, he drops dead, he leaves it to the cat. Monkey and I get to share the remainder of the estate when the sack of shit fleabag dies, which shouldn't be too long, looking at it, but I'm the one who has to tend to its needs in the meantime. Tend to its needs, for fuck's sake.

The creature in question rubbed at Grandma's legs and she made an uncertain attempt to stroke him, top of head to base of spine. More affection than she'd shown me in twenty-four years. He purred half-heartedly and settled near my feet. I made an effort to ignore him.

Campaspe Lloyd-Jacob, *My Inquisition*

Synopsis

My Inquisition is set in the Renaissance as dissident religions erupt in Europe and the church fights back using terror and awe. Writing from prison, a Calvinist woman reveals her love-torn past and present struggle with the Grand Inquisitor. It is a story of love, loss and survival.

Biography

Campaspe has for many years worked as a criminal barrister. This novel partly springs from that experience: the careful examination of someone's story, a study of the shifting emotions of an accused. She published a novel about life at the bar, *Ophelia in Pieces*, with Short Books in 2011 under the name Clare Jacob. She is also working on a comic novel about sisters who swap lives. Campaspe is married with three children.



Quote

"I was delighted to be chosen to pitch at the competition. It was exhilarating to read to an attentive audience and very useful to hear the detailed reactions of the panel of agent and publisher judges. It made me feel that my lonely work writing away was appreciated and worthwhile. I was also glad to meet my fellow finalists. We plan to keep in touch in future. The hosts were helpful, friendly and generous. The whole event was a great boost, a little intimidating, but inspiring too."

Opening Extract

Tor di Nona prison, Rome, August 1558

My prison faces the square where they may burn me. There's a platform for the inquisitor and the governor of Rome and a hole in the ground where they put

the stake. There was none there today when the cart driver brought me through but I saw how the flagstones had turned red from the heat of the fires and felt a burning sensation inside me. My heart and lungs will shrivel like prunes, my flesh melt and drip from my bones. If it comes to this, will I be strong enough to stay true?

I held my nerve under interrogation but that was different. Then my fate felt theoretical, as if the proceedings were all in a play. The bishop arrived in our village with an army of clerks and a few plump guards. Chaining up heretics looks like a retirement job for unfit mercenaries. The bishop set up his temporary court in our drawing room. Seeing him sitting on my father's chair, the X frame one Father used to take on campaigns – its legs chipped by passing swords, halberds and goblets – I compared the bishop to my father and to the last bishop, his uncle, and I was not afraid. He was only about my age and his beard, shaped into two combed points in the ecclesiastical way, was still short. He explained his role as surrogate inquisitor as if I had questioned his credentials. Then he thanked me for 'the good offices of the cook,' as if he were my guest. He asked about my books. I replied as if I were a solicitous hostess offering him something to read, not a prisoner suspected of hiding banned material. He ordered my extradition very smartly after that but it just felt like a bout of petulance. Now I see it may end my life and I feel heart-sick and sorry.

The Tor di Nona looks as old as the Tiber which flows beside it, depositing thick slime on its river wall. It is made of thin bricks like the ancient Romans used and has narrow windows in its high walls, like a fortress. A body hung from the battlements when we passed. That's how they get rid of ordinary criminals, the driver said as he unlocked my chain. Then he handed me down from the cart with a hint of gallantry. After a week on that cart I needed support.

I was taken through two sets of doors to the office of the chancellor who told me to hand over all my money and possessions. The chancellor was an excitable man with a black wart on his chin who protested that I could not possibly be thirty eight ('the rose is too fresh in your cheek...') hoping I would reward his flattery. He made a great to-do over writing down a list of all my possessions in his register, all but a stack of money which he passed back to me with a wink 'for extras.' He fussed over my scissors ('We don't want you to do this,' he said picking them up and making enthusiastic stabbing motions at his neck.) Then he rang a bell and a female guard appeared and took my chain from where it had been bolted on his counter. With a long face the chancellor informed her that I was 'yet another heretic.'

The guard was a wide-hipped woman in her forties with a round face and girlish ribbons in her hair. She walked slowly but with every appearance of haste and she told me her name was Marcella. She said that as I am a prisoner of the Holy Office I shall be kept in one of the small dark cells. The prisoners of the state are kept in a big airy room above mine and they can leave their cells to walk around the courtyard and attend Mass. I will not be allowed anywhere.

My cell is damp and dark as a crypt, though it is on the second floor. Set deep into the far wall is a small window barred with a thick cross of metal which lets in a ghost of daylight. There are two narrow beds with a thin channel between them. Beyond is a small space with a table and two chairs and, behind one of the beds, a stained chamber pot and a curious clay funnel set into the wall.

