

# **THE SPEED OF HONEY**

**By**  
**S. J. Howe**

## **SYNOPSIS**

Dan's charged with child murder, committed when he was five.

After a failed suicide attempt in Thailand. Dan Hargreeves has turned his life around.

Thirteen years later, he's a successful accountant living with a beautiful partner. His life falls apart with the arrival of identical twin Thai girls. They are a product of a brief encounter with a Thai prostitute just before his suicide attempt.

The girls are rude and violent. His partner detests them and his relationship breaks down. His whole world falls apart when he is charged with a child's murder. He has no recollection of it, but he knows he has something to do with the child's death, because of his violent and disturbing hallucinations are similar to the boy's injuries. He dreams the same dream every night, which consists of a red barn with a blue roof. The boy's body was found in such a barn.

This book contains scenes that some readers may find disturbing. Strictly adults only.

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## Chapter 1

Pressing number eight. Happiness blooms inside me; warming my internal organs. This is the night I am going to take my own life.

When I was a child I thought my life would be like a good book. Each page a day of my life. Each line a forty minute segment of the twenty-four hour cycle. Each sentence being read at the speed of honey, drifting down over each row of words. Sweet. Fragrant. Rich. Every page sticky to the touch. No. Not my life. It only takes a few wrong decisions and life can crush you, spit you out, leaving you in a desolate dark place. My life's nearly over, just eternal peace awaits me now. Free at last.

Looking at my reflection in a mirror, an image of split metal doors close behind me. I spot a picture in the distance on a diminishing wall. The picture of a horse and cart with a barn behind it, reminds me of a dream I have every night. My dream consists of a red barn with a blue roof, and it's large door I can never open. The floor pushes me up vertically. The alcohol I've just consumed makes it hard for me to keep my balance. I can hear it's internal sloshing breaking the silence. My body glows inside from it's disturbance.

Placing my palm on the mirrors cold glass to steady myself, mist instantly forms surrounding my fingers. Regaining my balance. I remove my hand and study it's print. It takes me back to my last hallucination, one which consisted of the removal of my hands; ending with the mutilation of my body. My violent, disturbing hallucinations have been quiet tonight. If it was like this all the time, I wouldn't take this pragmatic approach to my own death or be in Thailand. Moving my gaze to the reflection of a girl stood next to me, I wonder how many times she's made this journey.

'What's your name?' I ask.

'You not need know what name is. Give me money now, elevator smell of piss, hotel shit hole. I know what you English man like,' she says staring at herself, frowning in the mirror.

Reaching in my pocket I grab a handful of cash. 'Is this enough?' I say waving the notes in the air. She takes the cash still staring at her reflection, her face changes from a belligerent frown, easing into a slight smile. 'My name's Thip,' she says.

The sound of her name brings to my senses the taste of honey, the smell of cinnamon and the colours blue and red flashed through my mind.

The lift abruptly reaches it's destination. We both put our palms on the mirror's cold glass to

steady ourselves. I turn my head to look at her, but she stares blankly at her own reflection. Second thoughts maybe?

Walking past her through the opening split metal doors. I wonder if she'll come back to the hotel room. She seemed happy in the bar. She's been paid.

Opening the door to my room with a plastic credit card key, the lights, television set and air conditioning automatically come on.

The room smells lemon fresh, but it couldn't disguise it's worn out desperation. Condensation oozes from its walls. The room looks like it's slowly dying.

I chose this place purposely. I didn't want to die in a place that was fresh and modern. I felt guilty, even dirty about what I was going to do later. I wanted to die in a place my corpse wouldn't look out of place in.

Opening the fridge door I can hear Thip's tapping stilettos echoing on the ceramic tiles in the corridor leading to the room. She's decided to pay me what she owes me. It better be worth it.

Taking out a bottle of whiskey, I pour two glasses. Thip slips into the room behind me. The bed squeaks as she sits on it.

Taking a sip, the cold liquid flows over my tongue hitting the back of my throat, the taste of sparkling lemonade lingers in my mouth as I swallow.

Picking up the two glasses I turn around to face Thip. She's sat on the edge of the bed, looking up at me, her eyes connect with mine, but her face shows no emotion. To her it's simply business.

She grips her black tawdry purse and mobile in her palm, I pass her a glass, the expression on her face changes to an arrogant, snorting tut.

'I not want whiskey. Just fuck me,' she says in a matter-of-fact-way.

Taking another sip the coldness of this situation is filling me with regret. In hindsight I should of brought her friend with a glass eye, at least she laughed a lot.

'I thought we'd relax, have a few drinks, followed by sex afterwards,' I say hoping to bring a little warmth to the situation. After all it's my twenty-first birthday. This was supposed to be a little treat before I had to do, what I had to do.

'You spent three hours in bar getting drunk. You pay bar 600 Bahts to bring me to hotel to fuck me, so fuck me.'

Placing the glasses on top of the fridge I get undressed, I drop my clothes around my feet. Standing here naked in front of Thip I feel vulnerable with her being fully clothed staring directly at my cock, still sat on the edge of the bed.

She looks at my arms. 'You like cutting self?' she asks.

'Not any more.'

'He not very big. You good looking young man, but cock not big enough to please me,' she

says, staring at my air conditioned penis.

I should of brought her friend. I must of picked the prostitute with the most attitude in Bangkok.

‘Who the fuck’s paying here?’ I say raising my voice.

Thip looks up towards me giggling. ‘You not like it when I say cock small.’

Anger swells inside me, closing my eyes I suppress it by thinking about freezing water being hosed over my body. A technique I’ve learnt over the years.

‘You can say what the fuck you like, but you’re going on as if you’ve paid me. So either you let me fuck you like the cheap piece of meat you are, or give me my money back and fuck off.’

Thip opens her palm letting her purse and mobile drop, the items hit the floor disappearing under the bed. Still sat there with her palm open she looks up at me, her dark eyes don’t connect with mine, she’s looking at me in a sly way, similar to a cornered animal just before it launches it’s attack. She gives me a sarcastic smile. Changing her mind, she stands up and faces me.

She removes her black T-shirt and kicks her stilettos off. Skin tight jeans slither down her legs, she places them neatly beside the bed. I kick my hastily dropped clothes towards the wall.

Standing in front of me Thip unhooks her black bra. Her body is a lot fuller than most Thai girls, her skin is a flawless melted brown sugar colour, apart from lighter coloured stretch marks snaking around the bottom of her stomach.

Releasing her large breasts she keeps her bra in-between her fingers as she slips both her thumbs in either side of her pink thong. Looking directly at me she slides them down her smooth legs, letting them fall to her ankles. She steps out of the crumpled briefs dropping her bra at the same time.

‘You like what you see?’ she says stood in front of me with her palms facing, gesturing in a confident way, knowing full well she has a good body.

I notice two scars on her wrists. At least we’ve got something in common.

‘You know you’re a good looking woman, but those two scars on your wrists spoil the show a bit.’

‘Your little man like it, he get bigger,’ she says putting her hands behind her back.

‘So why try and kill yourself?’ I ask.

‘You not need know about that. So when use little man on me?’

‘Now. He’s got used to the air conditioning.’

Thip kneels down on all fours on the bed, with her feet over the bottom edge of it.

Scanning the back of her body, one black scorpion tattoo at the base of her spine spoils her flawless back.

Kneeling down on the carpet I push my thumbs into the soles of her feet, massaging them. Prising her legs slightly apart I move my head in. I can feel the air temperature rise, it flows across my cheeks as my face gets closer to the sticky heat of her trimmed vagina.

Pushing my nose into her soft entrance, the sticky heat takes the chill out of the tip of it, the air conditioning is doing it's job well.

The smell is intoxicating, it's the same as Blackpool Pleasure Beach. The smell of fish and chips smothered with salt and vinegar, mixed with candyfloss, drenched with salted sea air explodes up my nostrils.

Stretching my tongue I use it's tip, just touching Thip's clitoris, she jerks forward. I can feel the bristles at the start of her perfectly trimmed vagina, scratch around the outside of my tongue, as I work it over and around her hard tissue.

Pushing hard against the slippery velvet that guards her entrance, it accepts my tongue with ease. The taste takes me back to my childhood. Sherbet and liquorice dip rips across my taste buds.

Moving my tongue in and out, simultaneously twisting it around from left to right, the base of it starts to ache. The taste of sherbet dip intensifies, zipping around the inside of my mouth, the mixture of my saliva and Thip's vaginal juices join together, spilling over my lips and chin. My erection's at full strength. It's time to get my money's worth.

Stopping I wipe the residue off my face with the back of my hand. 'Why you fucking stop?' she says abruptly.

'What about me? I'm the one that's fucking paid.'

'I owe you one. Get condom, I not got any.'

Standing up from my crouched position, excitement buzzes inside me, my cock's numb with anticipation. Switching the TV off I grab a box of condoms from the welcome basket.

'What flavour d' you want? Strawberry or orange?'

'I not care. I not suck it. Just put little man in me.'

Ripping the wrapping off I slide the latex rubber along my cock. The smell of apple fills my nostrils. I feel nauseated. It's the taste and smell I hate the most. I'll get this rubber inside her as quickly as possible to kill the smell off.

Putting my hands on either side of Thip's waist, I pull her towards me. I use both my thumbs to open her entrance, sliding my cock half way in, my spine soaks up all the pleasure, I pause, then slowly penetrate her with the whole length. Intense heat swirls, penetrating the rubber. Thip moans.

'He nice size. I surprised. Now fuck me.'

Sliding in and out of Thip in a steady rhythm, I've got no fear of premature ejaculation with the amount of alcohol I've consumed.

Five minutes pass, then ten. Thip's moaning increases, mixing with the squeaking headboard.

Watching the back of her thighs vibrate, I turn my gaze to her scorpion tattoo, it moves in time with my rhythm as if to sting me. Blood gushes around her back underneath her skin, giving

that melted brown sugar colour a tinge of pink. My nostrils flare as they suck in the smell of a pungent Blackpool afternoon.

Thip's stomach contracts, I put my hand on it to feel her orgasm, I realise my alcohol consumption isn't going to give me the same pleasure.

'You finish yet?,' she asks in a way she's done her job and is ready to leave the room.

'No.'

'You been at it like fucking train. Too much beer.'

'Only 'cause you've come, you can fucking wait for me.'

Speeding up my rhythm, my cock feels numb inside her. The squeaking noise from the headboard is starting to put me off, especially when it knocks into a groove on the wall made by many previous sordid encounters.

'Come on, come on,' Thip shouts.

'You're putting me off. For fuck sake,' I say as my erection gives into the alcohol.

I Stop abruptly. Thip looks over her shoulder. 'You come?'

'Too much beer. I'll have to finish myself off later.'

Withdrawing I slump back down on the bed. We both lay next to each other looking at the revolving fan on the ceiling.

'I have whisky now,' she says with her part of the deal finished.

Getting off the bed I grab the two glasses. Passing Thip one, she drinks it down, I do the same.

'Get bottle,' she says.

Doing what I'm told, I pour her another glass and lie next to her.

'Why is your English so good?' I ask.

'I live with American man for five year. He own bar where you take me from.'

'I didn't see him there.'

'He leave. Go back America. I look after bar, send him money each month. I keep rest.'

'You can't make much if you have to sell yourself as well.'

'You stupid English man. I not need to fuck for money. I fuck if I want to fuck. Money just bonus,' she says screwing her face up.

'So why choose me?'

'You good looking man. Too young for me, you quiet, very sad. I see it in eyes. But I fuck many man from bar, so don't think you special.'

Taking another sip of whiskey I look up towards the ceiling. A familiar tingling sensation moves inside my right arm. I wait for the inevitable pain.

Snap! Bone cleanly breaks sending a shock wave to my unsuspecting brain. Crunch! Something smashes down on the fracture, split fragments bury and burn inside my flesh. I feel my fingers contort claw like. I wait. It shoots up my spine, firing into my neck ripping my brain

open, it feeds on the nerve endings. I used to scream, but not any more. I close my eyes and slip in.

The revolving fan cuts the air, Thip's face comes into view, she sits on my stomach and brings the tip of her nose to mine. Black vacant eyes stare, I can see my face reflected across them. Her tongue drops, she moves herself downward running the back of it in the middle of my chest. It leaves a fine red line as it slices through the skin. My skin peels back revealing a white ribcage stained with patches of red. Reaching my navel she moves her head to my side. Her head shakes like a wild animal as she tears into the flesh. She spits a chunk out, she does it again, then again. Kneeling in-between my legs she straightens her back, her head rises. Blood's curdled around her lips, gristle hangs onto her chin. Her tongue drops in-between her breasts, the tip of it touches my hard cock. It coils itself around it. Flesh bulges in-between the pink coils. It's going to burst. Spiders emerge from her mouth, they run down her tongue covering my penis. One leaves the pack, it grows in size as it makes it's way towards my face. It stands on my chin. Gossamer eyelids look at me, they look like light-green condoms bulging with a full load, they peel back, black glassy oval eyes stare, I can see my face reflected on them, tears are running down my cheeks. I recoil as two black fangs come from nowhere, congealing blood seeps out of their edges. A sudden jolt from in-between my legs lifts my backside off the mattress. Thip's got my ripped off cock dangling in her coiled tongue. Thick rainbow coloured liquid spurts from it's torn base. The spider moves onto my cheek, fangs raised. They sink down into my eyeball.

Looking back at the ceiling, Thip blocks my view, her black eyes pierce through me, they're so dark it looks like night has cut it's wrists and bled into them, but they look bemused. 'What the fuck is matter with you?' she asks.

'Hallucinations.'

'Your eyes move all over place. I shake you, but you still look at ceiling.'

'I've had them since I was sixteen, they last about ten seconds.'

'Is that reason you sad man?'

'Yeah. Can we change the subject?' I say.

This isn't the time to go into detail. She'll never understand.

'D' you want me to make you come?' she says looking down at me smiling. I smile back at her.

Thip drags the tips of her nails across my stomach, grabbing hold of my cock she squeezes it, it rapidly expands in its latex wrapping.

Ripping the condom off, she throws it on the carpet. Smiling at me she moves her head down towards my penis. Her long dark hair covers my chest and stomach as she slips my cock into her mouth. My backside jerks back into the bed as the alcohol residue left in her mouth burns the top of my foreskin. My cock gets used to the sudden temperature change as it relaxes into it's new warm, wet environment.



She gets into an expert rhythm, bringing me to a climax almost immediately. I need to defuse the situation.

‘Suck on my balls,’ I say.

Putting the whole of my sack in her mouth, she uses the tip of her tongue to flick away at my testicles, masturbating me at the same time.

Releasing my scrotum from its warm incubation, she slides my cock back into her mouth, going down to the base.

That’s the first time anyone has done that to me.

Getting back into her rhythm I feel myself about to come. Concentrating on the spinning fan above the bed, I try and make the moment last longer. It’s too late. The first spurt of semen enters her mouth, followed by a second, then a third.

She stops in mid-flow moving her head up towards mine with a smile on her face. Opening her mouth she comes in for a kiss, closing my eyes I open mine. Feeling her tongue clash with mine, her saliva is thick, almost mucus consistency.

What is that fucking taste? The taste of oysters fills my mouth. The last time I tried them, I was on holiday with my parents. That slimy sea taste made me retch, and that was the first and last time I was ever going to try them.

Fucking bitch. Pushing Thip flat on the bed I spit the semen onto the carpet. Anger brews inside me, I pin her shoulder to the bed, staring directly into her eyes.

‘Why the fuck did you do that for?’

‘It yours. You can have back,’ she says giggling.

‘I don’t think it’s very fucking funny.’

‘So it OK to put in my mouth?’ she says raising her voice.

‘You’re a female. I expect you’ve had plenty in your mouth over the years.’

‘I girl, so you think I like it?’ she shouts.

‘I don’t fucking know. But I know I fucking don’t,’ I shout back at her.

I can feel myself boiling over. This girl better not push it any further.

‘You stupid young man. Maybe it hallucination. When go back England to nice life you remember me now. You just think I piece of meat you buy then throw away.’

Nice life. I’m about to kill myself.

My brain is on fire, my stomach feels like a furnace, glowing molten steel flows through my veins.

I fucking hate this girl.

Sitting on her, pinning both her wrists to either side of the pillow, she looks up at me defiantly.

‘You want beat me? You want rape me? Go on. Rape me, I been raped before. You never be able to hurt me.’

Holding her, anger still burns through me.

Using my knee's to push her legs apart. I'll give her what she fucking deserves. She doesn't struggle, she knows it's pointless. I feel my cock touch the inside of her thigh as I spread her legs. She spits in my face, the globule drifts down the side of my cheek. My cock brushes against her pubic hair. She starts struggling, wriggling underneath me.

Pushing her wrists harder into the mattress, I've got her pinned down with the weight of myself on top of her. Anger and adrenaline fill my blood stream, hardening me. She feels it harden to, moving up the inside of her thigh. I push at her moist opening, a flap of skin moves to the side, I position myself just inside her, it's wet with hate. Now to thrust it with one short burst. What the fuck am I doing? Thip stares at me. Waiting for me to penetrate her, she spits in my face again.

Pushing my thumbs harder into her wrists, her brown skin turns white highlighting her scars. I run my thumbs along the broken skin. Warm tears drip down my cheeks falling onto her face.

'I'm going to take my own life some day,' I say.

Letting her go I lay next to her, putting my forearm across my sobbing eyes. Guilty silence covers me like a blanket. I hear the bed sheet ruffle. Warm breath circles my ear. 'My daughter die,' she says in a whisper.

The bed squeaks, I feel her warm arse cheeks on my stomach as she sits astride me. Bringing my knee's up to support her back, she pulls my forearm away from my stinging eyes.

'She die from measles. No money for injection.'

Her sudden mood change to empathy surprises me. This women's been through a lot.

'When did it happen?'

'Seven year ago. I come here after. Fuck for money.'

'Didn't you try to have a child with your American boyfriend?'

'No. He not want baby. He say if I have baby he throw me out on street.'

'My life's a complete fuck up. The pain that goes with these hallucinations is unbearable. I can't hold down a job. I've never had a relationship. Life's just a waste of time.'

Thip smiles at me. Raising her right hand, she slaps me across my face. My smarting cheek burns.

What the fuck is the matter with this fucking girl? Grabbing both my wrists, she pins them down either side of the pillow.

'Don't ever think about rape girl again,' she says. Her heavy mascara eyes look down at me, her long black hair drops over her shoulders, the ends annoyingly tickle my cheeks. She smiles.

'It's time for you to leave. You've been paid,' I say.

I want to get the job over and done with on myself. She's just getting in the way now.

I can feel Thip push her thumb nails hard into my wrists, she leans down kissing my smarting cheek. Moving onto my neck she uses the tip of her tongue to make small wet circles.

My new erection snuggles comfortably in-between her buttocks. My cock slides along the crease of her cheeks, as she raises her backside. Smack! It hits my stomach at the speed of a released coiled spring.

I can feel heat radiate from the crevice of her vagina, as her pubic bristles scratch along the belly of my cock.

‘Maybe I fucking rape you,’ she says in a whisper still kissing my neck.

‘Just get your stuff and leave,’ I say in an unconvincing tone.

Thip moves her head down to face mine. Her hair bunches up either side of my cheeks. I move my gaze away from her.

‘Why not struggle? Spit in face,’ she says.

‘I’m being polite.’

She touches the belly of my penis with her warm wetness, she slowly moves it along, leaving a sticky residue behind her, until she reaches the end.

Releasing my right wrist she grabs hold of my cock positioning it just inside herself.

Pinning my right wrist back down again, she smiles. ‘You sure you not want to fuck me?’

‘Leave now or I’ll get violent. You’ve pissed me off enough tonight,’ I say.

Sinking down, she swallows it whole.

‘Get fucking violent,’ she says as she sits up and starts fucking me.

Sweat gives her brown skin an even sheen all over, she glistens as her long black hair and breasts toss around in unison. Each bounce is pure delight.

‘You like my cunt?’ she asks.

I do. I perfectly fit inside her, the temperature is just right, the viscosity of her internal fluid is the best lubrication I’ve come across. This cunt could be my soul mate, it’s a pity about the person that surrounds it.

‘It’s worth every penny,’ I say.

She smiles. ‘You still pissed off with me?’

‘I’m starting to warm to you again.’

‘Don’t let little man spit inside me. I not want baby.’

My usual tingling sensation moves along the inside of my arm. Why now?

Snap! Crunch! Pain shoots through me, surging through my brain. My thoughts turn to screams. I hold mine in. I can feel my eyelids stick to my moistening eyes. I slip into one of my hallucinations.

Thip stares blankly at the wall. She’s still fucking me. Thrusting down on me, my penis explodes out of the side of her abdomen, she rises, thrusting down again, my cock explodes out the side of her making a second hole. Thick honey consistency clear liquid flows from the dick size holes, at the speed of syrup off the back of a spoon. The liquid turns to all the colours of a rainbow.

Thip thrusts down again, a third hole explodes out of her. Watching my penis descend out of the hole I wonder when this fucking episode is going to finish.

Large transparent spiders emerge from the three wounds, black oil like liquid sloshes about inside them. They rush up my arm coming for my face.

Looking up towards Thip, she thrusts down again, my cock explodes out of her left cheek, semen ejaculates from the end of my penis. Thip freezes dead still looking blankly at the wall, cloudy-white sperm drips from her tear ducts, nostrils and mouth. It covers all her face. Her whole head and face starts to melt as if it's wax. The spiders are all over my face. One takes position by my eye, his lemon slice lids gradually move over his shadowy glassy eyes.

Their black tails flick. Shards of light break the surface, the shafts illuminating a vast ball of slivers of silver. Their black hammer heads circle from above, moving in-between the glowing pillars, stabbing the light blue water. They dive, the ball turns a different shade, sweeping through the vast sea, chunks being picked off. The lucky ones in the middle can swim for another day.

His fangs are raised, dripping with fat. The ocean scene inside his glossy eyes carries on as he punctures my eyeball.

'Suck on my nipples. I need rest,' she says, out of breath, dangling her tits in my face, still pinning my wrists against the bed.

I'm back from that nightmare.

The cold air conditioned sweat, on the flesh of her breasts rubs against my cheeks as I get stuck into one of her nipples. I move my tongue in-between her breasts, lapping up secreted cherry flavoured drops.

'You have hallucination. I see eyes move all over place. You fuck me so quick and hard when having it, I thought I pass out. I have rest, then you finish fucking me.'

My cock goes limp inside her. I think I came inside her during my hallucination. The urge to carry on fucking her has left. I don't think she noticed, seeing that my previous ejaculation, which ended up in my mouth was only about ten minutes ago, the amount was a lot less.

Sliding my limp cock out of her she looks down at me. 'You not want fuck me any more?'

'I've already come.'

'I not feel anything,' Thip says inserting two fingers inside herself.

Pulling them out she inspects a few globules. She runs to the bathroom, turning the shower on.

'You fucking ass ole,' she shouts over the noise of the shower.

'I had no control over it,' I shout back.

She comes out drying herself with a towel.

'I wash spunk out. You fucking prick.'

'Look. Just get your fucking stuff and fuck off.'

'Don't worry. I go as quick as possible,' she says as she gets dressed.

'Well fucking hurry up.'

'Cunt,' she shouts raising her middle finger, slamming the door behind her.

My last human contact. Not what I expected. My mind's clear now. I feel nothing. I've just accepted the fact this is my final hour.

Walking to my holdall I take three letters out, plus my passport. I hope the letters to my father and brother help a little after my passing.

The third letter is to the British Embassy with all my details. It also contains an insurance policy worth £250,000 which pays out on death by suicide after two years, and that time was up yesterday. I hope that will help my father and brother a little. The insurance also contains excellent holiday cover if I were to have an accident or die. I don't want my father lumbered with the cost of repatriation of my body.

After placing them neatly on the bedside cabinet, I return to my holdall to collect a tub of thirty pain killers and slip into the bathroom.

Sitting naked on the edge of the bath I turn the taps on. I put five tablets in my palm. Putting them in my mouth I scoop some water from the cold tap. Swallowing them they leave the taste of lemon drops circling around the inside of my mouth.

Four heart breaking rolling chords swirl in my head, tic-tock, tic-tock, tic-tock. My countdown has begun. Everyone that tries to take their own life must have different things race through their minds, or maybe we all hear and see the same things.

Swallowing the rest I go to the mirror above the sink to have a last look at myself. It's just starting to mist up as the steam from the bath circulates around the room. The image of my face fades away, just like I'm going to do.

I write sorry on the misted glass with my forefinger, underneath that I write Dan Hargreeves 1975-1996 R.I.P. I could do with a piss.

Lifting the toilet seat up with my foot I pass nicotine yellow stained urine into the pan below. The water foams up as the urine bursts out of me.

A tingling sensation goes along the inside of my arm. For fuck sake. Not now.

Snap! Crunch! Grinding my teeth I take the pain and slip into an hallucination.

Still pissing in the toilet my urine has turned to all the colours of a rainbow. Spiders emerge from the pan of water, hundreds of them. Thip's head rises from the pan, water drips down over her face. The spiders move at speed up the porcelain walls as her head rises. I piss rainbow coloured urine over her face as she stares directly at my cock. Opening her mouth she sucks it in, rainbow piss explodes out of each corner of her mouth. Biting down on my penis blood sprays over her face and my stomach.

Pain shoots in every direction of my body. My blood coagulates inside me. It drops temperature as it comes to a standstill. I feel it freeze inside me, moving along the inside of my

arms and legs like frost moving up glass in mid-winter. Watching Thip's head descend with my cock dangling out the side of her mouth I feel my lungs start to freeze. My body shakes, electrified. Thip's head disappears under the pan of water. The spiders are all over me, chewing at my flesh. One comes for my eye.

Looking at the misted mirror I see the word sorry. I'm back. I'll be glad when this is all over. Turning the bath taps off I slip into the tub of warm water. Tiredness is creeping in. Closing my eyes I wait to slip away.

I'm on the edge of a cornfield, it's a hot, bright summers day. The sky is an electric blue, no clouds in sight. There are no birds singing, just silence.

Loneliness frightens me. I'm the only person on the planet. This is similar to my dreams, but it's not a dream. To my right I see a blurred human figure in the distance. I see a red barn with a blue roof on the other side of the cornfield.

The barn pulls me. Something inside wants me. Running through the field to reach the barn, corn ears brush against my hips. Reaching it I look at it's weather beaten wooden door. It opens on it's own.

Standing back I stare at the dark interior. The image shatters into thousands of pieces, leaving a black void. Something pulls the back of me, I'm being dragged through the cornfield, my heels dig into the dry soil kicking it up in lumps and dust. I spin around in a tunnel of darkness.

## Chapter 2

My lungs push at my ribcage. Do you breath in the afterlife? Who would know?

The thick scent of Daffodils lingers. Does Heaven or Hell smell of Daffodils?

Flickering my eyes open, bright light instantly blinds me. Shutting them tightly I realise my attempt failed somehow.

Relaxing my face I can see red through my shut translucent eyelids. Vomit pushes at the back of my throat, swelling my gullet. I ease the unwanted stench back down.

‘You’ve come back to join us then?’ says a females voice in Thai accent.

I can’t be bothered to answer her. As soon as I get the chance to kill myself I will, and next time there’ll be no mistakes. I’ve got no idea how they found me. But no one will have the chance next time.

‘What you the strong silent type?’ she asks.

I’d rather be the silent type. If I don’t answer her she’ll fuck off.

‘I’ll come back tomorrow when you’re in a better mood. But think about this. No airline will take you home until my assessment meets all their requirements. The CCTV camera in the room monitors you constantly. So I suggest you start co-operating tomorrow.’

Hearing her trot out the room, the smell of Daffodils leaves with her.

Opening my eyes I absorb the light, the room comes into focus. Looking around this sparse white place, the failure to kill myself, makes me feel worthless, my whole insides are a melting black mess. A tear trickles down my cheek. This is the first time I’ve cried outside and inside at the same time.

I have to crawl out of this emotion. Think. Think. The windows are locked. I can’t hang myself with the bed sheet with that CCTV on. It’ll take too long.

The strip light, that’ll do it. What do I do? Throat, chest, leg vein. If I scoop that femoral vein out, no one will be able to save me. I’ll have to be fast.

Standing up I grab the light out of it’s fixings, it sizzles into my hand. Smashing it against the metal headboard, it shatters. I flip my hospital gown open. Finding the vein I push the shattered strip light into my skin.

Clang! My head hits the headboard. A hospital orderly has got me in a headlock, he uses his other arm to pin my wrist down. I keep hold of the strip light gripping it tightly. Twisting my trapped wrist I manoeuvre the broken strip light towards his neck. He loosens his grip on my neck. I’m not worth dying for. A needle spike goes into my arm. Fuck. There’s a second orderly

in the room. They both pin me to the bed. I can't move. Feeling tired I'm slipping under.

The smell of Daffodils wafting around the room wakes me. My mouth is bone dry. Opening my eyes the light hits me again. I keep them open to absorb it, until I can focus. I see they've fitted me with a flattering straight jacket.

The Thai woman looks down at me. Her red lipstick gives off the odour of Daffodils.

'Nice try. You are determined. I'll give you that,' she says.

'Water,' I ask.

She pours a glass. Puts it to my lips. It tastes of apple. I spit it back in the glass.

'Water warm?' she asks.

'It tastes of apple. I fucking hate apple.'

'It's just plain water.'

'I know. When I taste or smell something it's completely different to what it's supposed to be.'

'How do you know what it tasted like in the first place?'

'It started when I was sixteen. The same time as my hallucinations.'

'Oh yeah. The prostitute who found you told us about that. She said that was the probable reason you attempted suicide.'

'Why did she come back to the room for?'

'She left her purse and mobile phone there. So are you going to give me some detail on why you tried to kill yourself?'

'Look lady. Just sign the paper work and fuck off,' I say turning my head away from her.

'I'll give you some food for thought. That straight jacket you're wearing can become a permanent fixture in your life. In a week's time I have to sign you out of this place, and your next destination will be the local Bangkok asylum unless I say otherwise.'

'Sounds good to me.'

Her warm breath circles around my ear. The strong smell of Daffodils fills my nostrils.

She whispers in my ear. 'The pain you feel now is nothing compared to that place. Your excellent insurance policy has deep pockets. The longer they keep you alive in there, the longer they get paid.'

'Fuck off.'

'You can stay in Bangkok for as long as I want. So I suggest you start co-operating. You've got a visitor. That whore you paid to fuck is here. I'll send her up,' she says as she leaves the room followed by her smell.

What the fuck am I going to do? What's the point of going on about my condition. She wouldn't understand. No one does.

'Why try fucking kill self?' Thip says walking into the room.



She sits down on a chair next to the bed. She's dressed differently to the last time I saw her. It looks like she's just come from an office with her tight grey pencil skirt and matching top. She holds my burnt bandaged wrist and hand, which is poking out of my straight jacket.

'You try cut wrist?' she asks.

'I had an argument with a strip light.'

'Why not tell me you were going to kill self when I leave? You know I try and kill myself once. I help you.'

'I told you I was going to someday.'

'I know. But I not know you try straight after fucking me. If I not leave purse and phone in room, you be dead.'

'What are you doing here? I mean nothing to you.'

'I not know why I here. When I see you in bath, I think you dead. I cry. I not know why.'

'Thip. As soon as I get the chance, I'm going to try again.'

'Why not let lady help you?' she says.

'There's nothing she can do, and I'd prefer it if you left.'

'I go. Let lady help you. If want me. I at bar,' she says.

Putting her hand in her pocket she pulls out a handful of cash, placing it neatly on my straight jacket. I get an erection watching her arse wiggle in her tight pencil skirt as she leaves.

How the fuck am I going to get out of this place? That shrink has got me by the bollocks and she knows it.

'Pleased to see me?' Daffodil girl says waltzing into the room.

'Not really.'

'Your penis is,' she says covering it up with my hospital gown.

'Believe me that's not because of you. But if you want to make yourself useful, take the money off my straight jacket, and put some lipstick around it. At least I won't have to hear you speak.'

'Mr Hargreeves. You win. I've told you the procedure. I'll grant you your wish. You don't have to see or hear of me again,' she says turning around to leave the room.

'I have the same dream every night,' I say, but she carries on walking.

'My mind cuts me up,' I shout. 'Spiders like the taste of my eyeballs.'

She comes back, takes a chair and sits by my bedside. 'I'll give you one more chance. If you're rude to me again, you will be sent to the Bangkok crazy house.'

'OK. But I'll be honest. I don't think you can help me.'

'How many psychiatrists have you seen?' she says taking a silver pen and note pad from her pocket.

'None. I'm sane enough to know I'm crazy.'

She smiles. 'How have you got this far in life?'

‘Alcohol.’

‘It’s a problem then?’

‘No. Reality is.’

‘OK. Start from the top. Tell me what you already know and I’ll see if I can make a difference.’

‘I was diagnosed with Lexical-gustatory synesthesia when I was four. Which is an ability to see various colours when I hear certain words. The Lexical-gustatory means I can taste and smell them as well. It’s strongest when I hear a person’s name for the first time.’

‘I’m well aware of what Synesthesia is. It’s not an unpleasant condition, most people like it, and it’s relatively common. It’s usually hereditary.’

‘I know. But mine seems to have mutated into disturbing hallucinations.’

‘This dream you have?’ she says writing some notes down.

‘I have the same dream every night. They started when I was a young child. I run through a cornfield, towards a red barn with a blue roof. When I get there I can never open the barn door. Then the dream ends.’

‘Unusual. When did the hallucinations start?’ she says writing more notes.

‘They started after my mother died of breast cancer when I was sixteen. The same time as my taste swaps.’

‘So why try and kill yourself?’

‘The pain from the hallucinations just before they start is like having your arm snapped, and then being stamped on, and the bone shattering like a smashed mirror.’

‘We can give you something for the pain,’ she says looking up from her note pad.

‘I’ve already tried every pain killer, none work. It’s not just that... I’ve got no life because of the hallucinations. The people from the small town I come from think I’m fucking mad. They call me crazy eyes. I’ve got no job. The girls stay well clear of me. A lot of people are frightened of me, my temper, it can turn volcanic. I should of spent time in prison for some of the things I’ve done, but I never got caught. Life’s just a waste of time.’

‘Are your hallucinations pseudo?’

‘I know they’re not real, but it doesn’t make it any easier.’

‘Can you tell me the contents of a sample of the hallucinations?’

Telling her the contents of a few, she takes more notes.

‘Are the hallucinations set off by an emotion you’re having?’

‘No. Nothing I know sets them off. All I get is a tingling sensation inside my right arm just before they start. The people I’m with usually feature prominently in them.’

‘Have you got any phobias?’

‘I don’t like spiders very much. But for some reason I’m petrified of rainbows.’

‘You don’t like rainbows? That’s odd,’ she says writing it down.

‘Yeah. When you see a dog cowering in a corner when it hears thunder. It shakes with fear because it’s got no understanding of what that loud noise is. That’s how I feel.’

‘Have you tried to take your own life before?’

‘Once. I walked into the sea and slipped under. I went back to the barn. A voice told me it wasn’t time. The next thing I knew I was walking across wet sand, back to a bench, but my clothes had been stolen. I sat down and cried.’

‘What happened next?’

‘Got arrested, but not charged. It was the middle of the night.’

‘The voice? Was it male or female?’

‘It was a woman’s.’

‘Have you tried hypnosis?’

‘No... Have you tried to kill yourself?’ I ask.

‘I’ve thought about. Everyone has. It’s comforting.’

‘So you haven’t got the guts to jump the finale hurdle?’

‘The people that don’t jump that finale hurdle are the ones with the guts. How about that hypnosis?’

‘Try it. Make me dance like a monkey.’

‘I’ll put you under. I want you to open the barn door. Just concentrate your eyes on my silver pen and listen to what I say.’

‘How is that going to work?’

‘I’ll put you under and I’ll get you to do a running commentary on what you see. I need to know what happened to you in that barn.’

She places her pen in her left hand, in-between her forefinger and thumb. Focusing on it I hope it works.

Losing focus of the pen. I feel myself slipping into a strange dimension. I know the shrink is by me, talking, directing me.

Standing in front of a large barn door, I can feel the heat of a summers day on my back. I can hear a monotonous hum above me. Looking up into the sky, it’s light-blue without a cloud in sight. I feel alone, there are no birds singing, no trees rustling. Just stillness.

‘What do you see?’ she asks.

‘I see a large barn door.’

‘Go up to it and open it.’

I feel my right hand tremor as I walk towards it. On tiptoe I try to push the latch across. Cold injects itself into my fingers from the rusting metal. The latch is stiff, it creaks and squeals as I manage to get it across.

‘What do you see?’ the psychiatrist asks.

‘The door’s still closed. I’ve got the latch across.’

‘Open the door,’ she says.

Standing back down from tiptoe I put my shoulder into the gnarled weather beaten wood.

Pushing it, it’s stiff, trying with all my strength it moves a couple of inches. My brow sweats from the heat of the summer’s day.

‘Open the door and tell me what you see,’ she says.

I push harder on the door, I use all my strength. It moves a couple of more inches.

Urine is running down my leg. A strong taste and smell fills my mouth and nose.

The psychiatrist is looking down at me. I can taste liver and onions.

‘You’ve got blood coming from your nose and mouth. You’ve wet yourself as well,’ she says.

‘Give me water,’ I ask.

She tips it into my mouth. This time it tastes of orange.

‘Did you get to the bottom of my condition?’ I ask.

‘The nurses will come and clean you up.’

‘I knew it wouldn’t fucking work.’

‘You couldn’t see inside the barn Mr Hargreeves. I’m leaving, my shift has finished. I’ll see you tomorrow.’

‘Don’t bother bringing any anti-depressants,’ I shout as she leaves.

Two nurses come into the room giggling to each other, one’s holding a bowl of water, the other has two sponges. I don’t think they’ve had many foreigners in this hospital.

‘Stand up. Face camera,’ one nurse says as she takes the money off my straight jacket and puts it into the bedside cabinet.

Standing, looking at the camera I give it a smile. One of them wrestles with the straps on the straight jacket, the other one just stands there looking at me. I give her a smile to.

She smiles back and puts a soggy wet sponge in my face.

They both talk at a hundred-miles-an-hour to each other in Thai, as they sponge my naked body down.

The one behind me puts the sponge into the crack of my arse, while the other kneels down and sponges around my genitals. She looks up at me while she does it. Both of them burst out laughing.

The psychiatrist storms into the room shouting at them in Thai. They quickly finish washing me, dry me off, one of them makes the bed, the other puts my gown on and straps me up.

Back in bed the straight jacket annoys me. How am I supposed to sleep with this fucking thing on?

The lights are switched off.

I’m going to have to fully co-operate with this doctor. Agree with everything she tells me. The way it’s looking at the moment I could be in this straight jacket for a very long time. Death

will have to wait.

Four hours I've been fucking led here. I've got to do something. 'Nurse, nurse,' I shout.

'What, want?' she says sticking her head through the doorway.

'A sleeping pill.'

'Cannot have. Doctor not like.'

'Don't worry about her. If you don't I'll scream this fucking place down.'

'OK. I get one. But not tell doctor.'

After taking it I slip into my usual dream.

Having been given something that resembles breakfast by a nurse with a spoon, anxiety rages in me waiting for the doctor. The usual anti-depressants will be on the menu, dished out because these people have no idea what to do. But I must go along with everything she says.

'Morning Mr Hargreeves,' says the doctor breezing into the room.

'Morning. What is your name anyway?'

'Dr Jones. My husband's English, he works for the British Embassy.'

The sound of her name conjures up the taste of pear, the smell of wild bluebells and the colours purple and yellow flash through my mind.

'Obviously something very bad happened to you in that barn,' she says. 'You were either molested, even raped. You could of seen something that put you into total shock, or maybe you committed an horrendous act in there. Because of your age at the time, your mind completely blocked it out.'

'What if I go back to the barn? Will that put some fresh light on my condition?'

'Maybe. But you don't know where it is. It's probably demolished by now. The hallucinations are connected with what happened in that barn, they are trying to tell you something. They were triggered by the death of your mother.'

'So you've got no cure?' I say.

'Let me finish. The only cure is to solve what went on in that barn. To me that's not going to be possible. All I can do is help you with your condition. Have you heard of shock therapy?'

'That went out in the dark ages,' I say.

'Not at all. I've had this small metal shock box made, it's just got two twelve volt batteries inside, with a button on the top. When you feel that tingling in your arm give yourself twenty-four volts. The shock should cancel out the pain and your hallucination.'

'I doubt it.'

'Try it. The rest of your condition I can't treat. The taste swaps are connected to your Synesthesia. After your mother's death, your brain just... I don't know, blew a fuse. It was an emotion too far. Your explosive anger is frustration because of your condition.'

'I don't care about the Synesthesia or taste and smell swaps. It's the pain before the

hallucinations and their content that drives me to kill myself.’

She unstraps the straight jacket and leaves the metal shock box on the bedside cabinet.

‘We’re still monitoring you. But use the shock box. Sooner or later you’re going to get an hallucination,’ she says leaving the room.

Looking at the shock box I pick it up and inspect it. Does she actually believe this will fucking work. I’ll just say it will to get out of this place. There’s no point in trying to kill myself here, there are too many people that can save me.

Bored. Wanting an hallucination is the last thing I thought I’d be doing. I wonder what happened to me in that barn. Once I get out this place I think I’ll go and see Thip one last time, then find a way to kill myself and make sure there are no mistakes.

At last I can feel a tingling sensation inside my arm. I push the button on the shock box giving myself twenty-four volts. My arm slightly twitches. I wait for the inevitable snap and crunch. Nothing. I don’t believe it.

The smell of Daffodils wafts into the room. ‘It worked. I was watching through the monitor,’ she says.

‘Let’s not be too premature. I’ll have to do it a few more times before I believe it.’

‘It will do the job. I knew it would,’ she says with an excited look on her face.

‘So you can sign me out of this fucking place?’

‘I could. But if you attempt suicide no airline will take you, not until eight weeks after the attempt. And during that time you have to be constantly monitored. Then I can sign the relevant paperwork.’

‘You’re fucking joking,’ I shout.

‘No Mr Hargreeves. It’ll give me more time to work on you. There will be times when you forget your shock box, or times when the batteries run out. Mind control is key here. I use a technique called cold therapy.’

‘I sometimes use that to control my temper. It won’t work for the pain.’

‘Depends how cold you can make yourself.’

‘I’ll try, but it won’t work.’

‘Dan you have to start believing in the strength of your own mind.’

‘Can you do it? Can you freeze yourself?’

‘I’ve got no reason to. I’ve used it on other patients and it works.’

‘Yeah. Right.’

