

This is an entry for the Jixemetri Special Anniversary CWP. Although technically I didn't have to bring in any carryover items, you will find one or two from each of the first three Jix CWPs. The title of this story is stolen from an episode of *The X-Files*. I swear I haven't made a penny off of this story!

The Blessing Way

by Dana

"Be at the clubhouse in ten minutes," the husky male voice said.

"Mmmm, I just *love* clandestine meetings at the clubhouse," came the female response.

"Oh really? And just how often do you engage in those?"

"About every three months," was the lilting reply. "As a matter of fact, today happens to be the three month anniversary of my first clandestine meeting."

"And just what happened at that meeting?"

"I lost my sweet sixteen and never been kissed status."

"My, my Miss Belden, I never knew you were so naughty!" Jim chuckled. "I'll see you at the clubhouse in a few minutes."

"Sounds good to me. I've missed you," Trixie said, unable to keep the longing out of her voice.

"I've missed you, too, but we have the next three days to spend together."

"I can't wait! See you in a few," Trixie told her boyfriend as she returned the phone to its cradle, quickly put on her sneakers, and raced out the door of the white frame farmhouse in which she lived.

She passed her nine-year-old brother Bobby playing outside on his pogo stick and told him to tell their mother that she would be at the clubhouse for a bit.

Trixie arrived at the clubhouse before Jim and quickly checked her appearance in the make-up mirror that Di had accidentally left on one of the shelves. Trixie's cheeks were flushed with excitement over seeing Jim again, and her shoulder length sandy curls were tousled from her sprint to the clubhouse. She tried to smooth them with her fingers but the door to the clubhouse opened just then.

"Jim!" Her hair was forgotten as Trixie shrieked and flew into her boyfriend's arms as though jet-propelled.

Jim gathered the petite girl in his arms and kissed her passionately. "Boy, you feel so good," he murmured as hugged her even closer after the kiss had ended.

"There is no better place than in your arms," Trixie purred contentedly into his shoulder, breathing in the scent of Jim. "Happy three month anniversary."

The two stayed locked in their embrace for quite a few minutes before finally breaking apart and sitting next to each other on one of the benches that Trixie's brother Mart had helped restore when their club had first formed three years before. It had been almost two months since the couple had seen each other, and right now they were enveloped in the warm glow of just being in each other's presence after so long a separation.

Finally Trixie's curiosity got the best of her. "Have you been home yet?"

Jim shook his head. "Nope, I couldn't wait another second to see you, so I called you from my cell phone. I figured I could steal a few minutes with you before I go enter all the hoopla of Manor House at Thanksgiving."

Trixie's smile took his breath away. "Really? You mean you wanted to see me before your family?"

Jim kissed her on the lips again. "I sure did. Once I go home it will be hard for me to get out again. I certainly couldn't wait until tomorrow to see you!"

"Speaking of tomorrow, has anyone given you the run-down of the holiday events?"

Jim shook his head again. "Nope. What cooks?"

"Well, Mr. Maypenny is roasting a game-bird with Regan, Joan Stinson, and Dan at the cottage. Miss Trask is fixing dinner for her sister and her brother at her sister's apartment in New York. Since Regan and Miss Trask were accounted for, Moms invited you Wheelers and Fraynes down to Crabapple Farm for dinner. All of your other servants have the day off tomorrow. Moms decided not to do her the Open House this year because she wants to be able to spend more time as a family. It's really important to her since Brian left and Mart's going away next year."

Jim smiled happily. "You mean I get to have Thanksgiving dinner with my favorite girl?"

Trixie nodded. "But I'd better be your only girl, James Frayne."

"You are," Jim promised as he bent down and kissed Trixie. Her lips parted, her arms went around his neck, and Thanksgiving dinner was forgotten.

* * *

Trixie and Jim were in a stadium. They had front row seats and a large ring stood in front of them. Music blared over the loudspeakers.

*At first I was afraid, I was petrified,
Kept thinkin' I could never live without you by my side,
But then I spent so many nights
Thinkin' how you did me wrong, and I grew strong
And so you're back from outer space
I just walked in to find you here with that sad look upon your face
I should have changed that stupid lock
I should have made you leave your key
If I'd've known for just one second you'd back to bother me
Go on now, walk out the door,
Just turn around now 'cause you're not welcome anymore
Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with goodbye?
Did I crumble? Did you think I'd lay down and die?
Oh no, not I.
I will survive.*

Trixie looked at Jim. "What is going on?"

