

First of all, a big thank you to everyone who is so complimentary about my writing—you guys are so sweet! I have been looking forward to writing about Jim and Trixie at my alma mater, Michigan State University, for quite some time. Last weekend I got to spend the day at MSU for the first time in years, so this was even more fun! I'm going to apologize now if the MSU tour or factoids are boring for you, but what can I say? I bleed Green and White! And in that obsessive way of mine, I have also provided links to pictures of things I describe, including altering a map of the campus in Photoshop to add Jim and Trixie related labels. If you are so inclined, you can even go to an Interactive MSU Map to see even more pictures! The bookstore mentioned in the story is where I happened upon some Trixies my junior year of college and the Trixie obsession began anew! This is a Jixemitri CWP#3 submission. Finally, a message to Mr. Lawyer: Please concentrate on your client's bankruptcy problems so we can get Trixie re-published. Harassing someone who hasn't made a dime off this story and respects the characters more than you (or your client for that matter!) ever will is really just a waste of time. The story title is from the Third Eye Blind song of the same name.

## **Semi-Charmed Life**

by Dana

Trixie stepped off the small plane and onto the tarmac at Lansing Airport. The sixteen-year-old high school junior followed the other passengers toward a small door and into the small regional airport. Trixie impatiently climbed the steps up to the main part of the airport knowing that Jim Frayne was waiting for her. She smiled as she thought of her college boyfriend; this would be the first time she'd seen him since he had left for Michigan State at the end of August, five weeks before. They had talked on the phone almost every night since then and emailed just as frequently, but now Trixie couldn't wait to kiss the handsome eighteen-year-old and run her fingers through that sexy red hair of his.

Finally, Trixie had navigated through the maze and entered the lobby of the airport. Her blue eyes lit up and she broke into a run as soon as she saw the tall redhead leaning casually against a nearby wall. Jim saw her at the same moment and hurried toward her. The couple shared an ecstatic embrace as several smiling passengers looked on. The two held each other for several moments, enjoying the feel of each other and laughing happily. Jim then took Trixie's face in his hands.

"I missed you, beautiful," he said as his lips met hers in a tender kiss that turned passionate before it ended.

"Not as much as I missed you," Trixie gasped when the kiss had ended. "I still can't believe Moms let me visit you at college without a chaperone. I think there might have been an alien abduction!"

Jim laughed and put his arm around Trixie, steering her toward baggage claim. "I think Brian may have had something to do with it."

"Brian?" Trixie exclaimed in surprise. "What does Brian have to do with it?"

Jim smiled at the look on Trixie's face. When Trixie and Jim had gotten together just a few days before Jim had left for his sophomore year at MSU, Trixie's older brother had pulled the protective brother routine. Brian Belden had been Jim's best friend for three years, ever since Jim had moved to Sleepyside after being adopted by the Beldens' next-door neighbors. Since school had started, Jim and Brian had talked quite a bit about his blossoming relationship with Trixie, and Brian had come to understand the depth of Jim's feelings for his sister. After Brian got over his initial knee-jerk reaction to seeing his little sister with a guy, he realized that there was no one he trusted more with his sister's heart than Jim.

Jim and Trixie had always had a special bond after she had found him in his great uncle's run-down mansion three years before. Jim had been an orphan, hiding from a cruel stepfather, when Trixie entered his life and changed it for the better. Thanks to her, he had a loving family, wonderful friends, and a trust fund waiting for him when he was ready to open his school for underprivileged boys. According to Trixie, he was "the most wonderful boy in the world" and Brian knew that Jim would rather die than hurt Trixie in any way. After a long talk, peace was restored between the two friends, and Brian wholeheartedly endorsed Jim's relationship with Trixie, once Jim had made him a few promises.

Jim looked at the petite blonde next to him, her khaki pants and tight sweater emphasizing her curves, and wondered if he would be able to keep his promise to Brian.

"What's Brian have to do with it?" Trixie repeated, looking up into Jim's green eyes.

"Well, we've talked a bit since we've both been back at school and he agreed to help soften your mom and dad toward the trip."

Trixie's eyes widened. "Really?"

Jim gave her a mischievous grin as they reached baggage claim and stood. "Brian helped, but the fact is, my honorable reputation comes in handy sometimes."

Trixie laughed. "Well, it's good to know it's useful for something!"

Jim laughed with her and took her hand. He looked at the sapphire ring she wore. "It looks good on you, Trix."

Trixie put her arms around her neck. "I never thanked you properly for it," she said huskily as she drew him in for yet another passionate kiss. Emotions flooded through Trixie as she kissed the man of her dreams. She knew that there was no better feeling on earth than his lips on hers, their tongues exploring, his arms gripping her tight. She sighed when the kiss ended.

"I missed you," they said at the same time and smiled happily.

\* \* \*

A half-hour later, Trixie was staring up at a very tall building.

"Is this your dorm, Jim?" she asked as he pulled her bag out of the back of his Jeep Wrangler.