‘Dan as a teenager I suffered badly from depression. It was the reason I became a psychiatrist. Those black days are behind me now. Prescription drugs never worked. I trained my mind to break free from it’s shackles.’

‘You might have just grown out of it.’

‘No. It still finds me. But when it does I’m ready for it.’

'I'll give it a serious go.'

'Thanks. You won't regret it.'

'Time for another session,' says Doctor Jones.

'No. I don't want to do it.'

'I know it can be painful, but you have to try. Close your eyes and put yourself on an iceberg naked.'

'I'm on it. I can see the Titanic, there's a couple of girls on deck with their tits out.'

'Forget about that. Think about freezing rain hitting your body, piercing like bullets. Think about the iceberg rocking, and icy mottled green-blue sea lapping over you, it's foam biting at your flesh, turning it red raw with it's bitterness.'

'Getting there,' I say with my teeth chattering.

'Is your body numb yet?'

'Nearly.'

'You have to be faster if you want to beat the pain.'

'I'm trying. That's enough,' I say opening my eyes.

'You can't always depend on that shock box.'

'How long have I got left in here?'

'Four weeks.'

'For fuck sake. Can I have a night out on my own? There are certain needs I've got.'

'Getting drunk and fucking some girl is not going to happen.'

'Why don't you come with me?'

'I'm happily married Mr Hargreeves. I don't think drinking with you would be a good idea.'

'I promise not to try and remove your clothes.'

'So you think you've got a chance of doing that?' she says resting her hand on my thigh.

'Well I don't know.'

Her hand moves up my leg, she bends down puckering her lips and closing her eyes. I do the same. 'Idiot,' she says. 'You really think you've got a chance. What sort of Doctor do you think I am?'

'One with morals.'

She smiles, standing back up. 'I've had plenty of lovers. Try and find someone to love Dan. Your soul mate is out there. It'll make you happier.'

'I just want ten minutes of happiness. You could give me that.'

'I'm flattered young man, and flattery will get you everywhere, but not this time. I don't do patients.'

'Pity. I've really warmed to you.'

'Right. Back to the iceberg.'

‘So you’re going to jump into bed with me,’ I say.

She pours a jug of drinking water over my head. ‘Time for you to cool down,’ she says.

Four weeks later: Packing my things I feel like my belly is full of fireflies as everything inside me tingles and glows. I can’t wait to get home. That shock box is a life saver. As soon as I get back home I’m going to turn my life around.

‘Ready to go Dan?’ Doctor Jones says walking into my room.

‘I can’t wait. Look. I owe you everything.’

‘It’s my job Dan. I’ll keep in touch. I’ll send you a fresh shock box every year. Just write me a letter on how you’re getting on after you receive it. So are you going to try and find the barn if it’s still there?’ she says, looking at me with quivering brown eyes.

‘I’ve decided not to. Obviously something happened to me in there, we’ve worked that one out. It can’t be far from my house because the dream started when I was a child. I don’t want to risk raking up something that could damage me. I can live a normal life with that shock box, I’m not going to take the chance.’

‘Dan... Life will still deal you plenty of bad cards, I’m looking at forty, the only child I’ve got is a made up picture in my mind. You still have to learn how to cope with trauma, not run from it by taking your own life.’

‘I’ll be fine. Life’s supposed to begin at forty?’

‘No it doesn’t. It’s just an acceptance. All the hopes and dreams you had when you were younger don’t matter any more. If you haven’t achieved them by then, you never will.’

‘That’s not very ambitious?’

‘Ambition. You lose that when that forty year old key is turned inside you. Dan take this advice, pour all your fears, materialistic desires, jealousies and insecurities into one large hole, fill it and stamp on it. Then after that dig another one for your ego. You don’t want to be buried with those things when you die, it’s too late then. You’ll be much happier. It took me a while to learn that lesson.’

‘You’re at the pinnacle of your career?’

‘Nowhere near. My country’s full of corruption. Payment to the ones above is the only currency used in promotion. My childish hand will never hold hands with a stranger’s. You never know what price you’d have to pay.’

‘How d’ you know that hand wouldn’t be kind?’

‘A strange one never is... Dan remember this isn’t a dress rehearsal, you only get one.’

‘I thought you lot were religious.’

‘Not all. If someone judged me after I had died I’d tell them to fuck off.’

‘So you don’t believe in controlling the masses?’

‘I’ve got no problem with that, they need to be controlled. It’s just some of the people



controlling them.’

‘Yeah. I’m in control of my demons now. The first thing I’m going to do is find myself a good looking girl with a sex drive that’ll make a ten dollar whore look expensive.’

‘Talking of whores. That bar girl you slept with is here. D’ you want me to send her up?’

‘No. Get rid of her, I just want to go home.’

She shouts in Thai at a nurse with the order.

‘Your taxi’s waiting. You ready?’

Taking a deep breath I say. ‘Yeah.’ Putting my arms around her I can’t thank her enough.

‘D’ you want me to walk with you to your cab?’ she asks.

‘No. I’d rather say goodbye here.’

‘Until the next time Dan. Stay safe.’

‘I will.’

Walking down the stairs of the hospital towards the revolving door excitement flips around in my stomach. I can’t wait to get home. I’m not going to waste a single hour of my new life.

Going out through the revolving door, warm Bangkok rain is falling from a pitch black night. Putting my face up towards the drops they cover my face. Those raindrops taste sweet. Free at last. No more hospital and no more mental and physical pain. The sound of car horns mixed with shouting Thai voices is music to my ears.

Someone taps me on my shoulder. Turning around it’s Thip. Her long black hair is drenched, stuck flat to her head, her make-up is trickling down her face mixing with the raindrops. She’s absolutely soaked.

‘Dan I pregnant,’ she says.

‘Thip no. Are you sure?’

‘Doctor tell me yesterday.’

‘You’re having an abortion? I suppose you want some money?’

‘No. I keeping baby. I lost daughter, I not lose this one.’

‘But Thip, you can’t bring a child up here on your own.’

‘Why can’t I come back England with you?’ she says dipping her head down, looking at the torrential water gushing down the pavement.

‘Sorry Thip that isn’t possible.’

The beeping sound of the taxi driver’s horn, gives me an excuse to get out this awkward situation.

‘I’ve got to get this flight.’

‘Please Dan. I need you help me. I scared,’ she says grabbing my arm.

Dr Jones comes out of the revolving door.

‘Is there a problem Dan?’ she asks.

‘Thip’s pregnant and wants to keep the baby.’

'I'll deal with this. You get that cab. That flight's not going to wait for you.'

Walking to the cab Thip shouts out. 'Please Dan. Help me.'

Jumping in I look out the back window at Doctor Jones with her arm around Thip.

As we drive off I can see Thip crying. They both disappear into a wet haze of car headlights and neon lit shop fronts. Raindrops cascade down the back window, highlighted by the yellow lights of the car behind. I wipe my own cascading raindrops from my cheeks. Guilt and happiness joined together are a powerful emotion.

## Chapter 3

Thirteen years later: Sat here on a hard wooden chair in a pair of baggy white underpants, with my wrists handcuffed behind me. Anxiety punches away.

Where the fuck is she? It's been a fucking hour.

Looking out a window in this lunar lit room, angry laden clouds the colour of crushed lead, drift across a full winter moon. I trace their outlines, just to pass sometime. The moon highlights their bruised purple edges which encloses their soft lead interior.

The room goes into complete darkness as the full moon is smothered by that soft lead.

I hear a sound from outside the room, my heart lurches. My knees bang together.

Fixing my gaze on the grey outline of the door, it opens, a rush of cool air flows over my naked body. It carries her familiar perfume. The smell of bananas flows up my nostrils.

I hear the tapping thud from her stilettos on the carpet. I feel her warm breath penetrate my ear from behind me. Goosebumps flare up on my handcuffed arms.

'Piss yourself,' she says in a thick Geordie accent, holding the blade of a knife to my throat.

Hot liquid gushes out of me, it seeps through my baggy underpants, forming a puddle in-between my thighs. The heat from the contents of my bladder feels good. It instantly brings my outside body temperature up a few degrees.

Slipping the blade inside my pants, she runs the flat side of it along my stomach, the cold from the steel cuts into my warm flesh.

Twang! The elastic of my underpants snaps into my thigh as she cuts through the side. The pain feels like someone's pinched my skin and twisted it. She does the same to the other side. She pulls the flap of cloth away from my genitals, which is stuck there due to the urine.

'You've been a fucking bastard to me,' she says.

The needle tip of the blade pushes into my testicle. I hope she doesn't pierce my scrotum.

'It was all a big mistake,' I plead. 'A moment of weakness.'

'I'm going to cut your balls off, then your cock and slowly feed them to you.'

'Please. Just give me one more chance.'

I can hear the floorboards creak as she kneels down, she slides the flat end of the blade under my cock. Using the knife she feeds my penis into her mouth.

The knife bangs on the floor. I worry about all the urine. To me it's dirty. But it doesn't seem to bother her. Getting my cock to a full erection she comes up for some air. She gasps.

'You like that baby?'

'Fuck me,' I say. I just want to be inside her.

The grey silhouette of her stands astride me. Her short silver sequin dress usually looks like flowing water on her body, as if she's been dressed by a waterfall. But it's blurred in this darkness. She pulls her knickers to one side. Gripping my penis she guides it just inside herself, taking her time she eases down. Her inside temperature is slightly hotter than her mouth.

I try to ignore the pain of the sequins from her dress digging into the top of my thighs as she gets into a fast rhythm. Putting her hand around the back of my head she brings her mouth to mine, burying her tongue deep, it's too much. My testicles shrink as their contents shoots inside, their arduous journey a wasted one. Her rhythm slows to a stop as my erection subsides.

'You come already baby?'

'Sorry.'

'D' you want to keep it inside me until you get hard again? Or d' you want it back in my mouth?'

'You took so long getting here my legs and arms are cramping up.'

'It adds to the thrill. Most men would put up with the fucking pain,' she says still sat on top of me with my limp cock inside her.

'I'll make it up to you later.'

'Fucking great twelfth anniversary this turned out to be.'

'Joanne. Don't be like that. If you hadn't taken so long.'

'I was getting ready. You know I like to look like the celebrity we're taking the piss out of. Fuck it,' she says standing up.

My cock limply falls out of her, the juices it's covered in, smear the inside of my thigh, the cold air instantly shrinks it.

I can see her ghostly grey outline put her hand up her skirt. I think she's pulling her knickers to one side. Warm globules drip on my cock and balls as she purposely dispatches the load.

'You can have the fucking stuff back.'

Getting off me, she turns the light on. I turn my eyes away from the instant brightness. Looking back at her, I watch as she unzips her short dress at the back, her fully made up face sulks like a young child's. Her dress drops, standing out of it she kicks her black stilettos off her creamy forty inch legs. Standing there in her pink lace knickers and bra she looks down at me.

'I suppose you want me to unlock the handcuffs?' she says.

'No. I'm quite happy sat here in my own piss and spunk, freezing my cock off.'

While she's releasing my wrists the smell of bananas fills the air. Throwing the handcuffs on the floor, she goes over to draw the curtains. I feel myself get another erection watching her arse twitch in her tight pink knickers. That'll have to wait until the morning. She should of calmed down by then.

'You getting in?' she says slipping into bed.

‘Give me a second. I just want to clean this shit off.’

Leaving my baggy white underpants stuck to the chair I grab my dressing gown, using it to wipe myself.

Turning the light off I slip into bed beside her.

Sunlight seeps through the crack in-between the bedroom curtains, irritating my eyes.

The sound of Joanne’s heavy breathing means she’s still deep in sleep. So there’s no chance of her taking care of my morning hardness.

Seeing that it’s a Saturday, we don’t have to be at our accountancy jobs. I’d lie here until she wakes, but the smell of bananas is getting on my nerves.

Creeping out of bed, I put my stained dressing gown on and go downstairs to meet the second love of my life.

Tucker runs up to me. ‘Hello boy,’ I say grabbing his neck, playfully fighting with him.

‘I’ll get you some food in a minute.’

I want to check my emails first. I had a strange phone call from Thip yesterday. She said she had some important information for me, but didn’t want to tell me over the phone. The only time I hear from her is when she sends me a photograph of the two girls on their birthday, with an email on how they’re getting on.

Going into my front room. I click onto my email account and open her mail.

Dan. I get straight to point. I got brain tumour. Doctor say I got three months live. Girls need you. If not look after they go orphanage. My family too old to look after. Dan come Thailand soon as can. Girls at bar. They not know I dying. I tell them they go on holiday to England. Please hurry.

I send you email later where bar is. When die relative send you photo of grave and where is. Tell girls then I dead. Thip.

Jesus. What the fuck am I going to do about all that? I can’t have them two here. We had a perfectly good arrangement. What the fuck is Joanne going to say?

‘Anything interesting?’ Joanne asks scratching her bed head hair.

‘Read the email.’

Bending down to look at the screen. Joanne’s face changes as if Bells Palsy has suddenly taken over. ‘No, no, no fucking way Dan.’

‘I never said I would.’

‘Did you know their mother was ill?’ She says standing up and facing me.

‘No. It’s the first time I’ve heard of it.’

‘We had a perfectly good arrangement sending money each month.’

‘Why don’t we take a holiday and go and see them?’

‘Why the fuck would I want to go to Thailand to see two fucking sprogs for?’

‘Well what the fuck am I going to do? Tell her to go and get fucked.’

‘Your problem. You solve it,’ Joanne says sitting down on the sofa.

‘I’m going to have to go over Joanne and sort everything out.’

‘Go over. But I’ll make this crystal clear to you. If those girls come over. I’m gone.’

‘I’ll go over for a week, that’ll be enough time to sort something out.’

‘Sort what out Dan?’

‘A nanny. Accommodation.’

‘They think they’re coming on holiday over here. They don’t know their mother’s dying. How are you going to explain that?’

‘I’ll think of something.’

‘While you’re over there try not to fuck any Thai whores,’ she says folding her arms. ‘You’ve got a perfectly good whore here.’

‘Joanne. I’ll get it sorted. It’s not that big a problem.’

‘Tell me you love me Dan?’ she says flickering her eyelashes with a childlike voice looking up at me.

‘Love’s such a strong word Joanne. After twelve years you know it was only the sex I was interested in.’

‘Tonight I want you to feel some pain and fuck me while you have an hallucination. A week without sex is a long time. I need something to make sure you’re worth waiting for.’

‘I think I can manage that.’

One week later: For Christ’s sake how hot can a fucking country be. The mass of yellow cabs look like bees swarming around this airport. All I want is one of them. Thrusting a printout of the address of the bar in the face of one of the drivers, he nods and grunts at me. Chucking my case on the back seat I jump in next to it.

Driving out of the bedlam we reach the open road. Thank fuck for that. Looking out the window this place looks like it hasn’t changed a bit over the thirteen years I’ve been away. The food sellers still push around their worn out open carts along the road. You go from slum to towering brand new skyscraper in a matter of minutes.

‘You want fuck girl?’ asks the driver throwing a brochure over of scantily clad dancers.

I must admit they look very tempting. But I’ve got some exceptionally good eye candy back home, and the last time I fucked a girl over here it got me into a world of shit.

‘No thanks.’

‘You want fuck boy?’ he says in the only English he probably knows.

‘Oh yeah. Silly me. I forgot I was a homosexual. Take me to the nearest boy so I can fuck

him. Jesus.'

'You want lady boy?'

'Mate. Just take me to the fucking address.'

Pulling up outside the bar a wooden for sale sign swings in a hot breeze. A woman wipes the counter, two glass door fridges behind her are empty. Paying the driver I retrieve my suitcase. Traffic rushes past me. I'm going to get fucking run over in a minute.

Sitting on a bar stool her eyes meet mine. 'Dan Hargreeves,' I say.

'They upstairs. Follow me,' she says with a slight smile.

We enter a small room, a TV blares out Thai commentary. We walk across a bare wooden floor. I stand opposite two small girls perched on a worn out sofa. Knee length white socks cover their legs, shiny black dolly shoes are attached to their feet, which point out, their legs unable to bend. They've got matching blue velvet dresses with white shirts underneath. Their long black hair touches their hips, it hides their faces. They stare at the TV screen.

'This father,' says the woman. 'He come take you on holiday.'

Their heads don't move. The Thai commentary is broken by a whistle. They both jump up on the sofa, pointing their tiny fingers. 'Ass oles,' they both shout.

They both start shouting at the TV in Thai.

'Molly. Polly,' says the woman raising her voice. 'This father.'

'Arserole fucking lose. If manager not spend money on player, we always fucking lose,' says one of them.

'Harry Riles not play. If he fucking play, we win. When I older I marry him,' says the other.

'You not fucking marry him. I will.'

'You not you fucking itch.'

The woman puts her hands in-between them. 'Girls. Father.'

Their heads turn towards me, blue eyes stare, light tanned skin flushes slightly, it's got the sheen of polished eggshells. They look like delicate porcelain dolls, that could shatter in your hands at any moment. One wrinkles her little nose up. 'Why you take long time see us?'

'I know I should of come when you were younger girls. I imagine this is all a bit strange.'

'What you do in Mingland?' asks the other.

'An accountant.'

'What fuck that?'

'I deal with numbers.'

'That not real job. You got wife?'

'I'm not married. I live with a woman.'

'She whore?'

'No.'

'She sleep in bed with man. She not married, she whore.'

‘She’s not. Girls can I take you out for an ice cream or something.’

They both look at me puzzled. ‘No,’ says one. ‘Mama say we go Mingland on holiday. Watch Arserole. Meet Harry Riles.’

‘There’s been a change of plan.’

They both jump off the sofa, running into a bedroom.

I turn to the woman. ‘Are these two for fucking real?’

‘They like own way.’

‘They need a good spanking.’

‘Not do. They like fighting.’

‘What’s with all the bad language?’

‘It what they hear around bar from tourist. They think it English.’

The girls come out of the room struggling with two suitcases on wheels. They’re both holding passports.

‘We go watch Arserole,’ says one.

I kneel down to make eye contact with her, I run the palm of my hand down her long silky hair. The first time I’ve ever touched my daughter. She touches my cheek with her palm.

‘What’s your name sweetheart?’

‘I Polly.’

I put my palm on the other one’s head. She grabs my wrist. ‘Don’t touch me ass ole,’ she says with a blaze of anger blushing across her face.

‘Young lady. How about some respect?’

‘Fuck you,’ she says letting my wrist go.

‘Don’t try and take me on,’ I say. ‘You wouldn’t stand a chance.’

She grins. Her blue eyes look at me with confidence. ‘I always be loving daughter,’ she says giving me a curtsey.

That was easy. Who said bringing up children was difficult. People should take some lessons from me.

Polly’s eyes move towards mine. ‘I hear Mingland’s full of witches?’

‘There are plenty of those over there. They love living in the woods and at night fly over the fields and rooftops.’

‘Can I kill one?’ asks Molly.

‘Sorry?’ I say.

‘Will you go jail if kill one?’

‘Young lady. You could not kill a witch... So girls how about that ice cream?’

‘Arserole,’ they both shout together.

Two days later: The plump taxi driver smells of last night’s sweat. The girls kneel on the



back seat looking out the window waving at the woman from the bar. I've decided to take them back for two weeks. One week is not long enough to sort them out a nanny and accommodation. I haven't told Joanne. Fuck the argument, it's only two weeks.

'Girls put your seatbelts on,' I say turning on my seat to face them. They still wave at the woman.

'Girls. Please.'

A monk in a black robe appears standing by the woman. The girls spin around clunking their belts in. They're frightened of him. Two pairs of blue eyes look up at me.

'We fucking there yet?' says Molly.

'Another thing. When we're in England no swearing. You might get away with it over here but not there. You're only twelve.'

'What swearing?' they both say together.

'I'll explain on the plane.'

## Chapter 4

Pulling up outside my four bed semi in my quiet little cul-de-sac. I'm starting to regret not telling Joanne. It's only two weeks. She'll be all right. It can be a practice run for when we have a family.

The girls are fast asleep in the back. Flying wasn't for them. They didn't like being up in the air. I've never seen two small things eat so much food though. They were like machines. They better not upset Joanne like those two Thai stewardesses, that's the last thing I need.

The driver gets out taking the suitcases from the boot.

Joanne comes out the front door to greet me. The cold winter night air hits my face, crushing my lips and cheeks in it's vice like icy grip as I go to greet her.

Putting her arms around me she kisses me. The warmth enters into my capillaries giving my cheeks and lips a warm blush.

'I've missed you baby,' She says holding me tightly.

'I've missed you to.'

'Three cases?' she says looking at the driver retrieving them from the boot.

'Look inside the taxi,' I say feeling confident she's just going to go weak at the knee's, as her maternal instinct kicks in.

'You fucking asshole Dan,' she says still bending down looking inside the taxi.

'I had no choice.'

'That's you and me finished,' she says letting me go, her eyes igniting, preparing for combustion.

'Joanne if you truly love me you'll put up with them for a bit.'

'How long?'

'Two weeks.'

'It better be two weeks.'

The girls start stirring in the back of the car.

'Go back inside and lock Tucker up in the kitchen. I don't want him frightening them. We'll talk about this later.'

'You bet we fucking will,' she says leaving.

Paying the driver the girls wake up.

'We here yet?' Molly asks stretching her arms with a yawn.

'Yeah. Get your cases.'

The girls follow me talking in Thai. 'Man?' says Molly. 'Why place fucking cold?'

'It's always cold.'

Standing in the hallway Joanne looks at us with her hands on her hips.

'Molly and Polly I'd like you to meet my partner Joanne.'

Joanne looks down at them with her icy-blue eyes putting her hand out.

'You whore?' Molly asks.

'No I'm not.'

'You make good money as whore,' Polly says.

'Girls please. She's not a whore and her name's Joanne. But if it makes it any easier call her Jo.'

Tucker comes rushing out of the kitchen. The two girls jump up into my arms with their legs around my waist. Kicking out at the dog. 'Fucking dog bite me,' Molly says.

'He's a nice dog. He's just being friendly,' I say placing the girls back down on the floor.

The girls pet the dog while Joanne stares coldly at me.

'So girls can you say a proper hello to Joanne?'

'Nice meet you Ho,' they both say in unison.

'Right Dan in the kitchen. I want a word,' She says opening the kitchen door.

Following her in the girls carry on petting Tucker in the hallway.

'They've been here two fucking minutes and they're calling me a whore and a ho.'

'Give them time Joanne. They've just arrived here.'

'Dan this simply isn't going to work out.'

'Let me get them settled into the spare room and we'll talk. They're worn out.'

'I'll be waiting in the front room for you.'

'Girls. I'll show you to your bedroom.'

Without saying a word they follow me upstairs struggling with their suitcases.

'This is your new bedroom for a while. Sorry about the double bed, I'll sort out a bed each tomorrow and separate rooms.'

'We want stay in same room,' Polly says.

'That's fine by me. Unpack your things and I'll come back up later. I need to talk to Joanne.'

'OK,' Polly says.

Going downstairs I take a deep breath before I enter into the front room.

'I suppose sex is off the menu?' I say.

'You'll be lucky to see me naked again.'

Sitting down on the sofa next to Joanne I put my arm around her.

'Get the fuck off me,' she says pushing my arm away.

'So it's going to be like this is it?'

'I didn't expect the man I was going to spend my life with, was also going to dump two kids

he had with a Thai whore on me.'

'So what do you want to do?'

'I don't know yet.'

Sitting here in silence I switch the TV on.

'Turn that off.'

'You're not fucking talking to me.'

'Why did you have to bring them back for Dan?'

'Not enough time to sort them out properly.'

'How much fucking time do you need?'

'Can we talk about this in the morning. I'm shattered after that flight.'

'I'm going up to bed anyway. When you join me keep your hands to yourself.'

Following her upstairs I check in on the girls. They're fast asleep. I must admit they look angelic. It's just when they open their gobs it's a problem.

Getting undressed I place my shock box on the bedside cabinet. Slipping into bed next to Joanne I put my arm around her stomach. She grips hold of my hand. The smell of bananas fills the room. I must get her to change that fucking perfume.

She lets my hand go, I move it across her soft stomach. Easing my fingers underneath the elastic of her knickers, I touch the top of her pubic mound. Moving my finger tips from left to right over her coarse hair, my hand dives down, trying my luck.

'Not tonight Dan.'

'It's been a week.'

'Let me sleep on it, and I might make it up to you in the morning.'

My tingling sensation starts inside my arm. I reach for my shock box behind me, on the bedside cabinet. Giving myself twenty-four volts. It doesn't work. Fuck it. The batteries are dead.

Snap! Crunch! My eyelids clench together as the pain starts. Standing naked with just a brown mink coat on, freezing air rushes past me. I crack a whip, the yelping hounds jolt the sled increasing it's speed, racing across a blanket of snow the icy air cuts into my pours, drifting inside me it starts to work on my blood. Fuck this I need more. Ripping the mink coat off it flies behind me like a kite.

'Yehaa,' I shout cracking the whip.

That's better. My organs freeze, my blood-flow stops. The fluid in my sulcus grooves turns to frost, strangling my brain. I'm there.

Cold slippery grass caress the bare flesh of my soles. Tumbling silky mist rolls down a hillside, I can hear the screams of men in it, cut down in medieval battle the day before. Their bodies hidden. It swirls around my ankles, my feet will have to do the work of my eyes. I walk, cool air wraps around my naked body. The mist thins, small patches of fresh shoots, bent over by

the delicate tears of dawn appear. Night has given birth to scatterings of field mushrooms, that look like floating water lanterns on a green sea. A foot comes into view, her nails painted a deep lilac, the rest of her is covered in a blanket of morning's milky breath, churning over a female I already know. I stop and kneel down. Her foot is ice cold to the touch. Lying across her rigid body, cloudy-white drifts giving me her face. Her lips are bruise-blue, her eyes are shut. Stiff breasts push into my chest, her nipples like daggers of ice. She smells of damp clothes and raw chicken fillet. I feel myself try to push inside her, her entrance firm and frigid. I push again, easing her open, her seal is broken, she crushes me. Her internal walls are dry and bite with a bitter chill.

Her head moves slightly left from right, held by a neck dead and inflexible. I put my warm lips to her frosted ones, her eyes burst open, icy-blue and full of life. Her body heats up. Internally she blazes, her walls burn, sticky heat drips from her, searing into my balls, like someone dripping hot candle wax. She spins me on my back without my cock leaving her. Straddled across me her breasts and long hair toss up and down, mist circles around her bouncing waist.

Looking down the hillside the backs of giant black hairy spiders move in combat formation, the rest of their bodies covered in mist. They've replaced the dead soldiers. The sound of their eight legs marching gets louder. One appears, his long legs rest on Joanne's shoulders. They wrap around her neck, her face turns red, her eyes bulge, she stops breathing, but carries on fucking me. Another one takes position by her side, he rips a chunk out of her, shaking it like a dog with a kitten. He takes another chunk, then another. Her blood flows thickly, it turns to all the colours of a rainbow. Her face is flat against her breasts, her neck broken, but she still carries on fucking me.

Something moves inside her stomach, the tips of two fangs break her flesh, it gnaws around like an ant cutting a leaf. It breaks through, legs rapidly dab on my belly, it moves to my face. His eyelids look like stretched foreskin, they slowly open. Two oval dew drop eyes glisten at me, I look at my twin reflection and wait for the inevitable. The fangs appear, sinking into my helpless eyeball like nails into crucified hands.

Looking at the back of Joanne's head. Her breathing is light. Her hair smells of yesterday's rain. I'm back. Tired from the long journey I slip into my usual dream.

The morning sun irritates my eyes through the crack in the curtains.

My morning erection yearns to be inside her, it's touching the cotton of her briefs.

Her sleep is light, she's nearly finished resting. My cock pushes against the fabric in-between the crease of her buttocks, it wants entry.

She moves her brief covered buttocks into my erection. I gently move my hand across her stomach, easing my fingers underneath the thin band of elastic. Her legs are shut. Resting my

palm on her pubic mound I wait for entry.

She keeps me waiting. Finally she opens her legs in a scissor motion, I slip my middle finger into her soft, wet opening, followed by a second finger. My fingers explore every millimetre of their sticky environment. It's a place they know well after twelve years, they know every bump, smooth surface and most importantly where the G-spot is. The soft squelching sound coming from underneath the duvet duets with her just audible groaning. Using my palm I brush against her hard clit, her tight briefs cover the top of my hand, restricting it.

Using my thumb from my other hand I pull at the back of her knickers, she lifts the side of her backside up, pulling them down I get them over her knee's, her feet wrestle with them and she manages to free one of her legs. My unrestricted hand is able to insert my fingers deeper, they move more freely.

The squelching is getting louder, so is her groaning. She rips my hand out, putting the two fingers inside her, in her mouth. My cock pushes in-between her buttocks, she lifts her leg, she grips me, guiding it into where I want it. At last it's sucked in down to the base. Putting my arm across her breasts I bring her close to me. Gripping her tightly I fuck her hard from behind. She spits my fingers out. The noise coming from her is a mixture of groaning and howling.

'You want us help you beat whore?' says Molly.

Turning my head over my shoulder Molly and Polly are stood there in the bedroom doorway. Dressed in pink tutu's holding a wand each with a star on top.

'It's OK. I can do it on my own.'

'For fuck sake,' Joanne says pulling her knickers back up under the duvet.

'Go downstairs and play with Tucker. I'll be down in a minute.'

The girls are gone in a flash.

'I'll go down and sort them out Jo.'

'I'll be down in two fucking weeks,' she says hitting the pillow, putting her head back down on it.

Easing myself out of her, I kiss her on her shoulder. She angrily moves it away.

I put a pair of boxer shorts on to suppress my erection, followed with my dressing gown and go downstairs.

The girls are petting the dog in the hallway with their star wands held high.

'He won't eat the wands girls.'

'He dog. He like stick,' Molly says.

'Right girls. What would you like to eat?'

'You show what got, we say if like,' Polly says.

'Come into the kitchen and we'll go through a couple of things.'

Following me in I reach up to the cupboard and show them the display of food. 'Take your pick girls.'

'We not read Mingleish,' says Polly.

'OK. I'll choose,' I say bringing down a box of porridge.

'We not like that shit,' Molly says.

'There's toast,' I say.

'What fucking loast?' Polly says.

'I'll make you some and you can try it. D' you like eggs?'

'Yeah. Yeah. We like egg,' they both say together.

'You two go in the front room, open the curtains and put the TV on. I'll prepare break fast.'

They're gone in a flash. Polly comes back into the kitchen as quickly as she left. 'It laining,' she says. She runs back into the front room.

'How I find hootball?' Molly says standing directly behind me, looking at my arse, with the remote in her hand.

'D' you like looking at my ass?'

'No. But fucking remoke not work.'

Turning around I point at the right button. 'Push that one there.'

She shoots out the kitchen with the remote held high.

The toast flips. I cover one lot with jam, the others with marmite. The eggs rattle as the water boils around them.

Putting the food on our two seater dinette table. Tucker's paw scratches at the back of my calf.

'I'll get yours now boy.'

Opening the can of dog food I shout to the girls. 'Finish what you're doing in there. Breakfast is ready.'

The girls run into the kitchen, jump up on the dinette chairs and look over at me.

'We not eat dog,' Molly says.

'I know that. Tucker wouldn't like it.'

Molly points at the can of dog food. 'It got picture of dog on can.'

'No. This is Tucker's. Yours is in front of you.'

'What this shit?' Polly says looking down at the spread.

'Try it and see.'

Taking a bite out of the jam toast her face screws up, she spits it onto the table. 'That shit.'

She takes a bite out of the marmite piece. 'That nice. Try Molly.'

'It not hot. Got chillies?' Molly asks.

'I've got mustard. That's hot,' I say getting it out and passing it to her.

The girls spread the yellow substance over the marmite covered toast and munch it down.

'Try the eggs girls.'

Watching them take the eggs out of their eggcups, they bite into the brown shell, spitting it

out immediately across the table.

‘Put the eggs back in their eggcups, use the spoons to open them.’

The girls raise their arms holding the spoons, and hit them with force. The eggs splatter over them, me and the dog.

Tucker looks up to me. ‘This is going to be a long fucking day,’ I say under my breath.

‘Girls. Go back upstairs and clean yourselves up. When you come back down we’ll go to the supermarket and find you some things you like.’

They jump off the chairs, running up the stairs. I can hear Jo coming down them as well.

‘It laining,’ I can hear Polly say to Jo as they meet in the middle.

‘Morning whore,’ Molly says.

‘My name’s not whore,’ Jo says to them.

Jo comes into the kitchen. ‘Good start to the day?’ she says watching me clean the egg off me and Tucker with a T-towel.

‘I’ve had better.’

The intercom beeps on the front door. ‘Hi Dan it’s Justin,’ he says through the speaker.

Opening the door I look at my younger brother, he smiles. His brown eyes look down at a black dustbin liner full of clothes.

‘I got them the winter stuff you asked me to get.’

‘Good. I couldn’t buy anything in Thailand.’

Walking in Justin plonks the dustbin liner down in the hallway. Shutting the door Joanne looks at me sternly. ‘So fucking Justin knew they were coming?’

‘I had to get them winter clothes. There’s none over there.’

‘Where are they?’ Justin asks.

‘Probably parking their little fucking broomsticks,’ Joanne says.

I can hear the girls come running down the stairs.

‘Who you?’ Molly says to Justin.

‘I’m your uncle.’

‘I not know man have brother,’ Polly says.

‘OK girls. I’ll get dressed and take you to the supermarket.’

‘Can I take them?’ Justin asks.

‘Go for it,’ Joanne says.

‘Can I take your car Jo? Mine hasn’t got a lot of fuel in it.’

‘Go on then. But make sure they don’t get any of their grubby finger prints on it, especially the windows, and no eating in it. You couldn’t put it through the car wash as well. Here’s a hundred quid.’

‘No problem Jo. Ready girls?’ Justin says taking the cash.

Following Justin the girls go out into the fresh winter air.



'Fuck me,' they both shout together running back inside.

'I was wondering when they were going to feel the cold over here,' Joanne says.

'Winter clothes in the dustbin liner girls,' I say.

Burying their heads into the plastic, they bring out a blue woollen hat with two pink bobbles on the side, jeans, boots, gloves and a pink fake fur lined jacket each and put the items on.

Watching them leave Joanne turns to me. 'Do you actually believe this is going to work?'

'No I don't Joanne. But they're only here for two weeks.'

'Dan... Don't lie to me. You want them here on a permanent basis.'

'No I don't.'

'Your mind thinks that, but your heart doesn't. It's a natural instinct to protect your offspring.'

'So what do I do?'

'I'll make you a coffee. Let's have a chat in the front room,' she says.

Sitting down with her, she puts my arm around herself, snuggles up to me with her head on the side of my chest, and brings her legs up on the sofa.

Sipping coffee. What am I going to do? Joanne looks up at me. 'D' you love them Dan?' she says in a warm toned voice.

'I didn't even see them grow up. How could I become attached to them. I don't even know them.'

'A mother's love is instant. She carries a child for nine months. How long d' you think it's going to take you?'

'Your mother left you when you were a baby.'

'That was different. She had severe post natal depression and tried to kill herself.'

'Your father brought you up on his own.'

'Daddy had me from the day I was born. Not when I was twelve.'

'Do you love me Dan?' she says.

'Very much.'

'So you know what love is. In time you'll feel love for them, but in that time I'll be gone. Probably bringing up my own family with someone else.'

'How can I leave them to fend for themselves. What sort of person would do that?'

'Daddy's got plenty of money. What we'll do is put them in a top boarding school in Bangkok. During school holidays we'll spend two weeks in Thailand and they can spend two weeks over here, every year,' she says having planned this in her head sometime ago.

'Yeah. Carry on,' I say warming a bit to the idea. 'What happens when they turn eighteen?'

'We'll bring them over to university here, and they can stay with us when they're not at uni.'

'Sounds great.'

I can't see them two making it to university. I can see them making it to a youth detention

centre. But you never know.

‘At eighteen I can handle them. They’ll be adults. We’ll also hopefully have a family of our own by then,’ she says putting her hand on my stomach and rubbing it.

‘I agree. It sounds perfectly good to me.’

‘Agreed. Can I steal a kiss?’ she says grinning up at me.

‘You can steal anything you like.’

Parting lips. Joanne stares at me smiling. ‘I’m taking a shower. Why don’t you come up and join me?’ she asks.

‘I think I will.’

Walking out the front room she looks back at me, over her shoulder. She wiggles her arse and starts to run. I chase her up the stairs grabbing both her buttocks. We both laugh. It’s been a while.

‘They’re taking their time. It’s been an hour,’ I say to Joanne sat back in the front room.

‘D’ you want to get undressed and have another shower?’

‘I’d love to. But they’ll be back any time.’

‘Just think Dan, in two weeks we won’t have to worry about any of this shit.’

The intercom beeps. ‘Dan we’re back,’ Justin says sounding out of breath.

Opening the door I look down at them. Justin’s soaking wet. The two girls look like drowning rats.

They smile up at me. I look over Justin’s shoulder. Joanne’s car is a wreck. The passengers door has been ripped off and tied to the roof with some rope. The drivers side wing mirror is hanging off with all it’s innards suspending it in mid-air. All the wing is dented along it’s side.

‘What the fuck happened?’ I ask.

‘Car wash tried to eat us,’ Molly says.

‘Sorry Dan. The brushes came roaring across the car and they just bolted, leaving the door open.’

I feel Joanne’s breath behind me, just by my ear.

‘Aghhhh,’ she screams nearly shattering my ear drum.

‘Justin get in your car and go home. You two girls grab the dustbin liner of clothes. Hang the stuff up and put the wet clothes into the liner,’ I say.

The two girls do as they’re told. Running upstairs as fast as they possibly can, dodging around Joanne in the process.

Joanne’s still stood in the hallway speechless.

‘Here are her keys Dan,’ Justin says throwing them to me. ‘The food’s in the boot.’

‘Go in the front room Joanne, I’ll go and get the stuff out the boot.’

She shuffles in zombie like.

Getting the things out the boot and taking it to the kitchen. I'm glad Jo and I had that talk earlier.

Is this all he's got, chicken, rice, chillies and cola. Next time I'll do it myself.

Going upstairs I hear the girls talking to each other in Thai in the shower. The dustbin liner's outside their bedroom door. Grabbing the wet clothes I take them downstairs, putting them in the dryer. I take a deep breath entering the front room.

Sitting next to Joanne she stares blankly at a programme on the Arctic. I think I'll keep my mouth shut.

Hearing the girls running down the stairs, they bounce into the front room in their pyjamas, and sit either side of Joanne and myself.

'What watching?' Molly asks.

Joanne ignores her. 'It's a programme about going to the north pole,' I say.

'What dog pulling on slow?' Polly asks.

'It's a sledge,' I say.

'I check on your internet, Arserole play in five minute on other channel,' Molly says.

'I'm fucking watching this,' Joanne says.

'Molly. We get dressed and go bar and watch it.'

'You can't go into a pub over here without an adult,' Joanne says.

'Don't be fucking stupid. You idiot,' Polly says.

'Can you stop being fucking rude to me.'

'But Arserole playing,' Polly says.

Joanne drops the remote on the floor. 'Watch what the fuck you like. I need to get out of this fucking place,' She says getting up leaving the room.

Following her. She turns to me. 'You got my keys?'

'You can't go for a drive in your car in that condition.'

'I don't care. I just need to get out of here.'

'Joanne don't be like that.'

Giving her the keys. She opens the door leaving it open. Watching her get into her wrecked car she sits there staring out the front windscreen. She lifts the side of her backside up, I can see a dark wet patch on her denim jeans covering the whole of her right buttock.

Screeching into a three point turn, she drives up the road and she's gone.

Closing the door. I'll make the girls some chicken and rice with chillies seeing that's the only fucking thing they brought back.

Preparing the meal all hell breaks loose in the front room. What the fuck's the matter now? This time I'm going to give them a good spanking.

Kicking the door open the two girls are on the sofa jumping up and down.

'Arserole playing, they play Man Nite,' Molly shouts.

‘Arsenale manager. He best in world,’ Polly shouts.

‘Look at bacon face and wonkey,’ Molly says pointing at the screen.

They both jump off the sofa kissing the TV screen.

‘Harry. Harry,’ they both say together.

Finishing cooking their food I bring it to them. Their eyes are transfixed to the screen. They take it from me, not moving their gaze and start munching away. Watching them eat, they shout at the TV screen in Thai. Arsenal win the match. They jump around the room in their football felicity.

Looking at my alarm clock it’s one in the morning. My shock box is beside it with fresh batteries.

Joanne’s still not back as I wait for her alone in our bed. I close my eyes sucking up the smell of bananas through my nostrils.

## Chapter 5

The alarm clock wakes me. I hate the sound of that beeping command. I feel a tingling sensation inside my arm, reaching for my shock box I give myself twenty-four volts.

‘Press snooze Dan,’ Joanne says.

I don’t know what time Joanne got into bed, I didn’t hear her come in.

‘OK. I’ll go downstairs before the girls get up.’

Going into the kitchen I put the kettle on. ‘Hello boy,’ I say to Tucker as he greets me.

Pouring the boiling water over the tea bag, it’s contents stains the swirling water a dark-red mahogany. Staring into the infused cup I wonder what the day will bring. Can we get through the day without any incidents. We’ve got two weeks with these girls. Will we get through and come out the other side.

Taking a sip of tea the taste of candyfloss explodes around the inside of my mouth.

I can hear the shower go on and two Thai voices talking to each other. Those two are very loquacious when they think no one is listening.

I’ll start on their breakfast and make Joanne a cup of tea. She’s at work today, but I’ve taken two weeks off to be with the girls.

The only commitment work wise is a scheduled meeting with our biggest client, which I can’t get out of, but that’s not until tonight. I’ll get Justin to babysit.

The noise from the two girls is getting louder. I can hear the shower being switched off and them running across the landing.

Arguing all ready, they’ve only been up five minutes. The noise of one of them hitting the floor vibrates through the house. Jesus. Christ. Do they ever give it a rest.

Laying their breakfast out on the dinette table, I can hear them running down the stairs together.

Turning around they are both stood in the kitchen doorway in their pyjamas. Polly’s got her hand over her face, there’s blood coming from her nose.

‘Take your hand away from your face Polly,’ I say and I’m greeted with the start of two swelling eyes and what looks like a broken nose.

‘How the hell did that happen?’

‘That fucking itch break my nose.’

Molly puts her hands to her face giggling to herself.

Polly elbows her in the side of the face, catching her cheek, she goes sprawling across the

kitchen floor.

‘That fucking itch not laugh now,’ Polly says.

‘Girls, girls for Christ sake.’

Watching Molly get up, it looks like she is just about to get stuck back into her sister. Standing in-between them I hold them apart.

