

**The Bendersons: Kidnapped at K7**  
**Second Edition**

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Smashwords Edition  
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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THIS IS NUTS MUM**

“This is nuts Mum...are you completely insane,” I said as I arrived home from doing practical work for my archaeology degree.

“No I am not, Tam,” indicated Mum, her eyes that were now turning into evil slits. “I am selling the house and that is that. Dan and Meryl have organized us a place in Kingsland and that is final.”

“Oh, is that so, Mum,” I said. “Well I have my work here and my study to consider.”

“Well haven’t you heard of a transfer, Tam? Dan told me that your course is available up there, so it is not a problem.”

“I leave for a few weeks work for an archaeology firm and this is what I come home to? You have no right to do this,” I faltered, feeling already defeated.

“Well, it is my bloody house and I suggest you cooperate, Tam, or Dan will be very angry with you,” smirked Mum.

“Oh okay... and thanks for nothing,” I barked as I slammed my bedroom door shut. “What can I do about this,” I thought as I drifted off to sleep, dreaming of a better life and future far, far, away from this hell hole.

“Tam Tam, wake up immediately,” Mum called as she knocked on my bedroom door and barged in.

“What is it?”

“Dan just phoned and he is coming down today. We are to meet him at the casino for dinner,” said Mum sporting a smug look on her face.

“So what about it, I need a little rest as I have just arrived home myself,” I pleaded.

“That is no way to treat your brother, Tam, and I suggest you come with me as I need someone to care for me when I get on the bus,” indicated Mum seriously.

“No Mum, I am tired. Get the picture,” I said.

“Tam, I am feeling a little wobbly to go alone,” said Mum, doing the familiar con artist trick.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CASINO

“Oh okay, as long as I pick what meal we’re having,” I said, visioning the full buffet meal.

“Okay,” said Mum.

I made myself ready and soon we were on the bus and ventured to the casino. “How about I book a table, Mum,” I said.

“Okay Tam, then I will let Dan know when he arrives,” said Mum seriously.

I booked a table and that was the last table available. I texted Dan to ask how long he would be. “Tam, I might be an hour by the time the bus arrives at the Casino. This just depends on how many customers stop at the different hotels around town before we arrive at the casino.”

“Oh there you are, Tam,” said Mum. “Can you get me a hot chocolate...are you okay there?”

“Not really. Dan just indicated that he would be travelling by bus and he will be late for his meal that I booked here,” I said.

“Well maybe Dan doesn’t want to eat here, Tam,” said Mum smirking, knowing full well she was winding me up.

I felt like smacking her. I knew she was trying to take the piss out of me and put me up against my own brother, Dan.

Dan soon arrived and I told him that I had made the booking for all of us for a buffet. “Well, you might have had the common courtesy to discuss the matter with me first,” snarled Dan and he then proceeded to talk to Mum.

“Now you listen here, Dan. I am shouting the meal and I prefer to eat here,” I pleaded.

“No, Tam, we are eating upstairs at the Restoria,” said Dan. “I need to go upstairs and freshen up. Do you mind waiting,” indicated Dan as he ventured upstairs.

“What in the hell, Mum? Aren’t you going to say anything? This is insane,” I said, shaking my head in disbelief.

“Now Dan has suggested the Restoria. It is much cheaper than the buffet,” smirked Mum.

“Why does he always get it his way?”

“Tshhhh, tsh, Tam. I know you are stinking jealous of him and Meryl. You’ve just got to face facts that they are people with money and you are not,” said Mum

“Well in that case stick your meal and you can go home by yourself,” I snarled.

“I am too wobbly, Tam,” said Mum, trying to pull on my heartstrings.

“Sorry, you have done the dirty on me. I am going,” I said feeling deflated.

“I might just stay the night with Dan if you are going to be a bitch about matters,” said Mum, looking at me with those evil slits called eyes.

“Sayonara,” I said as I walked outside of the casino and to the nearest McDonalds. I ordered a sumptuous burger and went home to rest.

I had just arrived home and was watching TV peacefully, when I noticed that there was a knock on the door. “I thought you were staying with, Dan,” I said, looking at Mum with disgust.

“Dan only had a single room booked,” said Mum, “so I could not stay with him, Tam.”

“Well good night,” I said. “I thought I would let you know that Dan is organizing the real estate agents to come, so I suggest you help me out clean the shed.”

“Great, but there is one problem. Have you thought about the fact that you are rendering me homeless by selling the house? Did it ever cross your mind, Mum? Did you even consider letting me buy it off you,” I faltered.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **XMAR REALTY**

Mum burst out into hysterics. “No way! You haven’t got that sort of money, like Dan and Meryl. I want the money straight away. The other thing, Tam, is you will be closer to David and Jenny as they are in the university near North Kingsland,” said Mum trying to persuade me to think differently on the matter when I could see absolutely no benefit into moving at all.

I showered and changed for bed and thought that, despite my work and university, my life was dull. I unfortunately was stuck in a rut living by Mum’s rules and a manipulating brother. There had to be a way out of this mess. I fell asleep and did not wake up until the next morning.

“Tam, you had better get out of bed and help clean out the shed before the real estate agent arrives and don’t come inside until I say so as Dan is there, as well,” said Mum.

“I beg your pardon? Why the secrecy,” I said. “First of all, I need something to eat and coffee before I get started.”

There was a knock on the door and Mum opened it. “Do you mind, Tam,” snarled Dan.

“Excuse me mate. I have just woken up and haven’t eaten yet. I live here, too,” I snapped, trying to stand my ground.

“That figures, Tam...and why you are such a failure in life in comparison to me? Big house, money to burn, a Mercedes, a pool, everything! And what do you have, Tam? Bloody nothing,” snarled Dan, looking at me with that steely-eyed poker face.

“Do you honestly deem your self worth on the basis of money in the bank, Dan,” I said.

“Hey, you! Don’t talk to Dan like that, Tam! Dan, I think someone is stinking jealous of your success. I’ll pay you \$10,000 to sell the house,” whispered Mum as I walked out. “Now where are you going, Tam,” Mum asked.

“That is none of your business,” I said as I slammed the door and went to the local shopping centre to order an egg and bacon roll and then head off to class.

A few hours later, I arrived home to find Dan and the real estate agent from XMar Realty talking to Mum. “Now what are you doing home so soon, Tam,” barked Dan.

“I live here, mate. So you can drop dead,” I snarled.

“Look, is there a problem here,” said the agent from XMar realty as he looked around.

“No not really, Sir,” said Dan seriously. “My sister cannot handle that I am rich and a person of importance and she is nothing but an undergraduate archeology student,” smirked Dan.

“What? You study archeology,” asked the agent, diverting his attention to me, much to the annoyance of my family.

“Yes, I do, and have just done four weeks work for a firm on ancient aboriginal relics,” I smiled.

“Excellent work, Tam,” said the real estate agent.

“Now can we talk shop, as I need this to be sorted out before I leave in an hour on the plane,” said Dan aggressively.

The real estate agent gave me a wink and talked things over with Dan.

“Now why do you have to disrupt things like that, Tam,” smirked Mum.

“Like what,” I said, looking at Mum, bewildered.

“You know and being a smart-aleck to Dan with the real estate agent,” said Mum, clearly annoyed that someone else actually valued me as a person.

“Oh, why don’t you just put a sock in it? I have an assignment to finish,” I said as I went to my room with a cup of coffee.

Soon, there was a knock on my bedroom door and it was Mum saying that Dan was leaving. “Look, don’t disturb me. I am busy. “

“I think someone is having a hissy fit, Dan,” said Mum as they went out of the door.

“Mum, don’t feel guilty about selling your house. Tam can buy her own house. She has had it far too easy all her life. If she put in the hard work, like myself, she could have exactly the same as us...maybe more,” said Dan seriously. Then Dan left and I proceeded to undertake a tedious 4000 word essay.

“Tam, would you be able to help me clean up the shed please,” said Mum, just opening my bedroom door without knocking.

“Do you mind not coming into my room when I am busy?”

“This is my house, Tam, and you have no say,” said Mum. “I am too wobbly to lift up heavy boxes and organize matters.”

“What is in it for me, Mum,” I said.

“How about that new laptop you saw in the computer shop a few weeks ago,” said Mum, surprisingly supportive.

“Okay then. I will do the assignment later.”

I made my way to the shed to sort umpteen numbers of boxes and carry the excess rubbish to the bins.

## CHAPTER 4

### TITLE DEED

I started to make headway in the rubbish. I sorted them out in three piles: true rubbish to be collected by the waste disposal, the pile for charity and the rest to keep. It was exhausting work and it did not make it easy when Mum came down and started asking nonsocial questions. “Now, would you be able to go through the rubbish again and see if you haven’t accidentally thrown out the title deed,” said Mum, oblivious to all the hard work that I have done.

“Why don’t you do that yourself? I have no idea what a title deed looks like,” I said, trying to pretend that I was totally stupid.

“Don’t give me that Tam. Just look for it as I cannot sell the house without it,” said Mum. “Now I will make you a cuppa and let me know if you have found it.”

I looked once again and I could not find it. Then, I went upstairs to have a cuppa and Mum asked “Did you find it, Tam?”

“No Mum, I could not,” I faltered. “Now is my time and I am going to finish off my paper.”

“Well, I have just spoken to Dan and he wants to fax you details on how to fill out a new application for the title deed.

“Well my fax is broken down and he can dictate to me over the phone,” I said.

“You know Dan has pride in his work and doesn’t want to have the details confused,” said Mum.

“Who says that I am incapable of taking down a few notes,” I wailed.

“Now take it steady, Tam. Is there something wrong with you,” asked Mum, knowing full well she was well and truly getting on my blasted nerves.

“Well, you can do that yourself then, smartarse,” I said.

“Now Tam, you know that Dan is prominent in his work and it is wise to follow his directions.”

“Oh okay. When does he want it done, Mum,” I barked.

“Tomorrow and I will give you the money,” said Mum, smirking.

The next day it was cold, wet and raining, but despite my protests, I had to fulfill Mum’s requirements to pay for an ad as the title deed was missing. Once I was done completing all the rigmarole and paying the receptionist, I walked out and went to class. Then, Mum phoned me in the middle of class for something, but I switched my mobile off and promptly forgot about it as

after class I had to do a few hours work.

After work, I arrived home to a hostile reception from Mum. "Tam, I have been ringing you all day and you don't even pick up the phone," barked Mum.

"Well the world does not evolve around you and your damn house," I said, not giving a damn.

"Well, I just need the shed's stuff to be sorted out as the bloke is coming to pick it up at the end of the week," said Mum gruffly.

"Well, you have to consider my work and classes, Mum," I said, feeling well and truly cheesed off.

"Dan told me that you can do your course online and that you can do a few hours for him instead of working for that shonky café," indicated Mum.

"It is really none of anyone's business where I work or study, but my own, and just tell Dan I am not interested in working for him. I would rather beg on the street than take his blasted orders," I said flatly.

"Oh, is that so, Tam," smirked Mum.

"Yes, that is so, smartarse," I said as I slammed the door, wishing I could just vanish into thin air and not have to deal with this family ever again.

A few days later, Dan was ringing up about problems with the deed application. We would now have to go to the land titles office to fill in some forms. "Okay then, tell Dan to email me the details and I'll put them on the form," I faltered.

"No he wants to fax the details, but your fax isn't working...so I have suggested the local post office, Tam," said Mum.

"No Mum, Dan can email me the details...keep it simple, stupid," I barked at her.

"Tam, are you trying to sabotage my sale of my house," smirked Mum.

"No but you and Dan are deliberately making it difficult on me when you are fully well aware that I have my own work and study to do," I faltered trying to stand up for my rights but not succeeding.

"Poppycock Tam, those few classes and work you do. Dan says that you have more than enough time to fit in what he wants," Mum stated seriously.

"Oh, is that so, and do I get paid for it," I retorted, becoming quite fed up with her smart aleck remarks.

"Are you trying to be a bitch to Dan and I," said Mum with a smug face. "I just don't understand you and frankly I blame your father for allowing you to behave in such an appalling manner."

"Well the same could be said about Dan. That bloody shitface," I said as I went to my room feeling downcast and deflated.

Over the next few days, in between work and classes, I managed to tidy up the shed. That



was on top of Dan constantly ringing up Mum and telling her what he wanted. Mum was following his requirements to a tee without any thought to the ramifications of her actions.

“Now, the man from the charity is coming tomorrow, Tam. Would you mind staying home until it is collected,” asked Mum innocently.

“Yes, in fact, I do mind as I have an extra tutorial and have to work,” I lied, hoping to put her in a position.

“Really? But Tam, you never work Fridays,” said Mum seriously.

“This week I have to,” I bluffed, “but I will be home when my shift finishes, which is around lunch time.”

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RUBBISH REMOVAL**

“Oh okay, as I have to go to the dentist,” said Mum.

Well, after work and class I arrived home and the charity van had just arrived. “Now have you the stuff ready for collection, baby doll,” indicated the young man who reminded me of an anorexic meat loaf.

“Sure, it is right here,” I indicated, pointing to the direction of where the stuff was packed in boxes.

“Ma'am,” asked Meatloaf.

“Yes, what do you want?”

“Would you be so kind as to allow me to have some of these chisels? I do part time wood carving,” he asked pleasantly.

“Yes sure, and if the charity queries then phone me,” I indicated as I scribbled down the number on his notepad.

“Gee, thanks you're a legend,” said Meatloaf as he walked off with the bric-a-brac that I had donated.

After this happened, Mum arrived home just as I was going inside. “So you have finished work, Tam, or maybe you haven't even gone,” said Mum snarling at me.

“What would make you say something like that,” I retorted, puzzled at her behavior.

“Well I rang your work, Tam,” said Mum, “and they said you were not their today.”

“Of course, Mum,” I said, knowing full well my boss had backed me up today.

## CHAPTER 6

### REMOVALISTS ORGANISED

Soon the real estate agent came to take photos of the house just as Mum had found the original title deed. “Tam, you never guess what I have just found,” said Mum waving the paper as I was packing up yet another few boxes after work.

“No, I have no idea, Mum. Enlighten me,” I faltered.

“Well, I have found the missing title deed and wonder where I am going to hide it,” sneered Mum.

“I think you had better tell the real estate agent,” I said honestly.

“Tam, for once in your life can you cut the moral high ground with me and just do as I ask, please? I beg you,” said Mum on her knees pleading me as if she was a five-year-old.

“Oh okay, just put it in here,” I said thoughtfully.

“What about sticking it on the inside, Tam?”

“Yes, but I am going to need more sticky tape,” I said.

“Okay, I will get it off the bench for you, Tam,” said Mum I packed up the box more and stuck it on the inside and hoped that the removers would not find it when we moved.

“Now that is done, Mum,” I said as I finished yet another box.

“Tam you know that money you have in the safe? How do you propose to carry that on the plane,” asked Mum.

“Well, put it in my purse,” I said, feeling exhausted.

“How about you put it into this account that Dan and Meryl have organized and I will take care of that for you,” said Mum

“Oh okay,” I said feeling totally exhausted, not thinking what I was doing and handing her the money. This was the last time I would ever see my money and it showed how easily you can be scammed by your own family.

After the money was safely deposited in the account, the real estate agent phoned to say that he had a buyer. The buyer came to visit and stayed briefly, but I was told to make myself scarce as usual. Luckily, I had extra shifts for work and when I arrived home, I found that the house was currently under contract and that Caleb from Canada was going to buy the house.

“Now Tam, do you mind to organize and pay for hotels, plane fares and removals,” said Mum.

“Why don’t you pay, Mum,” I said.

“Well most of the furniture is yours, Tam, so it is only right that you pay,” said Mum. “Mmmm, well then I am not going, Mum,” I said, feeling like this was the worst decision Mum had ever made in her life.

“See if I care, Tam, as I will throw all your furniture on the dump and will get Dan and Meryl to help me,” said Mum.

“Now where do I fit in all this?”

“You can live at the backpackers and this is none of your concern, Tam,” said Mum seriously.

“Oh, is that so? Well you can organize matters yourself then,” I said, slamming my door, disgusted with her attitude.

## CHAPTER 7

### RON AND GWEN

There was a hub of activity over the next week or so. The removalists were called and organized and hotels and airfares booked, much to my reluctance.

One of the neighbors' spoke to me just as I had finished my last day on the job. "Is it true, Tam, that you and your mother are leaving the neighborhood," asked Gwen.

"Yes, I am afraid so," I faltered.

"Now you wouldn't like to ask your mother if she could sell the house to me," indicated Ron seriously.

"I don't think so as she would not even let me buy it and I am family," I said.

"Oh is that the way she is working, Tam," said Gwen. "Who is doing all this manipulating?"

"It is mainly my brother and his missus," I said looking downcast.

"Now are you moving as well, Tam," asked Gwen.

"Yes and I have to throw in my job here," I said.

"Do you mean your mother is selling the house from under you and on top of that disrupt your studies and work? I am glad she is not my mother," indicated Gwen.

"I know what you mean, Gwen," I said.

"Now Tam, do you and your mother want some drinks and nibbles here before you go?"

"I'll ask her and I'll let you know."

"Tam, Tam? Where are you," screamed Mum. And then she popped her head out of the door and saw that I had been talking to the neighbors.

"Talking to the neighbors again, Tam," snarled Mum.

"Hey you there, pipe down, woman," said Ron seriously, "and stop upsetting your daughter here... you selfish cow."

Mum was taken back and said to him, "Ja ja. Tam come in at once!"

I came inside and felt the wrath of her fury as she went on and on that I was gossiping. "Well, the removals called and we will be moving tomorrow," said Mum. "They confirmed it while you were away so you had better defrost the fridge and clean it out. I have done enough today," sighed Mum as she sat on the couch. I was in no mood for arguing, but asked Mum if she wanted to come with me to see Ron and Gwen for a few nibbles. "Oh no, Tam, I will be glad to get away from here and be closer to my little Dan and sweet Meryl," said Mum knowing that this was another kick in the guts.

“Well, everything is good to go, Mum, and I have cleaned the fridge and freezer and it can dry out as I have opened the door. I am going to have the rest of the food that is in here and call it a day,” I sighed pretending to be really tired. Luckily, Mum did not catch on as I finished my meal and pretended to go to bed, but secretly climbed out of the window and visited Ron and Gwen.

“Hi Tam,” said Ron who opened the door.

“You made it,” said Gwen and a few other neighbors. “It is not going to be the same without you. Sit down and have a few nibbles.”

“I better get home after a few hours,” I said. “We leave tomorrow.”

“What is that mother of yours up to?”

“Nothing much, but manipulated to the hilt by her own son and he is nicely taking advantage of the whole situation.”

“Well enjoy this and relax, Tam,” said Gwen smiling. The neighbors’ gave me all a hug and I nearly burst into tears at the thought of leaving them behind.