"I thought you'd want to see two of my other favorite girls in action," Jim looked down at her briefly and then returned his attention to the ring where a large man now stood.

"Jim, what are you talking about?" Trixie demanded, but just then the large man started talking to the crowd.

“Ladies and gentlemen! For your entertainment pleasure we have an exciting match tonight! Two of Jim Frayne’s lovely ladies will duke it out before your very eyes. Only the winner will have the pleasure of receiving the husky lad’s attentions!”

Trixie looked at Jim. “What is he talking about? Jim, what is going on?” Trixie pleaded, a sense of despair settling in her stomach. But Jim just shushed her and told her to pay attention.

The large man continued his speech. “In this corner, in the purple sequined leotard is Iowa’s own Dot Murray!”

Dot Murray! That wench? What is going on here? Trixie wondered as the perfectly toned, perfectly coiffed, blonde-haired figure skater from Happy Valley flounced around the ring.

“And in the opposite corner, in the fuchsia velvet leotard is that loveable scam artist Laura Ramsey!”

Laura Ramsey?!? That’s it! I have to put a stop to this! Trixie thought as the crowd went wild. She watched, dumbfounded, as both girls, blond locks arranged in styles even Farrah Fawcett would have been jealous of, walked over to the side of the ring where she and Jim sat and each blew Jim a kiss.

“That does it!” Trixie shouted angrily and, without thinking, ran to the ring and climbed in. Laura and Dot looked at her with pity and contempt in their eyes.

“Poor Trixie,” Dot said. “You must know deep down that he likes me better than you!”

Before Trixie could retort, Laura spoke up. “Dull, dull Trixie. Would you like to know what Jim and I did on our walks together?” Her smile was venomous and it made Trixie see red.

Suddenly, Trixie was drawing on judo skills she didn’t even know she had. She landed a sharp kick to Laura’s gut that made the blonde felon go flying. Dot started to advance on Trixie, but Trixie avoided her nicely with a quick move. The crowd roared its approval as a well-placed elbow made the figure skater land next to Laura. Both looked very angry as they got up and started to approach the furious sleuth standing before them. They tried to attack, but again and again Trixie’s newfound judo skills, combined with her adrenaline rush, sent them flying. Finally, after a particularly inspired flurry of judo kicks and moves on Trixie’s part, both girls lay on the floor of the ring, unwilling or unable to stand. The large man who seemed to be officiating suddenly appeared again and raised Trixie’s arm. “Ladies and gentlemen! I proclaim two blonde butts thoroughly kicked. We have a winner! Jim Frayne, you may come claim your prize.”

Trixie, exhausted, watch the redhead approach the ring. He came to her and gave her a kiss. “Wow! That was the best butt-kicking I’ve seen a girl hand out since the season finale of *Dark Angel!* I knew you could do it. I knew you’d prove yourself my number one girl!”

Trixie took one look at Jim and with one flick of her foot, had Jim sprawling on the floor next to Dot and Laura. “You should be so lucky!”

Trixie sat straight up in bed. “What was that about?” she asked out loud.

The luminous numbers on her alarm clock told her it was 3:24 am.

“That’s the last time I eat red velvet cake and wasabi peas before I go to bed,” she muttered as she lay back down on her pillow. “Like I’d ever have to compete with Dot or Laura for Jim’s affections! Sheesh!” Within minutes, Trixie fell into a dreamless slumber.

* * *

Trixie was re-reading *The Quest in Buenos Aires*, one of the Lucy Radcliffe books that Jim had bought her last month when she visited him at Michigan State, when the Wheelers arrived at Crabapple Farm.

Trixie ran to the door and greeted the family she had come to be so close with over the last three years. Sixteen-year-old Honey Wheeler was her best friend, as well as Jim's adopted sister.

"You guys are just in time for the Macy's parade on TV! Moms won't need my help in preparing things for about another hour so I thought I'd keep you company!" Trixie's dimples appeared as she smiled and took their coats.

The gang settled into the large family room to watch the parade on the Beldens' TV. Bobby insisted on showing everybody his new football. Trixie watched, amused, as elegant Madeleine Wheeler ooh-ed and ah-ed over the ball as though it was a priceless piece of art, but Bobby looked so proud that Trixie's adoration for Honey's mother grew.

I am so thankful that the Wheeler's moved next door and that Honey has gotten to know her mother and that they adopted Jim and... Trixie sat lost in her thoughts and suddenly realized that Jim was looking at her quizzically. When she smiled warmly at him, he smiled back.