‘She say she marry Harry, I marry Harry,’ Molly says.

‘You not marry him, you fucking itch, I fucking marry him.’

‘You watch mouth, I come over, smash it.’

These two have got serious issues ‘That’s it girls, you’re supposed to be young ladies. So you can start fucking acting like it,’ I say shouting at them, holding them apart.

Molly takes a swing at Polly, misses and hits me in the leg.

‘Good start to the day Dan?’ Jo says standing in the hallway, dressed in her grey business suit, carrying her tan leather brief case.

Both girls turn around to face her.

‘You see girls I’m not a whore. I’ve actually got a job in an office, which doesn’t require me to go with strange men to cheap hotel rooms,’ She says giving them a brief smile.

‘You dress like fucking whore,’ Polly says under her breath.

‘Jo I’ve made you a cup of tea.’

‘I’ll give it a miss Dan. I can see you’re busy. I’m taking your car. Seeing that those two wrecked mine.’

‘What job you do?’ Molly asks Jo.

‘Accountancy. Something you two will never aspire to do.’

‘Why you think I ridiot?’ Molly asks.

‘Well let’s see. You’re violent, extremely rude. Your use of the English language is an assault on everyone’s ear drums.’

‘I can speak Minglish.’

‘Exactly. Minglish. With my job you have to be good with numbers. I doubt if you two can count from one to ten.’

‘We can, we can. One..Two..Three..Whore,’ the girls both say together, pointing at Joanne.

I can see being identical twins has it’s advantages in a riposte.

‘That’s it. I’m off. I’ll see you when ever Dan,’ she says slamming the door behind her.

‘You two sit down and eat your breakfast.’

Sitting down they munch on their marmite and mustard toast. ‘Don’t hit those eggs too hard either.’

Going upstairs I get dressed. Looking out my bedroom window a blanket of snow covers the landscape giving it a brand new pristine look. What am I going to do with the girls today? I don’t think they’ll want to play out in the snow. I don’t think they’ve ever been in snow.

Going back downstairs. I can hear the TV on.

'You two open the curtains and have a look outside.'

They run to each window, either side of the front room.

'It slow everywhere,' Molly says.

'It all white, everything white,' Polly says.

'D' you want to play out in it?'

'Yeah. Please. Please,' Molly says.

'Go upstairs and put on those winter clothes you had on yesterday, they're all dry now.'

Shooting up the stairs the girls race each other. I go into the kitchen to feed Tucker. He can go out in the garden with them. I'm not going out in it.

'We ready,' Molly says standing directly behind me.

'D' you like looking at my ass?'

'No. I want play in slow. I never play in before.'

Letting them out the front door, they run out followed by Tucker. Crunching down on the snow they make foot prints. They excitedly run across the cul-de-sac road laughing at all the foot prints they're making, with Tucker chasing them.

'Girls throw a few snow. Ahh. Thanks for that. I was going to say snowballs but you obviously beat me to it.'

'Hi Dan,' Justin says walking down the pavement.

He's ambushed by the two girls in a snowball throwing frenzy. Running through the front door he finds sanctuary in the hallway.

'Girls. Justin and me are going to have a cup of tea. Play out here nicely with Tucker and I'll take you sledging this afternoon.'

'You got fredge?' Molly says.

'Yes it's in the garage. But only if you play nicely.'

'Tea Justin?'

'Yeah.'

Making him the tea I look at him. I know this isn't going to go down well.

'I'm sending the girls back in two weeks time.'

'You can't,' he says, his stare prickling up the air in front of me. 'They've only just got here.'

'Joanne's not going to put up with them. They were only supposed to stay two weeks anyway.'

'She hasn't even tried. I thought you were using those two weeks to break the ice with Jo?'

'Justin our relationship will be over If I don't. I've got no choice. I never told you they were staying for good.'

'But Dan. You're their father. You've got to try.'

‘They’ll be well cared for. They’ll have the best of everything. Joanne’s going to get her dad to finance it.’

‘I’ll look after them.’

‘You can’t even look after your fucking self Justin,’ I say raising my voice.

‘I’ll get a job. I’ll do anything,’ he pleads.

‘No Justin. The decision’s been made and that’s the final word on the matter.’

‘But Dan,’ he says moving his stare away, straightening the air.

‘No Justin. I need you to babysit tonight. I’ve got a meeting. I can’t see Jo doing it.’

‘I can’t. I’ve got a hot date tonight.’

‘Well cancel it.’

‘No I’m not. And don’t blackmail me by saying you’re going to stop my allowance. I’m sick of you using that against me.’

‘Jo will have to do it then.’

‘Let’s go outside and play with the girls.’

‘You can. I’m staying here in the warm.’

‘Suit yourself,’ he says going out the front door.

‘Dan they’re not here,’ he shouts across at me.

‘For fuck sake,’ I say putting my jacket and boots on.

‘You stay here Justin. I’ll go and look for them.’

Looking at their foot prints it looks like they went into the garage. Opening the garage door I spot the sledge is missing. Those fuckers.

Walking out the cul-de-sac. Bill Crabtree our next door neighbour passes me.

‘If you’re looking for those girls Dan, they’ve got your dog tied to a sledge and he’s pulling them along the snow.’

‘Thanks Bill.’

‘They told me to fuck off when I told them it’s dangerous. They called me an old fucker as well.’

‘Sorry Bill. I’ll have a word with them.’

Walking out the cul-de-sac I go along a main street leading into town. Where the fuck are they? They couldn’t of gone far. The town’s busy as I trudge through the slush. Getting to a taxi rank I still can’t see them. I’ll be glad when these two weeks are up.

I feel my mobile vibrate in my pocket. Answering it Justin’s on the other end.

‘Dan they’re at Chegwell police station. I’ve got two officers here at the moment.’

‘I’m by a taxi rank. I’ll make my way over there.’

‘I’ll have a lift with these two officers and meet you there.’

‘OK.’

Going through the double doors of the station I spot Molly and Polly sitting on the police



counter, with their legs dangling and their feet tapping against it, talking to two female officers. Tucker's by the side of them in a dog cage.

'I'm their father,' I say to the duty officer.

'Lucky you,' he says not looking at me, getting a piece of paper and pen from the counter draw.

'Can I take them home?'

'Not just yet. They assaulted two police officers,' he says writing something on a piece of paper.

'You're fucking joking.'

'They didn't even know where they lived. We had to find out from Heathrow immigration,' he says looking directly at me.

'Look. I'm sorry.'

'They were found on the slip road of the M5, being pulled along by that dog on a sledge.'

'Why the fuck were they there?'

'As they put it. Off to London to watch Arsenal, so get out fucking way we nearly there. It took another two officers to man handle them into the car and cuff them.'

'Jesus. Sorry. I know they're a bit lively.'

'A bit fucking lively. They should have a government health warning stamped on their foreheads.'

'What did they do to the officers?'

'The two police men involved have got sore testicles and matching broken noses.'

'What can I say. I'm sorry.'

'You could keep them under control. They're only fucking twelve. We're letting them off with a caution this time because of their age. But please Mr Hargreeves give those girls some discipline.'

'I will. You wait until I get them back home.'

'Everything OK Dan,' Justin says, walking in with two police officers.

'Just about.'

The duty officer gives me a cold stare. 'Take them home. I'll get these two officers here to take you back. I'll give you this warning. Keep those girls under control because next time we won't be so lenient.'

'Thanks for that. Girls come with me,' I say.

The two girls run along the counter towards me.

'Molly here's that number you wanted for the Arsenal ticket office,' the duty officer says.

'Thanks Mister,' she says grabbing the piece of paper in her run.

Sitting in the back of the police car with Tucker on my lap in a cage. Justin and I assume the flanking manoeuvre on the girls.

‘What the fuck were you thinking?’ I say to both of them.

‘All do is tied Fucker to fredge, like on programme,’ Molly says.

‘His name’s Tucker.’

‘Fucker pull us along, but people keep stopping us. All want do is see Harry and Arserole,’ Polly says.

‘What about the two police men?’

‘I tell them not stop us. I tell them we beat them if try, but they laugh at me and Polly.’

‘So we beat them, put foot over neck, so not move when on ground,’ says Polly.

‘You can’t do that over here.’

‘Why not? They not got gun,’ Molly says.

‘Them police men we beat, run over fredge, it break. They ass ole,’ Polly says.

‘Probably the best thing they could do. You’re not going out in the snow unsupervised again.’

‘Mr Hargreeves we’re at your address,’ the officer driving says.

‘Thanks.’

‘You two go upstairs and get those wet clothes off. You can spend the afternoon in your bedroom.’

Spending the afternoon watching the most boring TV programmes know to man. I hear Joanne’s key in the front door.

‘Good day Dan?’

‘I’ve had better. The girls are in their room playing.’

‘Good. They can stay up there as well.’

‘I need you to babysit tonight.’

‘I’m not fucking looking after them. Get Justin to do it.’

‘He can’t. He’s got a hot date.’

‘Well find someone else.’

‘There’s no one. It’s the Perkin’s account. You won’t have to do it again.’

‘This is the last and only time I’m going to do it.’

‘OK. I’ve got to dash.’

Going upstairs I knock on the girls door.

‘What want?’ Molly says.

‘I’ve got to go to a meeting. Be nice to Joanne and don’t call her a whore.’

‘We will,’ Polly says.

Back downstairs I grab my briefcase from the hallway and look in on Joanne. She’s staring blankly at the TV. ‘You got my keys?’ I ask.

Throwing them at me she doesn’t take her eyes away from the screen. ‘Don’t be fucking

long.'

Driving to the pub where I have to meet Perkin. Leaves laden with snow drop their contents on my windscreen. It bursts across the screen, like thrown eggs, making it even more difficult driving along these treacherous lanes. Miniature snow flakes flicker in my full beam, kicked up from my tyres, it looks like I'm driving into TV interference. Keeping in the snow tracks of previous vehicles. I finally reach my destination.

Looking at the pub entrance I park up. I can see Perkin's car, with his driver Stuart moving his head to some music, his ears are plugged into his MP3 player.

I can't stand Perkin. He's a short, fat fuck. Whom made his money from importing cheap goods from China and Brazil. He's an obnoxious twat, that likes a bit of violence. He thinks he's a bit of a ladies man. But if his charm doesn't work, alcohol or Ketamine are his weapons of choice. If the rumours are to be believed. It's a sycophantic night for me. The part of the fucking job I hate the most.

Picking up my briefcase I head up the steps to the entrance, and into the bar. Perkin is there chatting a pretty little barmaid up with two small pony tails on top of her head.

'You're late fuckwit,' he says as he laughs with the barmaid.

'Sorry it was the snow.'

'Brandy?'

'No. I'm driving.'

'Have a fucking Brandy.'

'Just a small one.'

Watching the barmaid in her tight black skirt reach up to the optics, I feel a tingling inside my arm.

Reaching in my pocket for my shock box. It's not there. Fuck it. I've left it at home. Not now. Fucking hell. Not now.

Snap! Crunch! Engaging the pain I fight it with my mind. Cold seeps into my bones, freezing the marrow inside. Hailstones crash into my bare back, freshly dug soil moves underneath me. Moonlight flickers through bare black branches. A tombstone has my mother's name on it. Led naked on her grave soil falls away. Two ice cold palms caress my back, chilling my spine. I shudder, she kills my pain.

Perkin is stood by me. My arm extends. It grabs the back of his head, smashing his face into the edge of the wooden bar. I smash it again. Bits of flesh fly over the barmaid and optics. Smashing it again, blood sprays across the surface of the dented hard wood, making hundreds of small puddles. Turning to all the colours of a rainbow, the puddles fizz like spilt lemonade.

Pulling his shattered face back, his fat stomach bulges into his white shirt. Blood seeps into the white cotton, circling around all his buttons. The buttons pop from his shirt exposing his chest and fat belly. A thin red line works it's way down the centre of his chest, moving between

his nipples, reaching his navel. The red line bursts open. Thousands of spiders emerge from the burst cavity. Feeding off his fat body. One jumps on my face. His eyelids hang like globules of yellowish light-green sputum. The sludge falls.

My mother holds me in her arms as we walk through a park. Autumn leaves blow up from the ground. Her white dress with the pattern of sea shells on it blends into this autumnal scene. She smiles holding me to her face. Her eyes alight with happiness. A shot rings out. Birds squawk and scatter from the almost bare trees. I close my eyes. The image inside his eyes I no longer want to see. Two fangs slice into my eyelid crunching into my eye.

‘Fuck me. Fuckwit. What’s the matter with you? It looks like someone hit you over the head with a cricket bat. Your eyes were moving around like fruit on a fucking fruit machine.’

‘It’s a mild form of epilepsy. I forgot to take my tablets this morning.’

‘It didn’t look very mild to me.’

‘Shall we go to a table,’ I say.

‘Yeah. I hope you’ve sorted everything out for me?’

‘Everything’s in order.’

‘Hey. Gorgeous. Bring over a couple of large brandies and a bottle of red wine,’ Perkins says to the barmaid.

‘Certainly sir,’ she says.

Sitting down we both pick up a menu each.

‘I’ve got that bitch eating out of my hand. I bet you I nail her by the end of the evening.’

‘I don’t bet.’

The trouble with people with a low intelligence level, that have acquired a vast amount of money in a short space of time, they think they can buy anything. What chance has this overweight, obnoxious piece of shit got with her.

The barmaid brings our drinks over. Her pony tails look like small antenna bouncing around on top of her head.

‘Thanks sweetness. Here’s a twenty. Keep that good service up, there’ll be more to follow,’ Perkin says slipping it into her shirt pocket. He runs his little finger along her breast, which is amplified in her tight white shirt.

‘Oh. Sir you are a one,’ she says giggling. ‘Can I take your order now?’

‘Calf livers with mash,’ Perkin says.

‘I’ll have cod and chips.’

Taking the order she leaves, with Perkin glaring at her backside as it moves in her black skirt.

‘I can’t wait to smash that,’ he says.

‘Shall we get down to business?’

‘I’m all ears fuckwit.’

'I opened that account up in Guernsey. Here's all the paperwork to sign,' I say retrieving the relevant documents from my brief case.

'So I'll only pay two percent tax on my money?'

'It's all perfectly legal. Here are two credit cards for the account. One for this country, one for abroad.'

'You got the numbers?'

'The pin numbers are in this sealed envelope,' I say passing it to him.

Signing the paper work. Perkin slants his head, looking up at me sideways. 'You don't like me Hargreeves do you?'

'This is purely business, nothing personal.'

'You think I'm a bit of a cunt.'

What ever gave you that idea. I don't think you're a bit of one. I think your one great, fat fuck of one.

'No Toby. I think you're pleasant company and it's a pleasure doing business with you,' I say grinning.

'Yeah. Right. Maybe I'll take my business across to that company your pretty little girlfriend works for, and do her at the same time,' he says snarling at me.

'Toby there's no reason to get personal. Where you take your business is your prerogative.'

'Just remember this sonny. I put food on your fucking table.'

The waitress brings the meals over.

'Here's another twenty sweet heart,' Perkin says putting another note in her top pocket again. Testing her, he cups the whole of her breast in his palm.

'Don't do that, people can see,' she says.

'How about joining me with some champagne? After the meal?' he asks.

'I've got a boyfriend. We're engaged. He's picking me up in an hour.'

'I've got an hour in your beautiful company. At least let me buy you a glass of champagne at the bar.'

'Just the one then.'

'You're on your own fuckwit. I can't stand your fucking company anyway.'

Looking down at my cod and chips. I decide to stay here and eat it anyway. I'm not looking forward to the prospect of going home. There's just too much animosity there at the moment.

Munching through the meal the taste of steak and kidney pie and mash dance on my taste buds.

Pouring a glass of red wine I look over at Perkin as he leaves with the barmaid. She looks pale and unsteady on her feet. He must be taking her out for some fresh air.

Sipping the wine it tastes of bubble gum. Day dreaming I carry on drinking.

'Sir, sir have you finished?' the landlord asks.

‘Yeah. Sorry. I was miles away.’

The bottle of wine’s empty. Christ. I must of drank the lot. Looking into the depth of the empty wine glass, my finger tips are distorted. I push them harder into the glass, they flatten and turn white. I feel like shattering it. Why can’t Jo and I look after the girls? Why can’t she accept them? I know they’re a fucking handful, but they’ll calm down in time. Passing him my credit card I gather up the paperwork.

‘Come again sir,’ he says while I punch in my pin number.

‘I will, but with different company.’

‘I don’t blame you for that. He’s not a particularly nice person.’

‘That’s an understatement.’

‘He did offer to take a member of my staff home, when she suddenly became ill. I’ll give him that.’

‘Well. He must have some good points.’

Leaving I take a deep breath sucking in the icy air. I need to sober up a little before I get in my car.

Blowing icy air out of my lungs, it twists and turns in it’s smoky form, mixing with the tiny snowflakes underneath a folded coal black sky.

Looking down into the car park I see Perkin’s car with all it’s windows steamed up. Walking to mine I can just make out the side of the barmaids head against the back window, the side of her face is distorted by the steamed up glass, her cheek stands out, compressed against the glass, it’s wobbly compressed flesh moves like blancmange, going back and forth against the cold glass, the heat radiating from her cheek has made a two centimetre band of clear glass, I move closer, looking through the clear band surrounding her cheek.

One of her eyes is shut, but her other big brown one stares at me vacantly, it looks glazed, like the eye of a fish, that’s been dead for a few days. As her cheek moves forwards and backwards, her pony tails scratch at the steamed up glass, making a spider web of marks. Her cheek goes back a bit, it compresses down hard into the window, her mouth is half open as the force of the compression prises her lips apart, her teeth tap at the glass. Her cheek goes back again, saliva falls in one long strand from the corner of her mouth. She’s completely unconscious.

I’ve got to do something. Walking closer to Perkin’s car I can see the girl loosely kneeling down on the back seat. Her compressed cheek is holding her head up, while Perkin holds her by her waist, supporting her. She’s like a rag doll. Her tight black skirt has been lifted up over her backside, exposing the creamy white flesh of her buttocks, her black G-string has been pulled across her left cheek.

Perkin is kneeling there with his trousers down, pumping away at her from behind. He’s got a grimaced look on his face as he pumps her into a traumatised life.

Stuart has got his MP3 player plugged into his ears as he nods his head to some music. While his boss systematically rapes this unconscious poor young girl on the back seat.

I look at Stuart as he nods his head. As well as being Perkin's driver, he's also his body guard as well. He's going to take some knocking out. That Jamaican physique has seen a lot of violence in the past. The tapping of her teeth on the window behind me has stopped. Perkin must of finished himself off inside her.

Fuck it. The damage to her has already been done. It's not my problem. I've got enough problems at home. Perkin with his Ketamine loaded champagne, will bite him on his arse one day. That stupid girl should have had more sense.

Going back to my car anger boils inside me. I hate Perkin. I hate the fact I'm sending the girls back. I hate this fucking cold weather. I hate my fucking self for not helping that stupid bitch.

Switching my car's ignition on. Another car comes into the car park with it's lights on full beam.

The lights shine straight into Perkin's car, illuminating the girls face. A young man gets out leaving his engine running. He starts shouting. Stuart gets out and floors him with one punch. Perkin opens the passenger door. The girl falls unconsciously on top of the young man, with her bare arse showing.

Perkin is kneeling up on his back seat with his trousers down, laughing.

Fuck this. I've seen enough. I drive out the car park at speed, along the snow covered lane.

Reaching the main road I put my foot down. I need to talk to Joanne about the girls. I'm not happy about our piss poor attempt at being parents. I'm not happy about a lot of things at the moment.

Blue lights flash behind me. For fuck sake.

Pulling over a young officer gets out. Letting my window down he comes over.

'You've got a back light out sir.'

'Sorry. I didn't know.'

'Sir. I can smell alcohol on your breath.'

'I had a small Brandy.'

Going back to his car he comes back with a breathalyzer bag.

'Blow into this sir, until I say stop.'

Blowing into it, there might be a good chance that it's negative.

'Sir it's positive. Anything you say can be used as evidence. My colleague will take your car to the station, you'll have to come with me.'

## Chapter 6

Lying in this cell after a horrendous sleepless night without my shock box. It must be time for me to leave. Yesterday is one of those days I don't want to experience ever again. Joanne basically melted my ear to the phone, when I spoke to her. She's got Justin to look after the girls until I get home. I can look on the bright side. I can't see things getting any worse from here.

Hearing the heavy keys to my cell unlocking the door, relief rinses out of me. It's about fucking time.

'Mr Hargreeves follow me,' the officer says.

Following him past the main desk we go into a small room with just a table and two chairs.

'Sit here Mr Hargreeves. Someone wants to see you.'

What's this all about? If it's some fucking social worker coming to teach me the evils of alcohol. I'll go fucking mad.

A man of about sixty years sits down and stares at me. The chair creaks, struggling to support his enormous frame. He's in a high ranking police uniform.

'I've dreamt of this day for a fucking long time,' he says resting his weather beaten, bear paw size hands on the table.

'Have you,' I say trying not to be intimidated.

'Oh. Yes,' he says putting a tape recorder on the table.

'Is this going to take long? I've got two young girls to look after.'

'I'd forget about them. In fact. If I was you I'd start to look at your life in a completely different way from now on,' he says lifting the peek of his hat up, revealing his faded blue eyes, which are surrounded by deep furrowed, pitted skin.

'Is that right. Well if that's the case I suggest you tell me what the fuck you're going to say.'

Every furrow on his face moves upwards as he frowns. Liver-spots are stretched as he clenches his fist, his pupils increase in size. He's controlling his temper.

'If I had my way, I'd come over there and snap your neck, right now,' he says in a calm manner.

'That's not very professional,' I say giving him a flash of a grin.

He switches the tape on.

'Mr Hargreeves. I'm formally charging you with the murder of Tim Sawyer.'

'What fucking murder?'

'Anything you say will be used in evidence.'



'I don't know anything about any murder.'

'Thirty years ago Tim Sawyer was abducted from his mothers back garden, taken to a barn, murdered, then his body was mutilated. He was three years old.'

'Thirty years ago I would have been five.'

'I'm well aware of that. You and an accomplice abducted him, then murdered him in that barn.'

'No I didn't.'

'I checked your original address, that barn is half a mile from your house. It's situated in some fields at the back of your family home.'

'So what.'

'Mr Hargreeves. Two people witnessed Tim being taken away by two children. You were one of them, and the other was older and taller than you. Who was he?'

'I've got no idea what the fuck you're talking about.'

'Mr Hargreeves. I'll make this easy for you. The DNA swab taken from you, because you were caught drink driving last night, was put in the national database. It lit the thing up like a fucking Christmas tree,' he says delivering a fine mist of spittle across my face.

'Did it. I didn't commit any murder.'

'Evidence taken from the scene suggests you did,' he says putting his hat down on the table, revealing a downy coat of white speckled hair, in a regimental style haircut.

'What evidence?'

'A fresh apple core was found in the barn. DNA sampling wasn't around at the time, so luckily we kept it in dry ice with other evidence from the scene.'

'An apple core, big deal,' I say folding my arms. Turning away from him.

'It had your saliva all over it, plus some of Tim's blood. Explain that to me?'

'I've got no idea what you're talking about,' I say facing him again.

'A broken bottle pushed into his heart had all your finger prints all over it.'

'It wasn't me.'

'I want you to name your accomplice?'

'I don't fucking know.'

'You and I are both from the same small town. It's not the only crime you've committed. Is it? That man you nearly left for dead sixteen years ago, can you remember that?'

How the fuck does he know about that?

'What man?'

'The one that nearly died from his injuries. Blood that didn't belong to him was found on his body, it was put on the database as well. It matched the saliva on the apple. Guess what? It turned out to be yours.'

'I admit to that. I was going through a hard time. He was drunk. Taunted me, then started to

attack me, so I did what I had to do.'

'He was unconscious for three weeks.'

'I put him in a resuscitation position, went to a phone box and called an ambulance.'

'So you think that makes it better?'

'No. But at the time I wasn't myself.'

'Like the time you killed Tim Sawyer?'

'I know nothing about the murder of that boy.'

'I'll give you a list of his injuries. We'll see if that will help you with your memory loss.'

'I don't want to hear it,' I say turning away from him again.

'Yes you will sunshine. The only thing you did with any humanity was strangle him with a tree root, before you mutilated his body. One chunk bitten out of his cheek.'

'That wasn't me.'

'I know that. That's why I want you to name your accomplice, his saliva and teeth marks were found on that piece of cheek.'

'You cut him open with a broken bottle from under his chin, down to his navel, his tongue was cut off, three fifty pence sized holes were gouged out of his side with the same bottle. You smashed the back of his skull in with a brick, exposing his brain. Then you left the broken bottle embedded in his heart.'

'It sounds horrendous.'

'It was. You even cut his penis off. His mother killed herself two years after his death.'

'I'm being honest. I didn't do it,' I say looking back at him.

My God. Those injuries fit in with my hallucinations. I couldn't have done it.

'We'll let the courts decide that. Just admit your guilt now. It'll just make it easier for your family and friends.'

'I didn't do it,' I say slamming my fists down on the table.

'Dan Hargreeves. I'm charging you with the murder of Tim Sawyer, and the attempted murder of Barry Highfield.'

Switching the tape off, he stares at me with a look of satisfaction.

'Get used to your next accommodation. You're going to be living there for the rest of your sorry fucking life.'

'I don't think so,' I say defiantly.

'The next time I see you I'll be in court. Watching you get sent down for the rest of your natural.'

He gets up and leaves the room. Two officers come in, stand me up and handcuff me.

Lying in my new cell at Trentville prison. In the sex offender wing. I think about the red barn with a blue roof. Did I kill that boy? Did myself and someone else abduct him, then kill him

and mutilate him. I don't know. I know I've got something to do with it. The barn they're talking about is in my dreams every night. I was definitely there because of my DNA on the apple core. But that boy's blood was on the apple too. Even my fingerprints were on a broken bottle pushed into his heart. So I definitely came into contact with him. I must have something to do with it. But what. I can never open the barn door in my dreams. What happened in there?

My hallucinations fit with his bodily injuries. Did I kill him with someone else? Was my mind so traumatised I blocked the killing out, and it resurfaced after my mother's death, in the form of my hallucinations. Who was the other person with me?

'Grub up,' one of the prison guards says opening the cell door.

'I don't want any.'

'Get out that fucking pit and queue up with the rest of the filth, or my batten will give you an appetite.'

Queueing up with rest of the prisoners, the chefs dish out their gloop into yellow plastic trays. One advantage to me is my taste swaps.

'What's your name?' one of the prisoners asks me, blinking at me nervously with both his eyes.

'Dan,' I say.

I don't really want to talk to this prick.

'I'm Sinbad. It's your first day here. You won't like the food, but I'll eat it.'

'You can have it,' I say as we shuffle along the queue.

Sitting down with Sinbad, he gobbles his food down quicker than Tucker.

'May I?' he says looking at my tray.

Pushing my tray across to him, he gobbles it down at the same speed.

'You see that table over there, that's the child killers. They don't say a lot, but they stick together. It's safer,' he says between mouthfuls.

'Oh. Yeah,' I say as I look over at the misfit bunch.

I hope I never end up on that fucking table.

'That table over there are the rapists. They're like the jocks of this place, they run it. The table behind us are the old guys. They've been here most of their lives and will die here.'

'What table do you belong to?'

'That would be telling. We don't talk about our crimes in this place. Too many grasses.'

'What's that table of men over there?' I say looking at a bunch of well built, hard looking characters.

'That's the sisters. Male rapists. A good looking bloke like you wants to stay well clear of them.'

'Thanks for the advice,' I say swallowing a lump of saliva.

Fucking hell I wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of them.

'Stay close to me. Listen to what I say, and you'll be fine,' he says blinking erratically.

'I appreciate it.'

'Don't look behind you, but General Custard is giving you his traditional welcome. He does it to every new prisoner.'

'Does what?'

'Let him do it or he'll kill you later. He's the longest serving inmate here. He's killed three people before for not letting him welcome them.'

'What the fuck is he doing?'

'Just look at me and don't turn around,' he says as his blinking eyes go into overdrive. He looks excited.

'Fuck this,' I say turning around.

Some old guy's wanking himself off behind me, smiling.

'Fuck off you horrible bastard.'

'Let him come on you, he does it to everyone. If you don't, he'll kill you later,' he says twitching on his chair, like a child just about to receive a birthday present.

'Get fucked,' I say picking up Sinbad's yellow tray and smashing it across the old guy's face. The plastic tray disintegrates, I turn away to protect my eyes, as the shattered splinters move through the air at speed. I feel them slam into the side of my head as if someone has thrown a handful of grit at me. He goes sprawling across the floor. Stamping on his face, the force makes a sound like crunching snow under foot. I wait for the screws to intervene. It looks like his jaw and nose is broken as I remove my boot. The screws grab me. Dragging me away, thick blood is coming from his nose and mouth, it oozes like spilt treacle across the wooden tiled floor.

Dragging me back to the cell I don't struggle.

'Hargreeves that was a big mistake you made in there,' one of the prison officers says.

'So it's OK for people to be wanked on? While they're eating.'

'A lot of things in here we turn a blind eye to,' the other officer says as they release me.

'You can turn a blind eye to the beating I just gave out.'

'No you'll be charged with that, if you live long enough to see court.'

We walk in a civilised manner back to the cell.

'Just add it to the rest of my charges,' I say not giving a fuck any more.

'Hargreeves. I'll give you some advice. Don't trust anyone in here. Sinbad you were talking to, he's what you call, the honey trap,' the first officer whom spoke to me says.

'What the fuck d' you mean?'

'The sisters use him to befriend any new inmate they fancy, and they really like the look of you. They pick a time and a place, and Sinbad will lead you there, the pack of them will go through you, with Sinbad joining in. When they get hold of you, you'll wish for death,' the other officer says.

'Thanks for the advice,' I say as he opens the cell door and leads me in.

Looking at the ceiling of my cell from my bed, I want to cry. I need to get out this fucking place. I need to see Joanne. What does she think about all this. I want to be in bed beside her. I want the warmth. I want the contentment. I wish I could smell bananas.

'Hargreeves your solicitor's here,' a prison guard shouts in-between the cell bars.

'About fucking time,' I say jumping off my bed.

The officer leads me to a room. I sit down with a man I don't know.

'Who the fuck are you?' I ask.

I think I've been stitched up with a legal aid brief. Cutting his fucking teeth.

'George appointed me to look after your case.'

'Joanne's. Dad?'

'Yes. Your solicitor got in contact with Joanne to say the case is way out of his league.'

That spineless fuck. That's the last time I'm going to use that prick.

'George said what ever it costs, to get you out of here.'

'Can you do it?' I ask, knowing that George's pockets are deep. This prick must be one of the best.

'I'll be honest, going through the charges and evidence. It's a clean cut case. All I can do is try.'

'I didn't do it,' I say as my heart sinks.

'The attempted murder charge I can get down to either GBH or ABH. I'll get in touch with Barry Highfield, pay him off, and get him to say you acted in self defence.'

'I did act in self defence.'

'But the murder charge, that's a whole different ball game. The court will be lenient if you plead guilty. Mainly because of the age you were when you committed the crime. But you must tell them who you did it with,' he says looking at me sternly.

'I didn't fucking do it,' I say looking back at him matching his expression.

'We're going to go for bail. The hearing for that is in four weeks.'

'I can't spend four weeks in here.'

'Four weeks is nothing to what you could spend climbing the walls.'

'How are you going to make bail for me?'

'We're going to use an angle with the twins.'

'I don't want them brought into all this,' I say.

I'm supposed to be sending them home in a couple of weeks. I can't use them to save my sorry arse.

'You need every bit of help you can get.'

'OK. When is Joanne coming to see me?'

'She's not. Here's a letter from her,' he says sliding it across the table.

'What about the girls?'

'Your brother's looking after them. Is there anything else I need to know?'

'I gave an inmate a good spanking this morning, I think I broke his nose and jaw.'

'Christ. Dan. Stay out of trouble for fuck sake,' he says standing up from his chair.

'I need my shock box.'

'You what?'

'I get hallucinations. I need it on medical grounds.'

'I'll have a word.'

'Can I read the letter in private.'

'I'm leaving anyway. I'll see you in court in four weeks.'

Watching him leave I open the letter. The smell of bananas erupts from the ripped paper. Smiling I read it's contents.

Dan.

I love you very much, the last twelve years have been the happiest I've known.

This is the hardest thing I've ever had to do. It's over baby, and there's no going back. I'm so sorry. It breaks my heart writing this letter. But after all those years together, you deserve an explanation.

When you went to your meeting with Perkin, I ended up slapping the girls across their faces really hard. I never ever thought I was capable of hitting children.

They didn't know their mother's dying. They called me a lying whore. I just snapped. Sorry.

Those girls will always be a part of your life Dan, whether they're in Thailand or not. I can never be part of theirs.

I'm back living at dad's house. I've signed our house over to you and I'm looking for an apartment.

Justin's taking care of the girls at your house.

Dan I don't know if you killed that boy, but a lot fits. You could never open the barn door in your dreams, so you've got no idea if you killed him there or not. Your hallucinations are telling you something. I know you don't share their contents with me, but maybe they can give you some clues to what actually went on. To me you were traumatised in that barn, and your mind just blocked out what went on.

I hope one day you find out what actually happened.

As for us it's the end of the road. I will always love you baby. xxx

Putting the letter on the table, I feel my forehead split as I smash it into the table as hard as I can.

## Chapter 7

Four weeks later: Sitting in court handcuffed, we wait for the Judge.

I don't know how I got through those four weeks in that hell hole. But Sinbad got the message when I held a sharpened piece of a dinner tray to his throat, then sliced a smile on his cheek. I think inmates have got a sixth sense, and know when someone means it. He had a word with the sisters. General Custard's still unconscious in hospital. The screws didn't see what happened, and the lags are saying nothing. Until he makes a statement they can't charge me.

The Judge arrives, we all rise.

'Your Honour. The charge of attempted murder we would like it dismissed, on the grounds the victim has written a signed statement saying that Dan Hargreeves acted in self defence,' says my solicitor.

'We are happy to accept this your Honour. We've read the statement and have spoken to the individual,' says the prosecutor.

'Granted,' the Judge confirms.

'We would like Dan Hargreeves to be allowed bail, until his trial in four weeks time. The reason for this is after today there's no one available to take care of his twelve year old girls.'

'We strongly recommend that the charged be incarcerated until his trial. We feel alarmed that he should be trusted to look after two children. Due to the nature of his charges.'

'Your Honour. The charges relate to an incident when he was five years old. He has never committed a crime. At the moment he is an innocent man.'

'I don't feel comfortable releasing him. I feel it's an unnecessary risk to leave him in charge of children,' the Judge says.

'Your Honour. I would like you to meet Molly and Polly,' my solicitor says.

Fuck. What are they doing here. I look over to my defender. He ignores my glare.

The girls come running over to me. They're dressed in matching floral dresses with flowers in their hair.

'Papa. Papa,' they both shout, jumping up on me with their legs around my waist and their arms around my neck, kissing my cheeks.

'Your Honour, can I have the handcuffs released for one minute, just to cuddle them?' I ask.

'Granted.'

Cuddling them Molly whispers in my ear. 'That man over there take us Arserole. He say if we do what he say, he take us again.'

Looking over at my solicitor he's smiling at me.

'Old man. If Papa not take care of us we go back Thailand. We go orphanage. We have to make T-shirt all day. Then sit with old men in bar at night,' Molly says looking at the Judge in a puppy dog way.

'Young lady. Refer to me as your Honour.'

'Your Honour, if.'

'Young lady. You're an intelligent girl. Say your Honour,' he says.

'That what I fucking say you idiot.'

'Young lady this is a court of law. I suggest you treat it like one.'

'Your Honour, if Papa go jail and we go Thailand, Fucker be put down by vet. He nice dog. He not bite.'

'OK young lady. We've got facilities over here that will care for you. As for the dog, he won't be destroyed.'

'But we need Papa, it new country, we frightened,' Polly says.

'Like I said young lady. Our facilities are perfectly adequate.'

'I not good at Minglish. I not know what people say,' Polly says in a whining voice.

'I can understand you being frightened. After all it's a new country. And your English is far from perfect,' he says trying to comfort her.

'It not bad. It better than your fucking Thai,' Polly says.

'I'll warn you one more time. This is a Court of law.'

'So you let Papa go?' Molly asks.

'I don't need you to pressure me into any decision.'

'Fuck me. It take you long time to make decision. I wait fucking ages in corridor for you turn up. You always fucking late?'

'Officer. Take the two girls and their father downstairs and lock them in a cell.'

'Your Honour they're only twelve, it's illegal to put them in a cell,' my solicitor says.

'We're having a five minute break. I think they'll be quite safe with their father.'

Sitting in a cell, the two girls are playing on the bars.

'Get down from there you two, and come and sit by me.'

'When get out here? I want piss,' Molly says.

'You'll have to use the steel toilet, over there.'

'I not piss in front you.'

'Hold it in then.'

'Mr Hargreeves. The judge has decided to bail you on £100,000. You will have to surrender your passport and be electronically tagged. He also doesn't want your girls in his court again,' the police officer says.



Walking out the court house carrying the girls. I feel I've jumped one hurdle. The next hurdle is to speak to Joanne.

The solicitor gave my passport over, plus a cheque from Joanne's dad. I'm also the proud owner of an electronic tag. I can only go out in a five mile radius of my house.

Two photographers take pictures of me and the girls as we jump in the back of my solicitors car.

'Good result Dan. It's just the trial to get through,' my solicitor says as if he's pulled off a miracle.

'I appreciate all the work you've done.'

'I thought the girls would do the trick.'

'D' you mind. I just want to phone Joanne.'

'Sorry Dan she's changed her number. She doesn't want any contact with you.'

'Oh, OK.'

Reaching my house we go inside and meet up with Justin. The solicitor goes to another meeting.

'Great to see you,' Justin says as Tucker jumps all over me.

'And you Justin. How have the girls been?'

'Absolute angels.'

'I find that hard to believe.'

'They have. Honestly. Dan I've got things to do at my flat. All I've done is look after the girls for four weeks.'

'It's my turn now. Justin thanks for everything.'

'You're welcome.'

After Justin leaves I settle down with the girls. We watch telly the rest of the day and into the evening.

When I finally make it to bed I slip into it naked. My shock box is on my bedside cabinet. The electronic tag is annoying me. My nostrils suck in the scent of bananas. If only Joanne was part of that scent. Falling asleep I slip into my usual dream.

## Chapter 8

Preparing breakfast I can hear one of the girls come downstairs. 'I hungry,' says Polly.

'You're always hungry.'

Turning to her she's stood in the kitchen doorway in her pyjamas holding a teddy bear by it's paw. Tucker growls at it.

'Back Fucker. He not fight you.'

'Where's your sister?'

'She asleep. That itch keep me up all night snoring.'

'Well, if you didn't go around breaking each others noses it wouldn't be a problem.'

'I watch hootball.'

'I'll get your sister up.'

Going into their bedroom Molly's fast asleep. I shake her shoulder.

'Fuck off.'

'Get up. Breakfast is ready.'

She sits on the side of her bed, stretches her arms and yawns. 'I dream about monkeys.'

'Did you marry one and have children with it.'

'You think I marry monkey?'

'I don't think there's a primate on this planet that would be interested in you.'

'You try and be fucking funny?'

'Oh for God's sake. Why d' you take everything so seriously?'

'You say I marry fucking monkey.'

'It was a joke.'

'I not find it funny,' she says going to the window, putting her hands together and bowing her head to a black Buddha which is on the window sill.

'You believe in all that nonsense?'

'I not talk you about. You not understand.'

She lights two joss sticks, the aroma of roast chicken fills the air. I spot a snail in a jar on the window sill.

'What's that doing here,' I say pointing at it.

'It Brian. We find in garden.'

'It's a fucking snail. Don't you have snails in Thailand or did everyone fucking eat them?'

'He nice snail.'

'Get it out of here.'

'No.'

'Pick it up and stop defying me all the time.'

She grabs the jar and follows me downstairs into the kitchen.

'Now chuck the snail back into the garden.'

Polly comes into the kitchen. 'Where Brian go?'

'Back where he came from,' I say.

'No. He nice snail.'

'Not you as well.'

'Brian stay,' says Polly.

'I'm not in the mood to argue. Go in the front room and you can eat your breakfast while you watch football.'

'Man?' Molly asks.

'Why don't you call me Papa? Like in court.'

'Only do that so watch Arserole.'

'Man? I learn new word. Old man from next door use it on me and Polly.'

'That's nice.'

'Yeah. It cunt.'

'What did you just say?'

'Cunt.'

'Molly don't use that word again, it's very offensive in the English language.'

'It nice word. Polly like it. Listen. Polly you cunt.'

'Thanks Molly.'

'Man say cunt not nice word.'

'It sound nice.'

'You two swear enough already, I don't want that word brought into your assortment of swear words. It's very offensive over here.'

'OK. But still sound nice.'

'Molly you're a bitch,' I say.

'What you say?'

'You heard me, you're a fucking bitch.'

'I tell you one time only. You call me bitch again. I break your fucking neck.'

'You find that offensive. That's how English people feel about the word cunt.'

'I understand. But don't call me fucking bitch again,' she says going into the front room with her sister.

Taking their breakfast to them they're sat on the sofa with Brian in a jar plonked in the middle of them.

‘Brian want breakfast to,’ says Molly looking up at me like a purring cat.

‘I’m not feeding a fucking slug.’

‘He like lettuce. It in fridge,’ she says moving her bossy gaze away.

As soon as the girls are sorted out. I’m going to sort Joanne and myself out, I’ve got to see her. We’ve got to solve our problems. I need to be with her, feel her, smell her, speak to her. I’ll phone her dad, find out where she is.

Taking my mobile out of my dressing gown pocket I make the call. ‘Hi George.’

‘Dan. Nice to hear your voice again.’

‘Thanks for all your help, I’ll pay you back when I’ve got the money.’

‘Take all the time you need Dan.’

‘George... I need to see Joanne.’

‘No Dan. Leave it. Get the trial over with first. Try and patch things up with her then.’

‘I need to see her now George,’ I say raising my voice.

‘No. Dan.’

‘I just want to speak to her. Just give me her mobile number.’

‘She’s at work Dan. Phone the office. This didn’t come from me.’

‘What on a Saturday?’

‘She’s missed a lot of days off work. She needs to catch up on her accounts.’

‘Thanks George,’ I say hanging up going to the fridge.

I’ll go to her office and meet her there at lunchtime. Justin will have to babysit again.

‘Here’s his lettuce,’ I say dropping it in his jar.