Later, I snuck on in my bedroom and went to sleep. The next morning I awoke feeling surprisingly refreshed. “Well are you interested in a bacon and egg roll, Mum,” I said, trying to be chirpy.

“Is it McDonalds , Tam?”

I rushed out of the house and ignored her requests. I went to the little corner store down the road and bought two bacon and egg rolls and snuck two hungry jacks wrappers on them.

I took my time and enjoyed a large cappuccino and went home. “Sit down and enjoy, Mum,” I said, not taking any notice of her and her dramas.

“Hey, these are beautiful. Are these McDonalds Tam?”

“No they are...they are Hungry Jacks,” I lied. “look on the wrapper.”

Just as breakfast was finished, the removal van just arrived and everything was loaded up. It was tedious work and then I realized that Mum had not done any of her cupboards or wardrobes. This caused yet a further delay and on top of this the removals were determined to get the most out of us. “Now you people, would you be so kind as to purchase us some coffee,” they asked Mum. Mum started to get money out of her purse and then realized that they should provide their own food and drink.

“Now you listen here, matey, buy your own,” snarled Mum and on that occasion I thoroughly agreed with her. They look surprised, bought their own coffee and soon after that everything was finally loaded up. After Mum sorted out matters with the real estate agent, he left and so did the removal van.

Now I was feeling beyond exhausted and I said to Mum that the bus would soon be arriving to take us to the casino. “First things first, Tam, There is vacuum cleaning to be done. Dan insists,” snarled Mum.

“Sorry Mum, you do it. I am going,” I faltered watching her eyes turn into slits.

“Tam, you are not going to leave me on my own,” sneered Mum trying to fake tears running down her face.

“Cut the crap, Mum. I am buggered and I am going. That is the last bus for today,” I said. “Don’t you remember they changed the timetables Mum?”

“Oh yes you’re right, Tam. I’ll get my bag and we can do this cleaning tomorrow,” sighed Mum.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **AT THE CASINO**

Soon, we went on the bus, at the casino and were taken to our rooms. “Now Tam, would you be able to get some food from the café? Here is some money,” said Mum seriously.

“Mum, I seriously need to have a sleep,” “I faltered. “Okay, I will get some supplies.” I ordered some food and went to our hotel room and Mum was waking up from a nap.

“Tam, would you mind to buy a port? All this stuff will not fit in,” she pleaded.

“Jees, Mum,” I said at the thought of walking to the discount store at this hour.

“Well here is the money and keep the change, Tam,” said Mum sounding surprisingly generous.

I went to the store purchased a port that was half price, kept the change and threw away the docket. “Gee, that is a nice port and it is so bright, Tam,” smiled Mum.

“Well I did my best, Mum,” I said.

“How much did you pay for it, Tam?”

“Forty dollars,” I lied.

“Oh that is alright. I expected much more than that,” said Mum.



## CHAPTER 9

### SNORING

"I am going to pack my stuff in the port, Tam," said Mum.

"Yes, I think I will have a shower, eats and bed," I sighed.

Later, the both of us went to our beds and I tried to sleep, but to no avail as Mum was determined to disturb my night's sleep with her continual snoring that she was doing. It was so annoying, but in the end the both of us fell asleep from exhaustion.

"Now, are you going to help clean up the house, Tam," asked Mum.

"You did it yesterday," I faltered.

"Did I? No Tam, we didn't and Dan wants it done... this is our last day here and if you come with me then the buffet dinner is on me," said Mum pleasantly.

"Okay," I said and soon everything was cleaned spick and span. "Now how about we go to the casino," I said.

"Yes, not a bad idea and have a late buffet lunch," said Mum.

There was a call on Mum's phone and she said the keys had to be given to the real estate agent. "Would you mind to do that for me and then we'll both go for the early dinner," said Mum, surprisingly pleasant. "How about you meet me in the pokies and I'll shout you five dollars so you can have a flutter?"

"Okay Mum," I said as I waited in the hotel foyer for the agent to pick up the keys. I did not have to wait too long, luckily, and soon he arrived and picked up the keys. He then shook my hand and wished me the best for my move.

After that, I proceeded to the pokies and had a few games with Mum, and later enjoyed a peaceful meal together. Mum was smiling and I said, "Someone is happy today."

"Tam, that is because I will be closer to my little boy Dan and sweet Meryl," beamed Mum.

Luckily I had finished off my meal, as that comment made me feel so sick inside...but I needed a quick getaway. "Mum, you don't mind if I have a little flutter on the pokies?"

Mum looked at me and said, "Of course Tam. You might as well enjoy yourself," she smirked, knowing full well what she was saying.

I played a little while and then went back to my hotel room and saw Mum packing everything away. "It is D-Day tomorrow, Tam," she smiled.

"I am having a shower, Mum," I said, not wanting to draw attention to how cheesed off I felt.

The next day arrived and Mum asked me to call a taxi for our trip to the airport. I was hoping that the plane would be delayed or that the taxi would not come and we would miss our plane. Unfortunately for me, the taxi arrived early and we were soon on our way to the airport.

Mum then decided to get her money's worth and all she did was winge and wine that she was hungry. "Tam, I need a coffee and something to eat," she said purposely trying to be difficult while I organized all the luggage and bags.

"Mum, we get food on the plane and it arrives in about an hour," I said, not really wanting a coffee and something to eat as we had just had breakfast. "How about a packet of chips from the vending machines?"

"Oh no, I want a coffee and that muffin over their, Tam," said Mum. "Here is the money and get yourself a coffee as well."

I brought Mum's coffee and muffin to her and I had just sat down with my coffee and turned around to listen to what flights had to be boarded. All of a sudden, I could feel warm on my jeans and saw that Mum had carelessly knocked her coffee all over my table and the liquid was travelling towards my laptop. "Can't you look what you're doing for once? You nearly stuffed up my laptop," I said.

"I am sorry, Tam," Mum smirked. "I'll clean it up." Mum made an even bigger mess so I got up with my gear and called the cleaner to come and attend to the mess.

"Are you okay, Ma'am... what happened," she asked.

"Someone was determined to have a cup of coffee and did not look what she was doing," I said.

"Oh not another one of those women," she smiled. "Now go to our staff toilets. They have larger hand airers and big basins so you can get your jeans cleaned."

## CHAPTER 10

### CACTUS WOMAN

I returned to find Mum near the airport and her luggage looking angry. “That is where you are, Tam, leaving me like that,” Mum barked.

The young air hostess who had seen what happened took my side. “Hey Ma'am, you were the one that knocked the coffee over and I think you are being unreasonable to her as she had to clean her jeans off. Are you on this flight Ma'am?”

“Yes I am,” I smiled, seeing Mum’s annoyed face.

“Now Tam, would you mind to carry my port to the plane? I am feeling a little wobbly,” said Mum, trying to push my buttons.

“Mmmmmm, it is too high up the steps, Mum. I am overtired and might fall,” I sighed, wishing the hell she would disappear. I went over to the plane carrying the two ports and it wasn’t until I nearly fell over that the hostess came to my aid.

“What are you doing carrying those two ports yourself,” she said concerned for my well being.

“Well Mum said she was too wobbly.”

“Yes I have heard of con artists before, but it appears she needs to hear it from somebody else. Don’t you worry. Where is she sitting?”

“In this seat over there,” I faltered, wondering what she was going to do as she carried my port and guided me to where Mum was sitting with her smug face.

“Oh there you are, Tam,” Mum said.

“Yes she is, and you’re a little selfish to let your daughter carry up those two ports and she fell. Carry your own ports in future,” the young hostess said.

“It is heavy and I am feeling wobbly,” Mum retorted.

“Poppycock! My daughter is in preschool and she can roll her port along,” the hostess said and then turned to me. “Ma'am, don’t allow her to take control. Just let her be and she will do it on her own.”

“Thanks,” I said.

“Just tell her a thing or two and be firm,” she said.

If I thought the flight was going to be easier, boy was I sadly mistaken as Mum kept insisting that I pour her drinks. Simply stated, Mum is constantly being a perpetual pain in the posterior and never allows me to relax one bit. Luckily, the hostess walked up and said, “Now

Ma'am, you have allowed your daughter to run after you and do your food. Isn't it about time you did it yourself," she said firmly.

"I am old. 80 you know," said Mum flatly.

"Well my grandmother is 90 and still mows her own lawn and cooks for herself," said the young hostess. Mum looked hurt as the hostess continued, "If you keep going like that you will never do a thing for yourself. Is that what you really want to be? A cactus woman," said the hostess as she walked on and winked at me.

"Are you putting that young woman up against me, Tam," asked Mum.

"No! WTF? Flaming hell!" I looked at her face...the lines on that smug face...I could have killed her right there and then with my eyes blaring like daggers.

## CHAPTER 11

### DAN AND MERYL

Soon, the flight unfortunately ended and Mum was almost excited as a small child. “Oh, I am going to see my little boy and Meryl!”

I ignored her and went to get my ports and left her there. I walked up to the arrivals to see Dan and Meryl. She looked about nine months pregnant even though she wasn't. “Where is Mum, Tam,” said Dan, snarling at me.

“How the flaming hell should I know,” I barked.

“Hey Tam, you don't speak to Dan like that and don't take that tone to our house. Arguments will not be tolerated, Tam. “

“Who the bloody hell do you think you are, smartarse,” I barked, feeling well and truly pissed off.

“Hey.....Tam,” said Dan as he grabbed my arm “We're people with money and you are just a worthless piece of shit. Get it,” sneered Dan.

I turned around and was just about to clout him just as Mum arrived. “Well you might help me with my luggage, Tam,” said Mum

“What? Okay, I will go and find the luggage at the carousel.” One-by-one, I loaded up the luggage on the trolley and went back to find Mum hugging Dan and Meryl. “Now where are you parked, Dan,” I asked, hoping that it would be just outside.

“Right at the other end of the airport. It is much cheaper,” said Dan smirking, knowing that it would well and truly annoy me.

I lugged the ports on the trolley right to the other end of the airport and was just covered in a layer of sweat. I finally reach Dan's black Mariah, thoroughly exhausted, and stopped for a breather not expecting to be spoken to by Dan in such a demeaning manner. “Are you going to stand there like an idiot or actually do some work for a change, Tam,” smirked Dan.

“Do it yourself, dickhead. I am hot,” I said, taking my vest off.

“It is your luggage...”

“Hey shut your mouth, Meryl! You're not even family,” I retorted.

“Hey, you listen here, Tam. While you are having that tone with me, remember it is our house and our rules,” she snarled.

“Okay,” I said, wanting to get out the Kingsland heat ASAP.

Soon, we were in the car and travelling to where Dan and Meryl lived. All Dan did was talk

shop with Mum. “The money for the sale came through this morning and thanks for the commission Mum,” he smiled, oblivious to that I was in earshot.

“Rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr,” I was boiling with rage as I heard Dan prattle on about what a big shot real estate agent he was and all that rot.

We arrived Dan and Meryl's place. Then, Mum and I and got out of the car and I felt faint from the heat, but did Dan care, no! “Are you going to help to put the luggage in or stand there like a flaming idiot?”

“Hey watch your mouth, mate,” I said as I carried the suitcase inside and I was not prepared for what Meryl was going to say.

“Look Tam, you are guests at this house and if you could do what Dan says straight away, that would be great.” She smirked, knowing full well she had all the power.

“You mean allow him to bully me? No way bitch,” I said.

“Now you listen here, Tam. We are people with money and your father is not here to protect you, so I suggest you just bloody well do as you are told or you will be on the streets.”

“Well that suits me fine...just give me the money and I am gone,” I faltered, but still standing up for my rights.

“No that is for the rent and the money was a gift from Mum to us,” said Meryl.

“You bloody bastard,” I said coming up to her and trying to punch her in the face.

“Hey Tam, these suitcases won't go indoors by themselves,” barked Dan from outside.

“Well Tam, you know what you have to do,” said Meryl with her eyes looking at me like evil slits on that fat moonface.

## CHAPTER 12

### CAMPING TRIP

After a while, all the luggage was inside. I made myself a cold drink and went into my room, feeling like escaping. Then, I overheard Dan and Meryl talking about having a camping trip the next day with friends. “Yee ha,” I thought, “I can hardly wait till they leave.” Luckily, there were no further dramas and we all slept soundly.

If I thought Dan and Meryl were going to leave early, boy was I mistaken as Meryl spent the whole morning cooking quiches and spiced chicken wings before they loaded up their Mercedes and finally left. Just as they left, there was a phone call from Jenny and David. “Hi Mum, how are you,” they asked.

“I am fine and at Dan and Meryl’s,” I sighed.

“Oh that is okay, as we are going to catch bus and will be there tomorrow. Would you be able to meet me from the station tomorrow night,” asked David.

“Sure,” I said, wondering how I was going to manage that task all the way from whoop whoop. The day passed pleasantly and the thought of seeing my two children made the day bearable as Mum was not game to use any of Meryl’s stove as it wasn’t hooked up to the power. “That is just plain stupid, Mum,” I said.

“Are you stinking jealous of Dan? I think you are and it is appalling, Tam. If Dan says hello to you is it that much effort to talk to him,” said Mum with her smug face.

“Listen here lady, I don’t talk to idiots,” I said, much to her annoyance.

## CHAPTER 13

### DAVID AND JENNY

The next day arrived and I had planned to catch a cab after lunch when I heard the beep of a horn outside. It was David and Jenny. "Hi Jen and Dave," I said proudly.

"We got a lift with our lecturer, Mr. Cummings, Mum," said Jenny proudly.

Mum then walked to where I was holding Jenny's port and Jenny said, "Mr. Cummings, this is my Oma, which means Grandma in Dutch."

"I guessed as much kids. I better get going and if you need anything just call me on my mobile," said Mr. Cummings pleasantly.

"We'll do," said David and Jenny as they waved off to their lecturer as he sped off in his car.

"Where do we sleep, Mum," asked David.

"Over here, kids, behind the French doors," I said feeling relieved at the kids arriving. The kids settled in and I made them some food. Mum just sat there glum.

"Now where is the house that you are getting," said David curiously.

"Well, not sure, but I don't think it's happening," I faltered.

"What? This is incredible! You come up here for... nothing... basically. Mum and Oma what is the story," queried David.

"Not sure, but I don't think we are going to get a house here, but we can rent," said Mum.

"That is stupid, Oma," said Jenny seriously.

"Well the house didn't happen and it is up to Dan and Meryl," said Mum, speaking like a robot.

"This is nuts, Oma. They promised to buy you a house or did I hear things wrong," inquired David.

"Now you are really getting on my nerves, Dave," said Mum, looking at him annoyed.

"All he did was ask, Oma. What in god's name is going on," asked Jenny, looking at me and Oma for clues, but there were none. "Well I am having a shower and getting some sleep, Mum. Which is my bed?"

"Just pick whatever you like behind the French doors kids and enjoy a rest," I smiled.



## CHAPTER 14

### CABIN PARK

A little while later, Dan and Meryl arrived and their mood was even stormier than before. Apparently the people that they had camped with had taken the shower key, so sleeping the night in a tent without a shower apparently did not agree with Meryl or Dan, who were people that never went without. As they were sorting things out they were making a racket and not considering that David and Jenny were sound asleep.

Meryl saw that there were two other plates. David and Jenny had just woken up and were going to make themselves a hot drink each. “Hi Auntie Meryl and Uncle Dan,” said Jenny pleasantly.

“Hi ...and you kids need to know some home rules like cleaning up for yourselves. Dishes need to be put in a dishwasher,” snarled Meryl.

“Well, I don’t know how to use yours and-”

“What are you, five? Or a complete idiot,” barked Dan.

“Hey now, you listen here mate. They have just arrived here and I will not tolerate you speaking to David and Jenny like that,” I retorted. In the corner of my eye I saw that Mum just sat there like an idiot unwilling to back me in this situation.

“Now Tam, this is my house and did you thank my missus for having your teenagers here? Did you thank her? Did you thank her did you thank her,” Dan barked, going red in the face.”

“Oh shut the hell up,” I said to him and walked.

“Well in that case you can leave right now, Tam. You and your bloody kids go right now,” smirked Meryl.

“Great that is the best decision I have heard from you all day.”

I went to my room and started packing. I did not realize that Mum had followed me into the room. “Tam, are you okay,” she asked, trying to appear genuine.

“Look lady, are you for real or what,” I barked.

“Hey there is no need to talk like that to me. I am your mother,” Mum snarled.

“Really? You sure you did not have kids just as a fashion accessory as you have the power to be able to change Dan. This all falls back to you, Mum, because you did not allow Dad to discipline Dan and that is what you get...an arrogant pig. You have effectively enabled and condoned such behavior and he thinks it is okay to treat people like dirt.”

“No, that is not so, Tam,” barked Mum.

“Will you just get lost or help as I have to get out of this hell hole” I said, packing bit-by-bit into ports until it was done. “Are you ready kids,” I asked, calling out to them.

“Sure where do we go now,” asked Jenny.

“Where I should have gone straight away,” I said, feeling really down. All of a sudden I heard the taxi beep and David and Jenny followed me up to where the taxi was. I did not even bid Mum goodbye.

“Now where are we going to stay, Mum,” asked David curiously.

“Well, the local cabin park. They have showers and what not,” I said.

I booked into a small cabin, with a storage shed and porch. I looked into my wallet and saw that I had extra money...enough for food and bond.

As I went back to our cabin, the kids were waiting outside. “Oh there you are, Mum,” smiled Jenny as she took the key out of my hand and opened the door to our cabin.

“Now there are two rooms, one that holds two beds and I will take the single bed,” I faltered, feeling like flopping on my bed and off to sleep.

“Are you okay there, Mum,” asked Jenny, popping her head around the door.

“All this moving for Mum, on top of work, study and prac work has taken a lot out of me,” I sighed. “Now how about we get some supplies?”

“Not a bad idea as first we need to get something to eat,” sighed Jenny.

“Okay, there is McDonald’s right near the shopping centre. How about we get a feed, then pick up supplies and then get home,” I said. “Well put Mum,” said David.

We ate and then bought supplies and went home. “I am pooped kids,” I said as I flopped on the bed.

I must have fallen asleep and woke up when it was nearly dinner time. “So what are you going to do while we are away, as it is only a week to go, Mum,” said Jenny.

“Look for a job,” I said.

“Oh, that is okay, because while you look for a job we’ll cook the food, Mum” said David and Jenny supportively.

“Thanks for that,” I said wondering what the future held for all of us.

## CHAPTER 15

### HALLOWEEN

The next day, I woke up and prepared breakfast. Then David and Jenny bid me goodbye while I held my resume in my hand and walked up to the bus station. I caught the bus into town, trudged the streets, cold canvassing, and walked up to the local Burger King for a drink. In the corner of my eyes, I saw that they were hiring casual personnel and asked to speak to the manager. "Sure Ma'am," said the young girl and then the young man came out.

"I'm Chris, by the way, and you are?"

"Tam," I said, not really liking the look of him.