"Nope, that's Hubbard Hall. It was the tallest college dormitory in the world for a long time. As a matter of fact, you are standing on the largest contiguous college campus in the world."

"Well, that's pretty cool. It's, uh, nice," Trixie looked around the barren east end of campus. Personally, she thought it was pretty ugly, but she wasn't going to insult Jim's campus.

Jim laughed. "The campus is a nice one, Trix. Actually it's been called 'arguably one of the most beautiful college campuses in the country,' but the east part here, well, everyone agrees is about the ugliest they've ever seen. You're cute when you fib though," Jim said as he kissed her pert nose and then led her past Hubbard Hall toward a six-story building whose sign declared "Akers Hall."

Trixie read the sign. "Akers! That's your dorm!"

"Can't keep anything past my little detective," Jim teased.

Trixie sniffed. "Watch who you call little, Mr. Frayne."

"Aye-aye, ma'am," Jim said as he opened the door to his dorm. He headed toward the elevators and hit the up button. "Two of my roommates have left campus this weekend. One went to visit his girlfriend at U of M and the other one went home, so it's just you and me and Josh."

Trixie nodded and stepped onto the elevator as it opened. "Sounds good."

Jim punched the number 4 button and soon Trixie found herself on the fourth floor staring at a door marked "411." Jim unlocked the door and Trixie got her first look at an MSU dorm room, or suite rather. Akers Hall had been built a little differently than all of the other dorms on campus, which were simply rooms. Some dorms had community bathrooms, while other dorms had a shared bathroom between two rooms. In Jim's room, the bathroom was just off to the left immediately after you stepped into a short hallway. To the right there was a space partitioned into two sleeping areas. Lofts for sleeping had been built in both areas, with dressers and desks underneath the lofts. Straight ahead from the doorway was a common area where someone had put a beat up couch and chair, a television set with a VCR, and a small dorm-size refrigerator with a microwave sitting on top. On top of the microwave sat a variety of snack foods from popcorn to potato chips to pretzels to chocolate to gummy bears.

"Home, sweet, home," Jim said as he put Trixie's bag in the farther of the two sleeping areas. "You're going to sleep back here in my room."

Trixie looked suggestively at Jim. "And just where are you going to sleep?"

Jim's face turned red, remembering his promise to Brian. "Uh, I'm going to sleep in Andy's bed since he's at home. He shares the first sleeping area with Josh."

Trixie met this information with a mixture of feelings: disappointment that Jim didn't want to share sleeping quarters with her, relief that she wasn't going to be pressured to do anything she wasn't ready for, and amusement at Jim's honorableness. Outwardly she smiled.

"Whatever you say, Jim."

Jim took Trixie in his arms then and stared into her blue eyes. He wanted desperately to fall asleep holding her, but he didn't want to rush her into anything she wasn't ready for. Plus, he had promised Brian that he wouldn't do anything that would make Trixie feel pressured. "Trix, what do you want?"

The young blonde found herself staring into the green eyes of the man she loved more than anyone and knew exactly what she wanted. "Can we maybe just cuddle? I'll have such a hard time sleeping if I know you're just on the other side of the wall and that I'm not in your arms."

Jim smiled. "I think that sounds perfect, Trix. I can't think of anything I'd rather do than fall asleep holding you." The two once again started kissing until suddenly Jim and Trixie heard a voice shout from the bathroom, "Hey! Jim, is that you? We're out of toilet paper!"

Trixie, who had thought they were alone, jumped away from Jim as though he had the plague.

Jim sighed. "And that is my roommate, Josh." To Josh he called, "Hang on. I knew we were running low so I just bought some. Let me find it!"

Jim went into the common area and looked through some plastic bags that bore the name "Country Market." Finally, he produced a package of toilet paper. Josh opened the door

a crack and Jim shoved the package into the bathroom. Trixie stood by with an amused smile on her face.

“So this is dorm life, huh?”

Jim grinned. “This is it. So it’s Friday, 10 p.m. There’s lots of stuff we can do. Friday nights don’t really get hopping until at least 11. Do you want to go out?”

Trixie shook her head. “I was kind of hoping to get some alone time with you. If that’s okay with you, that is.”

“I was hoping you would say that. I rented a couple movies and thought we could cuddle up on the couch and stay in tonight. Tomorrow I’ll show you all over campus.”

“Sounds great! Let me go get comfortable,” Trixie gave Jim a quick kiss and headed to the back sleeping area to change. When she re-entered the common area wearing red plaid flannel pajama bottoms and Jim’s comfortable, old MSU sweatshirt, she found Jim talking to a handsome boy with jet black hair and clear blue eyes. He was really cute, but Trixie could tell right away that he knew it.

“Trix, this is my roommate Josh. Josh, my girlfriend Trixie,” Jim made the introductions.

Trixie and Josh smiled and said hi and then Josh said. “Well, gotta head over to the sorority house to pick up Ami and then we’re going bar hopping on Grand River. You wanna come?”