‘Brian say thank you,’ says Molly putting both her forefingers either side of her head and wiggling them.

‘You’re lucky we don’t live in France.’

Parked up in Joanne’s work’s car park, I wait for her to return from her lunch break. I don’t want to bump into any of her work colleagues. There’s bad blood between me and a couple of them.

A car pulls up beside me, some bloke’s driving. Ducking down in the car seat I look out the drivers side window. There’s a tap on the passenger window. Fuck it. What the fuck does he want? Turning to face him I let the electric window glide down.

‘Your seat belt’s hanging out your passenger door,’ he says giving me a smile.

‘Thanks mate,’ I say opening it.

Pulling the belt in he’s still staring at me. ‘D’ you work for the company?’ he asks.

‘No a different one, I’m waiting for someone,’ I say snapping the door shut.

Sticking his head through the open window, his Hollywood teeth smile beams into the car,

illuminating it with false happiness. His salon tanned face, designer suit and dripping expensive silver watch gives him a vain look that some women find attractive. He looks like a prick in my eyes.

‘Who is it? I might know them,’ he says.

‘It’s a young lady,’ I say not wanting to reveal Joanne’s name. He must be new to the company because everyone that works with Joanne knows me.

‘I’m meeting one to. We’re going away for the weekend.’

‘That’s nice,’ I say as he moves his head away from my window.

‘I’ve got to go and pick up her suitcase from the office. Nice to have met you,’ he says briskly walking towards the office’s revolving door.

Where is that fucking girl? Her lunch break is only half an hour. I spot her car driving into the car park. About time.

She’s going to be pleased to see me, it’s been four weeks. Tonight I could be wrapped around her naked flesh, in our bed. She spots me as I sit on my car’s bonnet. She’s dabbing her eyes with a tissue. Her tyres screech, stopping just by my feet. She looks upset. Glaring at me through her front windscreen, her head goes up in a tut-tut motion. She gets out of the car, looking at me over her car roof. ‘Why the fuck are you here?’

‘Joanne. We need to work everything out.’

‘There’s nothing to fucking work out. Now fuck off.’

‘Joanne please,’ I say going to her.

She’s got her back to me, grabbing her waist I pull her around to face me. Her icy-blue eyes flash like knives. ‘Get the fuck off me,’ she says pushing me away.

‘Take the afternoon off. We’ll go for a drink and sort things out.’

‘Yeah. Right. You’re charged with a child’s murder. You’ve got twin girls who’ll be part of your life forever. I don’t want to be part of theirs,’ she says as the man I was talking to earlier comes over holding a suitcase.

‘Everything all right darling?’ he asks.

‘Keep the fuck out of this,’ I say. ‘Unless you want those fucking white teeth of yours inside your stomach.’

‘Dan don’t,’ says Joanne holding both my hands in hers. ‘It’s over Dan. Duncan and I are going away for the weekend. That’s how much it’s over.’

My arm’s grabbed from behind, it’s stretched up my back and I’m spun around. Bang! A fist connects to my cheek. Bang! It hits me again with more force catching my nose. I can feel my nostrils start to leak, dull pain twists inside my skull, raking at the insides of my eyes. The smell of onions makes my eyes water. The taste of roast pork fills my mouth.

‘Leave him the fuck alone,’ Jo shouts. ‘Or you two won’t have a job come Monday morning.’

Martin Smith is stood in front of me. His fists have wanted to do that for a long time. He owes me. Turning around David Chester looks at me and smirks. I'll wipe that fucking smile off his face when I get the chance, but not today.

I face Joanne, a miniature tear slides down the side of her nose. I feel like my mother has died all over again.

'You're right. We're done now,' I say.

More tears run, but this time they're mine. She passes me a tissue. 'Keep it. I don't need anything from you any more,' I say getting into my car.

Looking at them through my car's windscreen. Duncan puts his arm around Joanne. She was the one.

Driving out I look in my rear view mirror, my last look at her. Hitting the mirror with my fist, it hits the dashboard, exploding into a million tiny shards, decorating the passenger seat in a thin layer of glitter. The glove box opens from the impact. I reach in and grab a chamois leather and wipe the blood from my nose and mouth.

Passing a pub I used to meet up with Joanne at, I pull up into it's car park. Fuck it. I could do with a strong drink. It'll take the taste of roast pork away and hopefully some of my heartache.

Going to the bar I throw down a twenty pound note and order a double brandy. It's heat instantly hits the back of my throat as I down it in one. It tastes of black coffee.

'Another,' I say to the barman.

The burning liquid drifts down the insides of my cheeks, slipping under my tongue. Swallowing it, it adds to the existing warm glow in my stomach. At least the taste of roast pork and the smell of onions has momentarily gone.

'Someone's had a bad day?' says a woman sat on a stool beside me.

Just my luck. The boring local idiot is perched at the bar.

'What's it got to do with you? Mind your own business.'

'Sorry I spoke you arrogant shit.'

I can feel my nose start to leak again, the smell of onions is back. Wiping my nose with the back of my hand, blood smears across it's taut skin. I spot a white tissue being waved like a surrendering flag from the corner of my eye. Taking it. I wipe my hand and nose.

'Shall we start again?' she asks.

'Sorry. You were right, it has been a bad day,' I say still staring at the barman.

'A woman was it?'

'Yeah. It's over now.'

'If a man walks into a bar and drinks like you did, a female's usually connected to it.'

'How perceptive,' I say turning to face her for the first time.

She's about thirty-eight. Her long blond curly hair complements her icy-blue eyes. Her

heavily blushed red lips blend into the rest of her make-up. It looks like it's been professionally done. Her black jacket and white shirt hide large breasts. She turns on her stool to face me, crossing her right denim covered leg over her left, she puts her hand out towards me.

'Lucy Summer,' she says.

Her name conjures up the smell of Jasmine, the taste of strawberries and cream. The colours pink and red flash through my mind.

'Dan Hargreeves,' I say shaking her hand, pulling up a stool.

'I've had a bad day myself. Family matters,' she says finishing her drink.

'Would you like another drink?'

'Just the one. I've got a long drive ahead of me. Gin and tonic please.'

Getting her the drink I pass it over. 'So you're not local?' I ask.

'No. I had to meet someone, but they've gone now,' she says uncrossing her legs. She keeps them open, I can't help staring in-between them. She crosses her left leg over her right. Her eyes connect with mine again and she smiles. I feel like a naughty schoolboy.

'I can't stay long. I've got two girls to look after.'

'A handful?'

'They are difficult girls.'

'Mine has grown up now. We're not close.'

'You don't look old enough to have a grown up child.'

'I'm forty. Thanks for the compliment.'

'I'm being honest. I thought you were a lot younger.'

This woman's sex appeal oozes from every pore of her body. It radiates over to me carrying the scent of bananas. My cock hardens. I cross my legs. She smiles at me again. She knows.

'You're a very pretty man,' she says dipping her head down, looking at me through her blond curls. Trying to make out she's slightly bashful.

'Thank you. You married?'

'I was. I've got a partner of two years.'

'He's a lucky man.'

'Not that lucky. I'm not completely honest with him. Forbidden fruit has always been a weakness of mine,' she says giving me a slight grin.

I think I'm about to get seduced by a blond female praying mantis.

'Would you like me to stay longer?' I ask.

'Up to you,' she says looking at her freshly painted red nails. They look like they've just thrust outward from her finger tips. Ready to sink into her intended prey.

'I'll just make a call,' I say going outside.

The chilly air bites at my face as I phone Justin. 'Justin I need a favour.'

'What now Dan?'

'I need you to have the girls tonight.'

'No. Dan.'

'I've just found out Joanne's seeing someone else.'

'Sorry to hear that Dan, but no.'

'Please. I need time alone.'

'Those girls have been here just over four weeks, you've had them two days.'

'This'll be the last time.'

'It better be. I'll take them to my flat. I've got things to do there.'

'Thanks. Can you take down all the pictures of Joanne in the house? I don't want to be reminded of that bitch.'

'OK. We'll speak later.'

Going back into the bar, Lucy's not on her stool, her empty glass sits on the bar, it's lip covered from the redness of hers. I go over to the glass, picking it up I smell the smudged red, the smell of pears fill my nostrils, it mixes with the smell of bananas. The only thing left of her presence. She was stringing me along.

Ordering a brandy, I go to an alcove and sit looking out the window. Frost still carpets the fields and hedgerows. The sun tries to break through a milky white sky, but it's efforts are in vain, nightfall will come before it can attack the frost.

I wonder what Joanne's doing. The thought of her with him repulses me. How could she? How can I start over again with someone new? To go through life without her.

'Penny for your thoughts?' says Lucy, pushing her large breasts into my back.

The smell of pears and bananas returns, whirling around my face with her sudden appearance.

'I thought you'd gone.'

'I had to freshen up and make a call myself,' she says taking a seat opposite me.

After drinking and talking with Lucy for a couple of hours, I don't know if she wants to come back with me or not. She's very confident and knows what she wants.

'You can't drive back now with all that alcohol you've had,' I say.

'The pub's got a B and B. I've already booked a room.'

'D' you want me to stay with you?'

'What sort of woman d' you think I am? We've only just met.'

She's been flirting with me all afternoon. Does she think this is some sort of game? I'll never see her again after tonight. Fuck her. I've had enough of women. I'm out of here.

'Sorry Lucy. I've got to go,' I say putting my coat on, leaning over kissing her cheek. My hand accidentally brushes against her breast.

'Was that just an excuse so you could touch my tits?'

'Yeah it was,' I say smiling at her, leaving the pub and ordering a taxi.



Standing outside the cold relentlessly chews at my flesh. Putting my hands in my pockets I pull my coat in tightly. I can see the back of Lucy's head through the alcove window as she drinks alone. I don't know what to make of her. I don't think I'll ever understand women. Fat raindrops start to fall, the scent of cut green grass and prickly wooden hedgerows splinters the air. I fill my lungs and close my eyes. It smells like early spring.

My taxi arrives. Jumping on the back seat it's hot interior warms me down to my bones. Giving the driver my address there's a tap on the window. I open the door. Lucy's face beams in.

'You forgot something,' she says.

'What was that?'

'Me you dickhead,' she says jumping onto the back seat, chucking her purse on my lap.

'I didn't think you were interested.'

'I was playing hard to get. I want you to appreciate it when you unwrap this candy,' she says as we drive off.

Standing in my bedroom naked with Lucy, my tongue slips around inside her mouth, her tongue tries to coil around mine, leaving the flavour of raspberries. She moves her lips away from me.

'You can unwrap the candy now,' she says.

I grip the denim around her button with my thumb and forefinger, it pops open. Pulling her zip down, I slip my hand under her briefs moving my hand over her neatly trimmed pubic hair, my middle finger touches her clitoral hood, the butter coated soft cover retracts, offering me it's hard pearl of tissue. Moving the tip of my finger around it, I look at her expression as her nerve endings charge her internally. She looks at me in a disapproving way.

'Don't fuck around with that. Get those fingers inside me. I've been wet all afternoon talking to you. It's a bit like you having a hard-on for three hours. She needs sorting out and fast.'

Easing two fingers in, her inner labia greases them. She's soaking. Her wet briefs stick to the back of my hand. My fingers move freely, lubricated by her stickiness. Unbuttoning her white shirt she tosses it on the floor. She pulls her jeans down to her knees, taking her briefs with them. My hand has more freedom, I slip two more fingers in. Childbirth has got expanding advantages. Hot fluid drips from my knuckles as my fingers go about their work. Her icy-blue eyes drunkenly look at me, they are glazed with pleasure.

My back hits the bed as she pushes me down on it. Watching her stoop down to remove her jeans and knickers, her massive breasts bulge into her bra, it looks like it can just about take the strain. She stands in front of me with her hands on her hips. Her vagina is waxed, but she's left a heart-shape of pubic hair above it.

'D' you like what you're looking at?' she asks.

‘Not bad for an old girl.’

‘You better watch that charm of yours.’

‘Not taking the bra off then?’

‘You don’t want these big things flopping about all over the place,’ she says spotting my electronic tag.

She looks at me, tilting her head to one side. ‘I was done for rape,’ I say smiling at her.

‘You what?’

‘No. I’m an accountant. Did something naughty with numbers.’

‘Well it’s time to do something naughty with me,’ she says kneeling down on the bed.

She runs her palm across my scarred arm. ‘I don’t do it any more,’ I say.

‘Did you get help?’

‘I read a self help book on it.’

‘It made you stop?’

‘No. I just got bored with doing it.’

Turning my gaze to the dressing table mirror an image of her backside looks back at me. I can see myself led on my back with Lucy knelt over me, her blond curls droop down, revealing a tattoo on her back of a broken heart. Her warm breath circles around the head of my cock.

‘Finger me while I suck you,’ she says sliding my cock into her mouth.

She goes down to the base. It hardens, exploring the inside of her warm mouth, it brushes against the inside of her cheek, then pushes against the back of her throat. Her blushed lips still firmly grip the base. I hear her gag. She releases, takes a deep breath and starts moving her lips up and down.

Looking at her arse in the mirror, I insert two fingers inside her, rapidly moving them in and out, her mouth speeds up trying to keep up with my fingers. A gush of hot liquid flows over the back of my hand, dripping off my wrist. The follicles on her heart-shaped mound are soaked, drops fall from them. Has she pissed herself? Do women of forty piss themselves when they have sex? This has never happened to me before.

‘Have you just wet yourself?’ I ask.

Her jaws open. My cock smacks my stomach. ‘No. You’ve been hitting my G-Spot. You’ll get another explosion in a minute,’ she says grabbing my cock and placing it back in her mouth.

Her buttocks move like kneading dough as my knuckles crash into them, the inside of her vagina pushes at my fingers and she erupts again, this time it’s a lot more powerful. I struggle to keep my fingers inside her. Hot liquid pummels my hand, a few spits hit the mirror’s glass.

‘God. That was a good one,’ she gasps releasing my cock, getting off the bed and going to her purse.

She’s not getting condoms? I haven’t used them for years.

‘I’ve had the same partner for twelve years. I’m quite clean,’ I say.

'Ta-ra,' she says turning around holding a purple vibrator in the air. 'I've got two holes to pleasure and you've only got one thing to do the job.'

'Which hole do you want me to have?'

'Take your pick.'

'I'll have the cunt.'

'Can you refer to it by another name? That word's so crude.'

'How about snatch or gash?'

'You really need to work on that charm of yours.'

'Strawberry then. Does that make you happy?'

'Do I look like a fourteen year old girl with wet knickers.'

'Come here and stop fucking about,' I say jumping off the bed, grabbing hold of her and throwing her back down on it.

She laughs as she turns around kneeling on all fours presenting her arse and vagina to me. She raises the purple vibrator in the air.

'Do the honours,' she says.

Taking it from her I scoop some wetness from her soaking crevice. Smearing it around her anus I insert my little finger in, moistening up the inside. She giggles as I turn the vibrator on, it's humming sound dulls when I push it into her. Standing. I grab her hips, pulling her over towards me. I rub the top of my hard cock along her vaginal lips.

'Stop fucking around Dan. Fuck me for Christ sake.'

Easing in, she spreads, coating me with buttery salacity. 'Are you going to squirt all over me?' I ask.

'Probably. Now fuck me.'

Getting into a rhythm my arm starts to tingle inside. Jesus. Not now. I can't explain to Lucy about my hallucinations. Fuck it. I'll take the pain. Snap! Crunch! Pain shoots to every corner of my body. My eardrums are about to explode as the buzz-saw sound of a thousand wasps smash around inside my skull. I need cold.

I hold her gloved hand. She's led on her back, cocooned in a blue quilted climbing suit. An ice axe and oxygen bottle is by her side. Her head turns towards me. 'They left me,' she says.

My bare flesh takes the full force of a snow storm, battering my back as I kneel beside her. The howling wind deafens me. I move my ear closer to her frozen lips.

'They had no choice,' she says. 'We reached the top. But I only made it a short way back down. They couldn't stay. They would of died.'

Looking across the mist covered snowy mountains, large grey tumbling clouds are moving in. Hard snowflakes ricochet around me, some pierce my body injecting the cold I need. Looking back down at the girl her face is still, her skin is pale with a tinge of grey, her blue eyes are wide open. They will be for a frozen eternity.

Lucy's motionless on the bed, she's on all fours. Standing behind her, I can feel her internal heat stroking my cock. The only thing moving is the round end of the vibrator stuck in her anus. It pulls itself out, coming up towards my face. It looks at me horizontally with its smooth missile shaped front. It glides about three feet away from my face and writes something in the air in purple joined up writing. Child killer appears in front of me. The word changes to all the colours of a rainbow, neon lit, flashing like a strip club sign. The vibrator stands like an exclamation mark at the end of the letters. It seems proud of its achievement. It glides back over Lucy's back and mass of blond curls. Is it taking a run up?

It comes screaming at me, penetrating the side of my stomach as easily as a red hot poker through a slab of pork fat. Searing heat burns around the edges of the wound. The girl and the mountain race into my thoughts. It removes itself from my flesh, goes back to its original position and comes screaming at me again. Puncturing my skin it buries itself deep inside me. I can feel ice forming on the insides of my eyes. The vibrator removes itself, takes its position and comes at me making a third hole.

Lucy's anus starts to twitch, small spiders emerge from it, hundreds of them. They scamper all over the white flesh of her buttocks. They move in an orderly fashion towards my penis and congregate around the base of it. The sound of gnawing echoes around the bedroom. I feel no pain, the cold has taken over. I feel myself move like I've been unhitched from something. Lucy's outer labia surrounds my cut off penis, it looks like a cut in half bloody passion fruit inside her. The spiders cover my stomach, I can feel the tiny hairs on their feet dabbing on it as they erratically move about. The sunken vibrator pulls itself out, going to the back of the room. It's taking its longest run up. The spiders run up towards my face. One has grown to a massive size, it stares at me, its eyes are shut, its bluey-grey intestinal looking eyelids glisten, they slowly move up, revealing dew drop eyes, black and full of blood lust. Its mouth springs opens, two fangs the colour of rotting teeth drip gel like saliva.

I can hear the vibrator rush through the air, howling. It punches into my heart. The spider sinks its fangs into my eye. I can't hold on. The ice is thawing. I'm going to die if all that pain hits.

Looking at Lucy's buttocks, they glow a smarting rose-red. I can hear her gasping. I'm back. Thank fuck for that.

'Jesus... Christ. What are you about?' she says catching her breath.

'I'm not the only one that can do it.'

'My fanny's on fire. I thought I was going to have a heart attack.'

'D' you want me to stop?'

'No. Just don't fuck me so hard. Tell me when you're about to come.'

My testicles boil away in their bag. I think my testes might be doing some overtime tonight. It's nearly time.

'I'm going to come,' I say.

The rush of ejaculation is seconds away. I hold on as Lucy spins around sitting on the edge of the bed. My cock goes into those blushed lips, followed by a good dollop of sperm. I hear her swallow.

She looks up at me. 'I can taste the brandy in it,' she says.

'I suppose you want a rest?'

'Fuck off. I may be older than you, but I've got plenty of stamina. Kneel across my face and dangle your cock and balls on it. You can use that tongue of yours.'

Doing what I'm told, I look down at her heart-shaped mound, her glistening vaginal lips twitch as they relax back into their original position, they look slightly swollen after their hallucinogenic battering. I can feel Lucy's warm breath drift around my buttocks and anus. I can smell Elderflowers, freshly cut grass and wild garlic, she smells of a spring morning. I wonder what it tastes like. The back of Lucy's tongue starts to slide down the centre groove of my buttocks. I put my tongue to her outer labia and run it along its length, picking up tiny scent filled drops left after her eruptions. Strawberries and cream run over my taste buds. Swallowing, it leaves a fragrant strawberry jam after taste. My anal nerve endings are caressed by the back of her tongue. I slip mine in deep, her inner labia fights, holding me back. My tongue and teeth shake from the humming vibrator, still stuck in her arse.

I jerk forward as her tongue penetrates me. She moves it inside me, sending an electrifying current of bliss to my cock and balls. I get an instant erection. She manoeuvres it into her mouth, sucking on it with her experienced blushed lips. Christ she's good. I work my tongue until the base of it aches.

'Fuck me,' she says spitting my cock out.

Looking down at Lucy getting the last drops of semen out of me I wonder what Joanne's doing. Is she doing the same things I'm doing? My cock goes limp at the thought of it. My stomach churns around leaving acid burns in my chest, a sour taste hits the back of my throat.

'I think you've had it all now,' I say.

Lucy squeezes my limp cock. I can feel a small drop of semen run along my urethra, it enters the fresh air. She scoops it up with the tip of her tongue.

'I've had it all now,' she says swallowing.

'Shall we sleep?' I ask.

'After fucking me three times. I'll sleep well tonight.'

'Christ knows what you were like when you were younger. Even the vibrator's gone dead.'

'I was a handful,' she says as we both slip under the duvet.

She's got her back to me. I put my arm over her, moving my hand in- between her legs, I rest it on her vagina, which burns my hand as it smoulders away, the glowing red embers of it

will start to die down soon. I close my eyes and pretend she's Joanne.

Sunlight penetrates my eyelids, peeling them back. The sun's rays have found their way through the crack in the curtains. My bed feels empty. Turning my head to the alarm clock it's ten o'clock. Justin will be back with the girls soon. That woman nearly destroyed me. I spot a business card on the bedside cabinet. Picking it up, it says Lucy Summer. Hairdresser. Turning it over she's written something on the back. Great sex last night. Call me any time. Love Lucy xxx. I'll keep this now that I'm single.

Slipping my dressing gown on I go downstairs. Tucker darts around me, he jumps up, his soft amber eyes flicker fawn like at me, his nose snuggles into my dressing gown. His tail slices through the air as he takes the scent of someone new in.

'Had a new female in the house last night. She basically made Joanne look like a fucking amateur,' I say rubbing his floppy ears.

Beep! 'We fucking back,' says Molly through the intercom.

Letting them in the girls rush past me into the front room and put the TV on, followed by Tucker.

'Tea Justin?'

'Why not,' he says as we go into the kitchen.

Looking at him I smile. His face drops. It's a smile he knows well, one which tells him he's not going to like what I'm going to say next.

'I need you to lie in court.'

'No.'

'D' you want me to spend the rest of my life in prison?' I say switching the kettle on.

'Of course not. The police paid me a visit last night, took a DNA sample and told me some details about the case.'

'They're just eliminating you from their enquiry.'

'Your dream Dan, and those hallucinations you get. It all fits in with that boy's death.'

'You keep that information to yourself. I had nothing to do with it.'

'So what d' you want me to say then?'

'I want you to be my alibi. I want you to say we played in that barn just before he was murdered in it. That's why there was evidence of me there.'

'Dan that won't stand up in court.'

'It's reasonable doubt. I've got no choice. I've got a good solicitor.'

'Dan if we get caught I'll go to jail.'

'I'm well aware of that. So will you?'

'OK. I'll do it. But that solicitor better be the best.'

The kettle's rattling subsides. Pouring the boiling water into two cups, the teabags rise,

rusting the clear liquid. I hope this works. It's flimsy, but just about believable. I've got four weeks to get this all together. I'm not going to go to jail, for something I don't know if I did or not.

'Two sugars Justin?'

'No. I'm leaving Dan. My stomach feels sick with anxiety, and I'm not even in court yet.'

'I understand. Thanks for this,' I say as he leaves.

Clashes of steel come from the front room. Thai voices shout in- between them. What the fuck are they doing now?

'Girls,' I shout. 'What... The fuck are you doing?'

'We fight with knife,' says Polly.

'Are you two fucking mad? Where did you get them?'

'From Thailand.'

'Give them here,' I say putting my hands out.

'No,' says Molly.

'Give,' I say grabbing them. 'They're going in the attic.'

'Ass ole,' says Molly.

My God. The Kukri knives are razor sharp. How did they get these through customs? Do these two girls actually want to kill each other.

## Chapter 9

Four weeks later: After giving my testimony. Justin takes the stand. Watching him swear on the bible, the female prosecutor has him in her sights. Her squinting brown eyes and buzzard beak nose, sense this could be an easy kill. Justin waits for his dismemberment. Her questions prepared to tear chunks out of him and pull at his tendons. The pores on Justin's forehead secrete globules of fear. He better not fuck it up. Some of the Jury twitch, fingers go into mouths, backsides shuffle on chairs. Others stare coldly, not moving a muscle. They know this is the evidence that could put me in prison for life. No other evidence matters. I don't think any of them believed a word I said.

'Mr Hargreeves. As a three year old, how can you remember going to that barn?' says the prosecutor.

'As a child you remember certain things. Like your parents arguing. Tasting something for the first time you disliked. Small things you remember for the rest of your life. I remember going to that barn.'

'Explain to me what happened the day you went there?'

'Dan and I used to take Nugin our dog for walks. Mum used to make us a packed lunch and we'd spend the afternoon with him in the countryside. Nugin ran off that afternoon, chasing a rabbit, we ran after him. I remember that barn on the horizon with its blue walls and red roof.'

'You seem to know a lot of detail, but you can't even remember that the barn had a blue roof with red walls.'

'It was a long time ago. We went inside and played on some of the hay bales. Dan drank his bottle of lemonade and ate an apple from his packed lunch. That's why there was evidence of him left in there.'

'You could of easily made all this up with your brother.'

'It's the truth. That boy was killed in that barn after we left. They used Dan's empty bottle on him, and that's why the apple core was left there.'

'Why is there no evidence of your presence in that barn?'

'I'd already eaten my lunch. Dan wouldn't give me any of his.'

'Again you seem to know a lot of detail. You do realise if you lie in this court, perjury is an automatic jail sentence.'

'I'm not lying. I was there.'

'Another thing that strikes me as odd, is a mother letting her three and five year old children



out on their own.’

‘We lived in the countryside. It was a different era then. It wouldn’t happen today.’

‘Maybe. But I find this all hard to believe.’

‘Dan’s an innocent man. He’s never been charged with committing any crime in his life.’

The Judge looks down at Justin. ‘Mr Hargreeves. You do not bring up past events that are not connected to this case. If you try and sway the Jury again with comments about your brothers past criminal records. I will jail you and we’ll have a retrial.’

‘Sorry your Honour. I didn’t know.’

Watching the prosecutor turn a page of her notes with her middle talon, she looks up at the Judge. ‘Your Honour. I have no further questions.’

The Judge looks across at me. His furrowed brow makes a V-shape, his faded brown eyes glare, making my skin cold. The years he’s spent listening to people like Justin and I gives him a sixth sense. He knows we’re lying through the back of our teeth. He also knows the Jury hasn’t got his years of experience.

He sighs. ‘We’ll resume court after the Jury has reached it’s verdict.’

‘All rise,’ says the bailiff.

Two hours later: Looking at the head Juror his face gives no emotion away. All I want to hear come out of his mouth is not guilty. I compress my lips, it helps to keep the inside of my mouth moist and supple. Butterflies roam around inside me. My heart bangs against my ribcage. My palms behind my back drip saline drops, they fall as if I’m being rung like a wet cloth. I hold back the urine trying to escape from my cock.

‘Not guilty,’ he says.

Every organ inside me stops dead still. Putting my hand to my face a warm ball of relief swells in my stomach, it races up towards my eyes, it pours out of them dripping through my fingers.

The Judge bangs down his gavel. ‘Case dismissed.’

The prosecutor rises. ‘Your Honour. Dan Hargreeves’s drink driving conviction,’ she says missing out on her pound of flesh. She needs to sink her razor sharp claws into something.

‘Two year disqualification,’ he says banging down his gavel for a second time.

Christ. He didn’t hang about thinking about that.

Walking down the court steps with Justin, a few photographer’s bulbs flash in our faces. We briskly walk to my car in the court’s car park. I throw Justin my car keys.

‘She’s all yours now Justin,’ I say as a bear paw sized hand grabs my shoulder.

‘If you think for one second, I believe that cock and bull story your brother and yourself pulled in there. Think again. I’ll have you one day,’ says Inspector Watley.

‘Fuck off and find the real killer,’ I say jumping in my car.

Driving out into the traffic. I text George the good news. He's got the girls. He was the only person available to do it. He said if I was convicted he'd sort them out. I don't know why. I didn't ask any questions.

Driving down George's long driveway. I remember the first time I came here to pick Joanne up. His large house intimidated me. I felt out of my depth. He was very pleasant. If he had known that I defiled his only daughter in the back of my car that night, I think his attitude towards me would have been very different. That was her first time. We had got to know each other at night school while we were studying accountancy.

Charcoal coloured trunks break my view, as they cross in an orderly fashion across the passenger window. A patchwork of fields dusted in ice, produce white drifting fog. Someone hanging by the neck from one of the fossilised trees in their winter hibernation, wouldn't look out of place in this medieval landscape. Crows feeding on death, rise as we drive past adding to the gloom.

I spot Joanne's car parking up. Fuck. What is she doing here? If she's with that prick I don't know what I'll do. Justin stops the car. Getting out. Joanne's bent over her driver's seat trying to get something out. Her grey skirt's tight around her buttocks, the smoothness of her cheeks inside the linen tell me she's got no knickers on. She only used to wear no knickers when I was around. I suppose with her new found sexual freedom she's doing it to attract new admirers. Fuck her. Anyway what's hidden inside that skirt has no interest for me any more. It's tainted. I couldn't go near it again with the thought of him using it.

She swings around facing me with her tan leather briefcase slung over her wrist.

'Come to reclaim me?' she asks.

'No.'

'Dad told me you were found innocent.'

'That doesn't matter any more. You should of waited. I've got no interest in you. Enjoy yourself with your new boyfriend.'

'He's not my boyfriend.'

'What you doing, fucking your way around the office?'

'Fuck off Dan. What are you doing here anyway?'

'Picking the girls up.'

'What the fuck are they doing here?' she says as George comes to the doorway holding the girls in his arms.

'It whore,' says Molly pointing at Joanne.

'Molly. She's my daughter, you don't call her that.'

'OK. Grandpa.'

'Dad put them down. I don't want them here.'

'Don't be rude Joanne, they're lovely girls,' says George while the girls give Joanne their

biggest grins.

‘You two. Your father’s over there. Good luck,’ says Jo.

George puts them down. They run over to the car jumping on the back seat.

‘You two better talk,’ says George going back inside.

‘So you don’t want me any more?’ she says walking towards me.

‘No. Flash boy’s been stuck up you now. I think I’d retch if I had to go in-between your legs again.’

‘Is that right,’ she says raising her eyebrows, pushing me against my cars wing.

I can feel the outline of her outer labia and clitoris through the flimsy material of her skirt, rub along my hardening trouser trapped cock.

‘You’re in-between my legs now and you’re still here,’ she says in a hushed tone, looking at me with those knowing icy-blue eyes. Who am I trying to kid. I love this woman with every fibre of my soul.

‘Like I said you’re spoilt goods,’ I say.

‘I didn’t sleep with him,’ she says putting her lips to mine.

Our tongues meet, moving inside each other. She’s still rubbing her vagina along my fully hard cock. I hear a ruffle of skirt. Jesus! Fucking! Christ! Watching her skirt, knees and ankles pass my vision in slow motion, I hit the tarmac staring at her stilettos. Saliva spews from my mouth covering her black shoes, my stomach feels like someone’s wrapped my intestine around it and pulled it tight. I feel my two testicles stuck in the back of my throat, waiting to be fired out of my mouth. The intense dull ache intensifies in my guts.

‘Why?’ I manage to spit out.

‘Don’t ever accuse me of sleeping around the office again. I’ve never slept with anyone else but you,’ she says turning around and walking away.

Curled up in a ball holding my blown away guts, I watch her buttocks move up and down in her tight skirt, my cock twitches back to life after it’s sudden trauma. Even in all this pain that woman still turns me on like no other. She spins around on her heels, her tan briefcase chops through the air still attached to her wrist.

‘I’ll pick you up at eight,’ she says turning back around, going through her fathers front door.

Picking myself up, holding my stomach, the two girls mist up my car’s side window with hysterical laughter. I think it’s the first time I’ve ever seen them amused. Justin looks at me, his eyes wide open. It’s the first time he’s seen Joanne’s little temper.

Walking around the back of the car the girls follow me looking through the windows, steaming them all up as they laugh. Jumping on the front seat I turn around and face them.

‘Don’t say a fucking word,’ I say pointing my finger at them.

‘She kick you in bollocking,’ says Molly.

‘No shit. What part of don’t say a fucking word do you understand?’

‘It fucking funny,’ says Polly holding her hand out with a snail on it. ‘She Matilda. Brian love her.’

‘We find her in grandpa garden,’ says Molly.

Turning around looking out the windscreen. I’m in no mood to argue. My guts still boils away, the dull ache inside it is still growing. I don’t think that girl could ever understand how much damage a knee can do. Maybe I’ll find a way of kicking her in her fucking ovaries.

‘You OK big brother?’

‘What the fuck do you think.’

Pulling up outside my house I turn to Justin. ‘You were brilliant in court today. You saved my ass.’

‘It troubles me about that boy’s death.’

‘I had nothing to do with it,’ I say getting out the car. ‘C’ mon girls.’

‘No we stay with uncle Justin,’ says Polly.

‘Do as you’re told. I’m fucking sick of you two defying me all the time.’

‘For fuck sake,’ says Molly as they both get out the car and stand either side of me.

Justin drives off. I look down at Molly. ‘I see your English is improving.’

‘What mean?’

‘You’ve been here for eight weeks and you’ve learnt the words for fuck sake.’

‘I hear you say. I learn cunt to,’ she says with her eyes twinkling.

Eight o’clock in the evening: Adjusting my tie in the bathroom mirror, a car horn beeps outside. Running downstairs I stick my head into the front room. Justin’s sat on the sofa with the two girls either side of him. They’re going through a book.

‘Bye. I’ll see you later,’ I say.

There’s no reply, they carry on going through the book. Justin’s pissed off with me asking him to babysit all the time, and the girls are pissed off with me as always. Fuck them. Going out into the winter cold I jump into Joanne’s car. She looks over at me smiling. She’s dressed in a brown trench coat and purple suede boots with purple fishnets covering her legs.

‘I don’t fancy anything to eat. Shall we just go to a pub?’ she says putting her foot down.

‘Fine by me.’

Driving along a pitch black country lane, she takes her eyes away from the front windscreen, looking directly at me. ‘I don’t want those girls around dad.’

‘Why?’

‘All he’s done is talk about them all afternoon,’ she says moving her gaze back to the road.

‘What harm can they do, they’re only twelve?’

‘They’re a lot smarter than they make out. I don’t need dad on their side.’

'You're not jealous of two twelve year old girls?'

'No. But if he wants to relive his fatherhood he can wait until I have a child.'

'I don't think they'll be here long. They can't stand the country.'

'Good. Because they'll be glad to know dad's going to finance their return to Thailand. I've booked a flight for them in two weeks time.'

'Christ. You didn't hang about.'

'I'm sorting two nannies and an apartment out for them next week, plus a good boarding school in Bangkok,' she says pulling up outside a pub.

Joanne didn't waste much time getting rid of the girls. Maybe she thinks the girls are getting their nails stuck into myself and her father. It looks like the relationship's back on. But is she lying? Did she sleep with that bloke?

Going into the pub we get our drinks and sit at a table in a quiet corner.

'So what have you done since you got out of prison?' says Jo twirling her ice around in her gin and tonic.

'Just looking after the girls. But what I want to know is why didn't you sleep with that bloke?'

'I'd rather not say.'

'Jo I need to know.'

'OK. That time we met in the car park I was going to go away with him. But I didn't that weekend, I was too upset. I went away with him the following weekend.'

'You what?'

'All that happened was me led on a bed with just a pair of knickers on.'

'You had your tits out?'

'You're lucky I didn't have anything else out. A beep came from his suitcase and inside was a switched on video camera.'

'You're joking.'

'He doesn't work for the company any more.'

'I bet your boss didn't hang about getting rid of him.'

'You know I'm his favourite. Another thing. Mother's got in contact.'

'What did she want?'

'She's got breast cancer. It's fifty fifty whether she lives or not.'

'What did she have to say then?'

'She wants to be part of my life. I basically told her to fuck off.'

'What if she dies Jo?'

'What difference is that going to make. I don't know her.'

'Jo. It's not in your nature to be that callous.'

'I know. That's why I looked so upset when we met in my work's car park.'

'I thought that was because of me.'

'No. I met up for lunch with her at the pub down the road.'

Something inside me twitches. Surely not. It couldn't of been. She was far too young.

'How old is your mother Jo?'

'Forty-eight. She had me when she was eighteen.'

An inside sigh of relief flows around me. Thank fuck for that. What was I thinking? What an idiot.

'She was a youngster when she had you. She deserves a chance,' I say putting my pint of lager to my lips.

'Maybe. But I'll make Lucy wait a bit first.'

My lager's stuck in my throat. I can't breath. Jesus. I can't hold it. Watching the fountain of spray shoot across the table hitting Joanne's trench coat, it turns it a dark brown.

'Sorry,' I manage to splutter out.

'Fucking hell Dan. I'm fucking soaked.'

'It went down the wrong hole.'

'Let's get the fuck out of here,' she says as we both get up and leave.

Steam twists from Jo's headlights as they illuminate the black air, the silence inside the car is broken from ice puddles cracking as her tyres roll over them. Lucy lied about her fucking age. How could I have been so stupid? I thought that woman seemed too familiar.

'I want this relationship to go up to another level,' she says staring directly out the window.

'Like what?'

'What do you think Dan? I want another woman brought into this relationship.'

'Really?'

'Of course not you fucking idiot. I want marriage and children.'

'Right. I didn't know.'

'You can propose to me by the end of next month.'

'Who's wearing the wedding dress? Me or you?'

'If I don't ask, nothing will happen. Hold this steering wheel. I want to get this wet coat off.'

'Why didn't you take it off in the pub?'

'You'll find out in a minute,' she says unbuttoning it, throwing it on the back seat, while I hold the wheel. I can see now why she didn't take it off. Her purple bra, knickers and suspended fishnets cover a body I ache for. I need to taste her all over. She makes a right turn into a deserted car park. Isolated sprinkles of light give away the depth of a dark valley below.

Parking up she slides her middle finger under her briefs, her lips smirk as she puts the finger into my mouth. The taste of strawberries and cream mixes with my saliva. Christ! She tastes the same as her mother. Her usual flavour of peach and cranberries has left her. What if she gets in contact with her mother? What if I have to meet Lucy? What if her mother tells her?

‘You haven’t tasted her for a while,’ she says twisting her finger around, brushing against the insides of my cheeks.

If she knew whom it reminds me of I don’t think that finger would be anywhere near my mouth. I think it would be gouging my eyes out.

Removing her finger, she undoes her bra throwing it on my lap, the scent of bananas wafts up from it. Her young breasts drop, her rosy areola surrounding her budding nipple, pull her soft creamy flesh together perfectly. I need one in my mouth. Placing my palm under her left one I lean over and bring it to my lips. Running my tongue around the areola, the small nodules feel twice the size they look, my tongue flicks over her swollen nipple, I put the tip of it into it’s dimpled centre, sucking hard the teat pumps the flavour of wild blackberries into my mouth.

Joanne blasts the inside of the car with a scream, my ears are ringing. She pushes my head away from her tit. Looking at her she’s pointing at my passenger window. Turning my head towards it a man has got his pants and trousers down to his ankles. Masturbating. Jumping up I glide the window down.

‘You got a fucking problem mate?’

‘Put that window back up I’m about to go off.’

The window glides back up. Pearl white globules hit the glass, sticking to it, looking like cloudy frogspawn as it drifts down.

Letting the window down a fraction I watch him pull his pants and trousers back up. He gives me a wink. ‘Thanks for that. She’s one of the best bitches I’ve seen up here. Great tits. Can I sit in the back and watch her suck you off? I won’t make a mess.’

‘Are you fucking crazy? D’ you want me to get out of this car and punch you all over this fucking car park?’

‘What d’ you mean? This is a dogging site.’

‘You what?’

‘Yeah. It’s the biggest in the county.’

‘I didn’t fucking know.’

‘Sorry. I thought you were a bit early,’ he says getting a tissue out and smearing the window with his glutinous mess. I’ve never been close to another man’s sperm. I hope I never do again.

Tossing Joanne’s bra across to her, she slips it back on along with her trench coat. Driving out of the car park the man waves at us. Joanne gives him her middle finger. I try not to look at his waxy presence on the window.

Pulling up outside my house Joanne turns to me. ‘Dirty fucking bastard. I’ve got to clean that shit off.’

‘Stay the night Jo?’

‘No. Not with those girls there.’

‘When are we going to have sex then?’

'Next Saturday. After my works dinner and dance. I'll book a hotel.'

'I'm not going to that. I can't stand some of the people you work with.'

'C' mon Dan. We're supposed to be getting married. D' you expect me to go on my own when we are?'

'No. But I don't want to go to this one. Look what's happened to us these past eight weeks. We need time on our own.'

'We can show everyone that we're an item again.'

'No Jo. Sorry,' I say getting out the car.

Putting my key in the door I hear Joanne's boots tap on the pathway behind me. Her hand grabs my shoulder spinning me around. She pushes me against the door. Unzipping my trousers, she slides her hand in gripping my cock.

'I'll give you a blowjob around the side of the house.'

'No. Jo.'

'C' mon. You must be gagging?'

'No. Justin and the girls are inside.'

'I'll suck it until those balls are dry. You've never knocked a blowjob back in your life.'

The bedroom window bursts open. Molly sticks her head out. 'Let whore give blowjob. What ever that is,' she shouts down.

'Get back to bed,' I shout up to her.

'Polly say she give blowjob if whore fuck off. We try sleep. Your ass on interom button.'

'Get back to fucking bed,' I say as she slams the window shut.

Moving my backside away from the button, Joanne grips my hardening cock.

'So will you come?'

'OK.OK.'

'Good. I'll rip you to pieces in the hotel room after,' she says pulling her hand out of my trousers and doing my zip back up.

'Watching her trot back to her car I shout over to her. 'Are you going to see your mother again?'

'Probably. But I'll make Lucy Chandler wait a while.'

'Lucy Chandler?'

'That's her name,' she says waving at me, getting in her car and driving off.

What's the chances of me meeting Joanne's mother and fucking her. What the hell was I thinking. I need my head read. God! What a fool.



## Chapter 10

Saturday evening: I'm going to be moving inside Joanne tonight, her soft flesh entwined with mine. I'm going to savour every part of her body, paying special attention to every orifice.

Hot jets blast my face, the hot streaks run over my chest and stomach, dripping off the end of my rock hard cock.

A tingling sensation moves along the inside of my right arm. Fuck! I've left my shock box downstairs fully charged. Snap! Crunch! Taking the pain I think about ice.