"What positions are you interested in, Tam?"

"The cleaning jobs mainly," I faltered.

"Great. Can you start in a few days," asked Chris.

"Sure," I said.

"Are you available on call, Tam?"

"Oh yes, but you have to give me half-an-hour to get ready," I said.

"Of course, and in that case, you can start next week for two to three days a week," said Chris seriously, shaking my hand.

I walked outside feeling mighty pleased with myself and ventured home to David and Jenny. "Are you home kids?" I knocked on the door but it was strangely silent. "Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooh," I heard coming from inside. They opened up the door. "Happy Halloween, Mum," said David, showing me the meal he and Jenny prepared in Halloween colors.

"Oh, but you shouldn't have," I said.

"Now do you want some BBQ sausages, Mum," asked David.

"There is no BBQ," I queried.

"Yes you have! Jen and I bought it for you," said David, showing me the brand new BBQ that they had bought.

"Oh, that must have cost you a fortune," I said.

"Mum, stop worrying. Jen and I have been working for some of the lecturers, so we're okay," beamed David. That night we all enjoyed each other's company in the spirit of Halloween.

Over the next few days, I enjoyed the children and realized that the day I started my new job

was the day before the day they were leaving. “Do you want me to come with you to Central Street tomorrow,” I said.

“Of course not. We have arranged with the other students to be picked outside of McDonalds, so it saves the headache of travelling there and the gridlock,” sighed Jenny as she rolled her eyes.

“Now how about McDonalds before I start my first day at work? My shout.”

“Of course,” was the resounding reply.

“Has Oma bothered to phone you at all, Mum,” asked Jenny.

“No not really, Jenny. I just assume that she is busy sorting something out.”

“Are you going to live with here if she does get a unit,” asked David.

“Not sure, David. I am okay here,” I said.

“What is her number again? I’ll ring over here where it is nice and quiet.”

“Okay,” I said as David ordered the meal for us while Jenny talked on the phone. “How did it go, Jen?”

“Well Meryl just cut me off the phone when I questioned her and Oma said she hasn’t got any unit and has just been busy,” faltered Jenny.

“Don’t worry, Jen,” I said.

“That is not the point, Mum. A house should have been organized before you and Oma arrived here...not after,” barked David angrily.

## CHAPTER 16

### LAUNDRY

“I know what you mean, Dave,” I said as I picked up my phone. It was Chris wanting me to start early.

“Who was that on the phone, Mum?”

“It is Chris my boss wanting me to start early. Do you want the keys to the cabin,” I said.

“Sure, we are going to do a bit of laundry and take care of a few last minute things,” said Jenny.

“Okay,” and I bid the kids goodbye and went to catch the bus.

Chris greeted me. “May I commend you on your punctuality? I’ll show you your locker and your uniform is already inside. Now here is what you have to do: clean the tables, empty bins and keep the floor clean,” he said.

“Of course. No worries,” I said.

Soon, I settled into wiping tables till they shone like diamonds, cleaning bins and clearing wrappers of the floor. It wasn't fun, but it kept my mind busy. It wasn't until Chris said, “Tam you can have a break now,” that I realized I had completed several hours. “Tam, food is on the house today, but you can only take a burger, fries and a drink,” said Chris seriously.

I ordered and sat down, relaxing for a bit.

When it was finally time to go home, it was afternoon and I arrived at the cabin feeling exhausted but happy. The kids were not there, as they had gone to the movies. At ten, my phone rang. I answered the phone and it was Mum. “Hi Tam, it is Mum,” she said, sounding as if she was on drugs or off the planet.

Mum was the last person I really wanted to talk to, but I thought I would be polite so I asked, “Now what is cooking?”

“Not much, but I thought I would let you know that I won't be spending Christmas with you or the grandchildren,” she said.

“What the hell in that in aid off,” I said.

“Well Tam, you have brought that on yourself as you have been such a hard case throughout the whole move and we don't want your hostility with those friends down in Sydney hat Dan has,” said Mum flatly, stating her case.

“Oh is that so? Well, I can come up for the day with the kids and we can stay in a cheap hostel... you just have to let us know what day you are leaving” I said.

“No Tam, you and the kids are excluded,” Mum said, “but you can come with me to coffee tomorrow.”

“Okay, but it will be after work,” I said.

“Since when have you started work here,” asked Mum.

“Well if you kept in contact instead of taking too much notice of Dan and Meryl you might know these things,” I snapped.

“Oh well, good bye,” and the phone went dead. That was like the last kick in the guts that I needed. I just broke down on the floor and cried in rivulets.

A while later, there was a knock on the door and I opened it. “Hi Mum, sorry we are late, but we have been at the movies,” said David. “Mum are you alright?”

“Yes, it is just a little hay fever,” I sniffed, trying to stop myself from crumpling into a heap on the floor.

“Bulldust Mum,” said David “You have been crying.”

“Yes Mum, what happened? Spill,” said Jenny curiously and looking at me with those big blue eyes.

“Well, Dan and Meryl have organized that Oma goes to Sydney and we are excluded kids,” I said.

“What? Has Oma lost her marbles,” said Jenny.

“I am going to ring them,” said David, picking up my iPhone and ringing them up. “There was no answer, but I did hear the phone click.”

“Never mind,” I said. “How about a simple beach Christmas?” I smiled through my tears. “Jen, what do you say about staying here with, Mum,” said David seriously.

“No kids don’t disrupt yourself. I have my work and I will be seeing Oma tomorrow,” I said. “I seriously never thought that Oma would ever do things like this,” said Jenny.

“Neither did I,” I faltered, trying to avoid breaking down again.

“How about we enjoy a BBQ Mum,” said David, carrying the ingredients he and Jenny just purchased.

“Yes okay,” I said feeling a little better.

The next day, the kids had their final breakfast with me and then they were off to university. “Look after yourself and we will be back at Christmas, Mum,” said David and Jenny as they went on the bus and waved goodbye through the bus windows.

I felt alone as I caught the bus to work. Trying to avoid being upset, I tidied up and had the restaurant cleaned like a whistle. I did not realize the time till Chris said, “It is lunchtime, Tam. And would you like to learn how to do cappuccino’s next week,” he asked.

“Oh okay, no worries,” I said.

“That’s the spirit,” he smiled. “Now, instead of doing an extra hour today, would you be able to come here for breakfast at around 6a.m.? You have twelve hours tomorrow, Tam,” said

Chris.”

“Thanks Chris,” I said.

“That is okay, Tam,” said Chris as I took my lunch and went to wait for the bus.

## CHAPTER 17

### MUM

I saw it was another twenty minutes, so I finished my burger, but then I caught sight of the express bus and ran towards it. In no time, I saw Mum near the donut king. “Hi Tam. Here is some money and would you be able to get me a coffee, half strength?”

“Yes okay.” I ordered two cups and donuts and brought it to her.

“You look a little peaky, Tam,” said Mum.

“Well, I am just tired Mum...I have been at work,” I said.

“Oh,” she said.

“Now what is the story about you going to Sydney as all of us excluded,” I snapped.

“Well, Dan and Meryl have organized matters and I cannot do anything about it,” she said.

“That may be, but you can say no to them,” I faltered.

“No, not possible,” indicated Mum.

“Well give me the flight number and we’ll see about that,” I said.

“No, I haven’t the information...Meryl has,” Mum retorted. “Tam do you mind to carry my bag for me as I am feeling wobbly?”

“No Mum. I am exhausted as I have just finished work,” I said.

“Tam you are a young woman,” Mum smirked.

My phone rang and Mum asked who it was. I felt like saying it was my lover, but no, “It is work Mum. I have to go,” I said noticing Mum calling out to me and luckily the bus was waiting there. Talk about a speedy exit.

I was soon settling into my job doing the breakfast and the café whenever Chris wanted it and thoroughly enjoyed it. “I am really impressed with your workload lately and whatever I teach you, it is never too much effort for you,” said Chris.

“Thanks so much,” I said as I left yet another shift. I looked at the Christmas decorations with disgust as I would be spending it alone with the kids. The last person I expected to hear from was Mum. “Tam, I have a place and you can move in straight away if you want,” Mum prattled.

“Really,” I said, sounding excited as I really was reluctant to leave the cabin park.

“Meet me tomorrow and cancel your place,” said Mum, sounding like a kid in a candy store.

“Okay,” I said.

I told the cabin park manager that I was leaving and went to meet Mum the next day after



work. "This is beautiful, Mum," I said.

"This is what Dan and Meryl organized for the both of us," Mum said with those evil eyes looking at me.

## CHAPTER 18

### GOOD ADVICE

I had just plonked down with my TV and started to set it all up. “Who owns this furniture,” I asked not thinking.

“It is Dan and Meryl’s and they are coming as I leave on the plane tomorrow,” Mum said, oblivious to how I was feeling.

“What in the hell? You tricked me to come here and know full well I haven’t even a damn fridge here, Mum,” I faltered.

“Nothing I can do about it.”

Then there was a beep outside and Dan thundered into the house. “How do you like the house, Tam,” Dan snarled.

“It is shit if you really must know and take your damn furniture. I have a backache from the damn chairs already.”

“I think someone is just taking a hissy fit,” snapped Dan. “That is our cue to go and are you ready, Mum?”

“See you Tam,” Mum said without even giving me a hug.

There I sat all alone, feeling lost and desolate. Luckily, there was one large bed in there and I sat down, meaning to only rest for a bit, but I fell asleep until morning.

The next day, I jumped out of bed, suddenly feeling hungry and walked to the toilet half-asleep. All of a sudden, I slipped on something and fell with a sickening thud on the floor and knocked myself out.

I don’t know how long I had been there. I woke up trying to regain my composure, but I felt disorientated. As I tried to get myself up, I winced in pain. I looked down my wrist and it had swollen to twice its size. “What do I do now?” My head was starting to ache and throb. In the fog, I thought I would walk to the shopping centre and luckily I caught the right bus which brought me straight to the hospital.

I went to the triage feeling disorientated and in pain. The nurse at triage took one look at me and put me ahead of the cue. “How are you feeling, Ma'am,” she asked.

“Not too good,” I replied.

As she asked a multitude of questions, it became apparent that I had slight concussion and a broken wrist. “Now Tam, have you had any painkillers today?” I said “no” and the nurse went back to get the doctor so that I could be given the painkillers. “Here you are Ma'am,” she said,

“and the doctor will be with you in a moment.”

I took the painkillers and soon felt a little better, but tired. “How are you, Tam,” the young doctor said.

“I have seen better days,” I faltered.

“Well you had a nasty bump to the head and a broken wrist, Tam. So you are not to stay home alone tonight, just to be on the safe side,” he said seriously. “Is there a next of kin that I can call?”

“Yes, here is my Mum’s number,” I said.

“Okay then I will call her to come here or meet you at home,” he said as he went away to call. A little while later he came back. “Tam is there something going on with your family?”

“No not really,” I said, wondering what Mum had said. “What did Mum say, by the way?”

“Well your Mum is hell bent on going to Sydney while you are having an injury. I explained how serious it was and it was disregarded,” said the doctor sounding annoyed.

“Well it goes like this Doc, my mother and I had looked after one another for years until my brother promised her a house.”

“Oh I see,” said the doctor sounding interested.

“Once we arrived here in the tropics, the house never eventuated and I find that my mother is taking my brothers side and not listening to anything that I say...” I faltered nearly bursting into tears.

“Oh cripes, not another spineless old woman,” said the doctor.

“I did not say that,” I said looking at him.

“I know, Tam, but I just put two and two together and I come up four,” he smiled “It is none of my business, Tam, but your family has no respect for you or your children and if I were you I would distance myself from them and make life for yourself.”

“Oh,” I said.

“Yes, Tam you can. Have you eaten yet?”

“No.”

“Well I’ll get you a sandwich and a juice,” said the doctor, talking to the nurse to get me a sandwich and a drink. The nurse returned and gave me the sandwich. “Now you eat that, Tam, while I organize your plaster.”

I finished the sandwich and then the doctor popped my plaster on. “Now I was going to pop you in hospital tonight,” said the doctor, “but there has been a serious accident nearby so there are no beds. Now, here is the number of the hospital and promise me if you feel worse then call the ambulance, Tam,” said the doctor, concerned.

“Thanks so much, Doc, for listening to my winging,” I said.

“That wasn’t winging but airing your problems. I am glad I haven’t a mother like that jeeeeeese,” he said.

I went home on the bus with a packet of painkillers and felt the warmth of the plaster on my arm. It was nearly Christmas time and all the decorations were up. I thought that I would ring David and Jenny to let them know what happened. I need not have worries, as I arrived home with supplies, there was a call from David.

“Hi! How are you, Mum,” he asked, trying to sound cheerful.

“Not too bad,” I lied.

“Mum what is wrong? You sound awful.”

“I have broken my wrist, Dave, and I'm on painkillers, so not good.”

“Oh crumbs are you alone, Mum? As we have to work on Christmas Day,” he said seriously.

“I am good, David,” I faltered. “I will see you after Christmas then.” I sighed.

“Is that okay with your Mum? We need the money,” he said.

“Where is Jen?”

“At a lecture, Mum,” said David. “Well, I better get going. My lecture starts soon. Ring me if you need anything, Mum.”

At that moment, I felt like bursting into tears at the thought of spending Christmas alone with a broken arm. It was terrible, but I managed to take a shower and get a coffee. Finally, from sheer exhaustion and the effects of painkillers, I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER 19

### CHRISTMAS DAY

A few days later, it was Christmas Day, and I woke up feeling glum. I was just about to get some cereal for breakfast, as I had slept late, when there was a knock on the door. I answered and to my surprise it was David and Jenny. “Hi Mum! Merry Christmas,” said David and Jenny together.

“Hi kids,” I said giving them a hug. “I thought you were coming tonight or tomorrow

“Well do you think we would leave you home alone at Christmas,” said Jenny, smiling.

“What about your work, Dave?”

“We worked extra hours and completed it earlier,” said David. “On top of that, I scored a casual job in a computer shop.”

“Wow, way to go kids,” I said smiling.

“Now have you eaten, Mum? We have brought Japanese pastries from the Japanese bakery. I will get you a coffee,” said Jenny.

We all sat down and enjoyed one another’s company at Christmas. “Have you still any ideas on Christmas dinner, Mum,” asked David seriously.

“No, not really,” I said, wondering what David was up to.

“Well aren’t you lucky that I have sausages, bread rolls and salad for a BBQ? You still have the BBQ, don’t you, Mum?”

“Sure, no worries,” I said.

“How does that feel? Here try this green tea pastry. It is really yum,” said Jenny as she handed me a piece of it.

“Now what is going on, Mum? I thought Oma would have stayed with you until we arrived,” said David.

“The doctor phoned her and he was annoyed that she did not even stay one hour to see how I was,” I faltered.

“What the heck, Mum? And look at your head! Blimey that was some fall,” said Jenny looking at the egg on my head.

“That is not all, as I did this as well,” I said, showing them my hip which sported a large bruise.

“Crikey, Mum, just as well we’re here,” said David. “Have you phoned work to let them know what is going on?”

“Yes. I have the next week off and then it is back to work, but light duties,” I said.

“That is okay,” said David.

“Have you sorted out this money business yet, Mum,” asked Jenny.

“No I have not seen a cent of it,” I faltered.

“Oh Jeeeeeeese,” said Jenny seriously.

## CHAPTER 20

### SECRETS

“Are there any pillows here,” asked Jenny.

“No Jen,” I said.

“Okay, I will go and have a look in the cupboards here,” said Jenny, looking in Mum’s room and the cupboards. “Mum look at this!”

“What is it,” I said, wondering what on earth she was talking about.

“I think here is where your money is and there is another sheet of paper. Here Mum.”

“Yes, that looks like what it is, but it gives no bank details or account details only a selections numbers,” I said seriously. “What is this paper?” I turned it over and it said Triads and the Walf along with this note:

*”Thanks for your recent dealings with us and look forward to doing business with you again. The Walf.”*

“Who the hell is he or she?”

“Oh Christ, don’t tell me, Mum..give me a look at the paper,” said David seriously. “Oh my god, I think the Triads are a big money laundering organization and the Walf is America’s most wanted.”

“Blimey David, what the hell is going on now,” said Jenny.

“It appears that Oma, and maybe Dan and Meryl, are involved in a money laundering organization. That is a criminal offence,” said David seriously.

“Oh shit, what now kids,” I said.

“Well Mum, I think it is time to get more information from around here, go to the police as soon as possible and then pack up and leave,” said David.

“It is Christmas Day kids,” I said.

“I know and the both of us will turn this place upside down to look for more information, Mum,” said David.

“Ok,” I said.

For quite a while, the kids both looked around and found more information on Oma’s money laundering ventures. “Look at this! It is a receipt of the Walf and Oma’s tax bill and it does not correspond at all,” I said.

“I know Mum,” said Jenny, holding up several papers.

“Now what do we do kids?”

“Have you got your scanner here,” said David.

“Yes sure.”

“How about you scan all the documents and tomorrow we will go to the police? When does Oma come home Mum,” asked David seriously.

“New Years Day.”

“Okay we will scan these documents, and tomorrow get the documents all photocopied and go to the police with them,” said David.

The documents were scanned and put in David’s laptop bag until tomorrow. For the rest of the day, we enjoyed the Christmas festivities despite the discovery.



## CHAPTER 21

### COP SHOP

The next day, all of us went out to McDonald's for breakfast. After, David went to get the documents photocopied at the newsagent and then we all went to the police station.

"Now what can I do for you," asked the young receptionist at the police station.

"I want to make a statement as we have found this," said David seriously.

"Just a minute," said the receptionist as she looked at the documents.

Soon, the detective introduced himself and called us all in, one-by-one, and grilled us for questions. It was quite grueling, and we were glad to go. As we all left, he said we would be in touch.

"So what now, Dave," I said.

"I think we should start packing," he said.

"How about we get lunch first and bring it home," I said.

"Yes, that is okay, Mum."

We brought lunch home and started packing. As we just finished and sat down for lunch, the police officers came to our door. "What is up officer," asked David.

"Plenty, young man, as we believe your family is involved in an international crime money laundering organization and fraud. It would be wise to leave this area," he said seriously.

"That is what we were thinking," I said.

"Smart move people, and where are you going?"

"To the local cabin park," I said.

"When? Today," asked the officer, noting it down in his book.

"Yes as soon as we finish lunch and packing we'll be off," I said.

"Okay people and we will keep you up to date as things are not looking good for your family," said the detective.

"Oh blimey," I said, looking downcast.

The detective noticed it and said, "Now Tam, you have done the right thing by informing the authorities. Your family are doing things that they are not suppose to do and have to be dealt with accordingly."

"Yes, I know, but it still doesn't make me feel better."

## CHAPTER 22

### THOMAS AND JOAN

Shortly after, we arrived at the cabin park and I went to the office to collect my keys from Thomas and Joan. “Hi Tam, as you are a returning customer you receive 10% of your rent,” said Thomas proudly.