"A penny for your thoughts, Trix," he said.

Trixie looked around at her friends and family. "I'm just thinking how blessed we are."

Matthew Wheeler spoke up. "That we are. Moving to Sleepyside was the best thing we ever did."

A cry of "Hear, hear" rose up among the assembled group. Just then Mart entered.

"I'm taking a survey," he announced. "Please state if you would prefer the starchy, edible tubers of the South American plant, scientifically known as *Solanum tuberosum*, kneaded until they are remollient or the fleshy tuberous orange root from the tropical American vine known as *Ipomoea batatas*."

Stares ranging from confused to amused to irritated greeted Mart's survey. Trixie was the first to recover.

"What my lame-brained, dictionary-eating brother would like to know is if you prefer mashed potatoes or yams. Moms will make them both but she likes an idea of how much to make of each," Trixie clarified while giving her "almost-twin" a withering glare.

"My sibling is quite correct in her assessment of my survey. Did I mention that the mashed potatoes will also contain a dairy product—namely a whitish liquid containing proteins, fats, lactose, and various vitamins and minerals that is produced by the mammary glands of all mature female mammals after they have given birth and serves as nourishment for their young," Mart continued.

Brian joined Trixie in glaring at their brother. "Mart, as much as you love food you are the only one who could manage to make Thanksgiving supper sound absolutely unpalatable! Moms should have known better than to have you conducting this 'survey.'" He looked at the group. "Okay, who wants yams?" Madeleine, Matthew, Peter Belden, Honey and Bobby raised their hands. "Potatoes?" At that point everyone in the room raised their hands. Brian stood. "Thanks everyone. I'll go tell Moms what to make."

Everyone laughed as Mart shrugged and took a seat next to Honey on the sofa. "Now he'll get stuck peeling potatoes. My ploy worked!"

Mart did eventually end up doing his share of kitchen help, as did all of the teenagers. Trixie and Honey had fun in the kitchen helping Moms with the potatoes and the yams, while Mart and Jim prepared fresh vegetables and dip for the veggie tray, and Brian was in charge of the cheese sauce for the broccoli.

In the midst of it all the phone rang, and Helen Belden was first to reach the phone.

"Hello, Belden residence."

"Mrs. Belden? This is Terry Lynch. Can I talk to Bobby?" the young voice asked.

"Why sure, Terry. Is something wrong? You sound frantic."

"I'm fine. Can you please put Bobby on?" Terry pleaded.

"Of course," Mrs. Belden tried to sooth the young boy. She turned to find Bobby standing right next to her.

"For me, Moms?"

Moms handed him the phone. "It's Terry. He sounds upset."

"Thanks, Moms," Bobby said, taking the phone. "Terry? What's wrong?"

"Diana took the latest issue of the G.R.O.S.S. newspaper and she's locked herself in her room where Larry and I can't get to her and she's *reading* it!" Terry's words tumbled out one after another.

"Well, it's not the greatest thing in the world, but it's not really that big of a deal is it? I mean we didn't write anything bad about her in it, did we?" Bobby asked.

"No! But the part about Ellen Pearson kissing Larry is in there, and he is way freaked out about it! He's banging on the door to get Di to come out and I know that my mom is going to come to find out what's going on and then she's going to read it and then she is going to know that Ellen kissed Larry and it's all going to be one big mess!" Terry finally stopped to take a breath.

"It's not that big of a deal. If Larry stops making a fuss your mom will never know. Diana really won't care about what's in our club newspaper."

"But we're supposed to be a *secret* club! And now we're not! Diana *knows* about us and she'll tell the rest of the Bob-Whites and it won't be a secret anymore!" To eight-year-old Terry Lynch this was a tragedy of the highest order.

But Bobby was actually being practical for a change. "Terry, get Larry to stop pounding on Diana's door so your mom doesn't come try to figure out what's going on. And if Di tells the rest of the Bob-Whites, that's okay. We know about their club, why shouldn't they know about ours?"

Terry was quiet for a minute. "I guess it's not *that* big of a deal, but I really liked having a secret club."

"Yeah, it was pretty cool. We'll think of something. But I gotta go Terry. I have to put the pickles and the olives on their tray. 'Bye!" He hung up after Terry said good-bye and turned to see his mom and the "big kids" looking at him with interest. He shrugged, looking like a smaller version of Mart, and said, "Eight-year-olds—what can you do with them?" before marching out of the kitchen. Everyone looked at each other for a stunned moment and then burst out laughing.