“No thanks, man, we’re just going to hang here,” Jim informed his roommate.

“Cool, dude,” then he gave Jim a sly smile. “Don’t expect me ‘til ya see me.”

Josh left and Trixie gave Jim a look. “Fancies himself quite the ladies man, does he?”

Jim laughed ruefully. “That he does—and he usually is. I can’t even begin to describe the parade of women, mostly sorority girls, that he goes through!”

“Well, he is cute, but I prefer my men red-headed with an honorable streak!” Trixie said as she gave Jim another kiss. “So you’ve got nothing to worry about.”

“That’s good to hear, Miss Belden,” Jim said as he returned the kiss.

Suddenly, Trixie pulled away. “You’re quite the host, Mr. Frayne! I’ve been fifteen whole minutes and you haven’t even offered me anything to drink!”

“Are you thirsty? Do you want to grab something from the fridge?”

Trixie nodded and went to the small dorm refrigerator. She waded past beer cans and finally found one can of Coke stuck in the back next to something fuzzy. Upon further investigation, she realized it was a peach that looked like it had been in there quite a while. “Uhh, Jim?”

“Yeah, Trix?” Jim called out distractedly from where he was loading a movie into the VCR.

“Do you guys know you have a science experiment growing in here behind all of this beer?”

“You mean the milk that expired over a month ago?”

Trixie looked back into the depths of the fridge and realized that there was indeed a small pint container of milk displaying an expired date of August 31. “Well, I was talking about

this peach that has a lovely winter coat of green fur, but now that you mention it, that is one ancient dairy product keeping it company.”

Jim laughed. “I have no idea whose they are, but go ahead and throw them out if you want.”

Trixie shut the refrigerator door and headed to the bathroom to wash off the Coke can—she was taking no chances. “No way am I doing your dirty work for you, Frayne,” she called.

“Fine. I’ll take care of it tomorrow.”

Trixie tripped on a Slinky in the bathroom and looked in the mirror. “What is going on?” she asked her reflection. “How does Jim live like this?” She washed the can off and returned to the couch where Jim was waiting for her with a blanket.

“Did you say something, Trix?”

“Well, after nearly breaking my ankle on the Slinky in the bathroom, of all places, I was just wondering what happened to the neat guy I always knew back home.”

Jim sighed. “Well, I’d like things to be neater here, too, but I can’t expect the impossible from these guys. Despite the fact that Josh and Andy are slobs, they’re great guys to live with. Real laid-back. Jeff and I try to keep things as neat as possible, but between classes and studying and sports and stuff, it’s usually a losing battle. And I can’t let myself get all riled up about the small things or else I’d be miserable.”

Trixie smiled and gave her boyfriend a peck on the cheek. “You always were the sensible one. Want to split the last Coke with me or are you afraid of my germs?” She asked with a twinkle in her eye.

“I’ll show you who’s afraid of germs,” Jim’s husky voice sent chills down Trixie’s spine as he grabbed her and kissed her. Trixie gave way to the feeling of Jim’s tongue as it danced with hers. Her breathing became heavy as her body started to awaken in Jim’s proximity. He always managed to give her butterflies in her stomach when he kissed her like that. She dropped the Coke on the couch and her hands found their way under his shirt. She explored his tight abdomen and muscular chest. Jim’s sigh made excitement build within her, and she wanted him to touch her as she was touching him. When his hand found its way underneath the bulky sweatshirt and traveled along the length of her spine, Trixie thought she would burst. “Touch me, Jim,” she murmured.

Just then the phone rang. Jim involuntarily started to reach for it, but Trixie stopped him. “Ignore it,” she demanded as she kissed him harder. Jim succumbed but then pulled away.

“Weren’t you supposed to call your mother when you landed?” Jim, always the voice of reason, extricated himself and went to the phone.

Trixie was cursing herself. She had forgotten to call her mother in the excitement of seeing Jim. She was not surprised to hear Jim say, “We just got in about a half-hour ago, Mrs. Belden. I’m sorry we forgot to call, here she is.”

After a brief conversation in which she assured her mom that she had gotten in safely, she hung the phone up and looked at Jim.

“Where were we?”

Jim smiled tenderly at her and kissed her forehead. “We were about to watch some movies.”

Trixie smiled wickedly. "I think the movies were about to get forgotten."

"I think you're right about that, Trix," Jim said seriously. "Let's just take things slow and watch the movie, okay?"

Trixie was about to protest, but when she saw the tender, pleading look in Jim's green eyes, she couldn't refuse. She had loved the way she had felt when they were so passionately making out a few minutes before, but the rational side of her brain wondered just where they had been headed and how far it might have gone. Despite what her hormones had been telling her just a few short minutes ago, Trixie knew she wasn't ready for a physical relationship with Jim.

Trixie smiled at Jim and cuddled up next to him. "I can't think of anything I would rather do."