“Ok and thanks.”

“What did you do to your arm, Tam,” asked Joan.

“Just slipped coming out of the toilet.”

“Take it easy, Tam,” they both said.

Over the next few days, the police came. They told us that Mum had been arrested for tax evasion and fraud and would be in court in a few days time. They were also close to arresting Dan and Meryl and had indicated to us that they were not as rich as they made out. “Oh, I thought they were loaded,” said Jenny as she heard the police give details.

“No, not really, Jenny, as they use borrowed money for most of their ventures and made only a little more than normal wages,” said the officer.

“Blimey,” I said as I sat down and took it all in. My own mother involved in money laundering and fraud...crikey!

“Are you going to the hearing tomorrow, Mum,” asked David.

“No, I don’t think so as it is my first day back,” I said.

“When do you start, Mum,” asked Jenny.

“I start at 8 and finish at one...Chris has me on light duties until I recover. Okay, I better get some supplies and get organized for tomorrow. Are you coming kids?”

“Why not,” was the resounding reply as we went out for dinner and went home.

The next day, I prepared to go to work. “Are you nervous, Mum,” asked David, making me a light breakfast.

“A little. Thanks for breakfast and I will see you after lunch,” I said and I hugged both kids goodbye.

## CHAPTER 23

### KIDNAPPED

I walked to the bus stop and there was nobody waiting there. I noticed that there was a black car nearby. I thought I would walk to the following bus stop, pretending to look busy. I could see the bus stop in the distance and did not realize how close the black car was coming behind me. All of a sudden, I could hear footsteps, then somebody knocked something on my head and I was out unconscious.

I don't know how much time later it was, but I awoke and tried to orientate myself. I saw a meal on the table, and as I familiarized myself, I realized I was in a small room with a bed. I then heard footsteps and pretended I was asleep. As the door opened, I pretended to wake up with a fright. "So you are awake, Ms Benderson," sneered a fat fellow.

"Yes I am," I faltered.

"Now have you eaten," indicated a thinner man.

"No," I said.

"Well, you will be flying out soon so I suggest you have some food," said the fat man.

"Okay, but why am I here?"

Then, they both burst out laughing and said, "That is what you get when you stick your nose into your brothers business!"

The door closed and I ate my meal that consisted of meat, potatoes, vegetables and a drink. It was a little on the bland side, but that was okay. Then it clicked. The reason I was here was because of Dan Meryl and my own mother. "Oh shit! My kids will be worried about me," I thought as I looked for my bag, but could not find it.

A little while later, the door opened and I was escorted through numerous passageways and taken to a plane and put on. "Here you are," Fat Manuel. I was tied up on the plane and told to take a tablet. "She should be out like a baby soon," sneered Fat Manuel to the boss. Fat Manuel gave me the tablet and water and untied my hands. He was too busy gasbagging to the boss to notice that I had spat the tablet out and taken a big gulp of water. "Now have you taken the tablet Ms Benderson?" I nodded as he carried on talking to the other men.

I tried to listen, but thought it wise to take notice of my surroundings and just play the game, so I pretended to be feeling tired. As I was drifting off, Fat Manuel said, "I think she is ready for K7. She is sleeping like a baby," he smirked.

"Well done, Fat Manuel. The Walf will be happy with us today," said the boss, who got into

the cockpit.

As I pretended to sleep, I slowed down my heart rate and felt Fat Manuel checking to see if I was really asleep while he tied my legs up as my arm was in plaster. I did not flinch, as my late father had taught me the art of deep meditation so that it looked like I was asleep. “Now are we all ready gang,” said the boss.

“Yes,” indicated Fat Manuel as I heard him moving around and making himself comfortable for the flight.

## CHAPTER 24

### K7

Meanwhile, there was a phone call from Chris to David. “Hi David. This is Chris your Mum’s boss. Your Mum should have arrived at work but she hasn’t.”

“Mum left for work just after breakfast, Chris, so that is odd,” indicated David.

“Maybe she decided to start tomorrow, Dave, and needed an extra day,” said Chris.

“Okay Chris, but I will let you know when Mum arrives,” said David.

“You look like you have seen a ghost, Dave. What is wrong,” asked Jenny.

“Nothing much as yet, but Mum did not arrive for work,” said David seriously.

“What? But Mum left after breakfast...are you thinking what I am thinking, Dave,” said Jenny frantically.

“Yes, but at the same time, Jen, Mum has been through a lot these last few months and I would not go panicking yet,” said David, turning white.

“You’re right Dave, but given the recent involvement with the police it would not hurt to give them a call.”

David informed the police that I was missing. They came to the cabin park straight away, looking serious. “I know Mum has not been missing for 24-hours but we thought we would give you a call,” said David, trying to remain calm.

“Just as well you did, David, as there was a report of two or three men in a black car that knocked your Mum out and took her away.”

“Who saw it,” asked Jenny.

“A young girl on her way to school,” said the detective.

“Oh blimey,” said Jenny, crumpling up in a heap. “Nooooooooooooooooooooo, noooooooooooooooooooooo, this cannot be happening!”

“We’ll do our best to find her, kids,” said the detective seriously.

Despite all the searching over the months that followed, there was no trace of Tam to be found anywhere or any new clues to her whereabouts.

## **CHAPTER 25**

### **THE MOUNTAIN**

After many pills and pretending to be asleep, the plane landed on pad 12. “Now where do we take her, Boss,” said Fat Manuel.

“Has she taken her last pill?”

“Yes,” said Fat Manuel.

“Well to the quarters where the workers for the power grid are and the Walf wants her to be well looked after for some reason,” said the boss.

“Well we better do what he says or we’ll end up like Snoz did a few months ago.”

I was popped on a stretcher that was colored silver and black and transported through a labyrinth of alleyways. Finally we reached my quarters and popped gently on my bed. Soon, there was a meal popped on the table with juice and coffee and then my door was closed quietly, but not locked. I waited and did not hear any footsteps. I looked around my room, which had a bookcase, shower, toilet bed and a lamp as well as heating. The meal was under a silver bowl and as I lifted it up, I saw that it was beef wellington, vegetables and apple pie with custard for dessert. I was so hungry I ate the lot and tried to think of what happened in the last forty eight hours. It was too much and I drifted off to sleep.

## CHAPTER 26

### SPIKE

I must have slept through the night. The next morning, I awoke to somebody knocking. I got up and it was somebody with food. “Hi Ma'am, here is your breakfast and here are your directions,” he said.

“Oh,” I said, looking at a piece of paper.

“I will show you the ropes. Do you mind if I explain things here Ma'am,” said a blonde man.

“No not at all,” I said while looking at him suspiciously.

“Thanks. First, of all, I am Spike and my quarters are next door,” he smiled.

“I am Tam,” I said, trying to avoid looking into his blue eyes.

“Welcome Tam. I am here to show you how to work a power grid,” he grinned.

“A what, Spike?”

“A power grid.”

“Blimey, I had no idea,” I said.

“That is okay. I have been here for over ten years, Tam, so I'll show you how to do things, but first let's eat.”

Both of us sat down and ate our scrambled egg and toast with fruit juice. I tried to avoid gazing at Spike lustfully because I had to find a way out and not reveal my plans.

As I had finished my breakfast, Spike said, “Now here is your uniform and I will meet you outside in five, Tam.”

I took the packet, which included make up, and put my uniform on and a dark T on my face, then met Spike outside my quarters. “Ready Tam,” he asked.

“Sure,” I said nervously.

We went along several escalators and conveyor belts till we hit the power grid and work. “Now this is, Tam, people,” said Spike.

“Oh the newbie, Spike,” said one gruff man looking me up and down.

“Yes, Tantor. Tam will be following my directions,” said Spike.

“Of course you know more than me when it comes to the power grid, Spike,” indicated Tantor.

“Now we are near the edge of the mountain, Tam,” said Spike, “and I will teach you how to man the controls for temperature regulation and what not.”

“Okay,” I said as I followed directions and making sure I did not draw attention to myself.

All morning, Spike showed me what to do and then it was time for lunch. "Lunch time people," said Tantor.

"Tam, do you want something hot or something cold," asked Spike, looking at me with those deep blue eyes.

"I think I will have a hot lunch," I said, thinking that this might be my last meal of the day.

"Okay Tam." My meal was place down next to Spike's. I opened it and it was lasagna with dessert and a drink. I took a bite of the lasagna and it was delicious. "How is your meal, Tam?"

"Great! Compliments to the chef," I said and Tantor overheard it and smiled.

After lunch, Spike and I did a few more hours and then went back to our quarters. "How was it, Tam," asked Spike as he led me to my quarters.

"Thanks for being there," I said.

"Anytime Tam," he said. "Do you want to join me for dinner tonight?" I looked at him hesitantly and Spike noticed. "It is only dinner Tam."

"Sure, why not," I said.

I noticed that someone had put clothes on my bed and saw that it was pajamas. I went into the shower and enjoyed the warm jets over my body. I did not realize that I had been under the shower for that long.

"Are you in there, Tam," said Spike.

"Yes," I said, hurriedly changing. I opened the door and the food trolley came. We both sat down for a meal. The food trolley man left and closed the door.

"Are you okay there, Tam?"

"What is this place, Spike," I hissed.

"Well Tam, it is the organization of the Silver Triads and its leader is the Walf."

"The what?"

"The Walf," said Spike, "and I have been here for over ten years. I want to get home now." he said.

"I don't think there is a way out," I said, not wanting to draw attention.

"Tam, I know it is a big ask and I don't know you all that well, but would you like to work with me and try to get out of this place," said Spike seriously.

"Are you completely out of your cotton picking mind," I said, looking at him seriously. "Now we are well looked after here and given ample food and quarters, so why bother?"

"How long have you been here, Tam," asked Spike.

"A few days," I faltered.

"I have been here for much longer than that and will you help me please?"

"Mmmm, why do you trust me Spike? And I need to know how you became to be hostage," I demanded.

"Sure Tam. I was member of a group called the Red Triangle and our leader was Billy



Man,” said Spike, telling how he landed here. “Well, we tried to do the right thing by exposing criminals and you guessed it, the Walf busted our whole group and took Billy Man away somewhere. I never heard of him again. I trust you Tam. Don’t ask me why, but I just do,” said Spike pleasantly.

## CHAPTER 27

### THE WALF

“Okay, in that case, then I will work out a plan with you for the next few weeks to get out,” I said. “Now who is this Walf character, Spike?”

“The Walf is our leader and a mysterious individual who worked at Pizza Hut in the outskirts of Sydney Australia. Now he is called the Walf, not to be confused with the animal called a wolf, Tam, and is now the leader of the Silver Triads, living in that penthouse on top over near where the computer hackers are.”

“OMG,” I said.

“Shhhh, Tam let me continue,” said Spike. “The hideaway of the Silver Triads is inside the mountain, away from prying eyes and away from the claws of the authorities who are at wits end to unlock and bring this organization down. The Walf has hollowed out the mountain so that we can live in here so the Silver Triad organization could operate in secret without any outside influence. The Walf also has several planes and helicopters and everything that the organization could possibly need.”

The Walf organized all this...is he some kind of genius or what,” I asked.

“Yes, you could say that, Tam, as he has computer systems unlike any that you have ever seen before. The systems are so far untraceable to the outside world, so in effect, they could hack to their hearts content without fear of reprisals or being held accountable for their actions,” said Spike. “I think the Walf wants to rule the world and benefit mankind, but while keeping this hideout a secret.”

“Sweet Jesus,” I hissed.

“I know, and food is grown inside the mountain and water is taken from the ice on the mountain...in other words everything you need has been thought of by the Walf.”

“So have you seen the Walf, Spike?”

“Yes, many times when I had to change jobs,” said Spike. “You go up those lifts until you reach the top of the mountain by the rolling escalators. There is rumor that others live in the other mountain and are transported to this mountain via secret tunnels.”

“Oh yes, I remember those tunnels from when I was taken here,” I hissed.

“Shhhhhhhhh, Tam, you were supposed to be asleep,” said Spike.

“I know,” I smiled, looking at Spike.

“Well, what do you reckon, Tam? Are you going to help me get out of this place?”

“Sure, but we have to be careful, monitor the times that the guards are at work and not leave anything to chance, especially as I am slightly handicapped with this broken arm,” I said.

“How about we sit and plan it carefully over the next few weeks or so and take it from there?”

“Okay,” I said.

So, over the next few weeks, Spike and I worked on the power grids and noticed that, quite often, some of the guards were too busy sitting in the lounge to bother with what we were doing...especially on Friday's when they did not even count or show up.

That night, Spike came over to my quarters just as the food trolley man was coming over. “I thought you were coming after dinner, Spike?”

“No, I hope you don't mind, but I have ordered my meal to be delivered here. You don't mind do you, Tam?”

“No,” I said, smiling at him.

## CHAPTER 28

### ESCAPE

Soon, we both sat down and had a pleasant meal together. Spike stood up and made sure that the door was closed. “Now, how about tomorrow you try and get us out of here,” said Spike.

“Okay but are you sure the guards won’t suddenly turn up?”

“I have all bases covered, Tam,” said Spike seriously.

“Now where do I go from here?”

“Well tomorrow is Friday and you are to keep an eye if any of the guards show up. If they don’t, then you go out the back control room, out that door which I have unlocked and then out the passage way. From there, keep going downhill and look for a small tea house and try and contact Connor West.”

“You mean the Connor West from Interpol,” I asked curiously.

“Yes and tell them where the Triads are.” I sat there looking at him and Spike noticed it. “Are you alright, Tam,” he asked curiously.

“Of course Spike, it is just...”

“What Tam?”

“I think I am falling in love with you,” I blurted out, and then realizing what I had just said. “Oh sorry Spike,” I babbled, feeling like an idiot.

“Tam, Tam, Tam,” said Spike softly and looking into my eyes. “I feel the same way about you right from the very first moment I saw you.” said Spike. “How about a kiss...or don’t I get one tonight?”

“Of course,” I said as I went over to where Spike was sitting and kissed him fondly.

It was some time later that Spike left and I prepared myself mentally for the next day when I would try and escape from the place.

The next day, the food trolley arrived and I was given a hot breakfast. Then, just as I finished my meal, Spike arrived. “Now Tam, be careful,” he hissed. “Here is some food to take with you and several coins to use a computer.”

The both of us arrived at work and Tantor was there. “Now can you work at the back controls, Tam and Spike. I have stuff to do on the other side of the mountain, so I trust you will be okay for the day?”

“Sure,” I said, trying to avoid attention.

We both went back to the back control room and I said, “Now what if I get caught with

these coins," I faltered.

"There the same for the vending machine nearby, Tam, so all is taken care of. Now are you ready," said Spike, giving me a big jacket.

"Of course Spike," I said as I kissed him. "Now if I don't make it, can you make sure David and Jenny are notified?"

"Of course Tam," said Spike.

I sneaked out, making sure nobody saw me leave and went down the passage way and outside. I walked and walked and saw in the distance that there was a small teahouse and smiled. Soon I will be there and help will arrive. There was a little stream nearby and I stopped to have a drink, noting the beauty of the mountain as I proceeded to walk towards the bridge. All of a sudden, I did not see the slippery rock underneath my feet and fell on the back of my head. I called out for help, thinking that now I would be in serious trouble with the Walf. My throat was getting hoarse and I passed out with exhaustion

I don't know how long I had been out, but I heard Spike say, "She's coming around Doc."

"Now how's the head Ms. Benderson," said an unfamiliar voice. I tried to sit up but everything was blurry as I tried to open my eyes.

"Take it easy, Tam," said Spike, seriously, as I opened my eyes and wondered where the hell I was. My eyes grew accustomed to the light and saw that I was in a hospital of some description.

"I am Doctor Zalt, and you have had quite a nasty bump to the head Ma'am."

As I sat upright, I winced because of the pain in my head, but noticed that the plaster on my arm was gone. "How long have I been out Doc," I winced.

"Several weeks. I have taken your plaster off and x-rayed your wrist as it has all healed. Now are you interested in a hot meal?"

"Oh yes, please," I said.

"Well I will just go and get it for you as well as some more painkillers," said the doctor.

"Thanks," I said.

When the doctor closed the door Spike said, "Now you were that close to being found, Tam," said Spike seriously.

"Really, how did you know that?"

"That is because I followed you about half-an-hour later and saw that you were unconscious and brought you back to the control room. I made out you slipped there, but I made sure to take off jacket and the tracking devices in your shoes, so nobody would be the wiser," smiled Spike.

"So in other words, Spike, you saved my life?"

"Of course, Tam. You do anything for someone you really love," said Spike, kissing me.

## CHAPTER 29

### WALF

The doctor walked in with two meals and soon the both of us were sitting, enjoying tuna Moray and vegetables. “Mmmmmmm, this tastes great,” I said.

“Well, you have to keep your strength up, Tam,” said Spike.

“Of course,” I said.

“Now here are your painkillers, Tam,” said the doctor, handing me several pain killers. “There is a message from the Walf, Tam, and he wants to see you after.”

“What for, I might ask,” I said, nearly panicking at the thought of seeing his honor.

“Nothing to worry about, I should imagine, as he wants you for dinner. Now you are dismissed, Spike, as you are needed at the power grid,” said the doctor handing Spike some paper.

Spike leaned over to me and said, “Don’t reveal anything, Tam.”

As Spike left, the doctor said, “Now get some rest before you meet the Walf, Tam.”

“Rest,” I thought to myself. “Mmmmm, was he on to us or what?”

Then, I must have fallen asleep and was woken up much later by the doctor. “Tam, Tam, it is time to meet the Walf,” he said.

“I don’t know my way around there,” I wailed.

“That is all taken care off as I am wheeling you up there in this wheel chair,” beamed the doctor.

Soon, I was given a dressing gown and taken up to the Walf’s quarters and almost felt like a nervous wreck. There was a young woman that opened his door and she asked, “Is this Tam Benderson?”

“Yes, it is,” said the doctor.

I waited in the waiting room and was then taken into the Walf’s quarters. The doctor left and I was alone. Then, I heard footsteps coming towards me. I looked up and saw somebody that was blond and blue eyed, unlike what I expected a criminal to look like. “Welcome Tam,” smiled the Walf, on his smug face as he stood and did a Nazi power move. “Now would you like a real treat, Tam,” said the Walf while pouring out pink liquid.

“Sure,” I said, playing along with him and noticed that he was eyeing me lustfully.

“Try it, Tam,” said the Walf, looking at me with deSire.

“Mmmmm, this is great,” I said, sipping what looked like pink champagne.

The Walf clicked his fingers and somebody came in with a meal tray. “Now that will be all, Valcar,” said the Walf seriously. “Now Tam, open up your meal and enjoy.”

I opened up my meal and saw that it was lobster and the biggest one I had ever seen. “You have to keep your strength up, Tam,” said the Walf gulping down his food and belching.