"I guess he forgot he was going to get the olive and pickle tray ready," Trixie commented to no one in particular.

As everyone busied themselves with their tasks, the talk turned to sports and then to hockey. "Can you believe the stats that Wah has put up?" Mart asked.

"Yeah, Colorado is lucky to have a goaltender like him," Jim agreed.

Trixie frowned. "I thought that Patrick Roy was the Avs' goalie?"

"He is, but it's pronounced 'Wah,'" Mart explained.

"But that's ridiculous!" Trixie protested. "It's spelled R-O-Y. Doesn't the guy know how to pronounce his own name?"

Jim and Brian laughed at Trixie's comment, but Mart looked exasperated. "I think the guy probably knows how to pronounce his own name, Trix."

"Then why isn't it Roy instead of Wah?" Trixie demanded.

Mart sighed. "Because it's French. He's French-Canadian, from Quebec."

"Well, that's ridiculous!" Trixie repeated again as she stirred the gravy. "If he spells it Roy he should pronounce it Roy!"

Mart grinned. "I'll be sure to tell him that next time I see him."

Trixie laughed, too. "You do that!"

Mrs. Belden interrupted her two almost-twins then. "Well, now that we have that settled, why don't you guys start setting the table? Everything is almost finished here so we should be sitting down to dinner very soon.

Sure enough, within twenty minutes everyone had gathered around the long table in the dining room to give thanks for all that they had. The two families knew they had a lot to be thankful for. Madeleine Wheeler was thankful that she had finally gotten to know her daughter and found that she was a truly lovely girl. Matthew Wheeler was thankful to see his family so close these days. Jim was thankful that, if he couldn't have Win and Katie Frayne beside him anymore, he had a great family like the Wheelers to call his own. Honey would be eternally grateful that they moved to Sleepyside so that she could get to know her mother, find a wonderful brother, and have wonderful friends like the Beldens nearby.

Helen and Peter were grateful to have four healthy children. Brian was grateful that the Wheelers had moved next door; Honey was looking more and more attractive to him every time he came home. Mart was glad that Moms had roasted an extra turkey that year. Bobby thanked the heavens that he was finally growing up and that Mart and Trixie didn't treat him like a little kid anymore.

Trixie felt so grateful for all that she had been provided, that she felt as though she would burst. She had the most wonderful, understanding parents. Even though she complained about her brothers a lot, she knew that she wouldn't trade them for anything in the world. She had the comforts of Crabapple Farm to call home and the most perfectly perfect best friend a girl could ever ask for. And seated next to her was a tall redhead that meant more to her than anyone on this earth. She knew she was truly blessed.

Peter Belden said grace and the Thanksgiving feast began.

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Later that night, after stuffing themselves with turkey and dressing and mashed potatoes and homemade pumpkin pie and all of the other wonderful things Mrs. Belden had prepared, Jim and Trixie sat outside on the porch swing. The air was nippy but that just gave them an excuse to cuddle even closer to each other.

"Thanksgiving is a wonderful time of the year," Trixie murmured.

"It's the perfect time to stop and count your blessings," Jim agreed. Suddenly, he felt a wave of emotion flood over him. He wanted to tell Trixie how grateful he was for her presence in his life, but he wasn't sure that his words could ever describe it.

The two sat silent for a while, staring into the darkness at the pale moon. Finally, Jim got up the courage to speak.

"Trix?"

"Yes, Jim?"

"You know how much you mean to me, right?"

Trixie looked at him and smiled. "I'm your special girl."

Jim smiled and kissed the tip of her nose. "You are that, and so much more. I owe everything to you, Trix." Trixie started to protest, but Jim held a finger to her lips. "It's true. You could have told your parents or Miss Trask about me when I was hiding in the mansion. But you didn't. You could have just left me there and never gave another thought about me, but you didn't. When I ran away upstate you could have forgotten about me, but you didn't. You chased me down. You gave me a home and a family and a reason to stick around. It's days like today that I think about how thankful I am that I have Trixie Belden in my life. I can never thank you enough for all you've done for me."

Trixie looked at him, her eyes sparkling like sapphires in the moonlight. "You already have, Jim Frayne," she whispered as she gently kissed him.

Carryover items (though not required) are: a pogo stick (#1), a make-up mirror (#2), a dairy product (#3).