An hour later, Trixie, having had a full day with school and then traveling to Michigan from New York, was fast asleep. Jim hit the stop button on the VCR and looked down at his sleeping girlfriend. He liked how her tousled curls framed her face. She looked so peaceful that he smiled and kissed her forehead. He lovingly looked at her for a long time, thinking how beautiful she was and how lucky he was to have her in his life. Before long, he too, was sleeping peacefully.

\* \* \*

"Jim?" Trixie mumbled sleepily. "Jim? What time is it?"

Jim opened sleepy eyes and tried to focus on the VCR clock. "A little after 4, I think."

"We must have fallen asleep," Trixie said as she snuggled close to her boyfriend and gave him a hug.

"You fell asleep an hour into the movie. I turned it off and I guess I must have fallen asleep after that. Do you want to go to bed?"

Trixie shook her head. "No, let's just get all comfy on this couch and go back to sleep. Or will that be uncomfortable for you?"

"No, I think I can manage," Jim said as he adjusted himself to get more comfortable. Soon the two of them were cuddled in each other's arms and once again dreaming.

The morning sun streaming through the window woke them both a few hours later. Jim yawned and stretched and kissed Trixie on the forehead. "Good morning, Sunshine," he said as he kissed her tenderly on her forehead.

"Morning," Trixie sighed contentedly and cuddled closer. "I could get used to this."

Jim smiled and hugged her. "Me, too. You want to head out for breakfast? There's a great truck stop diner not too far from here in Lansing. They serve great breakfasts."

"Sounds good to me," Trixie murmured, but she made no attempt at all to move.

Jim nudged her. "It gets pretty crowded. I try to go early to avoid the rush."

Trixie smiled playfully. "It figures. The one morning I don't have to get up at the crack of dawn to feed the chickens, and I'm stuck with the original early-riser."

"Well, since we have a limited time together, I really would like to spend as much awake time as possible with you," Jim pointed out.

“What? You don’t like sleeping with me?” Trixie pretended to be offended.

Jim kissed her soundly on the lips. “You know that’s not what I meant, Trix. And by the way, I loved sleeping with you.” He said playfully as he nipped at her neck. Trixie, being extremely ticklish, jumped off the couch, shrieking.

“Okay, okay, you win! I’m up!”

Jim smiled devilishly. “I knew I could get your lazy butt up off the couch!”

Trixie stuck her tongue out at him. “You will pay for that remark, Jim Frayne!” She warned as she disappeared into the Jim’s sleeping area to change. “No peeking while I change!” She called.

Jim suddenly felt like he had received an electric shock. He hadn’t been thinking at all of peeking, but now that she brought it up he thought of her in his room, pulling off her sleep attire to reveal the curves that he knew were there. His mouth went dry at the thought of running his hands over her bare skin, of looking at her in all of her naked glory.

“Stop it, Frayne,” he muttered to himself, “or you’re never going to make it. Definitely not needing Viagra right now. Okay, baseball, calculus equations, dorm food, Roseanne Barr naked. Ewwww! That did the trick!”

Trixie appeared in front of him just then in faded jeans that looked great on her and a snug turtleneck. “What are you muttering about?”

“Nothing, just thinking out loud, I guess,” Jim said as he hurried back to his dresser and started pulling out clothes. By the time he had changed, Trixie had already brushed her hair and teeth and was sitting on the couch watching TV.

“Just let me brush my teeth and I’ll be ready,” Jim called as he disappeared into the small bathroom.

Ten minutes later, Jim was looking all over for his keys. “I just had them last night! Where could they be?” He said in frustration as he checked around the room. “I couldn’t have put them in my pocket when I got back from picking you up because I was wearing sweats. Where are they?” Jim continued to tear apart his sleeping area, while Trixie checked the common area.

“Maybe they fell in between the couch cushions!” She called as she started to move the cushions, looking for the keys. She found them, but she also found something else that made her blush. But it also made her curious.

“Jim, could you please come here for a moment?” She called sweetly.

Jim appeared a moment later. “What’s up, Trix?”

“This isn’t yours, is it?” She gestured to something that had been concealed beneath the cushion she was now holding.

“Is it my keys?” Jim wanted to know as he stepped forward. Then he saw what she was looking at, and Trixie smiled to herself as she watched his face become as red as his hair. “Umm, no, it’s not mine. And before you ask, no, I don’t know whose it is.” He grabbed the keys, took the cushion from her hand and replaced it on the couch. “I don’t even want to know whose it is or how it got there.”

Jim grabbed Trixie’s hand and led her out the door before she could ask any more questions about the vibrator she had found stuck in his couch. Trixie, having gotten past her initial embarrassment at having found such a personal object, was laughing at Jim’s reaction.

She was still laughing on their way back from breakfast at the quaint diner that reminded Trixie of Wimpy's back home. The diner wasn't an old train car, but it had the same feel to it and was decorated with a train motif.

Jim looked over at her, amused. "Need I ask what you're laughing at?"

She grinned mischievously at him. "Do you really want to know?"