“Oh Christ,” I thought, “what a pig.”

The food was delicious. Walf kept pouring champagne into my glass and I was feeling a little light headed. “Tam, what do you reckon about changing jobs to computer hacking,” smiled the Walf.

“I don’t know that much about computers,” I faltered.

“Says who?”

“I am over 35 and really am not what you call an expert,” I faltered.

“Tam, I have watched your progress and you are a lot smarter than you give yourself credit for.”

“Really,” I said suddenly bursting into a fit of burping due to the pink champagne.

“Hey, don’t worry about that, but are you interested, Tam?” Walf sat next to me and moved closer to me. I tried to flinch but decided to play along with the Walf as he moved closer and closer and place his arm around my shoulder. He proceeded to kiss me until he turned my face around and passionately kissed me on the mouth. I had no choice but to respond to his fervent kissing.

“Tam, is there something wrong?”

“No, not really, but I want to talk and get to know you first before jumping into things,” I said, not wanting to say I was well and truly pissed off.

“Well okay, then let’s talk,” said the Walf as he held me close to him. “You should not be so tense, Tam.” The Walf tried to relax my shoulders.

“Just nervous here.”

“I can feel it and why?”

I felt like saying, “What you are doing is wrong and its criminal,” but I decided to divert the attention from me to him. “What do you believe in, Walf?”

“I am modeling myself on Adolf Hitler,” said the Walf, as he stood up in salute of him.

“He killed so many people and committed genocide of the Jews,” I faltered.

“That, I did not agree on, Tam. You are quite correct in that. I do not believe in killing people,” said the Walf, sounding almost sincere, but he did have some good ideas.

“You mean the idea of child endowment and working for the dole and all that,” I said.

“How do you know that Tam?”

“Well, my dad was in a prison camp...and he told me all I really needed to know about the Second World War,” I smiled.

“I had no idea, Tam. Wow!”

“Tam, you need to relax more. You are very tense and there is no need to be afraid because I idolize Adolf Hitler. I won’t harm you, Tam,” said the Walf, standing me up, embracing me and walking me slowly to the bedroom. “We can have our own Aryan race here, because that is the way I feel about you,” beamed the Walf.

“Mmmm, is that so, Walf,” I mumbled as I tried to ignore and not engage in his sexual advances.

“You said what, Tam,” asked the Walf, cheekily, looking at me and bringing me closer bodily.

“Nothing much...but I never knew you felt like that,” I said sounding bewildered.

“Well I do.”

“What in god’s name do I do now and how the hell do I get out of this situation,” I thought to myself as the Walf suddenly plonked me on the bed as he started to kiss me passionately.

Just then, there was a frantic knock on the door and it was Valcar. “What is it Valcar? Can’t it wait until morning? I am busy.”

“No, it cannot, and it has something to do with funds,” said Valcar, noticing that the Walf had me on the bed.

“Oh sorry about this, Tam, but let me know if you are interested,” said the Walf, trying to compose himself after kissing me intensely.

“Yes I am,” I smiled.

“Now I will get my secretary to take you back to the hospital,” smiled the Walf. I was wheeled to the hospital and the doctor met me there. He took me to my bed and I must have dozed off.



## CHAPTER 30

### COMPUTER HACKING

I woke up a little while later and Spike was sitting there. “Now what did the Walf have to say for himself, Tam?”

“Not much ...but I am to work in the computer hacking department,” I smiled.

“Tam that is excellent!”

“Spike, is there anyone else here,” I faltered, feeling like the worst woman in the world.

“No, the doctor and the nurse have left and they allowed me to visit you here, Tam. What is wrong?”

“Well, the Walf kissed me and was you know...” I said, looking down.

“Oh is that all, Tam,” said Spike.

“So you’re not angry, Spike,” I barked.

“No, you are in an awkward position and that is part of playing the game to survive this hell hole. I totally understand, but whatever you do don’t sleep with him,” said Spike seriously.

“Noooooooooooo,” I said.

“Did he offer you alcohol Tam?”

“Yes he did. Burrrrrrp,” I said, belching in front of Spike.

“Next time, tip the alcohol in the pot plants, but make sure you ask him to get some chocolate or something like that, so then his back will be turned. He will be none the wiser,” said Spike seriously.

“Oh blimey, I never thought of that,” I said.

“One advantage of being here for ten years, Tam, is I am in the know. Now, I better head off and you need to get to bed to have some rest,” said Spike giving me a kiss.

I slept soundly until morning when the doctor called me to check if I was wanting some breakfast. “Now how are you feeling, Tam?”

“Not too bad,” I said.

“Well how about we let you get to your quarters, but before we do the Walf wants to know if you are interested in undertaking the new position,” asked the doctor.

“Sure I am,” I said.

“Well here is your reading material and try to understand it before next week,” said the doctor handing me books.

I looked at them. They said “C drive” and had all the computer techno information that I

could master. They were written by the Walf. Spike came over later and the doctor said, "Now if you want to take Tam back to her quarters it will save me a trip down."

"Of course Sir," said Spike.

"Now do you want to get dressed or stay in your pajamas, Tam?"

"I think I will get dressed and then come down with you." I stood up and changed myself in the change room and then went to where Spike was standing.

"Now I will walk my lady down to our quarters," said Spike, holding me close and walking me down arm-in-arm.

Finally, Spike and I reached my quarters and Spike lifted me on the bed. "Have you looked at the books, Tam," asked Spike curiously.

"Yes and I don't understand it at all...let's face it I'm old," I faltered, feeling suddenly overwhelmed by the current situation.

"Bull dust Tam. To be honest with you, you look like a woman in her twenties," beamed Spike proudly.

"Thanks so much," I said.

"Now, I have to get back to work and you get some rest before lunch, Tam," said Spike thoughtfully.

I looked at the books again as Spike left and soon the lunch trolley arrived. "Now here are your directions for tomorrow, Tam," said a man, handing me a purple paper. "You are to pick up your uniform from the junction and your supervisor will be Byte."

He left and I ate my lunch, fell asleep and woke up when Spike returned. "How are you, Tam?"

"Not too bad...just resting as I start tomorrow," I faltered.

"Oh so soon," said Spike seriously.

"I have to pick up a new uniform at the junction. Would you be able to show me where it is?"

"Sure Tam," said Spike.

"Spike you are needed at the power grid," said Tantor, knocking on the door.

"I have only just finished my shift there, Tantor," wailed Spike.

"I know, Spike, but there is a problem with something and you are the only one that knows how to fix it properly," sighed Tantor.

"Okay, I'll come. Sorry about this, Tam," said Spike wearily as he left with Tantor to the power grid.

## CHAPTER 31

### HARE

I laid down and was almost asleep when I heard somebody shuffling at the end of the corridor. I listened while as the footsteps came closer and decided to investigate. I walked down the passageway and saw someone who resembled Merlin the magician. “Hi, who are you,” said the elderly gentleman.

“I am Tam,” I said, not knowing what to say.

“Pleased to meet you, Tam, and I am Hare,” said the elderly gent peering at me and trying to find his way. “I have lost my way.”

“Where do you have to go, Hare?”

“To the junction as I have to be there soon as I am one of the higher workers,” he said, looking downcast.

“OMG, AM I DREAMING OR WHAT,” I thought to myself while looking at the thin figure wearing a silver robe with Triad written all over it. “Okay, but I really do not know my way around this place, Hare,” I said.

“Now, Tam, how long have you been hostage here?”

“Around six months or so,” I said.

“I have been here over 10 years,” sighed the hare. “Now we can continue our chat and you can show me the way to the Junction as my eyes are failing. Show me the way via the green strip and that should lead you to the junction. Is it in front of you, Tam?”

“Yes it is,” I smiled, walking with the Hare.

“Now, who are you sleeping next to...at your quarters?”

“A guy by the name of Spike,” I said not giving any further information.

“Well I have heard of him and I am warning you to be on guard when he is around,” Hare responded.

“Why, what has he done as I have only seen him once and that was only briefly,” I lied, thinking now that I had to deal with resident evil next door. “What I meant, Tam,” replied Hare, seeing my concerned face, “is that he is a keeper and if you managed to get a bloke like that then you are lucky to have him. He tried to get my brother Owl out of this place, but the Walf’s associates caught him in the act. He was lucky to not have been killed for his actions, but he is now put in a position of doing the most mundane work here, just plain laboring at the power grid when he could be exposing the Walf’s evil deeds to the world and bringing the whole

organization down.”

“Wow,” I said as we followed the green stripe through hallways and corners until we reached the junction between the two mountains. “Here we are, Hare, and it says the Junction,” I faltered looking at the sign in front of me. At the same time a new person arrived and gave greetings to Hare.

“Hello, is that you Spock,” said Hare, wincing his eyes. “This kind lady, Tam, from the other side brought me here and you can take me now to the other mountain. Do you want to come with me Tam, and see the other mountain side?”

“Of course, and by the way aren’t you the new girl for the computer hackers?”

“Well yes and how do you know that,” I asked Spock curiously.

“Well, the news here travels fast,” Spock replied as he pressed a few buttons and then the door opened.

“OMG,” I thought to myself and could not believe my yes. It was unlike anything I had ever seen as we stood on a viewing platform looking out over several stories of people moving around everywhere like ants in the ants movie. “Is this all inside the mountain?”

“Yes it sure is, and it is set up by the Walf to provide all that we need to be a self-sufficient society with no need of the outside world,” Spock replied.

“This is awesome! Now where will I be working?”

“Over here, Tam,” said Spock, pointing to where the purple door was situated. “That is where the computer hackers are hard at work keeping track of the outside world, so you are on the up and up here, Tam.”

“I am flattered Spock but I am really not that good at computers,” I said.

“Well the Walf begs to differ on your train of thought; he is like that you know.”

“I have only met him once for a meal,” I said.

“Wow he must think the world of your ability, Tam,” beamed Spock proudly.

Suddenly, feeling overwhelmed by the situation, I asked to be shown the way home. “Now Tam, just go the way you came, but first follow the purple stripe and once that stops follow the green strip and it is 10 doors to the right and then you are home. Are you okay with that,” asked Spock, smiling with his thin face.

“Yes and I was suppose to pick up my new uniform,” I said.

“Oh that is no problem, Tam. It just here,” said Spock holding my shoulder gently and guiding me to the counter. The young girl appeared to know who I was. She handed me a parcel and asked me to sign off. I did just that and said goodnight to my kind new friends.

Fortunately, the route was just as Spock had described. I was soon sound asleep and more than ever determined to make it out of this place alone, realizing that David and Jenny must be worried about me.

The next day, I could hear the breakfast trolley arriving and I prepared for my new day on

the job. Spike came in and smiled, “How is sleeping beauty today and here is your uniform Tam.”

“Gee thanks, Spike, but I already got it last night. Sorry Spike.”

“That is okay, I was wondering why a uniform had already been given to you, but I thought you did not know the way to the Junction, Tam,” asked Spike curiously.

## CHAPTER 32

### COMPUTER HACKING

“It is a long story and I will tell you tonight. Is that alright by you, Spike?”

“Sure Tam,” said Spike. I looked at him and he was wearing computer hacker clothing as well.

“Now what is going on, Spike? Isn’t Byte my tutor for today?”

“No, I am taking over for a few days as Byte is ill, Tam,” said Spike.

“I thought you did not know anything about computer hacking,” I asked.

“Yes I was a computer hacker and the only one that knows how to get to the government mainframe computer, NASA and the pentagon. I had a few issues with the Walf and that is why I am on the power grid,” said Spike.

“Oh.” I said. “Now we had better have something to eat and then go.”

“Sure Tam,” and then we both went to where the computer hacker department was.

Now I was getting nervous, but excited at the same time, as I thought this would be my key to getting out of this place...with or without Spike.

“Nervous Tam,” asked Spike.

“Yes packing it,” I said, as I thought to myself to play the game and work on trying to get a message to David and Jenny without stuffing up.

“Don’t worry, Tam, you will just have to put up with me all day,” grinned Spike. I looked at him and instantly felt like cuddling him, but there was work to be done.

We reached the computer hacking room and I expected Spock to be there, but there was another fellow. “Hi Spike and Tam or should I say 9999 and 2211,” said the voice.

“That is alright, Vinto,” said Spike, “as we were both bar coded and allowed in.” Spike then showed me the lift leading to the computer hacking department and sensed I was nervous, so he put his arm around me for reassurance. The lift stopped and Spike guided me to a dark alleyway. There was a sequence of purple lights and Spike said, “This is where you will be working. Now Tam, you can swipe the door and go inside to work,” he said showing me the process.

As the door opened, we walked to the control desk together and Texno assigned us to our workstation. “Is that you Spike,” asked Texno curiously, looking at Spike as if he could not believe his eyes.

“Yes it is Texno,” said Spike.

“I thought you were a gonner after the stuff up with Owls escape,” said Texno.

“Sssssshh, Texno, the Walf has upgraded the security so he can bloody hear everything now! Can you for God sake shut up,” hissed Spike.

“Oh Christ has he?”

“Yes he has.”

“Have you heard from Owl since, Spike?”

“No,” said Spike not wanting to draw attention to himself.

“What was that all about,” I asked.

“I tell you tonight, Tam,” said Spike softly.

Texno motioned me to go to computer station number 13. “Now Ms Benderson, can you switch this on?”

“Sure,” I said. I thought that these computers were like the ones I was working on at Hungry Jacks. I was just about to switch it on and thought I would play it. “Mmm! Not sure about the system as it looks like an intranet network or something.”

“Well done Tam. No wonder you were recommended by the Walf as you use your initiative. Now here is how we log in and this is your code to get in and surf in stealth mode, unlike any other system of the world,” said Texno.

“Oh wow,” I said, and noticed that Spike was smiling as I was shown directions. I felt like asking him how to email my family, but thought I would better shut up about that for the moment. All of a sudden, Texno received a beep on his pager that was attached to his grey and black suit. “Now Tam, I have to see the Walf’s lieutenant, and Spike, would you be able to teach her the codes to hack into the mainframes? Make sure she writes them down and that should do her for today,” said Texno.

“Sure,” said Spike, looking at me.

“Now if you have time, Spike, run over the basics of C with Tam,” he said, exiting the room.

“Right oh,” said Spike.

Spike explained to me how to use the codes to hack into the FBI headquarters. The job was to monitor what they were up to and make notes for the Texno in the log book kept under the computer desk. “Now Tam, do you think you can do this on your own while I get you a drink?”

“Of course, Spike. I will try,” I said as I punched the codes in to get into the mainframe of the FBI. I looked into the Walf’s database and made notes on the procedures listed in the modus operadi. There was a lot to learn.

I thought I would be sneaky and look at any FBI files relating to my disappearance. There it was in black and white: a report that said I had not been seen for over six months. It also noted contact had been made after I disappeared and that Detective Poulos was still looking for me. Mmmmmmm!

Footsteps could be heard and it was Spike with a hot drink. “Tam, have you switched on the purple light at the back?”

I looked at the back of the computer. “No, is there a problem?”

“No not really, but it tracks all the searches you make and prevents you from contacting the outside world. If you do try, then it go up to the Walf’s lieutenant, Luke, and you are in big trouble.

“Oh,” I said.”

“Tam, have you hacked in yet?”

“Yes. I put this down about the Walf’s activities and what the FBI have info on, and made notes of the current investigations on him,” I said.

“Oh Tam, you are doing better than me when I first started. I am really very proud of you, said Spike giving me a hug. “Now how about we get started on computer programming?”

A few hours later, Texno returned and asked what we had completed. “All this,” I said and showed him.

“Well done you two, and now you are done for the day,” he smiled.

As we were both ushered out, we tagged off and exited the purple room. Spike and I walked down towards our quarters. I flopped on the bed. Spike lay next to me and I yawned. “Now how about that kiss I have been dying for all day,” said Spike cheekily.

“Of course,” I said as we engaged in passion. .

Soon the food trolley arrived and I wondered what was going to be on the menu tonight. “That smells good and I am starving,” I said. I opened the lid and was surprised at what I saw. “Salmon and salad with chocolate cake. What have you got, Spike?”

“Tam, I have the cheesecake instead of the chocolate cake,” he said.

“What is this in aid of,” I said.

“The reward for being such a hard worker and doing what you are told,” Spike replied. “I have wanted to escape many a time but it appears to be futile as we have all that we need here, food medical care in exchange for working for the Walf and his henchman.”

“You cannot be serious about wanting to stay here forever, Spike?”

“It just seems impossible,” said Spike.

“Well I do understand where you are coming from, Spike,” I smiled.

“Really Tam?”

“Yes when I was at home with the kids , I had to worry about cooking, work and paying for gas, but here I don’t have that worry.”

“I know Tam, but now you have to focus on hacking and hacking well,” said Spike.

“I know, Spike, but don’t you think of a way out or even look at the possibilities?”

Spike just sat there looking down. “Is it alright if I stay the night?”

“Sure” I said. Spike left to get his pillow and blanket. As he shut the door, I caught a light flashing near my bed. I got up and saw that it was my old I phone and wondered how on earth it



managed to get there of all places. With growing excitement, I saw that there were several messages on the I phone from David and Jenny just shortly after I was taken hostage. On the screen, it had Jenny's picture. I thought of them both and how difficult it must be for them to cope on their own. I knew that they both would do their best in the current situation. As I reached a little further into the bookcase, I found something soft and leathery. I reached out and picked it up, realizing it was my old shopping bag. "Why in god's name was it put there," I wondered.

## CHAPTER 33

### BOOKCASE

Then, I heard someone knocking, and it was Spike with his bedding and gear. I bent down to help him and my food hit something. "Ouch," I winced as I checked my toe. Soon, something moved near my bed. "What in the hell is that Spike?"

Spike smiled and said, "Tam, I was wondering how long it would take you to find the extra bed. "Here Tam look!" Spike pulled at something and the whole design resembled a large sandwich as it plonked to the floor with a thud.

"Oh my goodness, who would have thought of such a thing," I said.

"Pretty nifty, isn't it Tam, and look it pops out of the bed's mattress. Look here," said Spike as he showed me how it was made.

"Now I will put my sheets and blankets on it and there goes my pillow, Tam," said Spike as he made up his bed.

"Wow," now I have seen everything," I exclaimed.

"Well that is what I thought until I found my old belonging and backpack," said Spike seriously.

"Blimey," I said not wanting to draw attention to what I had just found.

"I think it was a trap by the Walf as I rang back home and poor old Owl suffered as a direct result," said Spike, looking sad as he remembered his friend Owl.

"Spike, you mustn't blame yourself," I mumbled, trying to offer Spike the moral support he needed. "How about some hot chocolate as we have a busy day tomorrow in the purple room?"

"Thanks Tam, I could not have put it better myself," said Spike, bending over and giving me a peck.

"You're welcome, Spike," I said.

"Tam, that is what I love about you. You know how to relate to me and to make me feel good about myself" beamed Spike.