Laurence Jones, *New Country*

Synopsis

Flagstaff, Arizona, 1989: after the death of his wife in a car accident, a hedonistic businessman spirals out of control. The chance discovery of a letter, evidence perhaps of his wife's infidelity, triggers a hallucinatory journey across the globe in search of answers and a final shot at redemption.

Biography

Laurence Jones was born and raised in London. His writing career began whilst studying American History, Literature and Creative Writing at Northern Arizona University in the United States. An extract from his debut novel, *New Country*, has been published in *Collages (CCWC, 2013)*, an anthology of new writing. He also won the Conville and Walsh Discovery Day event in 2013.



Quote

"The TLC Pen Factor was superb. I was delighted to be shortlisted in the first place, particularly given the quality and diversity of competition. It seems like no time at all since *New Country* was an idea scribbled in the back of a notebook. Fast forward and suddenly I'm on stage pitching to a panel of industry movers and shakers. Their considered feedback was excellent, particularly in terms of how to "elevator pitch" a novel which very much blurs the boundaries of genre. I was familiar with some of the panel from previous writing events but that didn't make the experience any less daunting. There was encouragement, constructive criticism and a real sense of perspective on the expectations of the marketplace. Surreal, nerve wracking and absolutely worthwhile pretty much sums the whole experience up."

Opening Extract

1. There's Been An Accident

Sheriff James Marston arrived at the scene just as they dragged the burned out wreckage of Jennifer Anderson's truck back up the mountainside. There had been a call on the radio then blue lights, paramedics, rain and flame. Jennifer's husband, Luke Anderson, had reported his wife missing a few hours before and Marston had promised his old friend one thing.

We'll find her, he said and he was right.

A charred figure lay crumpled and broken against the windscreen of the truck, a slender silhouette fused in to the dark structure of the dashboard like a sculpture. Marston did not need to see anymore. He volunteered to break the news to her husband and left the scene as fast as he could.

He headed westwards, dwarfed beneath a dark sky bloated with angry storm clouds, his squad car headlights pushing bravely against the darkness of the desert road ahead. Marston fumbled for the pack of cigarettes on the dashboard, lit one, and waved the smoke from his face. He gripped the steering wheel tight and watched the cigarette burn against the darkness in front of him, duty bound and alone on an empty road. In the rear view mirror, a solemn reflection glanced back at him. His eyes were bloodshot and sunken in their sockets and his nose was still filled with the smell of scorched earth.

The radio made him jump as it crackled in to life.

We need you back just as soon as, said a woman's voice, it just keeps on flying back here.

Understood, said Marston.

There was a brief silence.

Are you okay, said the voice.

I'm fine, said Marston but, for a moment, he thought about turning back.

He peered out through the rain soaked windscreen and followed the road as it snaked downwards around the mountainside, his eyes focused on the metal barrier as it curved over the treetops, and, for a short while, there was shelter from the storm. The inside of the car was peaceful, filled with

cigarette smoke and the static hum of the radio, but the image of Jennifer's truck, a mass of twisted metal and shattered glass, haunted him still. He drove carefully, preparing the words for the news he carried, trying not to think of the devastation it would cause and the ghost it would leave behind.

Eventually, the incline levelled out and the rain began to pelt loudly against the roof again. He arrived at a familiar crossroads, a set of traffic lights hanging high in front of him, their metal frame shaking precariously in the wind. The ground beneath him was bumpy as he left the tarmac of the interstate and headed out on to the desert road. It was the same route he had driven a hundred times or more but never had the Anderson ranch seemed so remote. Dark mountains loomed beyond it, their jagged peaks piercing the storm clouds and an unnatural grey light dripping through.

Marston parked close to the garage door, turned the ignition off then sat and stared at the house. There was a flash of light as the blinds in a downstairs window moved to one side then fell back in to place. Moments later, two towering spotlights exploded in to life and lit up the Anderson estate, a working ranch converted to a family home, a temple to a dream that had passed.

Marston took his cigarettes from the dashboard, buried them deep in his coat pocket, and stepped out in to the rain. He walked slowly across the mud and slush toward the house and let the cold rain soak him, unsure what he would say when he got there. He didn't want to arrive.

A figure appeared in the doorway. Lucky Luke Anderson was forty five years old and wearing blue jeans and a checked shirt. He looked at the police officer on his driveway and froze. Marston stepped on to the porch and swept the water from his jacket and hat.

Lucky, he said.

Lucky walked back in to the house without a word. Marston followed and closed the front door behind him. The wind and rain seemed suddenly distant, as if he had stepped in to another world entirely. Lucky was sat on the stairs in the hallway. He stood up and went to speak.

You might want to sit back down, said Marston.

Lucky's face went white. Where is she? he said.