Jim laughed out loud at that. "Probably not! Ready for your tour of campus, Miss Belden?"

"Absolutely, Mr. Frayne," Trixie leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. "I can't wait to see this campus I've heard so much about!"

"Well, on our right side right now is Brody complex. It's six dorms, mostly freshman because no one else wants to get stuck out here. It actually isn't even on the campus, but across the street from it. If you look at a map of campus you can see how it seems like it's on campus, but really isn't. These dorms are the only ones that don't have dining halls right in them. It's over in the main Brody building and they all share the same one. The interesting thing about Brody's dining hall is that it's the largest non-military cafeteria in the world and can feed 3,000 people at once."

Trixie looked over at the cluster of red brick, four story buildings. She still hadn't seen anything supporting Jim's claims that it really was a pretty campus. "Tallest dorm, largest campus, biggest cafeteria. MSU really goes all out for the records, huh?"

Jim smiled as he turned right on Harrison Road, with Brody on the right side of them and campus on the left. "MSU has set all kinds of records. It's the nation's first land-grant university, founded in 1855. It's on semesters now, but it used to be on quarters. It was so tied up in agriculture that fall quarter didn't start until late September, so that students could help finish the fall harvests at home before heading up to school."

Trixie, thinking of her family's small farm back in New York, found that interesting.

"To the left here is the Breslin Student Events Center, that's where graduation is held every year, plus basketball games, concerts, stuff like that." He turned left at Breslin and entered campus. "To the south there is another set of dorms. It's so close to the stadium, the ice arena, Breslin, and the practice fields, that that's where most of the athletes live."

Trixie looked to the south and noted the six story dorms were pretty spartan. "Where's this beautiful campus you promised me?"

Jim smiled at her impatience. "Just wait and see."

Jim continued to drive on past the stadium and then turned left, heading north. "This is the center of campus. That's Shaw Hall to your right. Everyone wants to live there because it's so central. Nothing is farther than a twenty minute walk."

"How long does it take to walk from one end of campus to the other?" Trixie wondered.

"Well, to go from Brody, where I had a class last year, all the way to my dorm, which is almost the eastern most dorm on campus, besides Hubbard—the really tall one, you know?" At Trixie's nod, he continued. "On a good day, it was 45 minutes. That's the farthest walk there is on campus, unless you head real far south to the agriculture outposts and the barns, but no one but upper level and graduate ag students ever go down there."

"That's quite a hike just to get to class!" Trixie exclaimed as she looked at a large rock painted blue with gold Greek letters. Jim informed her that the letters stood for Alpha Phi Omega. "It's a co-ed service fraternity on campus. Actually, I was thinking of joining."

Trixie wrinkled her nose. "You're thinking of joining a frat?"

Jim smiled. "It's not like a regular frat. Like I said, it's co-ed, their national charter forbids them from having a house, and they're all about service. You have to volunteer a certain number of hours a semester to stay active. They have a lot of charities they help out including Habitat for Humanity, reading for the blind, working with autistic children, and Visiting Pets where they take dogs from MSU's vet clinic and visit nursing homes. Their motto is 'Leadership, Friendship, and Service.'"

Trixie looked impressed. "And that's their rock?"

No, that's called 'The Rock' and whoever gets there first at night, paints it, and then guards it all night, gets to have their message seen all day long. I've never seen the same message two days in a row—it gets painted every night. The joke on campus is that it's really a little stone but it's got so many layers of paint on it that it looks like a big rock now."

Trixie laughed at that. College sounded so fun!

Jim wound around a curve and suddenly Trixie knew why a lot of people considered this one of the most beautiful college campuses in the nation. Ivy covered, nineteenth century buildings stood among tall oak and maple trees that looked older than the campus. Students mingled on tree lined walks, some running up steps into ornately carved doorways. The leaves were already changing colors, and Trixie was impressed with the thousands of bright red, yellow, and orange leaves covering the trees. She quickly craned her neck to see everything.

She saw Snyder and Phillips Halls, dorms looking like they might have belonged to an Ivy League campus themselves. Her blue eyes took in the impressive Natural Science building, proclaiming itself with ornate letters carved into the stone above the magnificent oak doors. The curvy, tree lined road wound itself around and she gasped at the tall student union, with its beautiful architecture. To the left she saw a field dotted here and there with trees. Students lounged in the field, some played Frisbee or football. Trixie even noticed one student bouncing up and down on a pogo stick and she thought of her younger brother Bobby. Rising near the opposite edge of the field was a tall bell tower, known as Beaumont Tower, and a famous campus landmark. A few moments later, to her right, she saw two more ivy-covered, nineteenth-century dorms, the most beautiful on campus. "I'd love to live there," she said wistfully.

Jim grinned. "I'd love for you to live there, too."

Something in Jim's voice made Trixie pause. "Why is that?"

"Those are Yakeley and Gilchrist—the only all female dorms on campus."

Trixie hit him. "Oh, you! Like you have anything to worry about!"