"I am pleased to be able to help, Spike," I said.

"Tam, how would you like a little something from me," said Spike smiling.

"Okay what is it?"

"Close your eyes and open your mouth," said Spike cheekily.

I close my eyes and felt something cold in it. "Mmm, that tastes great!"

"Tantor gave them to me and told me to enjoy it," said Spike. So the both of us enjoyed a

night in preparing for a busy day tomorrow.

The day arrived with our usual bell and I awoke to find out that Spike was not there. His bed had been slept in. I packed his bed up and prepared for work. I bumped against the bookcase that was near my bed and winced in pain. I heard something moving and stooped over to where my bookcase was and could not believe my eyes. I pinched myself to make sure I was not dreaming or still asleep. Now there was a tunnel, but where on earth it leads to I had no idea. "What in god's name is this place and how many more surprises was I in for?"

I inched forward and found that I could stand upright in the tunnel with my bare feet. I was going to go further inside when I realized I had to get dress and eat my breakfast. With a stroke of luck, the bookcase closed and I placed a piece of cardboard in it just for good measure as I was unsure of the mechanism it used.

I had just finished breakfast when Spike arrived looking disheveled. "Where the hell have you been, Spike? I have been so worried!"

"Just another day at the darn power grid. It is having problems," said Spike.

"Oh Christ," I said sounding concerned. "Now here is your breakfast, Spike," I said, handing him his meal.

"Thanks so much, Tam. ....it is appreciated."

"Oh crumbs, Spike we're going to be late," I wailed.

"No we have time to spare as I have a green slip to cover the both of us," beamed Spike. "I am going to tutor you today, Tam. Texno is doing other work. Well, I am having a quick shower before work."

Soon we were both ready to go and walked up to the purple room. I slid my arm and the door opened, and Spike followed me by doing the same. I had no sooner sat down at my work station when somebody came over to my desk. "Hi, I don't believe we have met. I am the Vulcan."

"I am pleased to meet you," I said automatically, as I shook his soft white cold hand. That feeling sent shivers down my spine.

As the Vulcan walked away. he asked Spike, "Now have you got your green permission slip to cover your late arrival as well as Ms Tam."

As Spike handed over the paper, I took in the Vulcan with those steely green eyes and that large T on his face, as well as his jet black hair done with indigo blue foils. His whole look gave me the poops, but I did not let on at all, I was just here doing a job and nothing else. "Now what is on roster for Tam to complete for today, Vulcan?"

"How about try and get into the Pentagon's secret files today.

## CHAPTER 34

### SADDAM HUSSEIN

“Previously, we could hack into the server, but now we cannot get access to anything. It is most strange. Here is a list of the codes I want you to try and if you can use your initiative then go for it.”

“Gee thanks,” I murmured, trying to avoid sounding too excited at the prospect of hacking, something that in my old life I would never have dreamed of doing. Spike sat closer to me and we both tried out the various codes, but alas by the end of the page nothing had worked.

“Damn, how is it possible that we cannot get in? We’ve tried everything.”

“You know,” I mused, thinking aloud, “I remember in the code book it said to try something radical to get into the mainframe because it is often something really simple.”

“Well what exactly are you thinking,” Spike questioned somewhat skeptically.

“Well you want to access the mainframe?” Spike said yes and I punched in, “Open sesame,” but nothing happened. Then I tried punching ,”Saddam Hussein,” and hey presto! it opened right up. I nearly jumped up out of my chair with excitement as Spike and I had been working hard all day on this.

It was nearly time to go home when the Vulcan came over to pick up the log we had filled in. The Vulcan looked at the amount of info that Spike and I filled in and he was impressed. “Wow, great to finally access the Pentagon's mainframe... but here you forgot to put down the password.”

“It was Saddam Hussein, Vulcan, will that be all,” I asked.

“Well done Spike for helping her and you will both get bonuses in your meals tonight. I think the Walf had the wrong idea about letting you go and I will be making a recommendation to have you reinstated.” Spike stood there proudly and then we walked off to our quarters to retire for the night.

“Now how are we feeling today, Tam? I never knew you could hack like that, OMG,” Spike remarked.

“You mean you never expected that I would be that clever,” I blurted out. “

Tam, well if that is the way you feel then I am staying in tonight to give you some space.”

“Oh well bugger off then,” I said as I walked to my quarters in a huff ,feeling deflated and realizing that Spike meant well and had no malicious intent. “What can I do about it,” I thought. “Nothing for the moment...just let him cool off,” I said to myself.

Then, I remembered the tunnel and thought I would go and do a little exploring. I tugged at the side of the bookcase and sure enough, it opened slightly. All of a sudden, I heard footsteps coming down the hallway and it sounded like the food trolley as well as somebody else. I quickly pushed the bookcase shut and it just closed in time as Spike and the food trolley arrived in unison. "Here are your meals and the bonus surprise courtesy of the Walf," said the trolley man, lifting up a small package for each of us.

"What is that," I asked the trolley man.

"Just open and see for yourself. I best be off as I have meals to deliver on two floors instead of one today."

I opened the package and there were all sorts of delectable items: Belgian chocolates and sumptuous biscuits and muffins. "Look at this Spike," I said as I saw him opening his own package. "Now what have you got in there?"

"Well look at this, smoked yak cheese, smoked yak meat slices, crackers and some wine with some pate."

"Wow," I said to Spike.

"We get all this for just hacking a few mainframes," I blurted out.

"Shhhhh, don't say that," Spike retorted, "or you might just bite the hand that feeds you." "Oops," I thought to myself. The sooner that I am out of this place the better. I plonked down on the bed and thought about the tunnel. "Spike, I am really sorry about before...I should not have gone off the deep end with you," I faltered.

"That is okay, Tam. Sometimes I say things I shouldn't, but the most important thing is that you had the decency to apologize for matters," said Spike giving me a peck.

"How about we enjoy this, Spike," I said looking at all the goodies the Walf had given us today.

"Okay Tam," said Spike. Just as he sat down there was a Beep! Beep Beep! and Spike lifted his pager to check. "Oh shit Tam, I have to go as there is another problem with the power grid. The power station looks like it is going to shut down if I don't sort the mess out."

"Oh my God, how long will you be Spike?"

"I could be hours. I am really sorry about this," he replied.

"That is all right," I assured him.

"Well I best be off," and he pecked me on the cheek as he left for the power station with cheese and crackers in hand.

I waited until everything was silent and locked my door.

## CHAPTER 35

### THE TUNNEL

I grabbed a few essentials like water and food and popped them in my little bag. On an afterthought, I slipped off my shoes. I'd been told they had tracking devices installed in them that connected to the Walf's security system. I went over to the bookcase and pulled it open, wondering what the hell lay behind it. I hesitated and then, torch in hand, stepped into the dark tunnel.

As I walked on in my stocking feet, I could see a light in the distance. In my mind I thought I would walk to the light and then come back. Trembling with fear, I took one step after another and slowly made my way, expecting at any time for the Sirens to go off and I would be sent away somewhere. There was just an eerie silence and after a short while I reached the light and saw it had a sign below it. I put the torch down to read the sign and it said, "Exit is to the left."

I stood there for a minute and thought I would try the exit way. I reached another sign that said, "Bhutan 50 kilometers. " Wow, holy crap! An underground tunnel that would lead us to freedom. This was unbelievable, and what was more, it was a tunnel made with air conditioning and small lights and tiled floors. I looked around for telltale signs of CCTV or any tracking devices. There was none at all. I was glad I had remembered to take off my shoes since I would not want to set off any alarms just yet. I noticed a little further on another light in the distance, but I thought it would be best to backtrack to my quarters before I was discovered.

Well this was nice to know that there was a possible escape route, I mused, but if it is correct that Bhutan is 50 kilometers away then the journey would need careful planning before the maneuver could be executed successfully. I backtracked, taking notice of which route I took, and soon I was near the end where the light of my bedroom was shining into the tunnel. I had just closed the bookcase, again carefully wedging it slightly open, and laid down on my bed when I thought I heard somebody outside.

"Knock, knock," an unfamiliar voice asked.

"Come in," I said, pretending to be gathering my things to have a shower.

"Just a message from the Walf to start early and that he gives you his compliments for all your hard work and he wants to see you after work tomorrow. Here is your purple slip for your early entry and it has been micro chipped just in case the door won't open."

"This is for 6.00 a.m., that is when the food trolley usually arrives or thereabouts," I said, thinking ahead to creature comforts. "

“All taken care of as you will get your food in the purple lounge near the computer room.”

“Great and thanks for that .”

“You will get extra bonuses for this and a couple of changes for your uniform and shoes,” the messenger replied. “Any questions?”

“Yes. What might the Walf want with me?”

“Well it looks like another reward for all your hard work,” he said as he shook my hand.

“Thanks so much,” I said wondering what the Walf wanted. Then the trolley man’s beeper went off, and with a quick smile in return, he exited to carry out another errand.

We were hostages we were extremely well looked after, to the extent I was wondering would it be worth it to escape and struggle for everything. Here I had everything handed to me virtually on a silver platter and the only restriction was that I could not contact anyone from the outside world about this whole secret society running full blast under everyone's noses. What would the kids think of me if I wanted to have no further contact with them? “Computer hacking and money laundering on a daily basis? No that is not what life is all about. I have to find a way out of this place whatever the cost.” I shuddered to think of living here for the rest of my life.

I woke up early and set off to the computer room, wondering when I would see Spike again, but that was the least of my worries as I had to get on with fulfilling my duties for the day, whatever they were going to be. I just wondered where on earth the lounge was for the computer room, but I need not have worried as the Vulcan was waiting for me near the lift. “Tam, you are here on time and first of all I will take you to the lounge where we are going to have breakfast before duty.” He walked past the computer room and there was a small oval door that he opened with his hands sliding against the slot.

“Wonders never cease in this place,” I thought to myself as I entered the lounge to have breakfast. I saw a mass of people sitting down at tables eating food and drinking coffee. They were all dressed the same in their silver track suits and all of them had a silver T over their whole face. The Vulcan ushered me to the table right near where they had all the hot food like eggs and bacon, today, with toast and cereal. “Wow,” I exclaimed as I was bamboozled by the sheer amount of people and food.

## CHAPTER 36

### MONEY LAUNDERING

“Today Tam, I will show you the ropes on how to get the food and all that, considering the hours you are going to put in,” he said. “I will sit with you and have something to eat after a long night.”

“Have you been up all night,” I asked.

“Yes, sorting stuff out for the Walf,” the Vulcan remarked. “Now sit over there and I will bring you something to eat. Okay?”

“Oh yes thanks.”

I looked at the scrambled egg, bacon and cereal on offer. “Dig in,” said the Vulcan, sitting opposite me, “as you have half-an-hour before work.”

“Thanks so much,” I replied as I ate a full breakfast.

The Vulcan ate his own breakfast and then got up. I was finished as well. “That is good timing, Tam. Are you ready to start now?”

“Yes,” I replied, standing up and smoothing out my uniform. I was not shown to my desk at console 13, but another desk further to the back of the computer room.

“In case you are wondering, Tam, you have made sound progress the last while and the Walf wants you to try your hand at money laundering.

“OMG,” I thought to myself, “this is a criminal offence,” but I tried not to let on how disgusted I was at being put in such a position of deceit and dishonesty. After all, I thought, this is not normal circumstances and I had to do as I was told.

I hesitated and the Vulcan noticed it. “Tam, that is what the Walf wants to see you about after work, as I think he has something special for you lined up,” grinned the Vulcan.

“Oh okay,” I said, not really knowing what to do in the situation. Money laundering of all things these are criminal offenses in the real world! What have I become? I shuddered in disgust.

“Tam, I will sit down next to you and explain a few things and see if you understand what I am trying to get at,” the Vulcan stated. I listened to what he was saying and could not stop thinking how much he reminded me of Dracula’s son. The Vulcan said to me, “Tam, I want you to try and hack into this account and just deposit one million into it.”

I took a deep breath and commenced, but shit, I failed to get in. “Now what have I done wrong?”

“Did you do this code and that code and this like I asked you?”



“Yes, what in the hell is going on?”

“Move aside if you could, Tam. I will have a go.” However the Vulcan he could not get in either, which made me feel quite a lot better.

“Cripes, what the hell have they been doing?”

“Updating their encryption barriers to prevent us from hacking in it looks like. Now Tam, the thing to do is try and get in using any code you like and see if you can hack into their server and go into the back door to the bank's mainframe and then move on from there.”

I must be learning something after all, because instead of just staring blankly at the screen I used the out-of-the-ordinary code that Spike had taught me, the 77777 code, which is very complex. I just went at it methodically and, bingo, after a few hours I got in and transferred over a million dollars to the Walf's account. “I did it Vulcan,” I called out to him, as he was watching the other person next to me.

“Are your serious,” he said, “and now how did you manage to do that?”

“Well Vulcan, check it then just to make sure I did not fluke the darn thing,” I remarked, looking proudly at what I had just done.

“OMG, well done Tam. I think the Walf knew how talented you were to do things like that and pick it up so fast.”

“Thanks so much for teaching me,” I said, again pretending to be gracious, but also enjoying the opportunity to learn things I never would have otherwise.

The rest of the afternoon I did copious amounts of devious deeds and was allowed to go to my quarters early.

I arrived home and Spike was waiting for me with that beaming smile. He asked me how I was. I told him what I had to do that day and he looked stunned. “Blimey Tam, you are really picking things up fast.”

“That is not all, Spike. I have to go and see the Walf now,” I faltered, not really looking forward to the idea at all.

“Do you want me to come with you, Tam?”

“No, but I'll remember not to take alcohol and ask the Walf for chocolates,” I chuckled.

“Okay, I will walk with you until you get to the lift and then wait for you at your quarters.”

“Okay, thanks ,Spike,” I said, holding his arm for dear life as we both ventured towards the Walf's penthouse and I wondered what he had in for me.

“Now this is where I leave you, Tam, and I will see you back at the quarters after.” Spike gave me a reassuring peck.

“Of course,” I said as I went up the lift.

The secretary said, “The Walf is waiting for you and wants you now.” She ushered me in to the Walf's quarters.

“Hi Tam. Long time no see,” he greeted me with a handshake and did a Nazi power move.

“You could say that,” I said softly, not wanting to aggravate him.

“Sit down Tam.” I did as I was told. “Don’t look so worried Tam,” said the Walf, eyeing me lustfully. “Look what I have for you.” The Walf grinned while he opened up the meal platter. It was a large meal of venison and vegetables. “Now do you want some champagne, Tam?”

“Of course,” I said. I waited until he turned his back and tipped the alcohol in the pot plants that were nearby. “This is beautiful meat,” I said tucking into a nice meal, trying to avoid any attention to myself.

“Well you deserve it, Tam, and that is why I want you here, to let you know that if you are interested you can do money laundering for me full time and be promoted later on to teach others as the leader in that field.”

“Oh shit,” I thought to myself, but I said, “Sure, no worries. If you think I am up to it.”

“Tam,” said the Walf while banging down his fists and knocking his champagne glass over.

“What have I done wrong now?”

“I just want you to know that you are one of the smartest women I know and you seem to always doubt yourself ! Bloody hell, Tam, when are you going to realize you are nothing short of a true genius?”

“Well thanks for your compliments, Walf, and by the way compliments to the chef,” I said, trying to avoid sounding too cocky.

“So are you interested, Tam?”

“Yes, sure am,” I said.

“That is more like it,” smiled the Walf, coming over to me and kissing me with passion. I forgot to ask for chocolates like Spike said, as the Walf was heavily engrossed in passion. I played along as I could not see a way out. I noticed that the Walf was undoing my top. He kissed me on the shoulders, then he accidentally knocked his drink on my lap. “Don’t worry about it, Tam.. I’m enjoying this.” He kissed me fervently and seemed oblivious to how I was feeling, let alone my wet outfit, which was preventing me from relaxing.

I was wondering when the hell he would stop kissing me! I pulled back and he noticed. “What is up, Tam,” asked the Walf, looking at me and stroking my hair.

I looked at him and said, “I better have a shower and get home. I needed some air.”

“Have a shower here, Tam, or better still come with me in the spa nearby,” grinned the Walf as he took his clothes off and was down to his boxer shorts.

“Okay,” I said, thinking how I could get out of the situation I was in.

“Here is the spa here,” said the Walf, and it was done with gold tap on it.

“Wow,” I said.

“Do you like this setup, Tam?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Well I am pleased,” he said, sitting down in the spa and reaching out for me as I was in my



## CHAPTER 37

### THE TUNNEL

Then there was a frantic knock on the door and the Walf answered it. “What is up Walf?”

“Sorry about this. There is a maintenance issue at the power grid that I have to attend to. It simply cannot wait until morning. You don’t mind do you if we will catch up another time,” said the Walf, sounding exasperated.

“Okay,” I said, trying to avoid jumping into the air with sheer delight and glee. I was not going to spend the night chez the Walf after all!

“Here is a spare lot of clothes, Tam, and make sure you lock up when you leave,” he said, giving me a package and kissing me on my mouth.

“Thanks,” I said happily. I changed and the Walf’s secretary let me out of his penthouse, much to my relief. I really did feel like having a few stiff drinks to calm my nerves. I nearly ran to my quarters and as Spike said, he was waiting for me.

“Are you alright Tam?”

“Yes, apart from the Walf trying to make a move on me. I mean a serious move,” I said.

“You mean what I think you mean?”

“Yep,” I said bursting into tears.

“Hey, it is okay, Tam. Next time I will come with you,” said Spike seriously.

“Okay,” I said as I nuzzled into his arms.

“Now can I join you tonight?”

Without hesitation I said, “Make sure you lock the door and don't allow anyone in.”

Spike locked the door to my quarters and the both of us enjoyed a quiet night by ourselves.

The next day the sound of the morning food trolley awoke us. Spike was sound asleep on the floor. I guess we forgot to activate the pull-out bed. I dressed myself and so did Spike. We enjoyed our breakfast and made our way over to the other mountain to do more money laundering for the Walf.

I was thinking to myself that I should make a more concentrated effort in trying to get off the mountain and that I was becoming overly complacent about the Walf’s intentions, and that needed to be stopped as well. The only way I could get protection from the Walf was to get out of this mountain and see how far the tunnel would take me.

Also, I was fully aware that in the real world the things that I was doing were subject to a

criminal conviction. I was absolutely disgusted with myself, but I really had no choice. I then pondered that there is always a choice no matter how dire the situation is. I thought that today was the first day of the rest of my life and I was going to find a way to get home...no matter what. I decided that I would feign being ill, so I collapsed on the floor.

“Are you alright, Tam,” asked Spike, tapping me on my shoulder and at the same time calling out for Dr Zalt. Soon, a few of the other workers were standing around in a circle. I tried my hardest to keep a straight face and not burst out laughing. This I achieved though the utilization of my mediation techniques to stimulate unconsciousness and slow my heart rate down, so it appeared that I had collapsed when the doctor did my obs.