Her powerful jaws grip my arm, her top and bottom fangs puncture my skin. She drags me, her two cubs nip at my ankles. Snow cuts into my back. The sky passing over my head is lit up with dancing purple and green. She stops. Two black dots look at me, black lips peel back, yellow ice pick teeth prepare to tear from her gaping mouth. Her breath, bellowing like the spout of a boiling kettle mists her face up, it carries the stench of yesterday's kill, melting the insides of my nostrils. My body is numb.

Opening my eyes the shower jets have turned to all the colours of a rainbow, covering my body in reds, greens and blues. The streaks run down, trickling over my flesh, filling the shower tray up. My feet are submerged. An oily film of purple floats on the surface, it's got blue and grey snake like patterns moving around in a slow disorderly fashion, they congregate around my ankles. My toes break through disturbing the slick of colours, water drips from them as they grow. They coil around my legs like tree roots, swiftly moving around the rest of my body, reaching my neck. Looking down, my whole body is a lattice of gnarled white meat. Five large transparent spiders break through the thick greasy layer, drops fall from them as they dab along my digits. My toes grip my neck, my breathing ceases. One of the spider's clear oval eyes looks at me. He's come to feed. His mouth springs open, liquid silver sloshes around in two flashing fangs, he sinks them into my eyeball, thick claret red pumps into his see through body. My vision is blurring as my brain is starved. The spider's full to the brim and makes way for another one, he raises his fangs. Everything has gone black.

Warm water tickles the back of my throat, I spit it out opening my eyes. I can see the bottom of the shower's glass door, I'm curled up in a foetal position on the shower tray floor.

When will I ever learn to keep my shock box with me at all times. Getting up, drying myself and putting my dinner jacket on I head downstairs and stick my head in the front room. The two girls are dressed in their pink tutu's holding a star wand each.

Polly looks over. 'Uncle Justin show us dancing tonight.'

‘Be careful,’ I say leaving them to it and getting into my waiting taxi.

Parking up outside Joanne’s dad’s house, she emerges from the front door. She’s dressed in her waterfall silver sequin dress, knee length black suede boots, and a diamond necklace and earring set her dad bought her for her twenty-first birthday, which is worth more than my fucking house.

Jumping in beside me she kisses my cheek. ‘I’ve booked the hotel,’ she says as we drive off.

‘I hope you’re ready for a long night?’

‘You bet I am,’ she says opening her legs, revealing leopard print panties. ‘My wild cat underwear gives you a clue to what’s going to happen tonight. Your back’s going to feel the full force of my nails.’

‘You want to be careful, I might rip them off your ass now,’ I say as she shuts her legs giving me a smile.

Leaning over I put my palm on top of her warm thighs, slipping my fingers under her short dress, I go in for a kiss.

‘Not yet,’ she says grabbing my wrist. ‘No kissing, I don’t want this make-up smudged, you can make a mess of my face later.’

Sitting back up we hold hands, with my other hand I give myself twenty-four volts. My shock box is fully charged. I might be needing it a lot tonight.

Pulling up outside Birch Tree golf course. Halloween green lights illuminate trees along the car park’s edge, it gives their silver bark an unnatural look, it’s supposed to complement miniature white lights, spread throughout their branches like glowing dollops of clotted cream. This artificial display gives an insight into what people inside this building are like. Why the fuck did I come?

Opening Joanne’s car door, I take her hand and we walk through the main entrance. People bustle around the snow white linen covered tables, decked with gleaming silver, hoping to find their name on the head table so they can purr to the owner of Huntsberg accountants, in the hope he might throw them a scrap of juicy fat promotion.

‘Gin and tonic Jo?’ I ask.

‘Yes baby. I’ll go and find our seats.’

Going to the bar and ordering my drinks from a pretty little barmaid, there’s a tap on my shoulder.

‘All right fuckwit?’ Perkin asks.

‘Fine Toby,’ I say turning to face him.

‘Heard you got done for killing a kid?’

‘I’m completely innocent.’

‘I’ll give you that. Great night we had the other night, nailed that bitch good and proper. Her

boyfriend turned up. Stewart knocked the fucker clean out, I tossed that slut on top of him after I'd finished with her.'

'I wonder what conversation they had after they came around?'

'I don't know. I didn't hang about,' he says with the lines of his furrowed brow moving closer together, his eyelids drop, they look like two rosy boils ready to burst, they flash back open, anger ignites in his eyes. 'You see her coming over with your drinks, she'll do me tonight,' he says snarling at my condescending manner and going back to his table.

The barmaid presents me my free drinks with a smile. 'Is that all Sir?'

'No. You see that fat man walking back to his table? Under no circumstances do you accept a drink from him.'

'I won't Sir. He's not my type,' she says smirking at me.

'He's not anybody's fucking type,' I say grabbing her wrist and bringing her ear close to my mouth.

'Sir you're hurting me.'

'That man is a fucking rapist,' I whisper in her ear. 'If you want to love what's between your legs and not hate it, I suggest you listen to me.'

'OK Sir. I will,' she says as I let go of her wrist.

She looks at me, fear makes her glowing skin turn white. 'Thank you,' I say picking my drinks up.

She scurries over to serve someone else while I go back and sit next to Joanne.

'Thanks baby,' she says as I pass her drink over to her.

Scanning the table Martin Smith and David Chester are at the bottom of it with their horrible fucking wives. I still owe them for the car park beating, but not tonight.

Joanne smiles at me, she looks beautiful. She can still make my heart skip a beat, like the first time I saw her in our night school accountancy class. I knew then she was the one for me. Twelve years have passed since then and I love her more now than ever.

George Huntsberg breezes into the room, everyone stands tapping their champagne glasses with a teaspoon, and the bar staff line up behind the bar. He takes his place at the head of our table.

'Please sit everyone,' he says gesturing the command with his hands. 'As you know 2010 has been a difficult year. We've had to make a lot of changes, but hopefully the worst is over. It's also the year I turn sixty-five and I fully intend to retire. Tonight I'm going to announce my successor. That person hasn't been informed yet,' he says, his eyes breathing in the room of smiles. Watching them, all their greedy mouths salivate at the prospect of running the company.

Looking over this banquet of charlatans, mixed with bankers, hedge fund managers and a few docile members of parliament, I wonder what the future has in store for them. Those days of drinking from the cup of financial illusion has finished. I've drank there many times myself, it's

intoxicating, but I know that cup's empty now. Swallowed by the vast array of money movers and their hangers on, in a tornado of arrogance, and then vomited back into the faces of normal working people, to pick up the pieces of their gluttony and greed. I wonder if all these fuckers know it's over?

Huntsberg smiles. 'The person I've chosen to succeed me is.... Joanne Huntsberg. My beautiful daughter.'

What? Joanne? She's far too young. What's he thinking. How is she going to run the whole of Huntsberg?

George Huntsberg looks down at his daughter. 'Would you like to say a few words darling?' he asks grinning from ear to ear.

'I'm in complete shock Daddy. I don't know what to say.'

'You just sit there with Dan and enjoy yourself,' says George taking his seat with a rush of applause ringing around the room.

'I don't believe it Dan. I had no idea. You can work with me now, seeing that dad's retiring.'

'One step at a time Jo. Congratulations anyway,' I say as she squeezes my hand.

After my suicide attempt in Thailand I moved out of my family home and came to live in Chegwell with Martin Smith. His parents were friends with mine. He worked at Huntsberg, and he got me a job there as a tea boy. After six months I started studying accountancy at night school, that's where I met Joanne. She didn't want to go to university because it meant leaving her father. Two months later we were dating. After a year living with Martin Smith things came to a head and I beat the living daylights out of him. Finding myself homeless I moved into Joanne's dad's house, he wasn't happy with the arrangement, but Joanne's got him wrapped around her little finger, he made us sleep in separate rooms though. After finishing my accountancy course Jo and I rented a one bedroom flat in the centre of town. I decided not to work for Huntsberg, even though George wanted me to. Over the years we became very good friends. Working with all those people and shagging the bosses daughter, the only thing I could see was trouble.

George Huntsberg leans over the table. 'Can I have a word at the bar Dan?'

'OK,' I say turning to Jo. 'I'm just going to the bar with your dad Jo.'

'Don't be long,' she says letting go of my hand while a few employees congratulate her. It's time for them to get their tongues out for the new boss.

Walking towards the bar with George, the pretty barmaid is talking to Perkin. She catches my gaze and scampers away. George nods to the head barman and two drinks appear on the bar. Being the owner of this place has it's advantages.

'I hear you're going to marry my daughter,' says George taking a sip of his brandy.

'I haven't proposed yet. But I will do soon.'

‘Will children quickly follow?’

‘Jo says she wants them. So yes.’

‘Good. Jo can’t run this company with children, so that’s where you come in.’

‘What d’ you mean?’

‘I want you to run it when she becomes a mother.’

‘Really. I don’t know what to say.’

‘Just say yes Dan.’

‘Thanks George. I will.’

‘Another thing Dan. Why are you sending those girls back to Thailand?’

‘Jo doesn’t want them here.’

‘What about you?’

‘I don’t want them here either.’

‘Jesus Dan. They’re your own flesh and blood.’

‘They’re a pain in the fucking ass George.’

‘Dan. You and Joanne have got a lot to learn about children. I’ve met them, they’re nice girls.’

‘You’re financing their return to Thailand.’

‘I’m not. Who told you that?’

‘Joanne.’

‘That little minx. Dan... Joanne hasn’t told you about her trust fund, she must be financing it.’

‘No. She hasn’t told me about that. But it doesn’t matter who’s financing it, they’re going back,’ I say as my leg trembles from my vibrating phone. Picking it up Molly speaks.

‘Uncle Justin get star wand stuck in eye.’

‘So. He’s big enough to look after himself.’

‘He need go hospital. It look fucking bad.’

‘For fuck sake. I’ll be there in fifteen minutes,’ I say hanging up. ‘George I’ll have to go home for a bit. Justin’s got a fucking wand stuck in his eye.’

‘OK. I hope it’s not serious,’ he says as I phone a taxi and go over to Joanne.

‘Jo there’s been an accident at home. I’ll have to go back and take Justin to hospital.’

‘You’re fucking joking Dan. One fucking night. That’s all I asked for.’

‘Sorry Jo. I won’t be long,’ I say as she brushes me away with the back of her hand.

It looks like my night of wild cat sex is coming off the menu tonight. Fucking Justin.

Walking through the array of busy tables, I make my way to the toilet. Good there’s no one in here. I can’t be bothered to speak to any of Jo’s work colleagues about her surprise promotion. I’ll try and sort Justin out as quickly as possible, then get back here for the hotel date. She would of calmed down by then.

Relieving myself someone comes in and stands peeing in the urinal next to me. I won't make eye contact. Staring at the white tiles in front of me, I can hear the first trickles of his urine splash on the white porcelain.

'I see your bird's got the top job,' says David Chester.

Fuck! That sycophantic weasel better watch that mouth of his. 'She is the owners daughter. What did you expect?'

'She's too young to run a big business like ours.'

'Her father can guide her. She's got me to help as well.'

'You? A fucking child killer.'

Putting my cock away his eyes meet mine. My face doesn't grin like his. The heat from my boiling blood makes the hairs on the back of my neck drip venom. Adrenalin and anger pumps into my veins mixing with my molten plasma. Pulling his head back by his hair, I smash it into the white tiles. The thudding sound vibrates through them, sending a small shock wave through my bones. His knees buckle underneath him. He's out cold. Holding him up by his hair I push his face into the white tiles, then gently bring his head down towards the urinal, smearing his pumping blood over the tiles like strawberry jam over white bread. I place his head in the urinal leaving him in a kneeling position. Shall I? No. I'd love to stamp on his head and hear that block of blue disinfectant crunch under his face. No. There's too many people about, plus I've got to deal with Justin. Walking out I look back at Chester in his kneeling position, still with his cock in his hand. That grin he had earlier has come to my face. The flush goes on the urinals, his overflows around his embedded face, spilling ruby port coloured liquid onto the brown tiled floor. I knew I'd have that fucker one day.

Jumping in my waiting taxi my grin is still plastered to my face. Now to deal with Justin and get back here as soon as possible to deal with Joanne.

Pulling up outside my house Justin and the girls are stood outside with them propping him up. Justin's got his hand over his eye.

'You three,' I shout. 'Get in the back of this fucking taxi.'

Watching the three of them clamber onto the back seat, Justin removes his hand from his damaged eye. Fuck me! It does look bad. His swollen eyelid covers most of his eyeball, fine red streaks cascade down over the moist white under his lid covered brown iris, the redness around the socket is starting to turn purple, expanding like a flowering rose. He looks at me with his good eye, which begs for sympathy.

'You fucking dickhead Justin.'

'I think I've lost my sight in it.'

'Don't be stupid. Why were you dancing with two twelve year old girls for? You're a grown man.'

Molly looks up at me not happy with my lack of sympathy. 'He teach us fucking dance,' she

says.

‘Yeah. Right. So when are you going to stick that wand in your eye? Because it looks like to me that’s the only thing he’s fucking taught you.’

‘Fuck you ass ole,’ she says putting her arm around Justin.

The taxi driver looks at me. ‘Hospital?’ he asks.

‘Yeah. Wait outside while we’re in there. I’ll be as quick as possible. I need to get back to Birch Tree,’ I say as we whisk off.

I can feel a drip of sweat fall from my armpit, it makes it’s corrugated way over my ribcage. This waiting room is as hot as a maternity ward. People cough, splutter and tend to makeshift bloodied bandages. This whole room is a breeding ground of human misery. I’m glad I can’t smell it. Honeysuckle fills my nostrils.

Where the fuck is Justin? It’s been an hour. Watching the girls in their pink tutu’s, they follow some fish using their star wands over the fish tank glass. Most people are watching them as they giggle and talk in Thai. My heart warms. Christ! The last thing I need is to become attached to them.

‘Mr Hargreeves,’ shouts a nurse from the reception.

‘Yes,’ I say walking over to her.

‘We’re keeping him overnight, just in case there’s any permanent damage.’

‘Tell him to phone me when he needs picking up,’ I say leaving as quickly as possible, scooping the girls up on my way out the door.

Our taxi’s lights shine on us as he spots me in the hospital entrance.

Polly turns her head towards me. ‘Why pick us up?’ she asks with her blue eyes burning into me.

‘Because I want to get out of this place as soon as possible.’

‘Put me down,’ says Molly. ‘I not want you touch me,’ she says struggling in my arm.

The taxi pulls up and I place them on the back seat. Molly looks like she wants to kill me, but Polly gives me a smile.

Sitting on the passenger seat the taxi driver points at his meter. ‘This is going to cost,’ he says.

‘Don’t worry, just get me back to Birch Tree as fast as you can.’

I’ll get George to babysit the girls tonight, so I can have my fun with his daughter. I’ll give Joanne a ring now to arrange it.

Fuck. It’s gone to answer machine. Either there’s no reception or she’s ignoring my call. I’ll give George a ring. C’ mon. C’ mon. ‘Yes Dan?’

‘Is Joanne with you?’

‘No. I’m at the hospital with one of my employees, who fell over drunk in the toilet.’

‘So she’s still at the party?’

‘Yes. I left her talking to Toby Perkin.’

‘You what? Fucking hell. Get back to Birch Tree as quick as you can. She’s in fucking danger.’

‘What sort of danger?’

‘It doesn’t matter. Just get back there,’ I say hanging up.

She’s with him. If he touches her. I’ll fucking kill him.

‘Put your foot down,’ I say to the driver. ‘There’s an extra fifty in the fare if you do.’

Arriving at Birch Tree, I spot Perkin’s car parked in a quiet corner.

‘Over there,’ I say pointing my finger for the driver. ‘Put your full beam on.’

His headlights shine on the car. Stewart’s nodding his head to his MP3 player. I can see two people on the back seat. Please let it be the barmaid. Not Joanne.

Tossing my wallet to the taxi driver I turn to the girls. ‘What ever happens girls you stay in this taxi.’

‘Don’t be fucking long,’ says Molly.

A fine chilled mist of rain covers my face as I run over to the car. Stewart’s face turns towards me. His eyes squint as the pleasure of music leaves them. Wrenching the back door open, Perkin’s head blocks my view of the sat down female. He’s kneeling in-between her legs, his trousers and pants loosely fall from the bottom of his pimpled huge white arse. He’s deep inside her. His head turns and his eyes meet mine, revealing Joanne’s unconscious face. Saliva glistens on her exposed breasts. Her crumpled leopard print briefs limply hang on top of her left black suede boot.

Reaching in I grab his hair, the follicles cut into my hands. He shouts for Stewart as I prise him out of Joanne’s spread legs, his limp cock drips a small strand of semen, the rest of it is congealed on the inside of Joanne’s left thigh. This person’s filth is moving around inside the woman I love. That dangling cock has been where no other man has been apart from me. This is the woman I’m supposed to marry and have children with. Tonight I’m going to kill a fucking rapist.

Bang! Something hard hits the back of my skull. Perkin’s hair slips from my grip, my own is being pulled. Spinning around Stewart’s face looks down at me, a large knuckled filled fist slams into my face again. He pulls me by my hair from the car’s back seat, I feel my whole body weaken, I try and keep my brain alert, but my legs are not responding, they’ve got a mind of their own now. It’s too much. Holding onto the back wing of the car to keep upright it slips under my palms. Stewart smiles. Clang! His fist does it’s work again. I feel no pain, just numbness all over. The dark night descends into pitch black. Hitting the tarmac. I’m gone.

Two high pitched Thai voices ring in my ears at a hundred-miles-an-hour. I feel nauseated



by a blinding headache. I don't want to open my eyes. I don't want to face the nightmare. If I just sit here with them closed everything might just go away. I have no idea where the fuck I am. I have no idea how long I've been out.

The Thai voices are getting louder. Do those girls ever give it a rest? What the fuck are they arguing about now? Fuck it.

Flickering my eyes open the back of Molly's and Polly's heads, covered in their long black hair come into my view. It looks like Molly's sat on Polly's lap. An engine blasts it's revs out. I'm still in Perkin's car. The girls are in the driving seat. I look to my left hoping nothing has happened to Joanne. She's sat there still unconscious with her breasts exposed and her knickers flopped over the top of her left boot. The semen from the inside of her left thigh has melted like ice cream, forming a puddle of cloudy liquid in-between her spread legs, most of it has slid down the black leather seats lapping at the bottom of her vagina and anus. I wonder how many viruses lurk in that filthy mess.

Molly turns her head towards me 'How make car go?' she says twisting her nose up.

'What the fuck are you doing?'

'Polly push on peddle. I fucking steer, but car not go fucking forward.'

'It's not in gear.'

'What fucking gear?' she says as the car screams out it's maximum revs.

'Dan,' Jo says. 'What's going on?'

'Jo...Toby Perkin drugged and raped you.'

Watching Joanne silently clean herself up, the girls start arguing in Thai again. Fuck this. Leaning over the drivers seat I pull the keys out of the ignition and sit back down. The girl's heads spin around glaring at me. 'You fight like fucking girl,' says Molly.

'Tell me what's going on.'

'We drag you in car. It fucking laining,' says Polly tossing my wallet over. 'Taxi man not want money. He say he not wait. He look scared.'

'OK girls, where are the two men?'

'They outside. Fat man cry like baby. Chocolate man fight good,' says Molly.

Joanne turns her back to me. 'Zip the back of my dress up. I think we better go outside,' she calmly says.

The rain hits me like bullets as I scan the dark empty car park. I hear a groan from the front of the car. Going to the sound, I look through the two headlight beams. What the fuck has gone on? I can't believe what I'm seeing.

Raindrops flicker through the twin amber beams like confetti, underneath them is Perkin and Stewart, on their backs with the car's front tyres in-between their spread legs. Their legs are broken. Fibula bone protrudes outwards, washed clean from the rain looking like carved ivory. The snapped sharp edges enclose fresh pink marrow bone. What's gone on? The girls couldn't of

done this. Looking at the men's swollen faces, the rain has washed most of their blood away, just leaving raindrop splashes of red. They both stare at me.

'My God!' says Joanne putting her hand on my shoulder.

The girls come from behind, darting around Joanne and I holding their star wands. They run over to the two men placing a foot each over the men's throats. Spluttering groans come from their victims. They're fucking choking them. They're not going to? Surely not.

'You two get the fuck over here,' I yell. 'What the fuck d' you think you're doing?'

Molly turns her head towards me. 'They hurt you and whore. We kill them,' she says as Perkin's spluttering increases in volume.

'Do as I fucking say.'

'No,' shouts Molly.

Going over to them I stand in-between the two men. Stewart's stopped breathing. I thought Polly was the nice one. Putting my palms on both of their backs I push them off. They both spin around, their eyes seem in a trance, they seem hell-bent on revenge. They're contemplating taking me out.

'Don't you even think about it,' I say staring directly at them.

Their blue eyes soften, they both stand up straight, then curtsy to me, giving me a smile. Splatters of red are highlighted on their pink tutu's from the amber beams. They look like a couple bloodthirsty ballerinas in a stage spotlight.

Stewart gasps for air. I look down at Perkin's battered, petrified face. Killing a wounded rapist should be quite pleasurable. Raising my Brogue covered foot, everything around me is silent. Forcing my foot down into his face, I look upward to gain more momentum, stretching every tendon in my body. The sound from the dull crunch from under my foot cools my revenging blood, the sound reminds me of stepping on a flesh stripped chicken carcass. Those soft bones breaking in dulcet tones. I need to hear some more. Raising my foot again, Joanne's face comes into my view.

'Don't,' she says.

'Sorry Joanne. I need to do it.'

'He didn't rape me.'

'I know what I saw.'

'I know that. I know when I've been penetrated. I haven't been.'

'Don't try and save his life.'

'I'm not. If you want to spend the next fifteen years in a room on your own, carry on. Or you could spend those years with me. He didn't fucking rape me.'

Car headlights shine across the four of us. George Huntsberg comes over. Joanne goes to him. My foot is still in it's raised position. Is she fucking lying to me? Joanne's talking to George. I wonder if she'll tell him the truth.

‘Go on then, fucking girl,’ says Molly.

‘I don’t need you, to tell me what to fucking do.’

‘You want me come over do fucking self?’

Putting my foot down I walk over to them. ‘C’ mon we’re going home,’ I say nudging them along.

I don’t think it’s particularly healthy for two twelve year old girls witnessing this level of violence, even though they caused most of it.

‘You not finish him?’ asks Polly. ‘He enemy for life.’

‘Maybe another time,’ I say as we walk over to Joanne and George.

‘I’ll sort all this out,’ says George. ‘You get Joanne and the girls back to your house. Use my car.’

Joanne puts her arm around her father. ‘How are you going to get home Daddy?’

‘I’ll make a few calls. Get some people down here. You just get back home with Dan,’ he says passing her his car keys.

Leaving. The inside of the car is silent. Joanne’s driving is calm and precise. If he did rape her it didn’t shock her. Maybe she is telling the truth. That dirty bastard must have had a premature ejaculation before he could get his cock inside her. He wasn’t far off his target though. Looking over at the girls on the back seat, they’re both fast asleep, curled up together like little dormice. How can two sweet looking things be so violent? Where the fuck did they learn how to do that?

‘Dan,’ says Joanne still looking directly out the windscreen. ‘The girls are still going back.’

‘I know Jo, but give credit where it’s due, they did save our asses tonight.’

‘If they hadn’t been with Justin, you would have been with me.’

‘What if you went on your own. It could of still happened.’

‘Maybe,’ she says moving her gaze to me. ‘He didn’t fuck me Dan.’

‘If he had. I don’t think you’d be this calm,’ I say as we pull up outside our house.

Waking the girls we go in. Tucker comes bounding over, his nose buzzes around the girls taking the scent of fresh blood in.

‘Girls go upstairs and have a shower. Bring those dresses down after you’ve finished,’ I say as they both run up the stairs.

Joanne puts her arms around me and squeezes me tight. ‘I love you Dan.’

‘I love you to Jo. Let’s go in the kitchen. I’ll make some tea. I’ll get the girls some food, they’ll be starving after exerting all that energy.’

Putting the kettle on and placing two tubs of rice and chilli chicken in the microwave Jo turns to me. ‘After they’ve finished in the shower, I want one. I need to wash that bastards presence off me.’

I go over to Jo and put my arms around her, she buries her face into my shoulder, kissing her

ear she starts to sob. I don't know what to say. A ping comes from the microwave and the kettle ceases to rattle.

'I fucking hungry,' says Molly stood by Polly in the kitchen doorway in their pyjamas, holding their bloody tutu's.

Releasing Jo I get their food from the microwave and exchange it for the dresses.

'Eat in your bedroom tonight,' I say giving them a fork each. They look up at me, turn around and are gone in a flash. Bending down putting their dresses in the washing machine, I feel Joanne's hand on my shoulder.

'Warm the bed up for me,' she says going upstairs to have a shower.

Feeding Tucker he gobbles his food down at the same speed I get it out the can. Switching the lights off the sound of jets of water hitting Joanne's body make me smile as I walk the stairs. She's back in my bed tonight. I'm going to enjoy the smell of bananas.

The girls chatter in Thai as I walk past their room, sticking my head in, they're sat up munching away on their food.

'Girls after you've finished eating keep the noise down.'

'OK,' says Polly while Molly ignores me.

Stripping off I slip into bed, placing my shock box on the bedside cabinet.

I want to see her naked. I can't wait for Joanne's warm body to be entwined with mine. I hear her come through the bedroom door, she comes around to her side of the bed. She stands in front of me letting her towel fall. My cock hardens as I take the full view of her beautiful body in.

'Dan. I know it's been a while. Just hold me in bed. We can have sex another time,' she says slipping into bed with her back to me. Holding her tight my hard cock snuggles into the groove of her warm backside, she pushes it into me, gently squashing my balls. My forearm rests over her breasts, her breathing is heavy. Her nipples move with each breath, rubbing against my tender forearm skin.

'Don't let go of me,' she says.

A tingling sensation moves along the inside of my right arm. Fuck! I won't let her go. I'll take the pain. Snap! Crunch! Cunt! I'm sure this pain gets fucking worse. Think coldness. I think of freezing winter mist. Tumbling around naked inside it, being blown across the tops of bare winter trees. The tops of their branches scrape my flesh as I spin around in the cloudy-white, I can hear the trees whispering to themselves, church bells serenade in the distance. Twisting and turning over the woodland, my body numbs as the cold seeps into my pores, killing my pain.

The back of Joanne's head stares at me. I'm back in bed with her, still holding her tightly. But no warmth comes from her body. She's dead still like a corpse. Her auburn-blond hair parts like a theatrical curtain, revealing pale goose flesh. It falls from her skull like steamed strips of wall paper. White porcelain bone gleams at me. A crack appears at the base of her skull, it zig-

zags it's way up the centre making a miniature fissure. Her skull splits in two, two pieces fall onto her pillow, they lay there like broken egg shells. Her pinkish-beige brain pumps it's thoughts. It turns to all the colours of a rainbow. My tongue extends, the tip of it runs along the maze of sulcus grooves, churning up cerebral spinal fluid like a lorry churning up slush after a winter storm. Spiders appear from her hair, hundreds of small ones. They make their way to my tongue. A large spider, with hair on his brown legs like black rose thorns emerges from the group, his black glossy oval eyes look down, they've got puffs of grey inside them, rolling around like storm clouds. Fuck this. Reaching over for my shock box behind me, I give myself twenty-four volts.

I'm back. Joanne's breathing is lighter. Her wet breasts gently push at my forearm, God I've missed this woman. The groove of her backside is moist. I move my cock out of it. The heat generated from my hallucination has made her sticky to the touch. She's fast asleep though. The drugs she was given, probably haven't entirely worn off. I give her breasts chance to breathe, moving my arm and placing my palm on her stomach, the gentle rhythm of it moving up and down soothes me. I feel myself falling asleep. Drifting in the comforting knowledge she's by my side. She'll always be by my side, what ever happens.

I dream: Standing on the edge of a golden cornfield, the red barn with the blue roof shimmers in the distance in a haze of sunshine. Everything is still and silent, only the sound of a monotonous hum breaks the calm. The low sun's rays burn into my back. Looking up, the sky's deep blue is unbroken by clouds. Running through the field, the corn ears brush against my cheeks. Reaching the barn, it's enormous gnarled, weather beaten grey door looks down at me. I need to open the door. For once let me open it. Tiptoeing up my fingertips touch the metal latch, icy-cold instantly injects into them. I try to push it along, but it won't budge. I try again with all my strength, beads of sweat form around my eyes and on my cheeks. The latch is stuck solid. Open for fuck sake. Open.

I can smell bananas. Moving my arm across to touch her the bed's empty. Opening my eyes I pull back the duvet. The crumpled outline of her body is the only thing left of her. I rub my cheeks inside it, picking up her residue. A piece of paper falls from her pillow. She's left a note. Sitting upright I hold it in-between my thumb and forefinger.

Sorry I left early. I want to see dad. Get Justin to have the girls tonight. I've got a surprise for you. We need to fuck. Jo xxx.

I hope Justin can be released from hospital today. I'll sort Tucker and the girls out and try and do something with them. That's if I can prise them away from the TV. I am not watching fucking football with them all day.

Getting up and opening the curtains the sky's crisp and clear, just a light drizzle sprinkles down. No! There's a fucking rainbow. A sour taste of vomit hits the back of my throat, as the

inside of my stomach turns to a lump of solidifying bile. I force it back down into my gut. Trembling uncontrollably I dive under the duvet. Moving into Joanne's crumpled outline, I need it for comfort. Squeezing my cock, urine still escapes, it sprays over Joanne's presence, filling the bed with the sweet scent of wheat. Tears roll down my cheeks. Why isn't she here? She holds me when I see a rainbow. She tells me when it's gone.

'What fucking matter with you?' asks Molly lifting the duvet up.

'Fuck off.'

'You piss bed like baby. Why you shake?' she says as Polly comes into the room staring down at me as well.

'I'm frightened of rainbows.'

'You fucking ridiot?'

'Just fuck off.'

Polly goes over to the window. 'Rainbow gone,' she shouts.

My bladder's empty, my trembling subsides. The contents of my stomach starts to melt.

'Why you frightened of rainbow?' asks Molly.

'I don't know.'

Polly comes over and puts her palm on my head. 'We feed Fucker. We get breakfast. You clean self up.'

Molly smiles down at me. 'Fucking ridiot,' she says dropping the duvet, plunging me into darkness.

Maybe I am a fucking idiot, led here in my own piss. Why the fuck am I petrified of rainbows?

That evening: Justin's taken the girls to the cinema. His eye's fine, he just has to wear an eye patch for six weeks. I've just had a text from Jo. She'll be around in fifteen minutes. She left a paper bag by the front door, the contents of which I'm pouring out on my bed at the moment. Whom the fuck is this supposed to be? Her purple fishnets, knickers and bra fall on the bed, followed by lipstick and eye shadow. She wants me to dress up as a fucking woman?

Slipping the items on I go to the bathroom to apply the make-up. I clumsily smear the blue eye shadow on, followed by the red lipstick. Looking at myself in the mirror, I look like a middle aged prostitute. If I'm dressed like this, what's she coming as?

Beep! That's her. I hope it's her. Running downstairs the knickers cut into my bollocks. The designer of these didn't take into account, that sometimes a pair of balls and a cock might have to fit inside them.

Opening the door Jo's stood there in her brown trench coat. She's dyed her hair black and has applied the same make-up as me.

'You love me long time mister?' she asks taking my hand and leading me into the front

room. She takes a dining chair and puts it in the middle of the floor.

‘Sit here mister,’ she says unbuttoning her coat and tossing it on the sofa.

Sitting down she’s stood in front of me in a white bikini. She’s got a red badge on her bikini top with the number fifty on it. She pulls out a strip of cloth, which is tucked into the back of her bikini bottoms, and ties my wrists together behind the chair.

She stands in front of me with her hands on her hips. ‘You like what you see mister?’

I nod. My hard cock bulges in the flimsy briefs. The top of it pokes out from underneath the elastic, pulling my foreskin back. She kneels down using the tip of her tongue on my stretched frenulum, running along it’s length.

‘Don’t tease it. Put it in your mouth,’ I say.

‘Mister should have patience,’ she says standing up removing her bikini top and bottoms. Throwing the items on the sofa, she pulls my knickers down to my ankles.

‘You want ass or fanny? Ass is double the price,’ she says putting my knees together and sitting on my lap facing me.

‘I haven’t had your ass for a while.’

‘That’s usually a special treat. You know it hurts me.’

‘It’s been eight weeks.’

‘My fanny needs sorting first. Do a good job there and I might let you enter the centre of my buttocks.’

Jo stands holding my cock upright in her right hand. She sits, guiding it into her vagina. The lips of her outer labia touch my skin, the head of my cock disappears inside her, she’s taking her time. God! I’m about to come. Hold on. Hold on. Her vagina eases down, sliding effortlessly down my shaft, engulfing it with slippery ease. She smiles down at me. ‘I just want it inside me for a while, it’s been eight weeks, I’ll fuck you in a minute.’

She puts her arms around me squashing her soft breasts into my face. It’s too much. The rush of ejaculation erupts from my balls, travelling at lightening speed through the centre of my cock. It shoots up inside her.

She looks down at me. ‘You’ve just come.’

‘Sorry. It’s been eight weeks.’

‘So when am I going to come?’

‘When I get another hard-on.’

‘I’m not waiting that long. You can use that tongue of yours on my fanny.’

‘Fuck off. It’s covered in all my sperm.’

‘So. It’s all right for me to swallow it by the bucket load. It’s your turn.’

‘I am not tasting my own sperm.’

‘Don’t be such a fucking baby,’ she says slipping my cock out of herself, kneeling down and putting the limp piece of meat into her mouth.

She moulds it into various shapes with her tongue, compressing it against the insides of her cheeks and tonsils, it starts to find fresh vigour. Blood seeps back into it. Her icy-blue eyes smile at me as the volume in her mouth increases. Gripping the base of my shaft in her hand, she moves her bright red lips up it's length. She rests the back of her tongue on top of it. Moving her head back, the back of her tongue strokes along the top of my erection. A strand of semen attaches itself to the tip of her tongue, she stretches it, it snaps, coiling up into her mouth.

She stands up looking down at me. 'Open your mouth,' she says smiling.

'No.'

'Don't be such a baby.'

'You're going to spit that spunk into my mouth.'

'D' you want my ass?'

'You know I like it.'

'Well. Open up.'

This fucking girl. Opening my mouth Joanne produces a long strand of saliva mixed with my semen from her mouth, it dangles there precariously, she spins it around with her tongue, taunting me. She bites her end and it drops into my mouth. I swallow it as quickly as I can. Fuck! I think I'm going to be sick. The taste of oysters explodes in my mouth. She looks down at my screwed up face.

'There's a good boy.'

'You're going to pay for that. I'm going to make sure you can't sit down for a fucking week,' I say suppressing vomiting.

She goes to the kitchen. I can hear Tucker's paws patter on the linoleum floor. She returns with my shock box and a jar of honey.

She puts the shock box into my bound right hand. 'I don't want you going off while you're in my ass,' she says unscrewing the jar, throwing the lid on the floor.

Dipping her fingers in she pulls out a lump of stickiness, it oozes around her fingers, slow-flowing in thick threads from her hand, the syrupy ends cover my cock and balls with thin amber trails. She runs her sweet hand up and down my cock. Turning around, she bends down placing the jar on the carpet, giving me a full view of the hole I'm going to penetrate, she stands up pulling her left buttock to one side, and smears the rest of the honey around her anus, she pushes her middle finger inside, stretching her tender tissue.

'You ready to sweeten my ass up,' she says bending over, grabbing me and guiding it to the centre of her buttocks. The head of my thickly coated cock, touches her delicate fragrant anus. She tentatively sits, I push hard against the narrow opening, it squeezes my rigid flesh. The nape of her neck blushes deep crimson, it moves under her skin, over her shoulders blades making them blossom in mottled poppy-red. I thrust the head in. She jerks forward. 'Fuck! Jesus Dan. Let me ease it in.'



‘C’ mon then. Once I’m inside you, the walls of your asshole are going to glisten.’

‘Just take your time.’

‘I owe you for putting the taste of oysters into my mouth.’

‘Just be careful. You know it hurts every time you put your cock up my ass,’ she says easing back down on my penis.

A forced cough echoes around the room. We both look towards the doorway.

‘Jesus! Christ!’ Joanne shouts. ‘Why the fuck are you here Dad?’

‘You left your front door key and mobile on the kitchen table. The front door was open,’ says George as Joanne jumps up putting her bikini back on.

‘Hi George,’ I say. I don’t know why I said that. I don’t know what to fucking say. ‘Joanne untie my wrists.’

She bends down looking at me with her deep crimson blotched face. Her hot cheeks flush like a teething child’s. Daddy’s little girl has given him a whole new image of her now. I drop my shock box as my hands are freed. Pulling my knickers up I stand up.

‘Sorry George,’ I say trying to get my hard-on into these fucking knickers. For fuck sake it won’t fit in. It’s easy to get a hard-on, but it’s certainly a lot more difficult getting fucking rid of it. Fuck it. It’ll have to poke out the top of them.

George comes over giving Joanne her key and mobile. ‘Dad. Sorry,’ she says with her eyes welling up, and her voice muffled as if she’s talking from underground through a crack on the surface. Which I imagine she’d dearly like to be at this moment.

‘I’m sorry to Joanne. I should of knocked.’

‘She doesn’t do it very often,’ I say.

Why the fuck did I just say that for? Why didn’t I just keep my big trap shut.

Joanne and her father both spin their heads around glaring at me. George comes over. ‘D’ you think this is fucking funny?’

‘No George.’

‘D’ you think it’s a laugh sodomising my daughter in front of me?’

‘No George,’ I say as my hard cock deflates, slipping back into my knickers.

‘No father should witness what I just did. One day it might happen to you. Then you can understand how I feel.’

‘Sorry George.’

‘Your own daughters have pulled up outside with your brother. Luckily I came in first,’ he says leaving in disgusted silence.

I can hear George exchange hello’s as he slips out into the cold night air.

The two girls run into the front room, switch the TV on and jump on the sofa. Their heads slowly turn towards myself and Joanne. ‘Why you dressed like fucking ladyboy?’ asks Polly.

‘We were playing a game,’ I say.

‘Why whore, dressed as whore?’ asks Molly.

‘You heard your father,’ says Jo as Justin comes to the front room doorway.

‘Why are you back so fucking early for Justin?’ I ask.

‘We got kicked out the cinema. The girls didn’t like the film. They upset the other parents and children with their swearing.’

Molly looks up at me. ‘That cartoon shit. I not fucking baby.’

‘I’ll see you tomorrow Dan,’ says Justin leaving.

‘Thanks anyway,’ I say. ‘Girls go upstairs and put your pyjamas on, then come back down and watch TV.’

They both jump off the sofa and run.

‘God! What am I going to say to dad?’ says Jo putting her face in her hands.

‘I’ve got no idea.’

‘Dan,’ says Joanne putting her trench coat back on. ‘I’ll go and see him now. Get it over and done with.’

Two piercing screams fire down from upstairs, vibrating around the house. Tucker howls from the kitchen. What the fuck’s going on now?

Going to the foot of the stairs I shout up. ‘What’s the matter with you two?’

‘Get whore,’ Polly shouts down.

‘Tell me what’s the matter? Or I’ll come up.’

‘Get fucking whore,’ shouts Molly.

Women. ‘Jo come here a minute.’

‘What’s up with them Dan?’

‘They want you.’

‘Me? Why?’

‘I don’t fucking know. Just sort them out.’

‘They better not be fucking me around,’ she says going upstairs.

Letting Tucker out of the kitchen he bounds into the front room with me. Sitting on the sofa I massage his soft ears. ‘Sometimes boy I wish it was only yourself and me in this fucking house. You’re the only one that seems fucking pleased to see me.’

Two hours later: What are they doing up there? Have they actually killed Jo or something.

Jo comes into the front room. ‘You’ll be glad to know your daughters have started their first period together.’

‘Lucky me. Is that what all the fuss was about?’

‘Yeah. What I found odd Dan. They had no idea about sex or menstruation.’

‘I’m surprised seeing what background they came from.’

‘I had to explain everything in detail to them. You should’ve seen the fear come over their faces,’ she says smiling. ‘Luckily I had some pads left in the bathroom.’

'I'm glad they're going back. I don't think I could deal with three women coming on at the same time in this house. Those two are bad tempered enough.'

'Dan I'm leaving.'

'Stay the night Jo?'

'No. Let me see dad. I'll have to try and be his little girl again.'

'Good luck on that one,' I say as she kisses my cheek and leaves.

Going upstairs I stick my head around the girl's bedroom door. 'Everything OK girls?'

'Go away,' says Molly.

'If you need any questions answered on you know what. I'm available.'

'We not ask you,' says Molly.

'I wouldn't worry too much about sex. I can't see any male on this planet taking one of you two on,' I say with a smile coming to my face.

'Fuck you ass ole,' shouts Molly as I walk back into my bedroom.

## Chapter 11

Next Saturday: My pores gape open, it feels like maggots are boring into them. The steamed heat drifting around this swimming pool has made it's way inside me, licking my internal organs. The deafening noise from children splashing and yelling adds to the torture.

'Fuck me,' says Jo. 'It's fucking hot in here. The smell of that chlorine makes my eyes water.'

'All I can smell is lavender.'

'You're lucky with your taste and smell swaps.'

Sitting here in a cordoned off area we wait for the girls. They're getting changed. I was surprised to find out they're frightened of water. Something about big fish living in it. I'd like to give them something to remember England by, and learning to swim seems fitting.

After explaining to them about drowning, they told me to fuck off and said they wouldn't go near any water. So gentle persuasion in the form of blackmail brought us to this point. The threat of staying in this country on a permanent basis seemed to do the trick.

Joanne laughs and points. 'Look at them. What a couple of dorks.'

Molly and Polly emerge from the changing room, dressed in blue bathing costumes, goggles and bright orange arm bands. They stand at the swimming pool's edge.

'Jump in then,' Joanne shouts.

The girls stay rooted in the same position.

'Dan give them a nudge. We'll be here all fucking day otherwise. We've got the local Fete to go to yet.'

Going over to them they both stare at the water, they seem mesmerised by their own dancing reflections.

'Girls jump in.'

'We look for big fucking fish,' says Molly.

'Don't be silly. It's a public pool,' I say nudging them in.

Watching them fall, their manic hands tear at the steamed air, the water opens up, swallowing them in one splashing gulp. Their orange armbands propel them to the surface. They breakthrough, long black hair covers their faces. Bobbing there they brush their drenched matted locks from their goggled covered eyes.

'You fucking ass ole,' shouts Molly coughing out some of the chlorine flavoured liquid.