The road curved to the left and became a bridge.

"That's the Red Cedar River that travels right through the center of campus. Want to feed the ducks tomorrow?"

"I'd love to!" Trixie said as her eyes took in a tall statue of a man. "What's that?" She wanted to know as she noticed several people taking pictures of it. They were definitely too old to be college students, so she assumed they were visitors to campus.

"That's Sparty. He's pretty famous on campus—lots of people, tourists and stuff, get their pictures taken with him. I think he's been up since the forties or something like that. He watches over campus. And speaking of records, he's one of the tallest ceramic statues in the

world.” Trixie looked at the muscular statue, holding his Spartan helmet, and agreed he did look like he’d make a great protector, if he were real.

To the left of Sparty was the football stadium. “You saw the football stadium from the south side near where we passed the jock’s dorms. This is it from the north side.”

Trixie looked at the stadium, empty today because the Spartan football team was playing away this weekend, but the blonde imagined she could hear the roar of the crowd as it would sound on game day, with over 72,000 seats filled. She pictured the fans, sitting in their green and white, cheering on their team. The thought filled Trixie with excitement.

“And that is the ten cent tour of campus,” Jim said, smiling over at Trixie.

“You were right, the north part of campus is absolutely beautiful. I’m sorry I doubted you,” Trixie said contritely, but she had a gleam in her eye.

“Apology accepted,” Jim said with a grin.

“What next, oh-tour-guide?” Trixie wondered.

“Well, the northern border of campus is a street called Grand River. I thought we could park up there and go Grand Rivering.”

“Grand Rivering?”

“That’s the student term for hanging out, wandering down the street, mingling with other students, window shopping in its funky stores, grabbing some food in one of the quaint restaurants or coffee shops, that kind of thing.”

“Sounds fun!” Trixie agreed.

Fifteen minutes later, Jim had found a metered spot and the two were hand-in-hand exploring Grand River. Trixie squealed with delight when she found a used bookstore called Curious Bookshop.

“Jim, I want to see if they have any Lucy Radcliffes. She’s out of print and so hard to find nowadays.”

Jim smiled at Trixie’s eagerness and allowed her to pull him into the store. She went straight to the children’s section at the back of the store and started pouring over the volumes.

“Nancy Drew—yuck! Too pristine and perfect! Hardy Boys, Tom Swift, Anne of Green Gables, Bobbsey Twins, Dana Girls,” Trixie muttered each name as her eyes quickly took in the books. Suddenly, she was squealing again. “Jim! Look! There’s a few Lucy Radcliffes here and two of them are ones I don’t have!” Trixie pulled two of the tan paperbacks off of the shelf and held them up for Jim to see. “Look! *The Malaysian Mystery* and *The Quest in Buenos Aires!*”

Jim looked at the oval pictures on the front covers. “Malaysia? Buenos Aires?”

Trixie nodded and headed for the counter to pay for her treasures. “Lucy’s a spy who travels all over the world—Paris, Munich, you name it!”

As Trixie approached the counter, Jim took the books from her.

“What do you think you’re doing James Winthrop Frayne?” Trixie demanded, thinking he didn’t want her to buy them. And he didn’t, but not in the way she thought.

Jim smiled mysteriously and placed the books on the counter. The clerk looked at him.

“Just these, sir?”

Jim reached for his wallet and nodded. "Just those, please."

Trixie wanted to protest, but she couldn't bring herself to do it in front of the kindly gentleman punching in numbers on an old fashioned cash register.

After they left the store, Jim handed Trixie the bag with a kiss.

"Jim, you spoil me. You shouldn't have!" Trixie exclaimed even as she was pulling her beloved books out of the bag and admiring them. "First the ring and now this!"

Jim casually placed his arm around Trixie's shoulders. "I'm the spoiled one, having the world's prettiest, spunkiest, smartest girl as my girlfriend."

Trixie blushed. "And the world's handsomest, most honorable, most wonderful redhead is mine."

The two continued to explore all Grand River had to offer, finally deciding to grab dinner at a quaint little pub called the Peanut Barrel. Trixie had such a fun time that she knew she would never be able to board the plane the next day. She just wanted to stay in East Lansing forever, or at least until Jim was done there.

When they entered Jim's dorm room after their Grand River adventures, Josh was studying with the radio playing loudly. The funky rhythm of the song "Tequila" filled the air. Trixie wondered how he could concentrate with the radio so loud, but she figured to each his own.

Josh looked up from the thick textbook he was reading, turned down the radio, and greeted them. "How goes it?"

Trixie smiled brightly. "I love campus! Jim and I just got back from Grand Rivering and that was a lot of fun, too!"

Josh smiled. "That's cool. Will we be seeing you here at State in a couple of years?"

Trixie blushed and looked at Jim. "Who knows?" was all she would say.

"I'm heading out to a party in Cedar Village tonight—do you guys want to come?" Josh invited.

Trixie looked at Jim, questioningly.