I was brought to a small room, which was the Triads sick bay. “Okay Tam, how are we feeling today,” the doctor asked.

“Not too good, Doc, but where am I?”

“You are in the sick bay, Tam,” he said, examining me and frowning. “Now, I think you had better rest for the rest of the day. If you have any problems see me. I will get Spike to take you back to your quarters.”

Spike wheeled me to my room and popped me on my bed. “Take care, Tam,” he said as he gave me a soft peck. I peeked through my eyelids and saw his worried face. “I will pop in after, Tam.”

I started to almost drift off from all the excitement and then remembered that I feigned illness for a reason. I got up and made sure that everything was quiet and locked my door from the inside so that Spike would not come in while I was out. To ensure that people left me alone, I tape a sign that said, “Do Not Disturb,” on the outside of the door.

Then, I went back inside and put a few supplies in my bag, including bottles of water, some biscuits and my torch. I was just about to head into the tunnel when I remembered that the shoes given to us by the Walf had tracking devices in them, which were connected to his security system, so I took them off for good measure. I bent down near the bookcase. I fiddled around with the knob and saw that it controlled the opening as well the knob on the inside. Upon discovering that, I went inside the tunnel and closing the door behind me and making sure I did it as quiet as possible.

I gingerly walked up to the sign for Bhutan, as I had previously, and then walked a lot further until I thought I could hear a noise. I shook my head as I inched closer and heard people talking. I took a sip of water, as my heart was pounding like you would not believe, and thought to myself, “Impossible...this cannot be happening ...what on earth lives here?” I saw a blue light further up and heard that the voices were getting louder and louder.

## CHAPTER 38

### THE VOLES

As I looked under the door, I noticed that there was a light inside and wondered what the hell I should do now. Maybe I would go back. “No Tam,” I thought, “it is now or never sister. I knocked a few times on the door.

A young woman opened the door, and almost slammed it in my face. “I did not mean to frighten you, Ma'am, but I just want to know who you are,” I asked curiously.

“Well I could ask the same thing,” she said, looking at me. She was dressed in true Bollywood style with the stylish makeup to boot.

The she breathed deeply, and asked me, “Are you with the Silver Triads?”

“Yes Ma'am,” I said honestly.

“Now how on earth did you find us?”

“Well, I happened to bump my head on the bookcase and it opened to this tunnel...so it is purely by accident Ma'am,” I said seriously.

“Oh well then, I am Lune. This is my husband Troy and this is Munga here. We are all members of a group called the Voles.”

“The Voles,” I repeated.

“Yes it stands for voices of liberty, equality and sincerity,” beamed Lune.

“I have never heard of them, Lune,” I said, looking at the members, all with V's on their forehead and dressed in rustic attire. Part of me right there and then wanted to go back to work computer hacking and indulge in a latte rather than face this unknown scenario.

“I thought you were the Walf, Troy. Gosh you look alike,” I said, gazing at him in disbelief.

“Well that stands to reason, Tam. I am his twin brother,” smiled Troy.

“Oh my goodness,” I said, trying to run outside.

“Hey Tam, don't panic. We are needing someone to help bring the Walf's computer system down, but we are having difficulty disabling the system as we have not access to the core files to fully shut down the whole shebang.”

“Blimey, you don't say,” I asked wondering what the hell these people wanted of me.

“Would you be able to help us bring the whole organization to its very knees,” asked Lune seriously.

“This could be tricky and...”

“So you won't help us,” Troy asked, looking annoyed with me.

“No, I did not say that, Troy, but I will need some help as I have to see the Walf regularly,” I said.

“Well we can do that for you, provided you work with us together and for god sake don’t get caught,” said Troy.

“All I want is to go back home and see my kids,” I faltered and burst into tears.

Lune and Munga came up to me and gave me a hug. “Well Tam, we will help you provided you will help us,” said Troy seriously.

“We are hiding out here so we are out of harms way, so to speak,” said Lune.

“Well, in that case, I will help you and the other people here. It must be your lucky day, as I am approaching the elite in computer hacking and money laundering.”

“Great,” said all the Voles in unison and all of a sudden I could hear a young child crying.

“Have you got kids in this place,” I asked Lune.

“Yes, this is our daughter, Khandi, the Walf’s niece. We keep her here and out of harm’s way from the Walf and his henchman as it is not safe in our country,” Lune said seriously.

“By the way Lune what is your country,” I asked.

“It is Bhutan, but I have lived in India at times,” indicated Lune smiling.

“Oh blimey.”

“Yes, it is a good two days walk to the King of Bhutan’s palace or if you happen to take the wrong route you will end up chez the Walf,” said Troy seriously.

“Oh blimey, I had no idea,” I faltered. “How did you build this without him knowing, Troy?”

“Well, I know how my brother thinks most of the time and used my specialized equipment which makes tunnels without making a noise...so that is how I made all these tunnels here,” said Troy, proudly standing there.

“Wow that is just true genius,” I said, in awe of Troy. “

“That is what I keep telling him,” said Lune proudly of her husband.

Troy just smiled and said. “The Walf is not as smart as he makes out and leaves all his operators to do his dirty work, and he forgets that Troy is his twin brother and he is a damn sight smarter than the Walf will ever be and on top of that much nicer,” said Lune as she hugged her husband.

“Thanks Lune,” said Troy, smiling.

“Now I am forgetting my manners, Tam. Are you interested in having a meal with us Voles and I’ll introduce you to the rest of our tribe,” said Lune.

“Sure,” I said.

“Now Tam, you can sit next to me,” said an elderly man. “I am Munga,” he said giving me a handshake.

“Please to meet you,” I said.

“This is Munga’s cousin, Blinka. I am Troy, this is Lune, Khandi, Mova the cook and his niece. All of a sudden, I heard a bang and a thud.

I jumped up in surprise and said, “What is that?”

“Sorry Tam,” said Troy calling out to somebody in the back... and then five young men came to where I was sitting. “These are Munga’s five nephews who are working in the back on new prototypes. They are Sunda, Suhul, Sagar, Roxol and Dingar and they are trained computer engineers and programmers, as well as experts in other fields.”

“OMG, I had no idea that all this was going on right under the Walf’s nose.”

“Here you are Tam...Mova’s specialty: Lentil Dahl and bread for today,” said Lune as she handed the meal on a plate.

“Mmmmmmm! This is good,” I said, smelling the aroma of natural cooking.

“Now are you getting your proper food, Tam,” asked Troy, looking at me concerned.

“Yes Troy that is one thing that is good. The meals are excellent,” I said.

“That is okay and one less worry for me,” said Troy. “Now when do you have to go back?”

“OOhhhh! I have left my watch at the bookcase,” I said.

“You have been here over two hours,” said Troy.

“Oh Christ,” I said, starting to panic.

“Hey take it easy, Tam,” said Troy, holding me. “I will take you home in two seconds flat with my laser cars at the back of our place,” he grinned.

“What on earth is a laser car,” I asked, looking at the striking blond fellow with those golden curls standing in front of me.

“My invention and one of the prototypes I have worked on,” said Troy seriously.

“OMG,” I said.

“Yes Tam, Troy is the inventor here. Before you go, here are some scuffs to pop on your feet and remember to leave them in the tunnel when Troy drops you off,” said Lune.

“Now, when do you see the Walf next Tam,” asked Troy.

“Soon, as I am being promoted and he wants me to spend time with him,” I said.

“Oh shit, is he keen on you,” asked Troy.

“I think so, unfortunately,” I said.

“Play along with him. Pop this little baby in his drink to get him to sleep and get the core files with this pink USB,” grinned Troy, handing me the device.

“What if I fail?”

“Well, if you do happen to fail it will tell me so and then I will sneak my way inside, now that you are already in the know.”

“Would you know your way around k7? It is pretty big.”

“Yes, Karl, or the Walf, and I had plans of building a society and made the plans together. I still have most of his designs, but that society was going to help the impoverished and poor...and



not engage in criminal activity. Unfortunately, Tam, the lure of money changed Karl for the Walf,” said Troy.

“What a sell out!”

“Girlfriend, I like the way you are talking,” beamed Mova.

“Now we better get you home, Tam,” said Troy, taking me to the back of his hideout. I saw a car that looked like something from Star Wars. “Love my car, Tam. It travels the speed of sound without making a noise and runs on air. Hop in, Tam.” I hopped in and in no time was near the edge of the tunnel. “Now will you try and get the files when you see the Walf next?”

“Okay,” I said.

“Now, when you want to see me tomorrow, press this pink button and these devices will help you do your work faster, but for god sake don’t let on or the plan is cactus. See you, Tam,” said Troy, shaking my hand.

“Bye,” I said and Troy left back to the Voles hideout.

I left my scuffs that Lune had given me in the tunnel and went to my room. I had just lain on the bed when I heard the food trolley come past. I was not really hungry after the lentil Dahl I had with Troy and the Voles. That was all for the best as it made it look like I was genuinely sick. I started to drift off while studying advanced computer programming and then woke up when Spike knocked on my door. “How are you, Tam,” he asked, looking concerned.

“Not too bad now,” I said, trying to contain my excitement.

“Do you think you will be alright tomorrow, Tam?”

“Yes, Spike,” and then through nerves I started to laugh at him.

“Are you sure you are okay?”

“Yes, I am happy that is all” ...realizing that I was finally on the right path to freedom with the help of the Voles.

“Well in that case, do you mind if I stay here?”

“Sure no worries, Spike,” I said, feeling a sense of achievement. I was not going to die in this place after all.

Spike returned and said, “Now do you need help with the tasks tomorrow, as I have to do some heavy maintenance on the power grid. It would be best if I could just focus on that. It keeps on shutting down all the time and I am at wits end on what to do about it. The Walf is not happy as it has never broken down like that before, Tam.”

“There is always a first time,” I remarked, and then laughed uncontrollably.

“Are you drunk or something, Tam?”

“Just the happiest woman alive,” I smiled.

“How about we celebrate and eat some of the goodies that the Walf has given us,” said Spike.

“Why not?”

## CHAPTER 39

### CORE FILES

I awoke the next day and remembered what had happened the day before. I dressed myself so I would not register on the Walf's security system when I showed up for my work duties.

As I walked up to the computer room I took a deep breath and remained cool, grinning to myself. I alone with the Voles might bring the whole Triad organization right down to its very knees.

I was handed all the tasks I had not completed from yesterday and sat down to tackle them. I looked around and made sure that nobody saw me as I put the little device on the bottom of the computer. Today I was supposed to hack into the taxation office of the USA and launder the entire revenue it obtained for that week. What had previously taken a few hours to figure out, Troy's device figured out in seconds, and I sped through the tasks in no time at all. Task by task, I wrote the codes down and I showed it to Vulcan for review. He was surprised at how I managed to finish two days work in a matter of hours.

As I checked the extra sheet to do, I realized that Vulcan had left and there was someone else checking my tasks log. "Here is what I had to do, plus the extra sheet is all completed," I said with a monotone, trying to avoid attracting any attention to myself.

"Well that is excellent and the Walf wants to see you after work, Tam," said the fellow.

"And who are you, by the way?"

"Well, I am Meno, Vulcan's assistant. The power grid keeps shutting down so we need extra help. Can you come early tomorrow?"

"Sure," I said.

"Okay, you can go now and well done, Tam," said Meno seriously.

I went up to the Walf and seriously felt like going back to my quarters, but I had to get the core files. It is the first step home.

I arrived at the Walf's door and his secretary took me in. "Now welcome, Tam," said the Walf, bending over to kiss me and I played along. "Now I hear you have done excellent work for me and I would like to reward you with this," said the Walf bringing the trolley out full of cakes and delicacies.

"Mmmmmmm," I said.

"Come on, Tam my lady, join me for high tea," said the Walf.

"Well you cannot have high tea unless you have chocolates," I said cheekily.

“Yes you are right, Tam. How silly of me to forget such a thing. Just a sec, Tam.” He got up and walked to his room. I waited till he turned his back and I quickly popped a pill into his coffee. When he came back, the Walf brought chocolates in a little box. “Try these, Tam, they are from Switzerland.”

I was looking at him to see if he would drink his coffee, but alas I found him getting closer and closer to me. He started to kiss me fondly and touching where I had the device to get the core files from. He jumped back angrily. “What is this, Tam?”

I was starting to feel frightened and said calmly. “Now, how about we have coffee and eats and play later?” I beamed, at the Walf trying to distract him.

“Of course, Tam. Now a velvet cupcake for you and one for me,” said the Walf, popping the most sumptuous cupcake for me on the plate.

“Cheers Walf,” I said, putting my coffee cup up high and the Walf did the same. He took a big gulp from his cup and belched.

“Sorry Tam. Would you like another cup of coffee?”

“Sure,” I said, looking to see if his eyes would start to flutter and close. Sure enough, the Walf became slower and slower in his movement and was soon sound asleep on the couch. I purposely knocked a glass cup over to see if he was well and truly in dream land, and the Walf did not wake up, snoring like the grampus.

“Great, and now where is the blasted computer,” I thought to myself, nearly feeling physically sick from nerves at the prospect of being discovered, but I remembered what Troy told me and that had a calming effect. I looked in the bedroom and found it was in the wardrobe. I started to use the devices that Troy gave me to hack in. In no time, I had the core files on the devices and saw that the Walf was sound asleep, on his back, with his mouth wide open.

Now I had to think of how to get out without attracting attention on what I had just done. So, I opened the door and saw that his secretary was not there. I closed it in a hurry, went to my quarters and luckily Spike was not there, either.

I pressed on the pink button. Troy came with his laser car and dropped me off to where the Voles were. “Tam, have you got what I asked,” asked Troy seriously.

“Yes, it is all here,” I said.

“Now where is Karl?”

“Sound asleep like a baby, but it was close, Troy, as he felt my device,” I faltered.

“Excellent work, Tam. The pill will prevent him of remembering what happened today,” grinned Troy.

Soon, something beeped on Troy. “I think you are wanted, Tam” said Troy seriously.”

“How do you know that, Troy?”

“Well I am keeping tabs on you, Tam, so you don’t get caught while helping us in the process,” said Troy seriously.

“Thanks for that,” I said, relieved.

## CHAPTER 40

### KING'S PALACE

"It is appreciated, Tam. How about a real treat for you? We will take you to the kings palace tomorrow," said Lune.

"Okay, why not?"

I had just got into my room, pretending to take a shower when Spike walked in, looking disheveled and haggard. "That damn power grid is just about cactus, Tam. How was your day?"

"Not too bad," I said, not drawing attention to that meeting with the Walf.

"Well tonight I will go to my room, Tam, as I am just plain exhausted. I hope you don't mind," said Spike giving me a peck as he went to his own room.

"No, I don't, Spike," I said calmly, feeling a sense of achievement in getting out of k7.

The next day, I had early duties to fill at the purple room. "Hi Tam would you mind sitting with me for breakfast," said the Vulcan seriously.

"Sure," I said wondering what he was on about.

"Now sit down and I'll get you some breakfast," said the Vulcan. He came back with two plates of bacon, egg, tomato and cereal with a pot of coffee.

"Mmmmmmmmm, this looks great, Vulcan," I said.

"I had hoped you would like it," beamed the Vulcan. "Now, would you mind doing my job of money laundering as well as your own, as I have to help Spike with the power grid? It keeps malfunctioning all the time and is on the verge of needing to be replaced at this stage."

"Oh blimey, Vulcan," I faltered.

"Yes, it is extra work. I will make sure you will get extra bonuses from the Walf."

"Well in that case, sure Vulcan," I said, making sure my device was well and out of mind and out of sight.

"Now, do you want anything else to eat, Tam?"

"No, I am good but thanks, Vulcan," I said.

"Well, I am going to the power grid. Here is what I have to do. Use your station to do my work," said the Vulcan.

"Okay," I said as I walked to my computer station.

After several hours work without a break, I finished and was allowed to go to my quarters. I

was just about to drift off when I remembered that I had to go and see Troy and the Voles. So, I got up, locked my door from the inside and made my way to the bookcase carrying some supplies. I pressed the pink button and Troy came to meet me in no time with a whoooooooooooooosh in his red laser car.

Soon, I was relaxing with all the other Voles who were trying to bring down the Walf . “Now do you want some pancakes and calming tea, Tam,” asked Lune.

“Of course, why not,” I said. Lune gave them to me on a rustic plate.

“Now we are slowly bringing the whole computer system down, Tam, bit-by-bit and that is why certain things will start to malfunction,” said Troy, and the Voles smiled. “With Munga’s help, you were the key to us getting this far.”

“Why thank you for saying that,” I said realizing the love and support I was receiving from the Voles who had not the riches of the world, but their knowledge, trust for one another and loyalty.

“Now Tam, how did you go with the device,” Troy asked.

“Excellent Troy, as I had to do the Vulcan’s work as well,” I said.

“Yes, but don’t make a habit of using it all the time, otherwise the Vulcan or one of the others will start getting suspicious. The point is to remember that all the codes to hacking and money laundering can be found by following a certain set of procedures and figuring it all out for yourself. Like this,” indicated Troy, making a few quick diagrams on a scrap sheet of paper.

“Thanks so much for that point, Troy,” I said .

“I have the core files of the Walf, so I am now keeping tabs on exactly what is going on,” said Troy. “I know that you are going to have another long day tomorrow, Tam.”

“Oh blimey,” I said, feeling more and more secure by the Voles who were supporting me in my hour of need.

“Now, how about let’s go to the king’s palace,” said Lune.

“Sure Lune” said Troy, “but have you enough supplies for the trip?”

“Well, if you are interested, I have bread, cheese and several platters for you to enjoy.” I smiled, showing what I had.

“That is really nice of you to consider us like that,” Lune said as she smiled back at me.

“Now are you ready to go with Mum and Tam, Khandi,” said Troy.

“Yes, I am,” said Khandi, beaming with those ebony eyes of hers.

“I nearly forgotten to take this little baby,” indicated Troy holding up a complicated looking set of devices.

“Now Troy what in God’s name have you there,” I asked, looking at what he was holding in his hand.

Troy smiled back at me and said , “See this pink read out here? This is your supervisor’s alert system and this is the Walf’s alert system. You said that they could call you up at any time,

right?"

"Yes, spot on," I said, nodding in awe at Troy's true genius.

"Well no sooner you are required, a second later the alert goes to my computer and this little baby beeps and then in double-quick time I will put you in the laser car and get you home."

"OMG," I said."

"For the moment, Spike is still at the power grid, so you are right for now. You can enjoy your outing at the king's palace."

We piled into the black laser car at the back of the Voles hideout and ventured off to the king's palace in Bhutan. Soon, the car went wooooooooooosh and we were going faster and faster. Troy pushed a series of buttons in the car and it closed itself up while increasing in speed. The next thing I knew, we exited the mountain of K7.

"Now first things first, we will hide the car over here, and here, put this sari on you to cover your uniform unless you want to arouse suspicion."