'When I get out water I fucking kill you,' shouts Polly with an exploding temper I haven't

seen before.

‘Don’t be such fucking babies,’ Joanne shouts down at them putting her arm around me.

‘He push us in water,’ says Molly.

‘No shit,’ says Joanne. ‘Now try and swim.’

The girls start moving their limbs. Chopping the water in a frenzy. For some reason they keep going around in circles. ‘Try and go in a straight line,’ I shout.

‘I try. It not work,’ shouts Polly.

‘Jesus. Christ. I should of brought my washing. Are you two fucking stupid?’ shouts Joanne.

‘Fuck you Ho,’ shouts Molly.

A lifeguard comes over. ‘Can you all keep the language down. Some of the parents are starting to complain,’ he says to Jo.

‘Sorry,’ she says. ‘But these two are a bit simple.’

‘We have an area separated from the rest of the children, especially for people with learning difficulties.’

‘They’ve got Tourettes.’

‘We don’t cater for that.’

‘Really? You haven’t got an area where people can shout fuck, shit and bollocks all day?’ asks Jo.

‘Just keep the language down. Or you’ll have to leave.’

‘We’re going anyway,’ says Jo turning to the girls. ‘Girls. Shark,’ she shouts at the top of her voice.

The girls swim for their lives. Scrabbling at the pool’s edge, they can’t get out. ‘Quick. Quick,’ shouts Joanne.

Polly offers her hand to me. Wrenching her out she sits down drenched and dripping. She rips her goggles off. ‘I piss in pool,’ she says.

‘Don’t worry you’re not in there any more,’ I say.

‘Ho. Ho,’ Molly screams holding her arm up.

Joanne grabs her, pulling her out, she lands on both her feet, turns around looking deep into the water. ‘Where big fish?’

‘I was mistaken,’ says Jo giggling. ‘It was someone’s flipper.’

Molly turns around tilting her head up, her eyes penetrating Jo’s. ‘You fucking dumb ass. You fucking itch.’

Jo bends down coming to Molly’s eye level. ‘What did I say about calling me names?’ she says touching Molly’s nose with the tip of her forefinger. Her eyes burning back into Molly’s.

‘You liar. You fucking ass ole.’

Joanne grabs her ear. ‘Not touch me Ho.’

‘What’re you going to do? Beat me up?’

Polly looks up at me shaking her head. She realises she's going to have to jump on her sister in a minute.

'I tell you one time only. Let go,' says Molly.

'No,' says Jo pulling Molly along by her ear and grabbing Polly's. 'What I fucking do?' says Polly.

'It's freezing outside you need to dry your hair properly,' says Jo dragging them along by their ears.

'Let go of fucking ear, we walk with you,' says Molly.

'I'm doing this for enjoyment. I owe you for all the shit you've given me these last eight weeks.'

'Let go of fucking ear,' says Molly jogging along trying to keep up with Jo's pace.

'Don't be a baby. You stupid little bitch.'

'Don't call me itch.'

'I'll call you what the fuck I like,' says Jo. 'Now get in those changing rooms. Get your costumes off and I'll dry you off, before you get pneumonia from the cold outside.'

'Don't call me itch,' says Molly.

'Shut up. You're like a moaning old woman,' says Jo dragging them into the changing rooms.

The charming aroma of Canfor wood spills from a candyfloss stall.

As a child I used to love the smell of candyfloss, but now I have to rely on my memory. The smell cleared my mind, made me feel normal again. Something changed inside me. I was a happy child, until I was five. After that I became introvert. Shyness was a big problem.

My mother would say 'Here's grumpy,' and pick me up, kissing me every time I'd get up in the morning.

'Did you have sweet dreams last night?' she'd ask.

I'd always nod, but I'd only dream about the red barn with a blue roof.

My mother would say. 'You used to be so happy Dan. You used to laugh all the time. What happened son?'

'I don't know,' I'd say struggling the words out.

My mother used to hold my hand as we walked through the annual Fete's various stands. I always remember her buying me candyfloss. Smiling down at me as she passed me a pink bundle of wispy love. We didn't have much money so it was a real treat. I just used to love being with her. Watching her smile and laugh with everyone. At the end of the day my last treat was a ride on a donkey. She'd pick me up and walk with me as I rode, looking over the heads of everyone, I felt like a knight in shining armour. She'd look at me with her soft brown eyes. 'You've been such a good boy today Dan. You haven't asked for one thing. I'm so lucky to have a son like

you,' she'd say kissing my cheek.

Yeah... I miss the smell of candyfloss very much. Wiping a tear from my eye I look down at my two children.

'I not want go on fucking wonky,' says Molly chewing on some candyfloss.

'Do as you're told,' I say.

'Fucking wonky smell of shit.'

'You can be such a spoilt brat sometimes Molly. I used to love riding on them. It used to be a real treat for me.'

'You think ride on wonky that smell of shit. Fun?'

'Yes I do. Now get up their,' I say lifting her up and putting her on the saddle. 'You can remove that face and put a fucking smile on it.'

'Fuck you ass ole,' she says. 'What wonky's name?' she asks the attendant.

'Buttercup,' he says pulling the reins and trotting off with her.

Polly waves as she passes Jo and I on her donkey. Her cheeks are covered in sugary-pink. At least one of them looks happy.

Jo slips her hand into mine. 'Why so sad? Is it because the girls are going back?'

'No. Just memories.'

'So where are you taking me tonight?'

'Barreto's.'

'Italian food. I can't wait.'

Tonight I'm going to propose to Joanne. I've bought a ring with a single solitaire diamond, which is mounted on two miniature platinum dolphins, her favourite animal. I've got it safely zipped up in my inside coat pocket.

The girls want to spend their last night with Justin. I'll pick them up in the morning. They're thrilled about going back home. But I've got my reservations. When they find out their mother is dead, I think I'm going to have a lot of problems with them. I've decided to tell them when we all get over there. I've kept Thip's email of the address of the cemetery, one of her relatives emailed me a photograph of her grave. I'll arrange a flight to Chiang Mai when I'm over there. I need the girls to see the grave.

'Dan,' says Jo squeezing my hand. 'The girls can stay if you want.'

'Sorry?'

'You heard me.'

'I can't quite believe what I'm hearing.'

'We'll be married soon. I want children as soon as possible. What difference would it make if two more were around.'

'I thought you were all sworn enemies.'

'Things have changed. D' you want them to stay?'

'I haven't given it much thought. I must admit I'm becoming very fond of Polly.'

'So how do we give them the bad news?'

'I want them to understand their mother is dead. The only way I can do that is show them the grave.'

'Take them over. Do what you have to do. Then offer them a home here.'

'I will,' I say shocked at what has just come out of Jo's mouth.

The donkey attendant returns with two empty animals. Where the fuck are they now?

'They just jumped off and ran into a pub,' he says.

'Are you sure about them fucking staying Jo?'

'It will be challenging to say the least. C' mon Dan let's get them.'

Paying the attendant he says. 'They both shouted the word Arserole when they jumped.'

'Yeah. When I find them they're going to feel the force of my hand on their arseroles.'

Slipping through the crowds, holding Jo's hand, we enter the pub. The girls are perched at the end of the bar, heads angled upwards towards the TV. They've got two glasses of cola beside them.

The barman comes over. 'What can I get you?'

'Those two little fuckers over there,' I say.

'You're Molly and Polly's father?'

'Yeah. Why are you serving them drinks? They're not even accompanied by an adult.'

'I'm an adult,' he says. 'I bought them the drinks. They often come here to watch football. They like Arsenal, the same as I do,' he says.

Who does this fucker think he is? They're only twelve.

'Have you got a thing for twelve year old girls?'

'You what?'

'That's enough Dan,' says Jo. 'We'll have a white wine and a pint of lager.'

The barman gives me a long stare as he pulls the pump. Prick.

'Girls,' I shout over to them.

'What want? We watch fucking Arserole,' shouts Molly.

'Dan. Leave them to it. We'll sit at a table in the corner,' she says paying the barman.

Joanne places the glasses on the table. Taking her coat I give her backside a squeeze.

'I can't wait to marry you,' I say.

'You've got to propose first,' she says as we take our seats.

'That's all in hand.'

'Is it. I doubt if you've even bought the ring yet.'

A grin comes to my face. I breath in deeply to feel the rings box push against my ribcage.

'You've bought one. Let me see it.'

'No. Not until I propose.'



‘Propose now.’

‘Not in here. I want it to be romantic.’

‘Romantic? You’re about as romantic as a pair of hairy bollocks.’

‘I’m going to propose to you tonight, after the meal. I was going to park up on the way home, in a quiet secluded spot. I want the moon and stars to shine down.’

‘Yeah. Right. More like me being on the back seat of the car with my legs hanging out the side window.’

‘You spoil everything.’

‘Go on. Do it now.’

Pulling the ring’s box from my pocket I get down on one knee. ‘Joanne Huntsberg. Will you marry me?’ I say flipping the box open.

‘Yes,’ she says taking the ring and slipping it on her finger.

‘I’m supposed to do that.’

‘So... It’s beautiful Dan.’

‘What doing idiot?’ asks Molly.

‘Asking Jo to marry me. Go back to your football.’

‘It finish,’ says Molly jumping on Jo’s leg looking at her ring. Polly joins her sitting on Jo’s other leg.

‘You can get up now idiot,’ says Molly.

‘I don’t need you, to tell me what to do.’

‘Stay on fucking knee then,’ says Molly.

That evening: Lying naked on our bed with Jo. The diamond on her finger catches the moonlight seeping through the curtains. It glints up my chest, flashing like a mirrored ball. She moves her hand over my stomach. I can feel her warm breath circle my ear. ‘That was a lovely meal Dan.’

‘It was. Happy?’

‘Delirious. I love you with all my heart,’ she says grabbing my soft cock.

‘So no role playing tonight?’

‘No. We can just be our naked selves. Kneel over my face, I want to play with your dangling bits.’

The springs in the mattress groan as my knees push into it. The headboard creaks as Jo pushes on it. She slides down getting in position on her back. I hear her spit, saliva trickles in-between my arse cheeks, it reaches my stretched anus, melting into it. Her tongue dabs at her oral discharge, brushing against my sensitive opening. This is a first. My cock fills. Her tongue stops.

‘Sorry Dan. I will one day. I’ve got a mental block when it comes to that.’

‘That’s something I can look forward to in married life.’

Gripping my hard cock, she gently glides her hand up and down. Her tongue touches the centre crease of my perineum, she runs it along its scarred length, going back and forth.

Looking down at her spread legs, she's trimmed her vagina, leaving her pink vaginal lips exposed to the elements. Her outer labia softly palpitates as my breath gets closer, its colour changes to a blushing rose-red. The scented aroma of a summer meadow, splashed with wild scarlet, purple and yellow rush up my nostrils. Her clitoral hood slips back as the tip of my tongue touches it, giving me its delectable affection. My tongue circles the hard tissue. Her knees bend upwards, pushing her groin into my face. Peach and Cranberry swirl up into my mouth. The two flavours mix together, bursting like fireworks against the insides of my cheeks. My cock fires out a shot of pre-come. It always happens when those flavours hit me. Swallowing. The after taste of apricot jam roams around, tickling my soft palate.

Her tongue's found my taste fuelled residue. 'Fuck me. That was quick,' she says licking the end of my cock.

'You know your flavours blow me away.'

Guiding my penis into her mouth, she gets into her suckling rhythm.

Running my tongue along her right hand outer labia, the soft flesh pulsates, it tries to get back into its original position as I pick up tiny scented peach drops. Sucking on it hard I draw out its full flavour. The whole of it enters my mouth, lightly biting, it feels supple and vulnerable, peach flows from it, drenching my mouth. I'm going to come. Concentrate. I haven't tasted her other one yet.

'Don't bite too hard Dan,' she says straining the words out of her full mouth. 'It's fucking sensitive you know.'

Letting it go, it makes its elasticated way back, easing next to its other half. Compressing my cheek against her hot wet hole, the folds of it stick, increasing in temperature. The scent of grass and wild flowers intensifies. Moving my cheek away, viscous strands cling, then snap back to their owner.

Licking the whole length of her other outer labia, the taste of cranberries rush over my tongue. I can't hold on. I smile as the contents of my balls explodes into Joanne's mouth.

She loudly coughs, spitting my cock out. 'You... Fucking asshole.'

'What?'

'You nearly fucking choked me. You could of told me you were coming.'

'I wanted to surprise you.'

'Surprise me. It nearly took my fucking tonsils out. Your cock was deep in my mouth, you idiot.'

Moving back up the bed I put my arm around her. 'Get the fuck off me,' she says still coughing.

'Don't be like that.'

‘Well. What d’ you expect.’

‘I expect you to do, what your future husband wants you to do.’

‘You can fuck right off.’

‘Spread your legs. I want to fuck you.’

‘Fuck off.’

Jo turns over on her front. The moon’s light shines on her back, highlighting miniature soft blond hairs. I run the tips of my fingers along her supple spine. Putting my palm on her tight buttocks, I dip the tip of my little finger into her opening.

‘You can leave that the fuck alone as well,’ she says clenching her cheeks.

I exchange that hole for her other one, twisting my little finger around inside, churning up her hot sticky fluid. My cock springs back to life.

‘Fuck me from behind,’ she says.

She lifts her arse up as I get into position. Grabbing her waist I feel a tingling sensation inside my right arm.

‘Get my shock box Jo. It’s in the bedside cabinet draw.’

‘No. You haven’t fucked me while you have an hallucination for ages.’

‘Please Jo.’

She opens the draw. I can see the flash of silver metal in her hand. Something falls from the shock box onto her pillow. She’s looking at it. Quick for fuck sake. The pains starting to kick in.

‘Jo please,’ I shout, but there’s no response.

Snap! Crunch! Clenching my teeth together I take the pain on. Naked. I lie on my back, in the middle of a frozen lake. Focusing on my environment, it looks like an old distorted photographic negative. It’s surrounded by purple snow capped mountains. The vast granite sky weeps tears of ash, dusting myself and the frozen water with it’s sorrow. A few of the sun’s rays breakthrough, the ice vibrates as it creaks like an old man’s bones. My body’s still hot. Freeze me. The ice gives way, I slip down into it’s clear depths. My teeth chatter as the liquid cold stabs me inside and out. The fast-flow of the water pushes me along under the ice. I can see the sun’s rays and purple mountains quiver as the ice bends and buckles their image. My body’s numb. I’ve beaten the pain.

Looking at Jo on our bed, lying completely still on her back, her spread legs are bent upwards, I’m kneeling in-between them. Her arms are stretched behind her head. Her armpits have evolved into two identical vaginas. The pubic hair is a heart-shape. The vaginal lips have been freshly waxed. It’s Lucy Summers’s vagina.

My cock increases in length, it moves over her body, snaking it’s way over her stomach and in-between her breasts. The head of it slips into her right armpit, forcing it’s way in at speed, dragging Lucy’s outer labia with it. It bursts out of Joanne’s sprung open mouth, diving back into the left armpit. Watching it move inside Joanne, it bulges up her skin into sausage shapes,

circling around her breasts, making it's way under her stomach's skin, towards her vagina. My cock's head tentatively pokes through her pink-raw opening as if it's testing the air, it shoots up towards my face, staring at me it spits, the hot liquid smells of sour milk as it melts down the side of my cheek. My cock twists and turns, coiling itself around my neck, it applies pressure. I take a deep breath. Spiders flow out of Jo's vagina followed by a beam of rainbow coloured light, their fast dabbling legs irritate my cock as they make their way up it, coming for my face. My cock tightens it's grip, squeezing the life out of me.

Something shocks me in my right hand. Jo's face instantly comes into view, she's knelt upright opposite me, she sits down on the bed with her back against the headboard, leaving me in my upright kneeling position. My shock box is in my hand.

'Thanks Jo,' I say. 'You could of done it sooner.'

'Could I.'

'Yeah. You could.'

She puts her palms on her bent up knees, pulling them apart. 'Take a good look at my cunt.'

'What about it?'

'It's the last time you'll ever fucking see it.'

'What the fuck are you talking about?'

'This,' she says holding Lucy Summers's calling card up.

'Nothing happened.'

'I read the back, you lying cunt.'

'I meant to tell you. I thought you were with that bloke. It wouldn't of happened otherwise.'

'You fucking asshole Dan,' she shouts with tears falling from her eyes.

'Sorry. It's the only time I've slept with someone else in all the time we've been together.'

'D' you know who this is?'

'Yeah. Of course I do.'

'It's my fucking mother,' she yells, her face turning crimson.

'It's not. She's Lucy Chandler.'

'That's her fucking maiden name. This is her fucking married name. I've got the same card in my purse.'

'It can't be.'

'It fucking is,' she says putting her clothes on and running downstairs.

Chasing her, I grab her shoulder spinning her around as she opens the front door. Her psychotic blue eyes look like they're on fire. 'Get the fuck off me,' she shouts. 'How the fuck can I be with someone who's fucked my mother?'

'We can work it out.'

'We can never work it out.'

Her eyes are in full flow. Her cheeks look like they've been stung by a hundred wasps. She

pulls her ring off, slamming it into my palm.

‘Fucking choke on it,’ she says spitting in my face.

‘Jo. Please.’

‘I don’t want to see or speak to you ever again,’ she says opening the front door and slamming it behind her.

Crushing the ring in my hand. How the fuck am I going to get out of this one? Give her time. She’ll calm down.

The intercom beeps. She’s come back. Opening the door Inspector Watley smiles at me. ‘Daniel Hargreeves,’ he says. ‘I’m charging you with the abduction and assisted murder of Tim Sawyer. Anything you say can be used in evidence.’

‘Really.’

‘Oh. Yes. We caught your accomplice the same way we caught you. He’s confessed everything. He said you and him abducted that boy and killed him. I said I’d have you one day.’

## Chapter 12

The next morning: The air hangs heavily, recycled by the lungs of filth. Their touch tainting it with their horrendous crimes. I feel it suffocating me. Closing in like drifting smog. The heat from their rancid breath crawls all over my flesh, rotting it. The sour stench of an open gangrenous sweating wound, teeming with hatching new life, folds into the thick toxic mix, putrefying it.

I'm not one of these people. I can't be. My old cell's still the same. Do they keep it just for me? Holding my shock box, I give myself twenty-four volts. The peeling paint on my cell walls is still there.

Joanne's gone. Gone for good I think. At this moment I don't feel anything. It's too early, that will come later.

So my accomplice has come forward. Did I kill that boy with someone? I honestly don't know. Did my mind somehow block the horror out? Traumatized at such a young age. Is it possible? I'll find out soon when I confront my so-called partner in crime.

'Hargreeves,' says a prison guard. 'Follow me,' he says with his ring of keys clanging together. It sounds like a wind chime, each key's note a man's freedom. He finds mine. The dead lock clunks open, releasing me from my cage.

Following him, wolf whistles give away the presence of other prisoners in their darkened cells.

Sinbad sticks his face in-between two of his bars. His complexion sickly-white, as if he's been locked in a crate and fed milk. My handiwork on top of his cheek has changed. It looks like a seared piece of raw veal instead of a black threaded crease. 'You're back Dan,' he says smiling, making his scar react the same way.

'For the moment.'

'No talking Hargreeves,' says the prison guard.

Reaching a door the guard opens it. 'In there Hargreeves. Sit on the chair opposite the interviewing desk.'

Taking my seat I look at three people in front of me. Why the fuck is she here? She's sat next to Watley, and on the other side of him is a well-dressed man I've never seen before.

'Hargreeves,' says Watley, 'You know the person on my left, the person on my right is Shaun Rix. Jog any memories? Or are you going to lie again?'

'I've never seen him before in my life.'

‘We all said you’d say that,’ smirks Watley.

‘Dan,’ Dr Jones says, ‘Please admit your guilt. Your dream and hallucinations make it clear you had something to do with that boy’s death.’

‘I had nothing to do with it. Why the fuck are you here?’ I shout.

‘I’d calm down Hargreeves,’ says Watley, ‘I dug deep. No medical records of your condition exist in the UK. But I knew there was something you weren’t telling me. Checked all your travel records, and look who I found. The foreign office kept records of your suicide attempt, which led me straight to Dr Jones.’

‘So what,’ I say.

‘Your dream of the barn where he was killed, and your hallucinations. I read Dr Jones’s notes. Your hallucinogenic content is similar to his injuries. You kept that to yourself you little fucker.’

‘OK. I agree. But I have no recollection of killing that boy,’ I say.

‘Dan,’ says Dr Jones, ‘As a child you witnessed something horrendous. Your mind’s dissociation from the event is common in children, who experience a massive traumatic event. The correct term for it is dissociative disorder not otherwise specified. In other words part of your mind put it in a corner to forget about it, then it resurfaced after the emotional turmoil of losing your mother. That was the trigger.’

‘How could I kill someone at the age of five? It’s ridiculous.’

‘You didn’t Dan,’ says Shaun Rix, his eyes connecting with mine. ‘I did. You helped me abduct him and assist me in his death,’ he says putting his hands over his face.

‘Yeah. And who the fuck are you?’

‘Dan,’ he says. ‘I came across you on a pavement with a grazed knee, you were crying. I offered to take you home. But my intention was to kill you,’ he says gently sobbing into his hands.

I can’t see his eyes. I can’t tell if he’s lying ‘You fucking what?’

‘I changed my mind. Your blue eyes. My little sister who died had blue eyes. I saw Tim Saywer in his back garden. I offered to take him for an ice cream, he came over to us, you held his hand while I held the other one,’ he says removing his hands, the lids on his eyes closed.

‘You are one sick fucker. I had nothing to do with it.’

‘Not exactly Hargreeves,’ says Watley. ‘Rix’s statement said you passed him the tree root to strangle him, and also the broken bottle. You could of ran. You could of got help.’

‘I was fucking five.’

‘I admit you were influenced by an older child. But you’re still an accessory.’

‘I had no idea what he was going to do to that boy, when we went to the barn.’

‘I told you I was going to kill him,’ says Rix, still with his eyes closed. ‘You nodded your head.’

‘Jesus. Fuck. What is all this shit?’

‘Dan... You didn’t kill that child,’ says Dr Jones. ‘But you were definitely there, the evidence is overwhelming. Plead guilty to abduction and assisting.’

‘Am I fuck.’

‘You’ll get four years. Out in two,’ says Watley.

‘There is no fucking way I’m pleading guilty,’ I yell to Watley.

‘Hargreeves. I’ll make this simple,’ says Watley. ‘Plead guilty now. Or your brother and yourself can go to jail for five years each.’

‘What d’ you mean?’

‘Perjury. We’ll drop those charges. It’ll make life easier for everyone... If you plead guilty.’

‘No.. I’m. not.’

‘Daniel Hargreeves. I charge you with the assisted abduction and murder of Tim Sawyer. You are also charged with a second offence of perjury with your brother...’

‘Do what the fuck you like. I’m not doing it.’

Watley’s faded-blue eyes look worn out. Defeated even. ‘Dan,’ he says. ‘Admit to it. I was wrong about you killing the child, but you did assist. You were in the wrong place at the wrong time. To me you’ve been punished enough. You were only five. I want closure on this case before I retire. I’ve got personal issues relating to it. Let’s get it over and done with. A court will be more lenient if you do.’

‘No. Forget it. I’m not doing it. Take me back to my fucking cell.’

‘Don’t be a fool Dan,’ says Dr Jones. ‘Plead guilty now for your sake and your brothers.’

‘Take me back to my fucking cell.’

Lying in my cell, the walls close in, pushed in by the silence of men’s boredom. No sound of talking, just the odd cough to give away their existence. Each minute unfolds, it’s pace crawling, almost stagnating, as it drifts containing a hundred memories. At least I can’t have them taken away. Joanne’s face appears in most of them. I can taste and smell her. What’s she doing now?

How could I help kill a child? What sort of person am I? I’m not evil. I can be a bad person at times. But this. I need time to think. If I plead guilty Joanne’s gone for good. I don’t think I can live without her. I hope she can get over her mother and me. I didn’t know. But Justin. How can I sit by and watch him go to prison for five years, if I go to trial and lose. I’m guilty for sure. But their must be a way of swaying a Jury that Shaun Rix is lying, and it was someone else and not me, he just made a mistake. How does he know me? He just came across me that day. Fuck. He must of read about my case in the papers.

The buzzer goes, and all the cell doors automatically open. No personal touch when it comes to dinner. The corridor fills with a misfit bunch, they don’t speak. Food cuts the boredom. That’s all they desire. Shuffling along with them I take my place in the dinner queue. It looks like



Sinbad's been promoted. Scooping mashed potato up and slopping it on a plate has always been an ambition of his.

'Hi Dan,' he says smiling. 'Extra scoop for you.'

'You're still not fucking me in the ass. I gave you a permanent warning last time.'

'No Dan. We're just mates.'

'Yeah. Right. I'll speak to you later Sinbad,' I say as two scoops congeal on my plastic yellow tray.

'Can't wait. I'll see you in the exercise yard.'

Men are animals. They slurp, gobble, and belch. Mouths open with food on display, trays tipped up and licked clean. Pigs chained up with heads buried into slop troughs look more dignified.

We sit on the long table. While the separate groups sit on theirs. Looked over by the guards who smirk at the display.

I can't eat this shit. Pushing it across the table a prisoner pounces. Another spots it to. They both tug on the tray, squawking like starving vultures. A truncheon comes in-between them and they both calm down. The trays are picked clean, stacked at the end of the table. The noise coming from all their mouths reminds me of a battery farm. Chickens clucking before death. The food has stimulated them, loosening their tongues.

A buzzer goes and we make our way to the exercise yard. The grey tarmac, splashed with damp black patches, surrounded by red brick walls gives us a brief taste of what freedom is, when you look to the sky.

Sitting on a bench I look up and imagine. Vapour trails spew from a plane's engine, it cuts the frosted blue sky in two. What I'd give to be on that plane.

'Dan. Buddy,' says Sinbad.

'Just use the word Dan.'

'Why is that?' he says, his tone lowering. 'Is it because I fuck blokes in the ass?'

'You rape blokes.'

'You killed a kid.'

'Fuck off Sinbad. I was quite happy on my own.'

'No. Don't be like that. Who's the bloke you did it with?'

'That one sat over there, on his own,' I say pointing at Shaun Rix.

'The sisters have taken a liking to him.'

'Tell the sisters to leave him for a while. I need him sane and normal for a bit.'

'I'll tell them Dan.'

'I want a chat with Mr Rix,' I say getting up, walking over and sitting next to him.

He turns his head towards me. 'Sorry Dan,' he says. 'What can I say?'

'Yeah. I'm sorry to. Sorry I ever fucking met you.'

‘Dan it was a long time ago. My brain was scrambled at the time. I went from children’s home to children’s home with my sister. Our parents. Drug addicts, violence and sexual abuse was the norm in that household. When we got out, the situation wasn’t a lot better. Then my sister was diagnosed with cancer. Died six months later. That’s when I fell apart. I just took it out on someone.’

‘What you did an animal wouldn’t do.’

‘I’m aware of that. It took me years of therapy. I’m happy now. Married with two children. I’m an electrician. It’s my own business. It’s very successful.’

‘Yeah. That’s all gone down the drain. Why didn’t you just come forward and admit your guilt?’

‘Would you?’

‘Did you read about me in the papers?’

‘No,’ he says, both his eyes slightly moving to the right.

I know when someone lies. I need to see their eyes. It changes the air slightly, flickering through it. To me it smells sweet and velvety, like breaking chocolate. I’ve smelt it many times in business. The sweetest ones are the most subtle, with the biggest consequences if found out. Of course I’m an expert at lying. You need it in business, when you deal solely in money. Honesty and integrity get you nowhere. God! I’ve seen some things played out over the years. But those flickering sweet lies always save the day.

‘Don’t you lie to me you fucking cunt,’ I say grabbing his throat.

‘Dan look. I’ve told you why. You know now what happened. I can’t change the past. There’s nothing else to say... I did read the papers. You’re right.’

‘Tell the court it was mistaken identity.’

‘Don’t be ridiculous. There’s evidence of you all over that barn. Plead guilty Dan. Get it over and done with.’

‘I’m never going to do that,’ I say releasing him from my grip.

Two days later: ‘He died in the night,’ says Justin sitting opposite me, behind a perspex screen with a telephone receiver in his hand.

‘That’s sad Justin. I know you were close to him.’

‘The hospital took him in because of pneumonia, he had a heart attack in his sleep.’

‘At least he felt no pain.’

‘Will you go to the funeral? I know you and him didn’t see eye to eye.’

‘I’ll go. I’ll be able to on compassionate grounds.’

‘Dan the girls have gone back. George sorted it all out in the end.’

‘Good bloke George Huntsberg. They’re better off in their own country. Justin have you seen Joanne?’

'She's gone Dan. She's gone to live down on the coast. She phoned and told me.'

'Can you pass a message to her from me?'

'I can't. She said not to contact her. She's changed her number now.'

'Ask George for her new number.'

'He phoned me to. I'm not to speak to him either. They're cutting all ties Dan.'

'That's the Huntsberg way.'

'Dan I've got no money.'

'Live at my house. I've got enough in my bank account. I'll set up a direct debit into yours. Is two grand a month enough?'

'Plenty... Dan the police came around, they said I could go to jail for five years,' he says putting his hand to his face, tears streaming through all his fingers. 'Dan... All of this is too much... Dan I thought about taking my own life last night,' he says sobbing into his fingers.

'You get that fucking thought out of your head. You won't be going to any jail. Everything's going to be fine,' I say knowing now what I have to do.

Five hours later: 'You made the right decision,' says Inspector Watley.

'I can't see my brother getting sent down.'

'You still don't believe you did it. Believe me you did.'

'I have no recollection of it. Will I still have to go to court?'

'Yeah. It's a serious case. No trial. Your solicitor will present the evidence to the Judge, he'll pass down a sentence. You'll get four, do two because of the age you committed the crime.'

'Why were you personally connected to the case?'

'I was in charge of the whole tragedy. I became very close to Tim's mother. She moved into my house. Two years later I found her hanging from my upstairs bannister. We were engaged and to marry a month after her death.'

'Sorry to here about that.'

'She was a beautiful woman. No mother gets over the death of a child. That bond will never be broken,' he says touching his chest. I think he's touching a locket, judging by the gold chain around his neck.

'I can see you loved her.'

'Hargreeves. Don't do anything stupid while you're in Trentville. Keep your head down and just do your two years. Get your life back on track again.'

'I will.'

Two days later: 'You win again,' says Shaun Rix.

'Shaun will your wife wait for you on the outside?' I say resetting the drafts board up, sat out in the fresh air of the prison yard.

'We love each other very much. I hope so.'

'How much time will you have to do?'

'Eight years. Out in four.'

'What does she think about you killing a kid?'

'She already knew. I couldn't marry her without her knowing the truth about my past.'

'What was her fucking reaction when you told her?'

'Shock,' he says looking down at the board and moving a black draft.

'But she still married you.'

'Yeah. We love each other, but she was also pregnant at the time.'

'How old are your kids?'

'My girls five and my boy's seven. I dote on them. They are not going to have the childhood I had. I'm a good husband Dan. It was the start of my life that fucked up, not the rest.'

'My girls are twelve.'

'You didn't tell me you had children.'

'They live in Thailand. I knocked up a Thai prostitute. They lived with me, they've just gone back.'

'That's so sad Dan. I'm so sorry. You must be devastated?'

'Not really. They were a couple of the rudest, naughtiest fuckers you'd ever meet.'

'Really,' Shaun Rix says laughing.

'Shaun. When you killed that kid with me, how did you know I wouldn't go to the police?'

'I didn't. I didn't care at the time if you did anyway. It's a shame you didn't. We wouldn't be here now if you had.'

The buzzer goes in the exercise yard. 'Five all,' says Shaun Rix.

'First one up to ten. We'll finish this tomorrow,' I say walking back to the prison with him to take our morning shower.

The peeling paint on the ceiling of my cell hangs bat like, the filament in the naked light bulb glows red, the yellow cooling light surrounding it attracts a fly. He's been there for a while. Bouncing back and forth, trying to escape inside it. He'll fall soon like the rest of them.

Joanne's gone for good. She always wanted to live by the sea. Dad's dead. I should grieve but I don't. My mother was the main person in my childhood. I never got on with my father. Justin thought about killing himself. Jesus. I've got to spend two years in this shit hole. Where the fuck did it all go wrong? Just a few small decision, lightly made in life can make such a difference. All this for sitting on a pavement with a grazed knee at the age of five.

He falls in the air, tumbling to his death, the heat from the bulb has melted his wings. Hitting the floor he lies there on his back, semi-cooked but still moving. A spider gingerly walks from under my bed to his regular food source. Two thin legs come up, they shovel his meal

underneath him, he sinks his fangs. He scurries back to his safe haven, moving sideways due to the heavy load.

Looking back to the bulb another meal tries to escape inside. A never ending circle of life and death.

Why the fuck do I have spiders in my hallucinations? Why the fuck do I have rainbows in them? Why am I petrified of fucking rainbows? And why the fuck do I run towards the barn in my dreams? I should be running away.

How can I sleep. My mind whirls away at a hundred-miles-an-hour. I need to calm down. I need to play with my thoughts. People think of ex-lovers in their pursuit of sleep. That gallery in my mind wouldn't take very long. I like to be hidden in a jungle with a rifle, alone, killing people without faces. I need to feel the fear of getting caught, knowing full well I'm safe in my bed. Yes. There's one face I'd like to see tonight. I'll go and get him. And after, my thoughts can fall away like powder being blown from my hand and drifting through the air, then I can slip into my usual dream.

The next day: Succulent salted roast beef melts inside my mouth.

'These corn sausages are disgusting,' says Shaun Rix sat beside me.

'I can eat them,' I say with the sound of a farmyard echoing around the canteen.

'You must have an iron stomach.'

The buzzer goes. 'C' mon Shaun. Five all. Let's finish it.'

'I'm with you Dan,' he says as Sinbad comes up and whispers in my ear. 'Dan. Word is General Custard's going to have a go in the yard. I'll watch your back.'

'Thanks,' I say.

Sitting on a bench with Shaun, we're in the middle of our second game.

'Dan? Have you got a girlfriend on the outside?'

'I did. A partner of twelve years. We were engaged and going to marry soon.'

'Sorry. It's my fault you're here. Sorry about her leaving you because of this.'

'That's not the reason. I accidentally fucked her mother. She found out.'

'Christ!'

'I know. I must admit though her mother was one hell of a lady. But I loved her daughter very much.'

'How come you didn't know who her mother was?'

'It's a long story. Shaun in my hallucinations I have a lot of the dead boy's injuries.'

'Dan. Don't. You said you wouldn't discuss it any more. You know I'm racked by guilt. You know I feel disgusted and nauseated about what I did.'

'Just this last question.'

'OK. Then. Make this the last.'

‘In my hallucinations there are spiders and rainbows. How come?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘In my dreams I run towards the barn. I should be running away after helping kill him.’

‘Dan it was a long time ago. I think there were spiders in the barn,’ he says looking straight at me. ‘Yeah. Come to think of it there was a rainbow as we walked across a field with the boy towards the barn,’ he says with his eyes shifting slightly.

And there it is. The sweetest aroma, breaks the air. Crumbling chocolate fills my nostrils. That candy-coated lie has the most powerful scent I’ve ever experienced, flickering before me, subtle in it’s execution. Trying to hide the truth. This fucker’s been lying all along. Why? Who’s he protecting? Why is this person worth so much that he has to frame me?

‘Thanks for clearing that up for me,’ I say with a smile.

‘My pleasure Dan.’

Sinbad comes running over. ‘Turn around Dan,’ he yells.

Spinning on the bench General Custard’s arm is raised above me holding a yellow plastic blade. Grabbing his wrist I pin him to the red brick wall, squeezing his throat with my thumb and forefinger. ‘You’ll have to be quicker than that you old cunt,’ I say prising the blade out of his hand with my fingers. His arm drops. He’s submissive being pinned against the wall, I’m younger and stronger than him. He knows the games up. Putting the tip of the blade inside his right nostril I flick it out. The fine cut trickles, soon it’ll flow. Pushing the blade against his throat his grey eyes stare into mine. ‘Do it,’ he says.

‘Dan. Don’t,’ says Shaun Rix. ‘Don’t add any more time to your sentence.’

‘Would you like me to do it?’ I ask.

He nods. ‘I would.’

‘Why are you in here? What kid did you fuck and murder?’

‘I don’t know why I’m here.’

‘Are you trying to tell me you’re innocent?’

‘I am innocent,’ he says, ‘I’ve only killed pricks like you.’ His grey eyes staring directly into mine. The air remains the same. There is no smell of broken chocolate. Christ! He’s telling the truth. Looking at him my own old face appears on his. This could be me in forty years time. Letting him go I drop the plastic blade on the floor. ‘Don’t try it again,’ I say. He just smirks at me.

My cell smells of strawberries. I didn’t help kill that kid. Who is he protecting? Who is so important that he has to fuck me over? If I wasn’t with him when he committed the crime, how come my hallucinations show the boy’s injuries? My dream is about the barn. I’m always trying to get inside it. Why? I need to find out. I need to go inside that barn. I can’t do it in my dreams, I’ll have to do it physically. Justin will have to do a few things for me on the outside. He’s

visiting this afternoon.

Two days later: Grey elephants float in the sky, drifting in melancholic madness. I know how they feel, their bright edges blind me as they pass over the sun, dripping their laden contents like diamonds falling from a black velvet bag.

Looking back at them lowering him, Justin cries, his tears mixing with the diamonds on his cheeks. He stands across from me, separated by a box of dressed flesh and bone. The rest of the mourners are behind him, their faces are blurred, their charcoal clothing stays dry, protected by black umbrellas which weep streams, it falls from their edges, exploding onto fresh Daffodil shoots and manicured spiked green grass. I have no protection. I stand alone handcuffed with two prison guards either side of me. Cold water runs down my back from my soaking hair. It's the only thing that wants to be close to me. Who wants to stand by a child killer.

'Can I go back to the house?' I ask.

'No,' says a prison guard.

'I just want to see if my brother's OK.'

'No.'

'It's a three hour drive back. There'll be sandwiches and hot tea.'

'Ten minutes. Then we're leaving.'

The box is lowered. I feel nothing. The person in there I don't even know. The person in there is probably not my father. My mother said on her deathbed that someone will look over me when she's gone. I asked if it would be her. She said no, that person was very much alive.

'Nice spread Justin.'

'Aunty Mavis did it.'

'How are you feeling?'

'I'm fine Dan.'

'Help yourself to the food,' I say to the two guards either side of me. 'Let me have a couple of minutes with my brother.'

'We will Hargreeves. But you don't move from this spot. Our eyes won't leave you,' he says.

'Everything go to plan Justin?'

'It's all in place. D' you think it'll work?'

'I don't know. All I know is I've never opened the barn door. I hope when I do it will give me the answer I'm looking for.'

'Good luck Dan,' he says slipping a piece of paper into my pocket.

'Thanks.'

A guard comes over with a plate full of sandwiches. 'I need the toilet,' I say.

‘For fuck sake Hargreeves. I’m fucking eating.’

Following me we make our way to the downstairs lavatory. ‘Hurry up Hargreeves.’

‘Can you unlock one of my hands?’

‘You can piss quite easily with your hands cuffed in front of you.’

‘I need a shit. D’ you want to wipe my ass?’

‘Fucking hell,’ he says looking inside the windowless toilet. He unlocks the cuff releasing one hand.

‘Just hurry up,’ he says as I shut the door and switch the light on.

Kneeling down by the porcelain bowl, I run my fingertips along the top of a piece of plaster board, which has been painted the same colour as the walls, I prise it out. Daylight shoots through, but it’s disguised by the artificial light. My hole of freedom. Well done Justin. I quietly crawl through. Standing up I survey my family garden. Completely empty apart from a rusting old swing. My handcuff limply falls from my wrist, it won’t be a burden.

The swing squeaks as I pass, gently rocking in a slight breeze. Pulling the loosened fence panel to one side I slip through. Justin’s map better be right. Reading it, I run following it’s instruction. Down a road, up a dirt track and into a dead field with new life poking through. I feel all eyes are on me as I run across the open ground. The field bows down towards running water. The sound of it’s hissing gets louder. I jump across it, it’s cold watery fresh scent ebbs away from me as I scramble up a steep embankment. Rocks tumble, crashing into the small stream. Reaching the top a monotonous hum rings through my ears. I’m close. Looking up, a wooden mast holds electricity cables. A current fizzes through them. Catching my breath, I must keep going. They’ll be onto me by now. Another field’s in front of me. Where is this fucking barn? Running, I spot it in the distance. At last. Just another field in front of me. The golden corn from my dreams has long gone. Just stubble and dirt remain. My shoes kick up dry soil. The barn increases in size. It’s blue roof and red walls have been stripped by the seasons, just patches of those once bright colours remain. This place could give me the answer I need. I’ve seen it thousands of times, but this time I’m going inside. The grey knotted door is a lot smaller, in my dreams it’s huge. Pulling the rusted latch across, the door easily opens with the force of my prison boot to help it. Taking a deep breath I walk into my nightmare.

The smell of apples hits me. The barn is completely empty, sunlight seeps through the gaps in it’s planked walls highlighting specks of dust. My stomach churns from the running and smell, my tongue knows the contents of it could meet it in a minute. Swallowing saliva I try to force it down.

I feel nothing for this place. All it is, is an empty fucking barn. What the fuck was I thinking? I’ll do extra time for this. What a stupid cunt. Fuck!

A tingling sensation moves along the inside of my right arm. I won’t use my shock box. Snap! Crunch! I must beat the pain.



They stare at me, hundreds of them. Dark-brown eyes filled with no life. Drips of ice pull their delicate long eye lashes downward, flirting in a long line. Their pink flesh is smeared in pale-red blood, brushed with white frost, stamped with the address of their last home. A hook through their ankle spreads their legs, their guts removed, spliced open to make sure they're well drained. Miniature icicles point downward from their snouts, they look like they're all smiling, strung up in a never ending procession. I'm at the front. We move along at a sluggish pace, waiting to be quartered and sliced, to be presented in a pretty way. Who wants fear, misery and death to excite their palate and put contentment on their face.

The hook through my ankle gives me no pain. But I'm still warm. C'mon freeze me. I put my arms around the one next to me, it's freezing flesh sticks to mine. Good. That's what I need. My body temperature plummets. Yes. Faster. A stamp appears on my buttock. Furry white frost covers my entire body. I'm there.

Looking at myself as a five year old, I'm dressed in pyjamas, jumping up and down on my old single bed. I turn in my jump looking out of my old bedroom window. My knees bend stopping me dead still. My young self runs past me, excitement flushed across his face. I follow him into my parents bedroom. 'Mum,' he shouts.