"I don't know," Jim said uncertainly. "Parties over there often get out of control quick." He looked at Trixie. "Almost every riot you've heard of at MSU has probably been started there."

"Is it a set of dorms?" Trixie wondered.

Jim shook his head. "No, it's an apartment complex that borders campus, so University Police have no jurisdiction of what goes on over there. There's been a lot of talk over the last few years of tearing it down, adding the land to campus, and expanding, but no one thinks that will ever go anywhere. Cedar Village has a decades long reputation as 'Party Central' here in East Lansing."

Trixie smirked. "Must be a great place to study!"

Jim and Josh laughed at that. "Not everyone is here to get an education," Josh added.

"Well, you guys have made it sound so appealing and all, but I think something more tame might be better for me," Trixie declared.

Jim nodded his approval. "Good. I would have taken you there if you had *really* wanted to, but I wasn't looking forward to it!"

Josh grinned. "It's not *that* bad, but then I am just a wee-bit older."

Jim snorted. "Yeah, the ancient man of nineteen!"

"I'll be twenty next month!" Josh said in self-defense, laughing.

"Ahh, the man of wisdom in our little communal home. Please, guide me, oh-wise-one!" Jim said sarcastically.

"Bite me, Frayne," came the reply and then Josh turned back to his textbook.

Trixie and Jim smiled at each other and since Josh was reading on the couch, went back to Jim's sleeping area. "Sleepy?" Jim wanted to know.

"Not really. I'm having too much fun to be tired. I'm surprised you are."

"I was just thinking that maybe curling up for a short catnap might have its benefits," Jim eyed her meaningfully.

A wicked smile played across Trixie's lips as she understood his meaning. "Well, now that you mention it, James, I *am* a little tired."

Jim pulled her close to him and kissed her softly. "Good, let's climb up in my loft and snuggle."

The two did just that and after an hour or so of sweet talk and kissing, the two drifted into a light sleep. Jim was the first to awaken about an hour and a half later. He looked at his watch and then nudged Trixie. "It's after ten. Josh is probably gone by now. Do you want to finish watching that movie?"

Trixie yawned and looked at Jim. "That sounds good. I love snuggling with you. How am I ever going to go back to New York tomorrow?"

Jim kissed her forehead. "Let's not talk about you leaving tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay," the petite blonde agreed.

After the two had changed into sweats and were settled on the couch, both realized that the movie was a lot less interesting than exploring each other. Jim was kissing Trixie ardently, trying to remember that she was only sixteen and he needed to try to keep a lid on his passion. Trixie, hot and flushed, was thinking only of how good her body felt. She never imagined that her body could respond this way to Jim's kisses and to the feel of his masculine body pressed up against hers. She wanted more. In her passionate state, she felt that she needed more than just kissing. She was about to express her desires to Jim when all of a sudden the door slammed.

The couple slid apart and Jim turned to look at the door, expecting to see Josh. Instead he saw a frustrated young blonde man who looked surprised to see them.

"Oh, man, I'm sorry, Jim. I didn't mean to barge in on you like this. I can leave if you want," the young man, whom Trixie correctly assumed was another of Jim's roommates, apologized.

"Nonsense! It's your room, too, Jeff!" Jim said heartily, successfully hiding his disappointment. "What happened? I thought you were spending the weekend with Mandy."

Jeff threw down his bag. "We had a fight. I could see it was going no where, so instead of staying and making things worse, I decided to leave. I completely forgot that your girlfriend was going to be here." He looked at Trixie. "By the way, I'm Jeff. You must be Trixie."

Trixie smiled at him. "That's right. Nice to meet you, Jeff."

"Anyway, I'll just get lost, leave you two alone," Jeff started to head out of the room.

Jim looked at his retreating roommate. Jeff and Mandy had been together since their junior year of high school and almost never fought. If the fight was bad enough for him to leave, he knew it must be serious. Despite the fact that he wanted to be alone with Trixie, he knew he couldn't let Jeff suffer alone. Plus, truth be told, he was a little relieved for the interruption; he was afraid of doing too much too soon with Trixie.

"Jeff, don't be dumb. We're just sitting here watching a movie. Join us."

Jeff turned around and looked with amusement at the television screen, which was blank. "The movie was so good that you didn't notice that it ended, and the VCR has already rewind itself?"

Trixie and Jim both looked over at the television screen and then at the counter on the VCR. They both flushed guiltily and looked back at Jeff.

"Well, umm," Jim tried to think fast.

"Don't worry about it. I'll find something to do."

"Like what?" Jim demanded. "It's almost midnight, the library is just about to close, and the only other places to go at this hour are bars and parties. Neither of which you look up for."

"I can go sit in the dorm lounge."

Trixie decided to help Jim then. "Jeff, please stay. Jim talks about you so much that I was really disappointed when I thought I wasn't going to get to meet you this weekend. Please stay, so I can get to know you," Trixie looked up at him with her big, blue eyes and Jeff knew he couldn't say no.