"Thanks Troy," I said as I quickly changed into a sari.

"Now you girls enjoy yourself and I have a few things to do. Bye Lune, and make sure that you take Tam to the tea house." Troy winked.

"Sure Troy," said Lune smiling. "I will see you in an hour."

"Now before I forget, use this connector so I can contact you at all times, just in case Tam is wanted," said Troy as he left.

"Now Tam, how about letting your hair down for once?"

"Look at the mountains over there," smiled Khandi.

"I know sweetheart," I said, smelling the fresh air.

"Tam, this is where you have been hostage for the last two years," said Lune, pointing in the opposite direction.

"Wow Lune, have we travelled that fast," I said, sounding bewildered.

"Yes, we sure have," said Lune proudly of her husband.

"That man is a true genius," I said.

"Thanks, I will tell him that, Tam. How about we look at the palace," smiled Lune. Lune showed me to one of the arched doors and we walked in. Once inside, I could not believe my eyes as it was so intricately made, many centuries before the Taj Mahal was even built.

"This is so amazing, Lune." I stood mesmerized by the sheer beauty of it all.

After walking around for a while, we were getting hungry, so decided to get some hot drinks and sit down for a picnic. Lune ordered the tea and we all sat and ate our lunch and drank our tea. All of a sudden, Troy came running towards us looking hot and flustered. "Tam you had better get home, you are wanted for something," said Troy.

"Oh crumbs Troy, just when I am finally enjoying myself at last!"

"I know, Tam, and luckily you did not venture to Kashmir or you might have been

discovered,” Troy said to me with a sense of urgency. “Khandi can stay with Lune and I will pick you up after, Hun.”

“Is that alright with you Lune?”

“Sure and look after yourself ,Tam. You will all be free soon,” she said, giving me the biggest hug.

“See you,” said Khandi, smiling at me.

I ran with Troy to where the laser car was and quickly changed. Soon, *whoooooooooosh*, we were travelling at breakneck speed and were at the entrance in no time. “Now here are some instructions Tam. If they start getting suspicious, hide your gadget and always have a plan to get rid of it if you cannot hide it straight away, such as your shoes or something like that,” said Troy.

“Are they on to me yet, Troy? You are scaring me,” I said, sounding almost hysterical.

“No they aren’t, but all of us Voles are slowly bringing the whole system down and we need you to be one step ahead of them before we give the final hit... the siege.”



## CHAPTER 41

### GUMMI BEARS

“Well I am relieved that they are not on to me, Troy,” I said sighing.

“If they were, Tam, then it will come up green on my gadget, as well as yours. For now, head down and bum up doing your work and avoid any suspicious activity,” said Troy.

“Okay,” I said, feeling slightly overwhelmed.

“Tam, we are on your side and are buying time and waiting until the moment is right for the siege,” indicated Troy.

“When do I know that the siege is on,” I said.

“I won’t tell you, Tam, but it is soon.” Looking at my scared face, Troy reached in his pocket. “Here is a calming gummi bear. It will settle your nerves, Tam.”

“Mmmmmm,” I said as I popped it into my mouth.

“It is Lune’s specialty. It is all natural,” said Troy.

“I better be off,” I said hastily as I got out of the car.

Troy pulled me back with one arm and I looked shocked for a moment. “Tam, aren’t you forgetting something,” he said, looking at my shoes that Lune had given to me.

“Oops,” I said to Troy and promptly slipped them off my feet.

“Now Tam, get into your bedroom, and quickly before you are discovered,” said Troy, almost pushing me out of the tunnel.

“See you tomorrow, Troy, and thanks for everything,” I said. I pressed open the door and went into my quarters. Troy whooshed off into the distance. No sooner had I closed the tunnel door and dashed under the shower that I heard a knock on the door. I poked my head around the door and saw that it was Spike looking exhausted.

“How is it going Tam?” he asked.

“Great. I finished early,” I said.

“How about we have a meal together tonight?”

“Sure no worries, Spike.” I was suddenly feeling tired after a long day but I was not letting on.

“Tam, where were you as I looked for you on a break at the computer room and they said that you had left hours ago,” said Spike seriously.

“That is correct.”

“You’re not ill again, Tam?”

“No, nothing of the sort. In fact I could not be better,” I replied trying to avoid an interrogation.

“How come you finished so early, and did you complete the two days of work?”

“Hey, what is with all the questions? I got it done and dusted because I am learning tricks from some of the others there.”

“Wow, that is excellent, Tam,” said Spike giving me a hug.

“I know and I could not be happier doing this line of work. It really suits me to a tee and I thoroughly enjoy it,” I said.

“Well, I am glad, Tam,” said Spike beaming.

“I am doing money laundering and all that, plus doing the Vulcan’s work as well,” I said, sounding downcast when realizing I was engaging in a criminal activity.

Spike sensed and knew how I was feeling. “Tam, I know it is tough being here and doing all this stuff, but you are doing the best you can in the current situation...we both are,” said Spike, hugging me tighter.

All of a sudden, I could hear the familiar sound of the food trolley. “Here are extra food bonuses from the Walf,” indicated the trolley man as he handed the both of us a large package. “Is that all for me? That is so much more than what I had before. Look at this, Spike!”

“Yes Ms Tam, you have done well and the Walf has rewarded you” the trolley guy beamed.

I lifted the lid on the plate and saw the best seafood platter I could ever imagine. “Yum this looks sensational! What have you got, Spike?”

Spike opened the lid of his and it turned out he had the same.

“Well I best be off,” said the trolley man. “Here is something extra for you.” It was a small packet of the most expensive truffles.

“OMG, where the hell does the Walf get all this stuff,” I queried.

“Don’t ask me, but how about we both enjoy it, Tam,” said Spike.

“First of all, let’s light a few candles,” I said, sounding romantic.

It was an enjoyable evening, but the reality was I had to face yet another day as a hostage thanks to the Walf.

## CHAPTER 42

### SEIGE

I woke up the next morning, and saw that Spike had left earlier. Then, I heard knocking on the door and wondered who it was. “What can I do for you?”

“The Walf wants to see you again after work, Ma'am,” said the young massager.

“Thanks for that,” I said and then I could hear the sound of the food trolley coming. I ate my breakfast in peace and thought I would tell Troy what was going on with the Walf.

I locked the door yet again and pressed the pink button and waited for Troy to come. “What is up Tam,” asked Troy.

“I have to go and see the Walf,” I said handing him a slip of paper.

“Oh, I see Tam.” He grinned at me. “Tam today he will ask you to become chief computer expert and his right hand woman, so to speak.”

“Oh crap, really?”

“Yes really, Tam, but be careful. All of us Voles will soon have the system shutting down and then the siege with the other Voles...so it is not long now Tam,” said Troy.

“Okay, but what if he tries it on me again,” I said.

“Then use this little baby in his drink, Tam, and don't go into the bedroom with him if at all possible.” Then Troy's device beeped. “You are going to be late for work, so hurry up.”

“Okay thanks, Troy,” I said, closing the door to the tunnel.

I went to work and threw myself into my tasks, completing them in double-quick time. I was just finished when I was told to see the Walf straight away.

Soon, I was at the Walf's penthouse, and saw that his secretary was not there. I did not see a bell or anything, but soon the door opened and it was the Walf himself who let me in. “Hi Tam. Don't look so worried,” he said with a smug face as he bent over and gave me a peck.

“Yuck,” I thought to myself as I felt like throwing up.

“Now sit down and have some wine with me,” said the Walf, going towards his bedroom. I quickly slipped the pill in his drink just as he was starting to turn back.

“This is good Walf,” I said.

“Now it is Karl to you,” beamed the Walf.

“Oka, I faltered, wondering what he was going to say next. “Now as you know, you have been doing excellent work lately. How would you like to be my right hand woman, as well as the leading computer expert here?”

“Why me,” I almost wailed.

“Well I know a fine woman when I see one and you’re it,” said the Walf.

“When do I have to make a decision, Karl?”

“In about a week.”

“Okay, I will think about it,” I said.

“Now let’s eat,” said the Walf as we both dined on fine meats. “If you want to be my right hand woman, will you be interested living in my quarters. Now, take my hand and I will show you around the penthouse.”

His penthouse was pure opulence, complete with a spa and state of the art creature comforts.

“Mmm, that is great,” I said as I touched the silk sheets.

“Interested, Tam? On top of that, here is a gown for you.” He showed me a gown that was encrusted in precious stones and I gasped.

“What ...? How about we finish dessert first and I will give you the answer in a week,” I said assertively.

“Of course,” said the Walf, believing in his deluded mind that he had won me over.

“How about we enjoy this gateau and...” He started to yawn, as I saw him take a big gulp of wine and his eyes started to flutter. “Tam sorry about this, but could you help me back to my room?”

By the time he plonked on the bed he was snoring. “I better go, Karl,” I said as I opened the door. His secretary had left for the day and her replacement had not arrived yet.

I arrived at my quarters just as Spike was about to leave. “I’ll see you later, Tam,” said Spike. “The darn power grid keeps going on the blink.” He went off to work, not suspecting that the Voles were responsible for the current hiccups chez k7

I locked my door, pressed the pink button and Troy arrived promptly. “Now, did Karl suspect anything,” said Troy.

“No nothing, but the power grid keeps malfunctioning,” I said. I saw Troy’s face burst into a big grin. “Ok what are you up to, Troy?”

“It is happening soon and the siege will come, Tam, and that is all I am going to say. I better be off, Tam, as we have to plan to get you all out soon. I want you to have a torch, food and water on hand at all times.”

“Yes Troy, I will, and thanks for that.”

Spike arrived late at night and slept on the bunk bed due to exhaustion. I had gathered up the necessary supplies and had them stored near my bed, just in case.

The next day, I woke up with a start and wondered where I was. Spike had awoken and I was just about to switch on the light when nothing happened. “Spike what is going on?” Then, the sound of alarms could be heard in the distance and I wondered what the hell was going on.

“I don’t know what is going on, Tam, but I’ll find out...and you stay here, Tam,” said Spike seriously.

“Of course,” I said, wondering what Troy had done to everything to make it impossible to switch on the lights. I could hear a lot of running around outside our quarters and it sounded like complete chaos inside. I tried to lock the door, but it would not shut, so I pressed the pink button and Troy came.

“Tam, today is D-day. The rest of the Voles are coming inside all at once to take all the hostages away to safety via this tunnel,” said Troy seriously.

“Are you sure that that will work, Troy,” I asked feeling suddenly overwhelmed.

“Yes, the Voles and I have planned it all for some time and soon Connor West and Interpol will be right here to help,” said Troy. “Tam just get the hostages to go with Munga’s nephews and let’s get to the task of getting all of you people out.”

“Okay, when will that happen,” I said.

“In about half an hour,” said Troy, and he closed the tunnel just as Spike came in the door.

## CHAPTER 43

### D DAY

“Well it appears that somebody has hacked into the Walf’s server and shut down the whole shebang, plus taken a large sum of cash as well,” indicated Spike seriously.

I tried hard not to laugh in his face and said, “Oh crap, now what I’m starved,” I said pretending to look bewildered at the current situation.

“I know, Tam, just grab a snack here and a drink and I will see if we’re needed on duty,” said Spike.

“Okay, I said as Spike left. Suddenly, Troy and the other Voles came through the tunnel were there smiling from ear to ear.

“How are things upstairs, Tam? Is that enough chaos for you?” He grinned.

“You rat, Troy,” I chuckled .

“Now Tam, you go with Munga and go and get the women here. Lune you stay in the tunnel with Khandi and make sure the women get away safe, and for God sake, keep Khandi with Mova at our place and don’t let the Walf near her.”

“Yes Troy. She is already there,” said Lune nervously.

“Great how about you all go and get them,” said Troy holding up his arms as if he was boarding the Trojan horse. Just then, as Troy and the Voles were going out of the bedroom, in walks Spike.

“Now what in God’s name is going on, Tam? And is that you, Karl?”

“No, I am Troy and this is D-Day and you are going to be rescued. Interpol is on its way,” said Troy.

“Are you serious, Tam? How can you be so dam sure you can trust these people,” said Spike seriously. Troy walked up closer to me and then Spike said to Troy, “You move another step and I will knock your block off. Tam is my woman and I love her very much!”

“Point taken, Spike, but all this dilly dallying is delaying the rescue. Is that what you want? Work with me and follow me and we will get everyone out to meet Connor and Interpol. So how about it,” said Troy assertively.

“Okay. What do I do, Troy,” said Spike uneasily.

“Follow me and Munga’s nephews.”

Then, Spike and I went with Munga. Munga and I were making out way down the hallway using torches and it was a scene of mass panic. “This way, Munga,” I said, as I could see many

of the workers running around not knowing what to do. I said in an authoritarian voice to the large group of women, "Follow me to safety near the tunnel!" I held some of the women's hands and the others grabbed on to Munga's hands and we went down to my quarters. Troy was there with other women.

"Ooooooooooh! We are going to be freed," they said. Lune helped all of them get into the large laser cars and with a *whooooooosh* they were gone.

"Now the next load," I said, giving everyone a high five. All of a sudden, I could hear popping in the distance and the smell of smoke. "What in the hell is going on, Troy," I said coughing and spluttering as smoke filled the air.

"That is nothing to worry about, Tam and Spike, but the network is going into meltdown and the power grid will overload and catch fire."

"Will anyone die," I asked, wondering if Troy had gone too far to bring the Walf down.

"No. Now Tam, honestly, what kind of monster do you think I am?"

"Will the Walf be able to pin this all on me?"

"Tam, you have to stop worrying and start rescuing more people

Time after time, all of us went in every direction, and being careful not to start a panic, we brought people to my quarters and to freedom. One woman remarked, "Jesus , now I have heard it all!"

"Tam get you check what is going on in the mountain please," said Troy seriously.

"I'll go with you, Tam," said Munga.

I ran through the corridors, checking for the stragglers and telling everyone I saw to follow me to where the nephews of Munga were helping with the rescue, which was near the helipad. The area was full of rescued people and rescuers with megaphones, directing all the people. It was just a complete state of pandemonium. The people were overwhelmed by the situation.

They were told to form a single file, so that they all could be transported to the evacuation centre. "Tam, they are okay and on their way to rescue. We had better check if there is anyone left behind," said Munga seriously.

I went back one more time through the hallways and it was practically deserted now. I rounded up the last of the hostages and, together with Munga, ran down to my quarters. "This is the last of them, I think."

"You could say that," said Munga, sounding weary.

There was no one in the tunnel and it was all dark and quiet. I began to panic, thinking it would be ironic if after all this time I was the only one who did not get rescued. Time and time again I pressed the pink button and no result.

The group was starting to get restless. They had been through enough that morning and they were wondering if it wasn't a trap. One of the women started to cry and Munga and I tried to calm her down. When it all seemed hopeless, Troy came along in his red laser car. "Sorry to

have kept you waiting, Tam and Munga. All the women are out now and in the rescue centre in Bhutan.”

“I am glad, Troy,” I said, starting to yawn as the last load of young men and women boarded the laser car.

“Now all of you...your mothers are already rescued,” said Troy, sounding authoritarian. “Thanks so much,” they said in unison, tears streaming down their faces as they boarded the laser car.

What a day and I had not even had breakfast yet. “Tam, just go and check the helicopter pad,” said Troy.

“I’ll come with you, Tam,” said Munga.

I just stepped outside and breathed a sigh of relief when I saw that everyone had been rescued.

“Watch out, Tam,” said Munga trying to protect me, but to no avail. Someone had grabbed me from behind and was armed.

“You move one inch and I’ll kill her,” snarled the Walf, who I could see at the corner of my eye. He proceeded to take me upstairs to the penthouse. I kept calm and did not say anything, but felt like I was going to faint as he took me further and further up the mountain and the new crew were following the scenario. “You know what happens to double crossers and you are the bitch that destroyed my whole world,” sneered Karl into my ears.

I did not say anything and tried to look for a way out, but there was none as we reached the penthouse. Quickly, Karl had me inside and he locked the door.

“Open the door, Karl,” said an Interpol man with a nametag that said, “Ez.” “We will do a deal.”

“No way! No deal, she stays with me,” sneered Karl, as he looked at me with hostility.

“Are you okay in there, Tam,” said a voice.

“Yes,” I said, and then my mouth was gagged.

“Now what is this, Tam,” said the Walf as we could hear the commotion outside. “You set me up and I don’t like double crossers!”

I was suddenly feeling sure of myself and trying to find a way out.

“What is wrong with living here, Tam?”

I started to think of a song that would make him see sense. All of a sudden, I spit out the gag and Michael Jackson’s “Man in the Mirror” came to me and I sang for the Walf. I was singing it in opera and he stood there spellbound. “Wow I never knew you could sing like that, Tam.” Walf came closer to me to kiss, me but I backed off. “WTF Tam!”

“Did you listen to one word I sang?”

“No not really, Tam,” said the Walf.

I heard banging outside and knew that our time was almost up. I saw that there was a can of



pepper near where I was sitting and I sprayed it in his face. The Walf screamed in pain. “Tam bugger you!” I opened the door and tried to escape and I saw Spike looking their dumbfounded, just outside the door. The Walf grabbed onto my leg, but Ez saw what was going on and that the Walf was armed. “Put the gun down!”

“No way you bastard! This is what traitors deserve,” said Karl, holding my leg tighter and to the point I could not move, but I kept calm.

## CHAPTER 44

### A HERO

“Now you don’t want to die here, so let the girl go and put the gun down,” said Ez standing in front of Karl and myself.

“No way and you don’t move,” sneered Karl.

All of a sudden I felt his iron grip loosen as he flopped to the floor behind me in the penthouse. “Are you okay, Tam,” said Ez West.

“Yes,” and then I burst into tears, falling to the floor.

“Tam, come here and it is going to be okay,” said Spike, holding me.

The rescue crew saw what happened and I realized everything had been captured on camera. “Are you the missing Tam Benderson,” asked a journalist, shoving a mike in my face.

“Yes, I sure am,” I said bursting out in tears, realizing that now I was indeed free.

“Now, we go this way, Tam, downstairs,” said Mr. West as I slowly walked outside of the mountain towards the others and more media personnel. I was blinking from the unfamiliar sight of the sun and found it hard to compose myself as everything felt suddenly surreal.

“It is okay, Tam,” said Spike as he held me.

We were transported to the Bhutanese rescue centre by helicopter and I nearly fell asleep due to exhaustion. I soon met up with Lune, Khandi, Hare, Munga’s nephews, Mova and the others as I stepped in Bhutanese soil a free woman.

“Now Ms Benderson, how does it feel to be a hero,” said a journalist.

“Hero? Me? No. Impossible,” I thought to myself as I tried to comprehend that I was no longer a hostage, but free as a bird waiting to start a new life, as my image was beamed around the globe.

“A hero,” I thought to myself...that sounds pretty good to me.