'Dan go back to bed,' she says snuggled up to my father.

'Mum. Rainbow. We find gold at end of rainbow.'

'Dan,' she says turning her head to her alarm clock. 'It's six o'clock in the morning.'

'Mum we find gold.'

'Dan. Bed now.'

My young self turns, his child's sulk scrunches his face up. He runs past me, I follow. He hangs onto the bannister, as he carefully negotiates the steps. Making it to the bottom he runs into the kitchen. Following him he puts his little grey hooded coat on and his black rubber boots. He reaches for an apple in a fruit bowl by the fridge, placing it into his coat's pocket. He pats Nugin our dog, who sits there with his lead in his mouth. 'Nugin I go on own. I take you out later,' he says going out the back door.

He runs to a fence at the back of our garden, slipping through a gap in the corner. I glide over the top of it, along the road and up a dirt track. I follow his trail in deep lush grass to where it bows down to the stream. I can see him scramble up the steep bank, I glide down behind him as he reaches the top. He rests, taking a bite of his apple, he looks up to the electricity mast, it hums it's never ending tune, breaking an eerie silence. The sky's a cloudless electric blue, the rainbow in the distance seems like it's been perfectly painted on. He runs again putting the apple in his pocket. He makes it to the blazing summer cornfield, it gently rocks back and forth. I can see the top of his head move along the field disrupting the corn ears. The red barn with the blue roof shines and shimmers in the bright morning sunshine. The rainbow looks like it's entering it through the roof. Following in his tracks I'm directly behind him as he stands up on tiptoe

pushing hard on the barn door's latch. It creaks open, beads of sweat glisten on his forehead. His young strength can just about open it, he slips inside. I follow.

The sunlight seeping through the gaps in the barn's planked walls illuminates the inside. At the back is a young boy on his back, splayed out on a hay bale. My young self walks over to him. He looks up and down his partly clothed body, taking in the horrendous injuries. The young boy's head faces us, his eyelids are closed, his neck entwined by a young tree root.

'Wake up,' my young self says. 'Wake up. You need go home.'

My young self pulls on the broken bottle embedded in his chest. 'Wake up.'

He tries to pull the bottle out, but it's stuck fast. He runs towards me, tears rolling down his cheeks, I want to pick him up, hold him, nurse him.

He stumbles by my feet, he puts his hands out, his face goes into some loose hay, his apple rolls across the floor, I can't move, I'm frozen to the spot. I want to pick him up. He looks up at me, five small spiders have attached themselves to his cheek, one is moving on his eyeball, he rubs it with the back of his hand, killing it, it smears across his eye, his blood shot eye looks through me. He gets up and runs through the gap in the barn door.

Looking at the boy, how could anyone inflict so much savage damage. A tear has dripped from the corner of his left tear duct, cold night air has frozen it, it's trail crystallized across his bitten cheek, it holds so much pain. His eyelid springs open. Fucking hell. Jesus. His glossy light-brown eye stares at me. He wants something. He knows me. It looks like it's calling to me.

My feet move, I glide out of the barn. I can't see my young self. Moving along our previous route, I see him sat in the middle of the shallow stream. His arm is raised, he's fallen down the steep bank. I glide down just hovering above the water, and stand by him. His arm is broken, the sound of loose rocks splashing in the water behind him makes him turn his head. One hits his back, he screams out going flat on his face into the water. Another falls onto his broken arm. His dripping head shoots out of the stream, crying, yelling, but no one comes. He stands up holding his right arm. He walks back, whimpering across the field, down the dirt track and along the road. He slips through the corner gap in the fence. My mother is in the kitchen doorway. 'Where the hell have you been Dan?' she shouts, running over to him and picking him up.

'I don't know.'

'Your arm son. You're all wet. Where have you been?'

'I don't know,' he says burying his crying head into her shoulder.

I can feel the warm trickles of my tears, as she passes a brand new rocking swing, taking him inside. I now know what happened to me. All because of a fucking rainbow. Someone's going to pay a heavy price for ruining my life. I am completely innocent. Now to get myself out of jail and get Joanne back.

Four weeks later: 'I love you Dan Hargreeves,' says Joanne. Her icy-blue eyes melting into

me, warming my heart.

The church is full. Her flowing white dress looks like it's submerged in water.

'I've dreamt about being in this place with you,' I say. 'A honeymoon in Thailand. A week on our own, then pick the girls up.'

'I can't wait,' she says squeezing my hand.

She signs the register Joanne Hargreeves, I sign my name.

Everyone stares as we walk down the aisle, confetti is thrown as we jump into a waiting vintage white car. She turns to me, her soft warm lips touch mine. 'Put your hand up my skirt,' she says. 'I've missed your touch so much.'

Fighting through the ruffles, I find the elastic at the top of her knickers and slip my hand down. She's completely waxed. 'All your hairs gone,' I say.

'You've never had me without pubic hair. I wanted to give you something new. A fresh start to our new life.'

My finger easily slides in, she smiles. Fuck! Something is gnawing into it, it's going down to the bone. I look into her face. Tears of red blood run down her cheeks, dripping over her white dress. I yank my hand out, my fingers gone, just a chewed up stump remains. She pushes me down on the back seat. She undoes my belt, pulling my trousers down, she lifts her dress up pulling her knickers to one side. Getting my cock out she puts it inside herself. She bends down, the tip of her nose touching mine. 'My cunt,' she says in a growling guttural voice, 'Is going to eat your cock.'

She opens her mouth sinking her teeth into my cheek. She pulls at the flesh, tearing a chunk off. Sitting back up she chews, smiling down at me.

My eyes burst open. Fuck me! It's going to take me years to get used to dreaming about things that don't involve the red barn with the blue roof. Dripping in fucking sweat again.

A truncheon hits every one of my bars in my isolation cell. 'Get up Hargreeves. Time to get back to your old cell.'

No one believed a word I said. The two guards got suspended. This whole prison smells of shit, it's as if someone has driven a muck spreader full of human waste through the place. Each cell and it's occupants splattered in filth. I miss my taste and smell swaps.

The keys rattle and my door clunks open. 'Fucking hurry up Hargreeves.'

I say nothing as I follow him. I'm not flavour of the month in this place at the moment. Two of his colleagues suspended because of me, has caused a great deal of animosity. Fuck them.

Prisoners cheer as I'm led to my cell. Getting two screws suspended in this place is a great win for them.

He opens my cell door. 'You better fucking behave yourself,' he says pushing his truncheon under my chin. 'I hope I get the chance to use this on you,' he says pushing me into my cell. Slamming it shut.

I look up at my naked light bulb. Another victim bounces. The buzzer goes and the cell doors automatically open.

Shuffling along I receive pats on my back. Shaun Rix walks beside me. 'Dan. Why?'

'I just wanted fresh air and freedom again.'

'It'll add a couple of years to your sentence.'

'I wasn't thinking. I saw my chance and took it.'

'You'll probably do the same time in here as me.'

'Shaun it's in the past now. I can't change anything. I'll just say in court I wasn't myself after burying my father. Hopefully they'll be lenient.'

'Game of drafts after break fast?'

'Yeah. Have you improved during my absence?'

'I haven't played. Dan you're the only person I have anything to do with in this place. I'm not one of them.'

'Really?'

'I committed my crime when I was a child. They did it as adults. They knew what they were doing. I didn't.'

'So you think that's OK?'

'No. Not at all. But there is a big difference between myself and them. I know how to love. They don't.'

After eating something that numbed my taste buds and burned my nasal passages, I sit with Shaun outside in the cool sunshine. The smell of shit has gone, replaced by the scent of freedom, reaching in from behind the prison walls. The sound of traffic, peoples voices and footsteps is a constant reminder of a life outside. They have no idea what it's like in here, but we all know what it's like out there. I need more than anything else to be one of those people again.

'It's my daughter's birthday today,' says Shaun Rix, 'It's the first time I've missed it.'

'Sorry to hear that Shaun.'

'My wife came to visit me yesterday. She's gorgeous. I miss her so much. She said she'd wait the rest of her life for me. She said four years is nothing.'

'She must love you very much Shaun.'

'I can't wait to hold her again.'

'A female's touch seems a distant memory.'

'Where's your shock box?'

'I don't need it any more.'

'Have the hallucinations stopped?'

'Yeah. My taste swaps have gone to. I dream a different dream every night now. It all takes a lot of getting used to.'

'I bet it does. How come the sudden change?'

'I don't know.'

The buzzer goes. We make our way back to take our morning shower.

'Stop looking at my cock and ass,' I say to Sinbad.

'I wasn't.'

'He was,' says Shaun Rix, 'He does it every morning.'

'Why don't you look at Shaun's instead?' I ask.

'I wasn't looking at anyone's cock,' says Sinbad. 'It's the scars on your arms Dan.'

'That was a miss spent youth. A place I never want to visit again.'

'Why take it out on yourself?' says Sinbad.

'I'm not like you. Some people walk through life on the light side of it. A lot of us walk on the dark side for a bit. You take it out on other people. I don't.'

'You girls,' says a prison officer. 'No talking. Especially you Hargreeves.'

Two naked prisoners jump on him. One gets hold of his truncheon as they wrestle him to the floor.

Smack! He's out cold. Water flows on his unconscious face, his grey uniform turns black from the jets of water. Shaun Rix is grabbed by two prisoners, his arms are bent behind his back, he's bent down horizontally.

'Dan. Sinbad. Help me,' he screams.

Sinbad gets behind him, he's already erect. He places both his palms on Shaun's buttocks.

'Dan fucking stop them,' he screams.

'No,' I say.

'Dan please. For God's sake fucking stop them.'

'D' you want me to stop them?'

'Do it Dan. Just stop them,' he says.

Placing my thumb and forefinger around his jaw, I lift his head up. His eyes meet mine.

'I organised all this from my isolation cell. It cost me a few quid as well. This can all stop if you tell me who you killed that boy with.'

'I did it with you Dan.'

'You see Shaun. I didn't. Who are you protecting?' I say squeezing his jaw tighter. The wet bodies of other prisoners crowd around us. Excitement flicks through the air for them.

'No one. It was you.'

'A name Shaun. This is your last warning.'

'I can't just make up somebody's name. It was you.'

I nod to Sinbad. This isn't going to be easy. I hoped he'd just give me the name.

I look into his eyes as Sinbad starts to penetrate him.

'Please Dan.'

‘A name.’

‘Keep him still, my cock just fell out,’ shouts Sinbad.

The two prisoners holding his arms, twist them and push them up higher. He screams out.

Blood trickles down the insides of his thighs, it’s flow broken by black hairs, it’s jagged path mixes with tiny water droplets. His bulging eyes look at me, streaks of pink criss-cross the whites of them, tears run. His mouth is open, sucking in as much air as he can.

‘A name,’ I say.

‘It was you,’ he says taking another deep breath.

Sinbad gets into full copulation.

‘After Sinbad finishes, there’s four more that want a turn.’

‘I’ll fucking kill you for this,’ he yells.

Fuck this. My knuckles crunch into his face. I bring his head back up, his eyes meet mine. Blood seeps from his split lips. ‘Sinbad get out of him, I want another sister up him.’

‘I haven’t come yet.’

‘Just do as I say.’

Another sister takes position, forcing his cock inside him. The smell of cow shit rises. Rix’s eyes roll back. He’s going to black out in a minute. I punch him again.

‘A fucking name.’ I say.

‘Char... lie,’ he says with a long strand of saliva hanging onto the corner of his mouth. His eyes roll back again. He’s out cold. He’s dropped on the floor.

Something hits my back, it hits me again. A thick warm gush bursts over my fingers as I checkout the wounds. Falling to my knees I look at Shaun’s unconscious face. I feel my life draining away. Is this it? I fall onto Shaun’s naked body. Our blood swirls around on the white tiles, mixing together in the shower water. Everything goes silent. Darkness creeps in.

I can smell disinfectant and roses. My mouth’s dry as a bone. I try and focus, but my vision is blurred.

‘Welcome back,’ says Dr Jones.

‘How long have I been out?’

‘Two days, he caught your kidney. This is a public hospital, the injury was too complicated for the prison one. Two guards are outside.’

‘Why are you still here?’

‘My husband’s English remember. We’re visiting relatives. I had to deal with your case, so we decided to take a holiday as well.’

‘I’m surprised they let you see me.’

‘You’re still my patient. Always will be.’

‘I didn’t help kill that boy.’

'I heard about your escape attempt. You went to the barn. What happened?'

'I was attracted to the barn by a rainbow. I discovered his body after he was killed. My mind just buried the trauma.'

'So who was the person he did it with?'

'His name's Charlie. That's all I know.'

'I'll do some research on his family history, this person means a great deal to him. Have your hallucinations gone?'

'Yeah. Plus my taste swaps. The dreams have stopped to.'

'Good. I thought that would happen when you found out the cause of them. I'll be back here in a weeks time.'

The smell of roses leaves with her. General Custard nearly succeeded. We're evens now.

A week later: Dr Jones enters my hospital room, dressed in a long coat, hat, scarf and sunglasses.

'Morning Dan. We have to be quick,' she says taking her coat off.

'What d' you mean?'

'You need to visit someone, I can't get involved, put my coat, glasses and hat on. Cover the bottom of you face with the scarf.'

'What about the guards?'

'I've given them a coffee each laced with laxative.'

'What's going on?'

'Shaun Rix has got an older sister. He did have a younger one that died, he failed to mention he had an older one. They were both at the same children's home together when the murder was committed.'

'He said the name Charlie.'

'Her name's Charlotte. That's who he's protecting. Rip some bed sheet up and tie my hands and ankles together, gag me as well. My hire car's parked at the front of the hospital, it's a red Mini, the door's open and the keys are in it, I've set the sat-nav to her address. Hurry Dan.'

Putting the clothing on I rip the bed sheet up.

'I've got no shoes.'

'Put my tights on, cover your hairy legs up. There's a pair of my husbands shoes on the car's passengers seat. The hospital's too busy to notice you're shoeless.'

Dr Jones sits on my bed tied and gagged. She moves her head towards the direction of the door, shooing me away. I hope this fucking works. If I get caught I'm looking at some serious time.

Entering the hospital wing the two guards are nowhere to be seen, no one takes any notice as I briskly walk through. Phones ring, people dart about. This place is a fucking mad house.

Pressing the button for the ground floor a nurse stands beside me. She looks me up and down as we wait.

‘Visiting?’ she asks.

I rub my thumb and forefinger along my scarf covered throat, and cough. The lift makes it’s journey, the lights jump their numbers. For fuck sake hurry up. The doors open with the sound of a ping and we walk inside.

‘If your throat’s sore, it’s a good idea to wear shoes,’ says the nurse.

I nod as we descend. We reach the second floor and come to a stop, she exits giving me a long stare as the doors close. Reaching the bottom a flurry of people stand in front of me, slipping by them they rush inside. My hands are soaking, the wounds on my back are starting to ache. Passing the reception desk a voice shouts out. ‘Madame. You need to sign the register.’

Fuck! Going over to her I keep my head down and mouth covered by the scarf. She shows me a clip board and passes me a pen. I see Dr Jones’s signature by a time slot. How do I copy that? The phone goes, she answers. I write in the box smudging it with the side of my soaking hand.

I expect her to shout to me as I go through the entrance into bright sunshine, but she remains on the phone. Spotting Dr Jones’s red Mini I jump inside. The engine comes to life, it’s been a while since I’ve been in this position. Easing the clutch up the sat-nav springs into life with it’s commands. I expect the whole hospital to come running out of the building to stop me. My armpits are drenched, my soaking hands slip on the steering wheel as I drive out onto the main road.

The traffic’s light, thank fuck. My stomach twists with anxiety. If this fails I’m fucked. It says on the sat-nav it’s an hour and fifteen minutes to her address. If I make it there before being stopped it’ll be a major miracle.

Passing her house I park at the end of the road. My soaking tights stick to the vinyl seat, prising the backs of my legs away I put the shoes on. Leaving the car running I make my way to her house. The smart leafy neighbourhood’s quiet. Only the sound of a barking dog breaks the silence. Entering her pathway the house is well maintained, she’s married well. Two children’s bikes are parked up in the porch, three sets of boots caked in mud are neatly placed in a row beside them. Pulling my scarf over my mouth I ring the door bell. I can hear the muffled sound of someone inside. The door opens. A woman answers dressed in a short brown skirt and light brown shirt, her feet are bare, her long tussled brown hair surrounds a naturally pretty face with no make-up.

‘Yes?’ she asks.

Looking behind me there’s no one about. I push her hard between her breasts, she goes sprawling across the hallway, but makes no sound. Closing the door behind me I pull my scarf



down revealing my stubble covered chin and look down at her. Her brown eyes dig into me. 'Rape me and leave,' she says.

'Upstairs.'

She submissively does what I ask, the visible line of her knickers moves from left to right as I follow her. She leads me to her bedroom and lies down on her back, on a bed.

'Fuck me and go. I won't scream or yell,' she says putting her hands up her skirt.

'How d' you know I haven't come to rob you?'

'A thief doesn't knock on the front door dressed as a woman,' she says pulling her knickers over her shoeless feet. She throws them at me, hitching her skirt up. She bends her legs upwards, then spreads them presenting me her vagina.

'It could do with a trim,' I say.

'I haven't used it for a while. So are you going to get this over and done with?' she says calmly.

Kneeling in-between her spread legs my tights stretch over my fully erect cock.

'Put it in your mouth,' I say.

She sits up, putting her hands up my coat. She wrenches my tights down to my knees. I unbutton the coat. She looks up at me as she brings my cock to her lips. 'I'll do anything you say. I've been raped many times before. Just don't hurt me. My children need me,' she says.

Wrapping my scarf around her neck, her gaze leaves my cock and looks up at me. 'Please. My children.'

I pull hard on the noose I've made. 'No,' she chokes out, her hands grabbing my arm, her nails digging deep into my flesh.

I tighten it further, her face blushes, her eyes look like they're on stalks, the contents of her mouth spews down over her chin, her open mouth gargles it's last breath, tears roll out the corners of her eyes, piss spurts from her vagina, the smell of ammonia fills the room. I release the scarf, she slumps down on the bed.

Unwinding the scarf it's red imprint covers her neck with swirling welts, her crumpled body lays lifeless. Her breathing's light.

What the fuck did I just do? God! Why didn't I just take her to the police station? That's why I left the car running. Sometimes, something just takes over me. Look at this poor girl. She's only a young mother. I hope Dr Jones has got the right person.

Pulling the duvet from underneath her I place her on her back, lifting her head back I make sure her throat's straight, getting as much oxygen as possible to her brain. Drying the insides of her thighs and vagina with the duvet, I find her thrown away knickers and put her shoeless feet through them, pulling them up her legs they twist into a tight roll. For fuck sake. Why are women's knickers so flimsy? Straightening them out I try and get them over the back of her arse.

'You are one strange fucking rapist,' she says hoarsely.

Kneeling back up, she sorts herself out pulling her skirt back down. Taking my sunglasses and hat off I smile at her. 'D' you recognise me?' I ask.

'No.'

'I'm Dan Hargreeves.'

She gives me a long stare. 'Sorry,' she murmurs.

'I'm sorry to. You know I'm serious. So are you going to admit to the crime, or will I have to strangle you.'

'Dan just do the two years. There's a lot more at stake than you think.'

'You are the one that helped kill that kid?'

'I was. But I can't help you Dan. Sorry.'

'I'm sorry I have to kill you.'

'You won't Dan. Another fifteen years to your sentence. I don't think so,' she says sitting up, resting her back on the headboard.

'Why frame me?'

'My children Dan. I won't leave them.'

'Your husband can look after them.'

'He's in jail. We've got no other relatives. They are not going into a children's home.'

'When does he get out?'

'In four years. You know my husband. He's Shaun Rix.'

'Are you sick? You're brother and sister.'

'We're step brother and sister. My mother married his father, I took the family name. He got her into drugs, they're both dead now.'

'They can go into foster care. I'll look after them.'

'No Dan. I will not take any chances with those two. Shaun and I went from children's home to children's home, the sexual abuse was horrendous. When our little sister died it was too much. We took it out on that boy. Well Shaun did, I just watched,' she says with her eyes moistening over.

'Children's homes are different now.'

'How the fuck do you know? You ever been in one?' she shouts.

'So I've got to rot in jail because of you two?'

'Sorry. We read about you getting charged in the papers. Two witnesses saw two children take the boy away. Shaun had to come up with a name. If there was another way we'd do it. Shaun's not protecting me, he's protecting his kids.'

'There must be a way out of this.'

'There isn't. By the way Shaun's been moved to another prison. One where you can't get hold of him.'

'I'll find away. Don't worry about that.'

She holds my hand. 'Dan just do the two years. Do it for my children.'

'I've got children to.'

'Yeah. Shaun told me. He also told me you sent them back to Thailand. You can't be much of a parent.'

'I was going to bring them back.'

'He said you told him they were the most rudest, naughtiest fuckers you'd ever met. Doesn't sound like you're a good father to me.'

'You haven't fucking met them. They're a couple of lunatics.'

'How can you say that about your own children.'

'So what happens now?'

'You found my house easily enough. I'm sure you can find your way back to Trentville.'

Three months later: We wait for the Jury's verdict. My solicitor presented all the evidence. Shaun and Charlotte Rix took the stand. Their story didn't change. This is my last chance. Even though I'm completely innocent. It's still my word against theirs. The only big chance I've got is Dr Jones's testimony. She told the Jury she believed everything I said, even though I tied her up. She told the Jury I did it out of desperation.

The Jury arrive back taking their seats. The head Juror stands. 'Guilty.'

No. It can't be.

'Daniel Hargreeves. Please stand,' says the Judge. 'Four years for abduction and assisting in Tim Saywers murder. Two years for absconding. Four years for absconding a second time. You're lucky that Dr Jones didn't have you charged with assault. You are lucky that Charlotte Rix didn't have you charged with the same offence, because your sentence would have been a lot higher. Take him down.'

Ten years. I'll have to do five. I can't do that.

That night: Four rolling guitar chords fill my mind. Their solemn sound breaks my heart. Tic-tock, tic-tock, tic-tock. It tightens. My cell wall moves towards my face, touching my nose, my breathing stops. I descend. Falling through darkness. I can feel the rush of air speed pass me. My final journey.

The cornfield moves majestically in a slight breeze. The silent air feels different. Turning to my right I can see the outline of someone, blurred in the distance. The barn's blue and red roars at me, almost blinding me. The sunlight intensifying it's colours. The corn stems rustle as I crush them. Looking at the grey beaten door, something inside wants me. I feel it's pull. The door opens. I walk inside.

Tim Sawyer's sat on a hay bale, his glossy light-brown eyes look up at me. He smiles.

'You've come for me Dan. I've waited a long time.'

'It looks that way. Where am I taking you?'

'You'll find out soon enough,' he says getting up holding my hand.

Smiling down at him something pulls at my back, his hand slips from mine. I'm being dragged out the barn door.

'Come back Dan,' shouts Tim, with his arms stretched out. I put mine out to. I can't reach him. The backs of my heels dig into the ground as I'm pulled back through the cornfield. What the fuck's going on?

I speed through pitch black, spinning violently, my whole body vibrates with the force. My lungs fill with hot air. I cough it out.

'He's back,' says a prison guard. 'You're on twenty-four hour suicide watch Hargreeves. You'll have to try a better trick than trying to hang yourself with a bed sheet.'

I can't answer, my throat is crushed.

One year, eight months later: 'You've managed to stay out of trouble for a while Dan,' says Sinbad.

'Yeah,' I say soaking up the winter sun in the exercise yard.

'They might let you out when you've done your five.'

'Maybe. I've got another fucking three left yet.'

'Get your life back again. Do your time peacefully.'

'What life. The person I wanted to spend it with is married with a kid now.'

'You'll find someone else.'

'I didn't want anyone else.'

'What about your girls. You heard from them?'

'No. Their mother got in contact about a year ago asking for money.'

'The one that told you she was dying.'

'Yeah. Fucking lying bitch. All she wanted was her daughters to have a better life. Her fucking offspring caused me a lot of problems. I told Justin to tell her to fuck off.'

The buzzer goes. Walking back with Sinbad two guards come up to me. 'Follow us Hargreeves,' says one.

'What the fuck have I done now?'

'Just follow.'

They lead me to an interviewing room. 'Take a seat,' says a guard.

Inspector Watley sits in front of me. 'I thought you fucking retired?' I ask.

'I have.'

'So why the fuck are you here?'

'I'm here to apologise. You didn't help kill that boy Dan.'

'You what?'

‘Charlotte Rix had an affair, her husband found out.’

‘What d’ you mean?’

‘The guy having sex with her went to see Rix in jail, he asked why he wouldn’t give her a divorce. He wanted to marry Charlotte. Rix had no idea what was going on.’

‘What?’

‘Charlotte was stringing the bloke along. She had woman’s needs and he did while her husband was in jail. She used the divorce thing as an excuse not to take things further with him. It backfired.’

‘How?’

‘Rix went berserk. Asked to see me. He told me the truth. I wired him up when Charlotte visited. There was no way she was going to confess. I got everything I needed.’

‘So what happens now?’

‘You’re a free man.’

‘I’ve spent two years in this fucking shit hole,’ I yell.

‘Dan. Sorry. I can’t change anything.’

‘My wife to be is married to someone else and has got a kid. My daughters are probably teenage fucking prostitutes. My fucking life’s been ruined.’

‘Dan. Sorry. That’s all I can say.’

Jumping up I grab him by his throat, the gold chain around his neck snaps. Two guards rush in holding me back.

‘Let him go,’ says Watley pulling the broken chain from his neck. A locket’s attached to the bottom of it.

‘Dan,’ says Watley. ‘These guards will sort you out. They’ll give you the clothes you were arrested in and order a taxi.’

‘Is that it,’ I say snarling at him.

‘I’m afraid so. The media will be informed. Your name will be cleared.’

‘Thanks for fuck all Watley.’

‘Dan. Listen to an old man. Get over what’s happened to you. Don’t dwell on it. Get your life back on track.’

‘I intend to. I’m also going to sue all your asses for as much money as possible.’

‘Bye Dan.’

‘Fuck you.’

## Chapter 13

It's strange pulling up outside my house after all this time. Everything looks the same.

'I've got no money,' I say to the taxi driver.

'It's on the prison account.'

Getting out I ring the intercom buzzer, no answer. I go around the back of the house. Lifting a stone up, the spare key's still in it's usual place.

Entering the empty house, it's as if it's stayed suspended in time. Nothing has changed. If only Joanne came bursting into the kitchen. If only. Echoes of the girls and Joanne shouting swirl around my mind as I walk the stairs. They all seem a distant memory. I wonder what they're all doing now. Their lives have changed, mine has stood still.

Kicking my shoes off I lie on my bed. Closing my eyes I think of her, touching her. I roll onto her side of the bed. Her warm body used to lay here. I feel close to her. I try and smell bananas.

A key turns in the front door, the sound of Tucker's paws tap frenziedly on the wooden floored hallway. He's got my scent. 'Come here,' shouts Justin.

Tucker's lead rattles up the stairs, his manic legs pound each step. He bursts into the bedroom. Jumping on me his tongue washes my face, his amber eyes can't quite believe what he's seeing.

'Hello boy,' I say grabbing his ears. 'It's been a while.'

'Dan?' says Justin walking into the bedroom.

'Yes. It's really me. Charlotte Rix has been charged. I'm a free man.'

'I don't believe it. After all this time.'

'So what's really happened around here since I left?'

'I've been a bit of a recluse. I just stay in watching films and take Tucker for walks.'

'How are the girls?'

'I don't know. I stopped using the net when their mother got in contact. I don't answer the telephone any more. I sort of fell apart when you went inside. No one wants to speak to me. The brother of a supposed child killer is steered well clear of.'

'Joanne came to see you.'

'Yeah. I told you about that.'

'Did you get her mobile number?'

'No. Leave it Dan. She's happily married to a guy called Simon, they've got a baby daughter

called Lisa.'

'Did she mention me?'

'No. So what do we do from here Dan?'

'I think we both need a holiday. I'll book some flights. Let's try and leave tonight.'

'So soon?'

'Yeah. D' you fancy snow or sunshine?'

'Nothing too commercial. You know I hate the tourist thing. How about Tuscany.'

'Fuck off Justin. I've just spent two years in fucking jail.'

'You choose.'

'Benidorm here we come.'

'Dan...' says Justin looking at the floor. 'I don't know how to say this. I didn't want to tell you in prison.'

'Spit it out Justin for fuck sake.'

'I received a letter from a man claiming to be your father, it's downstairs.'

'What did he want?'

'He wants to meet you, but I received it a year ago. You don't seem shocked?'

'I already knew dad wasn't my father. I've got this far in life without meeting him, I can't see the point of seeing him.'

'Oh.'

'Throw the letter in the bin.'

Sat in a hotel foyer I wait for Justin. It's nice to have shorts, sandals and a T-shirt on. This cold bottle of beer tastes good. I've never tasted one before which gives me it's genuine flavour.

A free man. I still don't believe it. I can do what I like. Go where I like. Eat what I like. Prison brutalises people. It'll never reform them. You might as well keep them locked up.

A barmaid wipes the surface of a table, her short black skirt grips her heart-shaped arse. I'd love to lift that skirt up and taste the delights it hides. I need a female as soon as possible. Two years without sex nearly fucking killed me.

'Another beer please,' I say to her.

She brings one over. I discreetly take in the whole of her body, my eyes hidden by my sunglasses.

'You want anything more?' she asks.

My cock hardens in my shorts. 'When d' you finish work?'

'I not fuck customer.'

'What?' I say coughing some beer up.

'Your little man like me. I see him move in shorts. If want fuck girl, buy one,' she says passing me a beer.

‘I was just making polite conversation.’

‘You not. You want fuck me.’

Passing her some money, she smiles. ‘Keep the change,’ I say.

She puts her hands together and bows her head.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. ‘That was a long flight Dan,’ says Justin. ‘I’m refreshed and ready to go now.’

‘D’ you want a beer before we leave?’

‘No. Let’s go. I’m too excited.’

We both venture out into the heat. It hits you, taking your breath away. I want to run back into the coolness of the air conditioned foyer. The sun’s nuclear fusion fiercely burns, it’s so bright it shakes like a silver coin falling in water. The flawless violet sky is only broken by a never ending conveyor belt of tiny clouds. They cower as they pass the sun, looking like frightened raw pieces of pink streaky bacon. The smell of exhaust fumes laced with fried food with the scent of joss sticks slams into my nostrils, moistening my eyes. Thousands of engines race along the road, they sound like a swarm of chainsaws.

‘My God Dan. It’s so hot.’

‘I know. Let’s get to the bar as quickly as we can.’

The narrow broken pavement forces you to squeeze pass street sellers and other tourists. Fuck this. Who plants a fucking tree in the middle of a pavement? I’m going on the road.

‘Dan wait for me.’

‘This place is starting to piss me off already. Mind the traffic Justin.’

Walking along the side of the road, Tuts-tuts beep their horns. Hailing one down, Justin and I jump inside. ‘Just drive down the road,’ I say, ‘I know this bar’s along here somewhere. It’s been a long time.’

As shops and open air bars pass, their occupants seem to move in slow motion, beaten into submission by the relentless afternoon heat. Strands of red, orange and white orchids swing from the rear view mirror like willow catkins being blown in a breeze. A black and white photograph of the king is planted in the middle of them. A golden Buddha sits on the dashboard, his smile gives our driver the confidence to take risks as we race along, weaving in and out of traffic that could crush us in an instant.

‘This place doesn’t look very nice,’ says Justin. ‘Maybe Benidorm would have been a better option.’

‘You? With a load of lager louts? I don’t think so. It becomes a completely different place when nightfall arrives.’

‘I hope so.’

It’s been fifteen years, but things are starting to look familiar. I’ll never spot the bar going at this speed. ‘Stop,’ I say.



Pulling over I pay the driver. 'Are we here?' asks Justin.

'We're close. We'll walk the rest of the way.'

Girls in bars lounge around, fans whirl around cooling their brown tattooed flesh, their long black hair floats behind them, their dark eyes seem uninterested in Justin and I. Night time will motivate them into selling themselves, daytime is all about staying cool and eating.

'I don't like this place at all Dan. It's so seedy.'

'You might meet the girl of your dreams.'

'Yeah. Right.'

'I think it's up here.'

The bar comes into view. It's semi circle wooden top, surrounded by crimson fake leather stools, spiked up by chrome stems which glint in the sunshine hasn't changed one bit. Someone's got their back to us as she counts money from a till. I jump on a stool. I can feel the warm rush of traffic on my back. The pavement is the only barrier between myself and it. Justin sits beside me.

'You love me long time,' I say to the woman.

'You think you fucking funny Englishman?' she says still with her back to us counting the money.

'Two beers please,' I say.

'In minute. You make me lose count.'

'The service is a bit poor in here.'

'Go to other fucking bar.'

'I like the look of your ass.'

'Englishman. Fuck off.'

'You can see where Molly and Polly get their attitude from Justin.'

The woman stops counting. 'Do I know you?' she asks.

'Know me. We may have crossed paths. I think we had sex once. I was drunk.'

'I have sex with many man.'

'Did any of them impregnate you with identical twin girls.'

The woman spins around. Her face has aged well. Her black eyes glare at me. The money stays fixed in her hands. 'Dan?'

'It's me,' I say taking my sunglasses off.

'You in jail.'

'I was. I was innocent all along.'

She comes over placing the cash on the bar. She puts her arms around me rubbing her cheek against mine. 'I thought I never see you again,' she says.

'Well. It's me in the flesh. How about that beer?'

She lets me go. She smiles going to the fridge. She places two cold ones on the bar.

'It on me,' she says.

'How are the girls?' asks Justin.

'They at school. They fine. You must be famous Justin?'

'I don't know about being famous. I did get on very well with them.'

'Girls talk about you. They like you.'

'Did they mention me?' I ask.

Thip smiles. 'They mention you. But only use word ass ole.'

'That sounds about right. Why d' you tell me you were dying?'

'Better life for girls. You not have them if I not say. I want best for girls.'

'There could have been a different way.'

'I not want them live here and sell body.'

'I would of provided enough money so they didn't have to.'

'How I know that? Girls want many thing when older. It easy sell self here. You send no money for two year. I use all savings keep them in school.'

'I'll change that when I get back to England.'

'I phone them. Tell them you here. They finish school soon... You back with girlfriend?'

'No. She's married with a kid now.'

Chatting with Thip the beer soothes me. I feel calm. Relaxed. I feel myself returning to my old self.

The afternoon moves along. It starts to lose its bright sheen. Shadows move across us. The air cools as day turns into dusk. Light rain sprinkles across a thirsty road. Traffic slows. Purple, green and orange lights come on. Neon signs flash. The bars fill with night workers. Brown flesh is plentiful. Displayed with a smile, their eyes trying to hide pain. Music is ramped up. The whole road takes on a completely different look. It's got its soul back.

Five girls trot into Thip's bar. She speaks to them, they turn and look over at me smiling. One of them goes over to Justin. She says something in his ear. He moves up the bar and gets her a drink. They start to play a bar game.

'You like beer?' says one of Thip's workers.

'Yeah. D' you want a drink?'

'No. I not. Mamasan not like.'

She kneels down opening a glass fronted fridge. Her white thong pokes out from the top of her black skirt, her long black silky hair touches it. She stands up adjusting her skirt. Turning to me her nipples have increased in size from the sudden temperature change. Her breasts are small, covered by just a white T-shirt. Her face lights up with a heavily red lipstick smile. Perfect white teeth open.

'You want play game?' she asks passing me the beer.

'No,' I say. 'I'm quite happy having a drink.'

Her expression changes downward. She walks back to the till with my money. She'll do me

tonight. She'll definitely do me tonight.

Two voices shout out. 'Uncle Justin. Uncle Justin.'

Molly and Polly jump on Justin. What the fuck are they wearing? Their tight white Lycra dresses show all their new curves. Their long black hair is brushed outwards. Make-up makes them look eighteen, not fourteen.

'Hello girls,' I shout to them.

They both stare at me, their arms draped over Justin. Their light-brown waxed legs shine in the neon light, black stilettos drip from their feet.

I turn back to the bar and take a sip on my beer. 'Dan?' says Thip. 'Speak to them.'

'They're both ignoring me.'

'They children. You adult. Act like father.'

For fuck sake. Walking over to Justin their heavily made up blue eyes follow me. I pull Molly's arm to give her a cuddle. 'Get fuck off me,' she says pulling her arm out of my hands. 'You not touch me like fucking sex tourist.'

'Sex tourist? Have you seen what you fucking look like?'

'I dress for bar. It good for business.'

'You look like a fucking slut. You're only fourteen.'

'I not slut ass ole.'

'You could of fooled me. Look at yourself you stupid bitch.'

'Don't call me itch.'

'Change the record for fuck sake. You... Stupid... Bitch.'

My legs are kicked away. The concrete pavement slams into my back, a black stiletto clamps over my throat. Fuck. She's fucking choking me.

Something swishes through the air. Clack! It's found a soft target. Molly jumps up, rubbing both her arse cheeks.

'You not do that to father,' says Thip.

'He call me itch.'

'I not care,' says Thip giving me her hand and helping me up.

'Take cane. Hit her Dan.'

'I can't do that,' I say sitting back on my stool.

Thip grabs her arm, pulling her over towards me, she stumbles in her stilettos, she pushes her down, bending her over my knee. She places the cane in my hand. 'You need teach daughter discipline.'

Raising the cane Molly looks up at me defiantly. I throw it on the floor.

'You too soft Dan,' says Thip.

Molly stands up. She sits on my lap. I put my hands under her arm pits, moving her further up.

‘Christ. You weigh a tonne.’

‘My tits and ass get bigger,’ she says rubbing her buttocks back and forth across my thighs.

‘Can you stop fidgeting.’

‘My fucking ass sore. Your fault.’

‘It could have been worse. You’re lucky I didn’t have a go.’

‘No. You lucky you not do it,’ she says leaning over the bar. She shouts something in Thai and a glass of cola appears. ‘This mama’s bar.’

‘No shit. I see you still state the fucking obvious.’

‘We work here when finish school.’

‘What type of work?’

‘Serve man drink. Talk to tourist.’

‘I hope that’s all you do... I see your sister’s not speaking to me.’

‘She like you. She think you just come, then go. She not want get attached again. I think you fucking ass ole.’

Thip shouts at the two girls. They jump up, going behind the bar. Men walking passed start to take notice of them. A few take seats ordering beers. I suppose it’s a bit unusual for twin girls to serve behind a bar.

Two men sit beside me. Their stomachs bulge in tight T-shirts, doughy white flesh sags over the top of their shorts. Ponytails fall from the back of their bald heads. Thai letter tattoos are scrawled over their arms. They use white handkerchiefs to wipe their profusely sweating brows.

‘Look at those two,’ says one. ‘My cocks hard already.’

‘Beer,’ says the other one to Molly.

She comes over placing it on the bar with a bill in a bamboo tub.

‘D’ you see her blue eyes? Those red lips. She’s fucking gorgeous,’ says the one sat beside me.

‘I’d love those lips around my cock. I’d skull fuck that all the way to Christmas,’ says the other one gesturing with his hand to Thip.

‘Yes sir?’ asks Thip.

‘How much for the two girls?’

‘They not for sale.’

‘Everyone’s for sale over here. How much?’

‘They too young. They not for sale.’

‘I’ll give you two thousand Baht each for them.’

‘You fucking heard her fuck face,’ I say. ‘They’re too young.’

‘What’s it got to do with you mate? D’ you wanna fuck them?’

Standing up from my stool he does the same. I’m going to enjoy this one.

‘No. Dan,’ says Thip putting her hand on my arm. ‘He their father,’ says Thip to the men.

The man sits down. 'Sorry mate. I didn't know.'

Fuck this. I can't watch them two dressed like that serving behind this bar.

'I'm off Thip.'

'You come back later?'

'No. The girls are only fourteen. They shouldn't even be behind a bar. Let alone dressed like a couple of prostitutes. I've seen enough,' I say walking down the road.

Girls call out from bars as I pass. I've suddenly lost interest in females. Stopping by a food stall I order a cheese burger. Justin's right. This place is fucking seedy.

'You want onion?'

'Yeah. Put some mustard on as well.'

Placing it to my lips childhood memories flood my mind. God I've missed cheese burgers. Sinking my teeth into it, the meat and cheese blend in my mouth. Warm fat oozes. My eyes go to the sky. At times like this I'm glad my taste swaps have gone.

Finishing. I lick the fat from my fingers. Gorgeous. Putting my hands in my pockets I can feel my cock come back to life. I'm going to have to use this on someone soon.

A neon sign flashes above the food stall. It says topless girls. Good blowjobs. That's handy.

Walking in, the heavy bass music pounds the walls, the air is thick with smoke, it drifts around in a blue haze, circling about twenty dancing topless girls. Stale sweat, alcohol and perfume hangs in the air. Something else does to, it's pungent and I don't recognise it. All of them have got the same multi-coloured bikini bottoms on with a numbered badge pinned to it. They shuffle instead of dancing, worn out by the hours they spend up on stage. Men watch them, laughing and giggling between themselves.

I take a seat by the bar. 'Vodka,' I say.

A girl pours it from a bottle. 'You want lady sit by you?'

'Yeah,' I say taking the shot glass from her.

'What number?'

Viewing the display, not one of them is smiling. I can't blame them. I think I'll pick the most miserable one. She could probably do with a sit down.

'Number twelve,' I say.

The barmaid shouts her name. She leaves the stage and takes a seat beside me. A drink instantly appears beside mine. I pass it to her.

'You want short time or long time?' she asks.

'Short time.'

'It one thousand Baht. Fifteen minutes,' she says sitting on my lap.

The vodka burns as I sip. A drip of condensation falls from the shot glass onto her breast, goosebumps instantly appear on her soft cocoa butter coloured skin, it trickles over her dark-brown nipple, dropping to her navel, it struggles as it's course is disrupted by the the folds on her

stomach, bunched up because of her sitting position, it makes its way to the flimsy fabric of her bikini, darkening the brightly coloured material. The top of my cock pushes in-between her buttocks. She smiles. I put my arm around her, resting my palm on the flesh just below her breasts. My hand takes in her heat. I can feel her heart beat, it races like a humming bird. A woman in my arms at long last. Putting my nose to her hair, I breathe in her scent. A bouquet of rose perfume fills my nostrils, the aroma of coconut oil smothered on her flesh infuses into the lustful mix.

‘Shall we go?’ I ask.