Jeff smiled in appreciation at Trixie's friendliness. "Jim talks about you like you can walk on water and now I can see why. Okay, you talked me into it, but I owe you big time for horning in on your weekend together."

"Nonsense!" Trixie and Jim said together and then smiled.

"Okay, I'll pop some microwave popcorn and go down and buy some Cokes from the machine. Fire up a movie," Jeff said.

Jeff returned from the Coke machines just as Jim was pulling a bag of microwave popcorn from the small microwave. The trio had fun watching the movie and munching on popcorn. Trixie was glad to see that the tension lines that had been around Jeff's eyes and mouth when he had first arrived were easing. She hated to think of anyone unhappy, and she couldn't imagine having an argument so serious with Jim that they would need to put an hour's drive between them.

After the movie was over, Jeff stood and stretched. "You want me to take Andy's bed so you two can have some privacy?"

Jim smiled down at Trix. "Nah, I think we like cuddling on the couch."

Jeff smiled. "Suit yourself. Nice meeting you, Trix. And thanks." With that he disappeared into his sleeping area.

“Couch okay with you?” Jim looked at Trixie who was yawning.

“I’m so tired that just the thought of moving anywhere right now is exhausting. The couch is great,” Trixie mumbled sleepily.

The couple arranged themselves to be comfortable and, with their arms wrapped around each other, fell into a peaceful sleep.

\* \* \*

Late the next morning, Trixie and Jim sat on a bridge near the middle of campus throwing bits of bread to the ducks and squirrels. The campus was nearly deserted and had a wonderfully peaceful air about it. The couple was quiet, sad that they needed to leave to go to the airport in another fifteen minutes. Each time they said good-bye, it was getting harder and harder.

Jim finally broke the silence. “You know, I really lead such a semi-charmed life.”

Trixie looked up from the mallards she was feeding and smiled. “Semi-charmed?”

“I meet and fall for the most wonderful girl in the world, she agrees to be mine, but I live 700 miles away from her!” Jim burst out. Trixie smiled in spite of herself.

“Do you like Michigan State, Jim?”

Jim nodded. “I do, Trix.”

“And is it a good school for education?”

“One of the best,” came Jim’s reply.

“Then you are right where you need to be, even if it is 700 miles away from me,” Trixie said past the lump forming in her throat.

“I could transfer—” Jim began, but Trixie interrupted.

“No,” she said firmly. “You chose State for a reason and I will not be the reason you walk away from it. I...care about you too much to let you do something like that,” Trixie gulped as she realized she had started to say she loved Jim, but as he had never brought up the L word before, she didn’t want to either.

“But there are great schools in New York. I didn’t *have* to come to Michigan.”

Trixie agreed. “No, you didn’t have to. But you did because that’s what you wanted. This is the school that you felt was best for you.” She looked around. “And it’s a great school.” She paused, took a deep breath, and her deep blue eyes met and held Jim’s green ones. “Jim, if we were meant to be, 700 miles, or a million miles for that matter, won’t make a bit of difference. And if we’re not meant to be, then moving back to New York won’t help anyway.”

Jim leaned over and kissed his girlfriend. “When did you get so smart?”

Trixie smiled. “It’s what I tell myself every night before I fall asleep. It helps me handle you being so far away.”

Jim placed his hand on Trixie’s face and gave her a long, slow, lingering kiss. “I think we need to leave to make your flight.”

“I wish I didn’t have to take such an early flight.”

“But you do, so let’s get going.” Jim stood and offered his hand to Trixie. She took it and stood up, wrapping her arms around him for a hug. The two stood like that for a few minutes and finally walked, arm in arm, to Jim’s jeep.

Jim sat with Trixie at her gate until her flight was called. They chatted lightly, trying to be cheerful, but every minute that passed was one less minute they had together.

Finally, Trixie’s flight was called and they rose from their seats.

Jim folded her into one last embrace and then pulled back, gently wiping the tears from Trixie’s eyes. “Be safe and be good.”

“I will, James. I promise.”

Jim kissed her tenderly. “I love you, Trixie Belden.”

Trixie’s eyes widened and a look of pure happiness descended upon her features. “I love you too, Jim Frayne.”

Without another word she headed toward the doors to the tarmac. She turned and gave Jim one last look, a bright smile on her face, but the tears on her cheeks, glistening like jewels, gave her away. Once again, looking at Trixie, Jim thought of sapphires. And then she disappeared through the doors. His precious jewel was leaving him, but he smiled anyway, filled with one thought.

Seven hundred miles didn’t matter.

He knew they were meant to be.

One small last note: Matt and I visited Curious Bookshop on our first visit back to MSU together, Christmas, 1998. I found four Trixies that I did not yet have and started toward the counter. Matt grabbed them from me and took them to the counter himself, paying for them, and telling me “Merry Christmas.” I figured if Matt would do that, then Jim certainly would! ☺

My carryover items were: pogo stick (#1) and mention of Viagra (#2).