She stands, leading me to a room. Closing the door she undoes my shorts, she looks me in the eye as they fall to my ankles. Her small hand squeezes my hard cock. Her black eyes turn blue. Fuck. Molly’s face appears. My cock shrinks. She looks bemused. She gets down on her knees placing it in her mouth. I put my palm on top of her bobbing head. I can feel her warm tongue slide around, she gulps, saliva drips from the corner of her mouth, but my cock stays soft. She speeds up, more saliva rolls down her chin. My stomach churns its contents. I think I’m going to vomit.

Pushing her head away, my limp cock looks shrivelled, it glistens from her spit. She looks up at me, her eyes have turned back to black.

‘You not want me make you come?’

Pulling my shorts back up, I put my hand in my pocket and give her one thousand Baht.

‘Maybe another time,’ I say.

Leaving. I pay the tab. The evening heat hits me as I go back onto the road. Stench filled drains growl, their watery contents washing away a whore’s night shift. I’ll just walk back to the hotel. What a fucking disaster of a night. Fucking Justin’s idea to come here. I’ll grab him when I go past Thip’s bar. He’s not going to take that girl back to his room.

The paving slabs are illuminated by various coloured lights, given away free from every bar, food joint and fast moving headlights. I spot the two men that took a great interest in Molly and Polly across the road. Their eyes hollow, lost in a drunken thought, which would never be remembered again. They gently stumble from left to right. They subconsciously know where their hotel is, but they won’t remember tomorrow how they got back there. I could take them both out, but it would be too easy. What’s the point anyway.

Reaching Thip’s bar, she’s gone and so are the girls. Justin’s not there either. The pretty girl’s there that served me earlier. Taking a stool I call her over.

‘Where is everyone?’ I ask.

‘Mamasan take girls home. They not allowed work bar if you here.’

‘Good. Where’s my brother?’

‘Man leave with lady.’

‘What? Back to the hotel?’

‘She say they go dancing.’

‘Oh. Right. I’ll have a beer then.’

She places it on the bar with a smile. My cock hardens again. Thank God for that. I thought I was sexually ruined for life. Watching her arse move in her tight skirt, she puts my money in the till. I know who’s going to be sleeping in my bed tonight. Well. Hopefully not too much sleeping.

‘Would you like a beer?’ I ask.

She turns. ‘I like. Mamasan not here.’

‘How about coming back to my hotel with me?’

‘No. Cannot. Mamasan beat me.’

‘She’s not here. How much do you cost?’

‘I one thousand. Pay bar three hundred. I cannot go with you.’

‘I’ll give you three thousand. Meet me at the Royal hotel, room sixty-six. I’ll give you half an hour. Mamasan will never find out.’

‘No. Road have too many eyes.’

‘I’ll see you in half an hour,’ I say leaving.

Cool conditioned air seeps into all my yawning pores, closing them as it wraps itself around my freshly showered naked body. A dainty knuckle taps on the door.

‘It’s open,’ I shout from my bed.

She comes in locking the door behind her. ‘I take shower,’ she says taking her shoes off.

‘You decided to come after all?’

‘I need money.’

She silently walks across the room, disappearing inside the bathroom. My cock twitches into life. I hope she’s worth it. The shower cord’s pulled, I can hear jets of water splash against her naked skin. I move my forefinger up and down my full erection. At last I can get inside some female flesh. The jets of water stop, she emerges from the bathroom with damp hair and a white towel slung around her.

‘Lose the towel,’ I say.

It falls to her feet. Her small breasts have huge erect dark-brown nipples, she’s unshaven, wispy black pubic hair covers her vagina. She comes over pushing my legs apart, kneeling in-between them. The ends of her damp black hair tickles my stomach and thighs as she looks directly at my cock. Her head moves towards it, her curtain of black hair hides her face, I can feel the heat of her breath closing in. The tip of her tongue touches the bottom of my penis, she runs it along it’s belly. She grips it in her delicate hand, pulling it up vertically towards her mouth. I can’t hold on. A rush of semen explodes, her head jolts back. She kneels back up brushing her hair over her head with her hand. She looks down at me, one of her eyes is shut,

cloudy-white thick greasy lumps have splattered across her face, it eases downward in it's elasticated way from her brown skin, it's even got into her black hair, caught in it looking like trapped gelatinous spit.

'Sorry,' I say.

'You got me in fucking eye,' she says running to the bathroom.

I follow her in, her head's bent over the sink with a tap running. She scoops water up in her hand to get rid of the sticky mess. I put my arms around her waist, my soft cock snuggles into the crevice in- between her tight warm buttocks.

Her reflection from the mirror above the sink looks at mine, her eye's bloodshot, she's still got bits of it in her black hair.

'I go,' she says.

'Don't be like that. I haven't been inside you yet.'

'You not. You hurt eye.'

'I'll pay you an extra thousand.'

'I not suck you.'

'I can live with that,' I say picking her up, cradling her in my arms. She drapes an arm over my shoulder. Carrying her to my bed I lay her down.

'I want to taste you now,' I say.

She opens her legs. Kneeling on the carpet at the bottom of the bed. I drag her down over the sheet by her spread legs. Cupping my hand around her arse cheeks I bring her wispy pubic hair towards my mouth. Something smells different. It's a scent I haven't smelt before. Unusual. Sensual. Erotic. Similar to lightly toasted clams. The musky pheromone scent instantly hardens my cock. My first time with a female, that actually smells like a female. I can't wait to taste her. I wonder if they smell and taste all the same.

Moving her dark-brown outer labia apart with my thumb and forefinger, glazed bright pink twitches inside her. My tongue touches it, I feel it move, her scent intensifies. It's flavour is sweet and sour, similar to a Chinese plum sauce, my tongue gets coated. I could drown in this rich, creamy stickiness. I feel myself coming again. I thought my taste swaps improved the taste. How wrong could I be. I push my tongue in deeper, she arches her back. Churning up her juice it thins to a sweeter taste, it's exquisite, pre-come spits out my cock. Retracting my tongue I rub my cheeks over her opening, coating them with her syrupy pheromones.

Rubbing my cheeks over her stomach and large nipples, I cover her with her own scent. I smile at her looking into her eyes. Her face scrunches up. 'Why do that?' she asks.

'Don't you like the smell of yourself?'

'No I not. It dirty. It smell.'

'It's delicious.'

'Next time come on face you can lick off. You like do that?'



'No,' I say getting off the bed and getting a condom. She looks up at me with her head on the pillow as I stand beside the bed rolling the condom down.

'I small girl, I go on top.'

'Fine by me. Move over,' I say lying on the bed next to her.

Straddling me she eases the top of my cock inside herself, her face strains, her vagina is exceptionally narrow. She moves up and down just keeping half my length inside her. The exposed condom shines from her juices, which slip down it giving it a sheen. More of my cock goes inside her, her vagina's expanding to accommodate it. Her brown twitching outer labia makes contact with my pubic hair. At last my whole cock is inside a female. Two years is such a long time. Her internal heat circulates, tenderising the meat. I push up with my buttocks, moving in and out of her.

Her face winces. 'Not hard. I small girl.'

'Well you fucking do it then.'

She bends down, her long black hair falls around my face, her bloodshot eye stares, it looks like it's been skewered. I think it wants to skewer me.

'I like do it this way,' she says moving her hips up and down at the speed she prefers.

Her lips touch mine, hard nipples push into my chest, her rhythm speeds up.

There's a knock on the door. Who the fuck's this? The girl stops.

'You can carry on,' I say, 'I've waited two fucking years for this.'

I put my arm over her back keeping her in position, pushing up inside her, her gaze returns from the door. 'Who that?' she asks.

'I don't know, and I don't fucking care.'

The doorknob turns. Someone's fiddling with the lock. Her head turns to the door again. I clamp her in position. There is no way I'm going to stop fucking this girl.

The door bursts open. Thip comes running over. Her palm smashes into the girls cheek. Black hair puffs up with the echo of a slap bouncing off every wall. Thip shouts at her in Thai, slapping her again. I hold her in position still fucking her. I'm not going to give her up for anything. I've waited too long. Thip pulls her by her hair dragging her over the side of the bed. I keep hold of her, it's starting to turn into a tug of war.

'What the fuck do you think you're doing Thip?'

'If want fuck woman. Fuck me.'

'I can fuck who I like,' I say holding tightly onto the girl.

'She sixteen. You get caught, you go jail. She not allowed to fuck man for money, she not eighteen. She work at bar to serve drink. I her aunt.'

Letting her go she runs to the bathroom to get her clothes, tears splash off her reddened cheek, she runs back out naked with her clothes in her arms, held tight against the front of her naked body. Thip kicks her bare backside as she bolts through the door. Bending down Thip

picks the girl's stilettos up, throwing them down the hotel corridor and slams the door.

'Little bitch,' says Thip.

'I didn't fucking know. All I want is a fuck.'

'She know. She Molly, Polly cousin. She go same school as them.'

'Fucking hell.'

Thip pulls the condom off my cock. 'Take shower. I smell her all over you.'

Doing as I'm told the shower washes her scent off. What a shame. Thip comes in flushing the latex down the toilet. 'D' you want to join me?' I ask.

'No. I have shower at home when take girls back.'

'Molly and Polly never take men back?'

'They never do that. They good girls.'

Getting out the shower I dry myself off. Thip looks me up and down. 'You fatter.'

'It's been fifteen years. Get your clothes off. Let's see how you've aged.'

'No,' she says leaving the bathroom.

I finish drying myself off and walk into the bedroom. Thip's in bed. She lifts the sheet up. Her brown naked body looks like a shadow as she covers it from the light. I can just make out her breasts and nipples. I slip in putting my arms around her, her hot soft flesh warms mine. Turning her on her back I spread her legs with my knees. The belly of my hard cock lies across her coarse pubic hair. At last I can fuck.

'Hold me,' she says. 'I not fuck tonight. I too angry.'

'I haven't had sex in two years.'

'I not care. You wait. I might let you in morning.'

The noise from the shower wakes me. My morning erection is going to be satisfied. Jumping out of bed I slip in behind Thip who's got her back to me. I put my arms around her slippery skin, squeezing both her breasts, my hard cock pushes at her closed bristled crevice, it slightly opens as I nudge it, it smoulders as I push the head in, soon it'll burn me with it's naughtiness.

'No Dan,' she says getting out the shower drying herself.

'When then?'

'When I want. If want come, do self.'

'I've been doing that for the last two years. Which isn't easy in a fucking prison, believe me.'

She leaves the bathroom. I don't think I'll ever fuck anyone ever again. 'Sorry mate you'll have to be patient,' I say to my cock. 'If I was you I'd look for a new owner.'

Thip's dressed as I walk out the bathroom, she's drying her damp hair with a towel. 'I go down for breakfast. I meet you there,' she says.

Scrambled egg and bacon waft up from my plate. Beautiful. Grabbing a coffee from the breakfast buffet I scan the dining tables for Thip. I spot her, she's sat at a table with two people who have got their backs to me. I think one of them is Justin.

Sitting down Justin smiles at me. He's sat down with the girl he was with yesterday. I don't know what to make of this.

'This is Poco Dan,' says Justin. She smiles and nods. She whispers something in Justin's ear. He giggles. She gets up and walks over to the breakfast buffet. She's got great legs. I feel my cock harden, watching her red tartan mini skirt slightly lift as she walks, exposing the bottom of her left buttock. Her large breasts push out of a creased white blouse. Maybe I'll borrow her off Justin for ten minutes. That could be the answer.

'Did she stay the night Justin?'

'Oh yes, best night of my life.'

Things have changed in the last two years. 'I hope you used a condom Justin,' I say putting some scrambled egg in my mouth.

'We both did.'

Egg is stuck in the back of my throat. Fuck. 'It's a bloke,' I splutter.

'You think she lady?' asks Thip.

'Well she does a good impression of one,' I say trying to cough out the egg.

'She got cock,' says Thip.

'No shit. I know where your fucking daughter gets it from now.'

'We love each Dan,' says Justin. 'I'm taking her back to England.'

'You've just met her. Don't be stupid.'

'It's the real thing. We're going to look at visas today.'

'She's using you. She probably gets fucked by a different bloke every night.'

'You think what you like,' he says getting up from his seat with anger spilling from his face.

'Where you going now?'

'Away from you. I'll see you when ever,' he says leaving, taking Poco away from the breakfast queue.

'Brother not happy. Poco nice man. He like brother.'

'Yeah. He's scamming him. I'll sort Justin out later.'

'So what want do?'

'I want to release you from your knickers.'

'You wait. You still get hallucination?'

'No. All that's gone now. I dream and taste things like normal people as well.'

'So what do when go back England?'

'Get a job. My funds are low after not working for two years.'

'You start pay me again when go back?'

'I'll sort that out. When I start work I'll refund the two years you didn't get paid. I only stopped the payments when the girls came over to England. I thought you were dead.'

'I know. But I tell you I alive and have girls. Why not pay?'

'Because I was fucking angry you lied. I thought the girls were being financed by George Huntsberg.'

'Who he? When girls come back from England, they come straight to bar, find me.'

'He just put them on a plane? Leaving them to fend for themselves?'

'Lady bring them over. They bring her to bar. She see me and leave.'

'Did they say who she was.'

'They say her name Ho. They never mention her again.'

Joanne brought them over. She must of stopped all the finance for them when she found out Thip was alive.

'What are your plans for today Thip?'

'I stay with you. Open bar tonight. I want go home, change clothes. I have motorbike outside. You come with me?'

'OK.'

After completing what seemed like a suicide mission on the back of Thips bike, the city traffic is a distant hum as we park up outside a run down part of town.

'I live here,' she says.

The tower block is splashed with fresh grey cement, patched up to hide crumbling mortar. Bright coloured clothes hang across balconies, stacked up on each level, smiling in reds, oranges and light greens. Some of the apartments are empty, windows removed. Black plastic coated wires stretch from wooden electricity masts, dipping in the middle, fizzling and twisting around each other, looking like a long line of liquorice spaghetti, parasitically attaching themselves to their concrete host.

Mothers sit outside, around small smoking fires, blackened pots boil on them, shawls are wrapped over their shoulders, their children run around laughing. The smell of sweet rotting vegetables roams in the air, overpowering acrid smoke and lead filled exhaust fumes.

'Why don't they cook inside?' I ask.

'They evicted. Not pay rent. Not have roof.'

'Oh. Right.'

'They work street. Sell body. But when money not good, live outside,' says Thip.

I follow her into the tower block, while she pushes her motorbike. She puts it on it's stand in the stairwell.

A mother sits on the bottom step, a golden Buddha smiles on a window ledge above her, joss sticks burn either side of it. Her young child sits at her feet, he's laughing, playing with a sweet

wrapper. Her eyes stare through us, she's lost in despair. I've seen this look before in my own mother. When my father left her the first time. It was just before I went to the barn. We were alone in a play ground. I was on a slide. I remember laughing as I went down it, she was sat on a bench watching me. She seemed so alone, an outcast. Her eyes a million miles away, chin on her palm, desolation gouged into her face. Drizzle fell, and at the time I thought it was strange, because she still allowed me to play. I feel guilty now about being so happy, oblivious to her pain.

Dipping my hand in my pocket I hold out all the money in it. She looks up at me, her expression doesn't change. She takes it, standing up she puts her hands together bowing her head to the golden Buddha. Picking her child up, she leaves without saying a word.

'You not solve problem,' says Thip.

'It'll help,' I say as we go up the stairs. 'You don't bow to Buddha?' I ask.

'He wrong colour,' says Thip.

Entering Thip's apartment she goes straight to the kitchen. 'You want coffee?' she asks. I nod. 'Take seat, I bring you.'

Sitting on a fake leather worn out sofa, flies buzz around me. The sofa's lost it's black colour, just faded grey remains, pink foam pokes out from broken seams. It reminds me of a dead bloated Hippo, it fucking smells like one to. I survey the room. A TV sits on a wooden crate, two bent aerials poke out the top of it. The coffee table's also a wooden crate. Paint peels from the walls, gesturing like children's fingers when they want you to follow. On the window sill is a black Buddha with two unlit joss sticks either side of it.

'You have sugar?'

'Yeah. Two please.'

She sits down next to me, placing the cup on the wooden crate. 'What you like do today?'

'I'd like to take you out for lunch, a nice restaurant by the river, the most expensive one there is.'

'I change. Put best dress on. We get taxi.'

Coffee leaks into my mouth. I don't know why I drink it. It's so bitter. I used to love it when I had my taste swaps. Thip stares at me, a smile lifts the fat of her cheeks, lighting her face up. 'I never think I see you again.'

'I'm lucky to be here. How have Molly and Polly been?'

'They happy girls. But they better off live in England. They need get out of here. They need proper education.'

'No. We've tried that. It'll never happen again.'

'Up to you.'

'Do you know what they're capable of?'

'They daughters. I know them.'

‘While they were in England they beat the hell out of two men. Where the fuck did they learn all that?’

‘They go kick boxing school. Most Thai children go.’

‘This was different. They were going to kill them. Twelve year old girls do not go around with that level of violence in them.’

‘They not normal twelve year old girls.’

‘I guessed that a long time ago. Has their behaviour improved now that they’re fourteen?’

‘They still same. But know men like them. They like flirt, take advantage. But no man touch them yet.’

‘I should hope not. When I get back to England I’ll send enough money over so they don’t have to work behind your bar, also enough to send them to a better school. I don’t want them turning into prostitutes.’

‘Young girl want many things. I cannot stop them selling self.’

‘You’d let them do that?’

‘If want. It only skin. Shower after, same person again.’

‘I don’t think it really works like that.’

‘How know? After while mind become cold. Not love man. He break heart. You go jail, break girlfriends heart. Man ass ole.’

‘I didn’t break her heart because of that.’

‘How then?’

‘I accidentally had sex with her mother. She found out.’

‘You fuck her mother?’

‘Yes. It was a mistake. I didn’t know.’

‘Girlfriend hate you now. I sell body many time, but if I sleep with man that fucked mother. I’d kill self. It disgusting.’

‘Yeah. Thanks for the heads up. I’m a dirty, horrible, disgusting bastard.’

‘Was she old lady?’ asks Thip smiling from ear to ear.

‘No. She was very attractive, it’s where her daughter got her good looks from.’

‘I change. We go restaurant,’ she says getting off the sofa, looking back over her shoulder. ‘So now you mother fucker,’ she says grinning.

‘I’ll give you mother fucker in a minute. Just go and get changed.’

That cup of coffee can stay on the crate. The flies are more interested in it than me. How can people fucking live in this heat. This room’s roasting me alive. My leaking armpits drip down the insides of my arms. Pulling the flesh on the back of my legs away from the fake leather, my skin is pulled like chewing gum stuck to a shoe, the sound of Velcro being pulled apart comes from the sofa as it releases my flesh to it’s rightful owner. Standing. My back and buttocks have dampened my shorts and T-shirt. I can’t go to a restaurant like this. I’ll go back to the hotel first

and change.

I can see two single mattresses through an a jar door. It must be the girl's bedroom. Looking inside their clothes are hung up on two T-shaped hangers, a pair of stilettos and a pair of trainers neatly sit underneath them. A poster of Arsenal hangs on the wall. Not much of a teenage bedroom. I take it they're at school today.

Looking down out of their window, the women and children sit around like a forgotten tribe, the unwanted, removed from the eyes of tourists. Smoke rises in-between the groups, spiralling upwards in a grey-blue haze, ghost like, the debris left over in their pursuit of prolonging their broken lives, maybe it carries all their hopes and dreams in it's journey to the Heavens, knocking on the door, their prayers answered, but then it's just smoke and it's only superstition. A guilt fed shudder runs across my shoulder blades, as if I've been touched by the tip of a bird's wing in flight. I'm glad I'm not one of those people. Molly and Polly will never end up down there. I'll make sure of that.

'You like look at people?' asks Thip.

'No. Will some of them go on to have better lives?' I say turning around and facing her.

'Some will. The pretty ones got chance,' she says stood in the doorway in a tight blue dress, hair put up and face fully made up.

'You look great,' I say. 'I'll have to go back to the hotel first and change, my clothes are all damp from sweat. How can you live in this heat?'

'You not used to it,' she says going back into her front room.

Looking back out the window, the distant skyscraper horizon sways in a haze of heat, metal and glass glint through a thin layer of smog. Looking back down at the mothers and their children, the divide is a massive corrupted trench. I've always believed in Capitalism, but sometimes I fucking wonder.

My hand hits something off the shelf hidden by the curtain, it falls rolling across the floor. Picking it up the clear glass jar has two snail shells inside it. Brian and Matilda. Those two brought their snails over. Putting the jar to the window light their brownish surface and yellow bands have faded, almost merging into one colour. When they were alive I was with Joanne. Yeah. With Joanne. Our love for each other in a jar. Forgotten. Bone dry and dead. I open the jar, droplets fall in, splashing wet specks across their shells, bringing their colour back. Maybe it'll bring them back to life. Maybe the pain in my tears will somehow take them back in time, giving them air to breath again.

'You like snail?' asks Thip stood in the girls bedroom doorway.

'No,' I say wiping my tears away with the back of my hand.

'You love her with all heart.'

'She'll leave my soul sooner or later, but at the moment she's still a resident there.'

'She always live inside you. When find another lady they have to live together. Man's heart

can only be taken once. Lady heart many times.’

‘Is that right?’

‘Come with me,’ she says holding her hand out. I grip her fingertips and she gently pulls me into the front room.

‘Touch me,’ she says.

‘I already am.’

‘Between legs idiot.’

‘No. Let’s go for a meal first. I feel crushed inside at the moment.’

‘You want go back hotel? Change?’

‘Yeah. But we’ll get a taxi.’

‘I make call,’ she says going to her purse by the kitchen sink.

Thip bends over the sink while she speaks on the phone. Her peach-shaped backside pushes her tight blue dress to breaking point, the thin silk looks as smooth as glass, just showing the outline of her buttocks. Going over to her I put my hands on her hips.

‘Cancel it,’ I say.

She cuts the phone off without saying a word and carries on looking out the window. Taking my damp T-shirt and shorts off I stand behind her. I slip my flat hand in-between her closed legs, she opens them scissor fashion, her brown flesh on the back of them is stretched taut, buffed and polished with only hair follicle holes left on her calf muscles, breaking the surface, looking like strawberry flesh.

Sticky heat circulates around my hand, rising in temperature as my palm gets closer, her outer labia twitches when my finger tip touches it, moving back slightly, guarding her entrance. Sliding my middle finger in, thick juices coat it. Fuck this I need my cock inside her. Lifting her blue dress up over her cheeks, I pull them apart with my thumb and forefinger, forcing my coated finger inside, down to the knuckle. The light brown skin of her buttocks, flares into a mass of tiny bumps.

‘You want fuck me there?’ she asks.

‘I might do later.’

My hard cock nudges at her entrance, it breaks through into her internal warmth. At last. Pulling my finger out, I grab her hips. The tops of my thighs smash into her buttocks, which moves in ripples. Two years I’ve waited for this. Two fucking years. My cock churns up the thick fluid inside her, sloshing, slurping sounds travel to my ears from below, it also carries her scent. It seductively drifts into my nostrils like captivating mist. Women do smell differently, poached Langoustine with a splash of flat ale sends my hormones into overdrive. I hope she doesn’t expect me to make her come. My balls shrink to the shape of prunes as they deposit their gooey contents. She turns her head around looking at my contented smile.

‘You come already?’ she says. ‘It not worth putting cock in me.’



‘It was worth it to me.’

‘So we go restaurant now?’

‘No. I’ve got two years of fucking to catch up with. Food can wait.’

Lying on my back in Thip’s bedroom, she sits astride me with my limp cock inside her. She puts her palms either side of my shoulders, her long black hair droops down hiding her breasts. Her charcoal eyes bore into me. ‘That third time you fuck me. You happy now?’ she asks.

‘At the moment. I’ve still got two weeks left here. I hope your fanny can take it.’

‘It take it. It used to lots of cock.’

She sits up, brushing her hair over the back of her shoulders with her hand, her large breasts hang loosely, but still retain a nice shape.

‘Did you breast feed Molly and Polly?’

‘No. I not want them suck life out of tits. I need these in good shape to make money. I pay woman to feed them.’

‘You got another woman to breast feed them?’

‘She have two year old child. Molly, Polly take his place.’

‘It doesn’t sound right to me.’

‘It better than give them animal milk.’

‘So what do you think is going to happen to those girls?’

‘I not know. I want them in England. I want best for girls.’

‘No Thip. I need to sort a lot of things out when I get back. I can’t have two teenage girls around me.’

‘You father. You have power to make lives better.’

‘Look. Let me get back, give it a year and I’ll think seriously about bringing them over.’

‘You promise?’ she says running the tips of her finger nails in a circular motion around my nipples.

‘Yeah. I promise.’

She bends her head down using the tip of her tongue on my neck. I can feel myself increasing in size inside her.

‘You want try other hole?’ she asks in a whisper.

‘No. I’m quite happy with the one it’s in at the moment.’

Sitting at Thip’s bar she smiles over at me while she serves a customer. What a great sexual afternoon, that girl really knows her stuff.

‘I’ll have another beer,’ I shout to her.

She comes over. ‘Does sir want anything else?’

‘Only you in my hotel room tonight.’

‘Pay bar three hundred Baht. I one thousand.’

‘Really. Do you think you’re worth it?’

‘I know I worth it. But buy condom. I not want baby.’

‘You fucking what?’

‘I joke.’

‘I nearly had a fucking heart attack.’

‘You not want more children?’

‘Do I fuck. Two’s enough. I’m going to a hospital when I get back home to make sure I can’t have any more.’

‘You might find lady that want child.’

‘I might take you back home so I don’t have to.’

‘Not say thing like that,’ she says, her eyes looking at me as if they’re going to explode two lightening bolts inside me. ‘Life not game. You lucky. Never say unless mean.’

‘Maybe I’m warming to the idea of you and the two girls living with me in England. After all, apart from Justin you’re the only family I’ve got.’

‘You really mean?’

‘Give me a year and I’ll sort something out.’

Molly comes from nowhere and jumps on my lap. ‘Buy me cola ridiot.’

‘Not say that to father. I get cane.’

‘Sorry Papa. Your daughter love you.’

‘That better,’ says Thip going to the fridge to get her drink.

Molly whispers in my ear. ‘I only here because mama tell me. I still think you ass ole.’

‘That’ll never change will it?’ I say as she shakes her head. ‘Where’s your sister?’

‘She go see Uncle Justin at hotel.’

Thip comes back with a bottle of cola with a straw in it and places it in front of Molly. ‘She being good girl?’ she asks.

‘Yes.’

Thip’s face beams a smile as if every burden in the world has been lifted from her. ‘Good,’ she says going off to serve some customers.

‘I see you’re wearing something more appropriate for a fourteen year old girl.’

‘Mama tell me. She say you not like what wear to bar.’

‘Yeah. You’ve got plenty of time to dress like a whore when you’re older.’

She bends her head forward putting the straw to her lips, her bright red cheeks pucker inwards, a loud slurp comes from the bottle. I can feel her anger vibrate through every one of her veins as her whole body heats up. She’s learnt how to control it.

A plump man in his fifties sits beside me. The last of his grey hair flutters on top of his head, blown up and down by a whirling fan, it looks like a freshly shot pigeon’s wing, not quite dead,

flapping in a vain attempt to fly again, waiting to be snatched by excited jaws and returned to its executioner. His brown sandalled feet and beige knee length shorts trap a pair of pale chubby legs covered in ginger hairs. He pulls his semi-circle wallet from his pocket and flips it open, carefully counting the notes with his thumb tip. Tight fucker. Probably spent too much money on whores. A beer's placed in front of him and he takes a nervous sip. He turns on his stool and faces me, his smile moves his chunky cheeks upwards, the freckles on them expand in size almost merging together, his raised eyebrows blend into ashen skin. I can just make out a red tinge running through them. His face reminds me of a teddy bear I had as a child. I expect he's going to bore me about his pointless life.

'Hi ya,' he says.

'Same to you,' I say.

'On holiday?' he asks.

'Yeah. Two weeks.'

'It's my first time over here. My wife passed away two years ago and my kids have grown up. I just needed some female company. Not much call for a fifty-six year old overweight G.P. back home.'

Thip and all her staff suddenly stop what they're doing. They put their hands together and bow their heads. Molly sits up and does the same. A monk in a black robe takes a seat. Thip brings him over a whiskey. He picks it up turning on his stool looking directly at me, he does a cheers motion with the glass, I do the same with my bottle. He gives me a smile and turns back to the bar. I've seen one of them before when I picked the girls up from here to take them to England. The twins seemed frightened of them.

'What's that all about?' asks the G.P.

'I've got no idea. Probably some superstitious daft belief.'

Another loud slurp comes from Molly's cola bottle.

'Mick Hobbs,' says the man holding his hand out.

'Dan Hargreeves,' I say shaking it.

'I'm looking to take a girl back home. I know it's not the real thing, but I think I can give her a good life.'

'Be careful. There's a lot of sharks in this place.'

'My house is so lonely. It only comes back to life when my grandchildren come around.'

'Find a girl with a child, give that person a good start in life.'

'I like the idea of that. I see you've got a young lady.'

'She's my daughter.'

'Really?' he says taking a confident sip on his bottle.

Molly takes a long slurp and swivels on my lap and faces him. 'I not. We lovers. He only say that because I under age.'

'I'll warn you now Molly. That's enough.'

'He like dress me up in school uniform. Pay me money, do bad things.'

'This is your last warning or you'll see a side of me you haven't seen before.'

She swivels back around to her cola. 'Sorry about that,' I say 'She's got a lot of attitude, and a bee in her bonnet about me.'

'Oh. What's it like having a Thai daughter?'

'Difficult. This one's a right pain in the ass. She's got a twin sister as well.'

Molly slurps again and swivels on my lap and faces him. 'My sister fuck him to. He pay more money when we together.'

I can see the backs of her cheeks smirk. She can feel my body temperature increase as my anger replaces hers. The difference is I can't control mine, red mist settles over my eyes. This fucking girl knows how to get the better of me. Lifting her up by her armpits I carefully place her on the ground. Standing over her she looks up at me smiling. Spinning the fake leather crimson seat around it's chrome spike, I release it. Lifting it above her head, the hard wooden base could do a lot of damage. She still looks up at me smiling. Bringing it down, I turn, smashing it into Mick Hobbs's head. A gut wrenching thud cuts through the loud bass music. The whole bar stops and looks. He slumps over the bar, his arms dangle over the serving side. An indentation on the side of his head means I've broken bone. A five inch gash starts to weep in a red line, it starts to flow like melting chocolate, his flapping grey hair picks up specks of it. Now it looks like a shot pigeon's wing.

I look down at Molly putting my forefinger to her nose. 'I fucking warned you,' I say.

'He innocent,' she says with a look of disgust.

'Next time you're around me you better behave yourself, or more people will get hurt.'

'I not be with you ever again. I take cane instead any time.'

'Suits me down to the ground,' I say walking past Thip and her staff who stare opened mouthed at me.

The monk in the black robe swivels on his stool and smiles at me. What's his fucking problem? Does he think this is funny? I fold my arms hiding my clenched fist. 'D' you want some as well?' I ask.

His smile broadens. 'I don't think so,' he says.

His head jerks sideways as my clenched fist smashes into it. He calmly stands up from his stool, pushing his chest into mine. He shows no emotion from his onyx black eyes, which look like glossy rosary beads. 'Back off son,' I say. 'Or I'll pull your eyes out and use them to pray for forgiveness.'

He carries on staring. I think he's put his religious views on hold. Fuck him. He'll have to learn the hard way. My palms slam into his chest, he stumbles backwards. The black ruffles of his robe open, a flash of curved steel catches my eye, his right hand goes to his left hip, gripping

a black snakeskin handle. Molly jumps in-between us, shouting at him in Thai. His hand firmly grips the knife, he carries on staring at me.

'Leave now Dan,' says Thips, her nose nearly touching mine, her head blocking my view of the monk.

'My pleasure,' I say walking down the road.

Watching a fly bounce on a lampshade above me, reminds me of prison. I can't sleep. Guilt boils over in my stomach, overflowing into my toes. I'm out of here. I'll get a flight tomorrow. Fuck this place and the people in it.

Someone knocks on my hotel door. 'Let me in,' says Thip.

'Fuck off.'

The door knob turns and she picks the lock again. She walks in closing the door behind her. 'That stupid thing you do tonight.'

'I've done a lot of stupid things.'

'You nearly kill man. Never hit monk Dan. Molly save your life.'

'I can look after myself. If it wasn't for your fucking daughter, that man would still be happily drinking at your bar.'

'She tell me what happen. She naughty girl. But you say she grow up to be whore. You laugh at her religion. You say she pain in ass. You not even know her.'

'I know her well enough. I won't be bothering with her ever again. I'm done with her now.'

'What about Polly?'

'She doesn't speak to me.'

'So now you not father any more.'

'I was never a proper father in the first place. Thip I'm leaving tomorrow, I'll send over the money you need, it was a bad idea coming to this place.'

'Dan,' she says slipping into my bed fully clothed. 'Stay for while. Try work things out with Molly. Deep down she love you.'

'She hates me with all her heart. I won't be staying.'

'Up to you. Police look for you. Man in bad way. I say I not see you before.'

'I'll be gone before they find out who I am.'

'You want me stay night?'

'Yeah. I've got nothing against you Thip. I think you're a great women.'

'But not great enough to love.'

'You're the mother of my children, you carried part of me for nine months, gave birth to two human beings, of course there's love there.'

'But not enough for me to come and live with you.'

'No. Sorry.'

She gets out of bed. 'You leaving?' I ask.

'No,' she says unbuttoning her shirt. 'I like sex to. Especially with father of daughters. You leave tomorrow. I want sex with love.'

She keeps her underwear on as she slips into bed. Her warm skin entwines itself with mine.

'Thip?' I ask. 'What's the deal with the monk?'

'You not need know,' she says moving her head under the duvet.

'Molly and Polly believe it all. Those curved knives and black Buddha's. What's that all about?'

Her hand grips my cock pulling it up vertically. 'You want me talk about religion?' she asks in a muffled voice. 'Or you want me suck cock?'

'Does Buddha except dirty bitches like you up in Heaven... Ow. Fuck. I thought you were going to suck it. Not bite the fucking thing.'

'We have no Heaven. Only rebirth.'

'What you coming back as? A fucking crocodile... Ow. Jesus.'

'No. We not believe in reincarnation. Only energy from soul find place when body die.'

'You're starting to lose me now.'

'So you not want me talk about religion?'

'No. You go back to what you're good at. That beats Heaven any day.'

Her head moves under the duvet, it pokes out like a Turtles staring directly into my face.

'You get under duvet and pleasure me with mouth. Why I always go first? You not paying.'

'My fucking pleasure. D' you want me to send you to Nirvana?'

'You not that fucking good.'

## Chapter 14

Two days later: 'Thanks Bob.'

'I enjoyed the company. You weren't on holiday very long.'

'No. It was a mistake going.'

'Those girls haven't changed then?'

'Those girls will always be the same.'

'Where's your brother?'

'I left him over there.'

'Your face has been in a lot of newspapers. What a miscarriage of Justice. You must be absolutely livid?'

'I am. But I try not to dwell on it. I must go Bob. I've got so much to do. Thanks again for looking after Tucker.'

'Any time Dan.'

Pulling my suitcase and Tucker along the pavement, curtains twitch. The innocent child killer is back. I expect their conversations will have to change from I always knew there was something strange about that bloke. To I knew there was something wrong with his conviction. I expect I'll get a flurry of barbecue invites when summer arrives.

Entering my house I let Tucker off his lead, he sniffs in every corner to make sure no other animal has been on his territory while he's been away.

Dumping my suitcase in the middle of the front room, I sit on it resting my chin on my palms. What the fuck am I going to do? Who's going to employ me? Even though I'm innocent there's still stigma attached. The only person who can help me is George Huntsberg. The only thing I can do is phone him. Taking a deep breath I do what I have to do. I don't know what can of worms this is going to open up. The dialling tone rings in my ear. He might not even answer.

'Hi George.'

'Dan,' he says excitedly.

'I need a favour.'

'Anything.'

'I need you to help me find a job.'

'Come to my house tomorrow and we'll discuss it. Be there at ten-thirty.'

'Thanks George. How's Joanne?' I say with my voice breaking.

'Dan. She's happily married to Simon. They've got a little baby daughter called Lisa. You

stay well clear of her. She lives down on the coast anyway.'

'I just want to phone her to see how she is.'

'No. She knows you're innocent, it's been well publicised. You and her have got nothing to say to each other. I don't want you upsetting her happy family life. Especially where my granddaughter is concerned.'

'OK George I'll see you at ten-thirty.'

Ringing George's doorbell I can hear stilettos tap on marble. They echo through George's cathedral size hallway. As they get louder I wonder who it is. It must be Joanne. He must of told her I was coming. My heart races as the brass door handle is turned. She wants me back. I knew she would as soon as she found out I was innocent. She'll be in my bed tonight. Two fucking years without speaking to her. Two fucking years I've waited to be inside her.

The door opens. 'You don't know me,' she whispers kissing my cheek.

Why is she fucking here? What's going on?

'Hi Mr Hargreeves. Nice to finally meet you,' she says loudly.

'Is that Dan?' shouts George.

'Yes darling. In the flesh.'

'Bring him to the study.'

'We'll be right there,' she shouts as I follow her.

George is sat on a large terracotta leather sofa, he looks up from some papers he is reading. He nudges his glasses up the bridge of his nose with his middle finger and gives me a smile. 'I suppose you're wondering who this woman is?'

'I am curious. But it's none of my business.'

'Can you see the family likeness?' asks George.

'She does look familiar. I can't put my finger on it.'

'This is Joanne's mother. We're a couple now.'

Lucy sits on the sofa next to him. She holds his hand. 'And we're very happy together,' she says.

She must of run out of money. Conniving bitch. If it wasn't for her I might still be with Joanne. That women could fuck for England. George could never satisfy her.

'I now know where Joanne gets her good looks from,' I say with a smirk.

'Yes,' says George. 'It wasn't from me. Lucy and Joanne have patched things up. They're very much mother and daughter now. Lucy helped Joanne through a very bad period of post natal depression. She suffered from it herself. Joanne said she wouldn't of coped without her.'

'I'm glad they've sorted things out. Nice to meet you Lucy.'

'I've heard a lot about you Dan,' says Lucy. 'The last two years must have been a nightmare?'



'They were. But it's over now.'

'So Dan,' says George. 'You need a job.'

'I desperately need one. I know it's going to be difficult. I just need a little help.'

'I want you to run my company.'

'Are you serious?'

'Very much so. You were ear marked to do it while you were with Joanne. I want to retire Dan. Spend time with Lucy and my granddaughter.'

'Does Joanne know about this?'

'She does. She's OK with it.'

'I'm totally shocked. I don't know what to say.'

'Just say you'll do it.'

'I will George. Thanks.'

'I'll sort out a contract. You'll get a good package. One condition Dan, you stay well clear of Joanne or that contract will be terminated.'

'I understand George.'

'It'll take me a week to wrap things up so you can slip easily into my position. Lucy's been acting as my P.A. She'll show you the customer accounts. Be at work in a weeks time.'

'I will George. Thanks again.'

'You're welcome. So Dan what's happening with your family?'

'The girls are staying in Thailand. Justin's over there at the moment. He'll be back in a weeks time.'

'So you're not bringing the girls over then?'

'No. They're happy with their mother.'

'Yeah. Their back from the dead mother. What a cruel trick. Joanne took them back, she was absolutely shocked when she found out she was still alive.'

'I was to. I heard Joanne accompanied them back.'

'We were going to finance their upbringing. But as soon as she saw their mother was still alive, she got on the next plane out of there.'

'I don't blame her.'

'Dan I've got a meeting in an hour. Sorry to cut the conversation short.'

'George thanks for everything. I'll give you a hundred percent.'

'I know you will.'

'I'll show him out,' says Lucy.

Lucy links her arm in mine as we walk across the marbled floor. 'I don't want George or Joanne to know about you and me,' she says.

Joanne didn't say anything. Why? I would of thought she would of broken these two up as quickly as possible.

‘Your secret is safe with me.’

‘I’ll see you in a weeks time in the office,’ says Lucy opening the door.

Walking outside I turn and face her. ‘I look forward to it Lucy.’

She pulls the door behind her, just leaving it slightly ajar. She leans forward gently squeezing my testicles. ‘Don’t get any silly ideas of using that on me.’

‘It hasn’t even crossed my mind. You forget I’ve had the younger version of you. Why would I want mutton when I’ve had the lamb?’ I say with a smirk.

‘You really need to work on that charm of yours,’ she says rubbing my hardening cock. ‘I see you like mutton,’ she says smiling.

‘Do you still like forbidden fruit? Or is George your only source of satisfaction?’

‘I might take the odd lover now and again. But I love George, always have done. I’ll see you in a weeks time Dan,’ she says going back inside and shutting the door.

One week later: Sitting behind a desk in George’s office, Lucy’s bent over a filing cabinet getting me some account folders. Her navy blue skirt is stretched taut, displaying a shapely tight backside. Not bad for a fifty year old. I don’t know what it is, but this woman oozes sex appeal in bucket loads. Just her presence gives me a hard-on. I don’t know if it’s the way she talks, smells. The way she walks around in her tight clothing showing off all her curves. I bet when she was younger those buckets overflowed.

‘You still would,’ she says.

‘Would what?’

‘Don’t play dumb with me. All you’ve done this morning is look at my tits and ass.’

‘You’re cock sure of yourself. Have you forgotten you’re fifty?’

‘I know when a cock wants me. I’ve had plenty of them,’ she says spinning around on her black stilettos. Her blond ringlets sway to one side, her breasts do the same. They push out from her light blue shirt, which is slightly see through. I can see the pattern of her bra around her large cleavage.

‘What happened about the breast cancer?’

‘I lost one, but managed to keep the other.’

‘Sorry Lucy. I didn’t know.’

‘I’ve had reconstructed surgery now. I lost a lot of confidence for a while. But I’m back to my old self again.’

‘I’m glad to hear that. Did Joanne support you through that time?’

‘She did. We’re close now. A mother needs her daughter and vice-versa.’

‘Has Joanne ever mentioned anything about me?’

‘I don’t want to discuss her with you. All I’ll say is she was heart broken.’

‘She wasn’t the only one.’

‘Dan. If you want to get on in this company you’ll have to forget her. Find someone else.’

‘I plan to. But she’s the type of women that’s hard to forget.’

‘Let’s get down to business. Here are the folders of the three big accounts we lost,’ she says passing them to me.

‘Yeah. D’ you know why we lost them?’

‘No idea. Also Dan we’ve got interviews for your new P.A. This afternoon.’

‘OK.’

Going through the folders I can put faces to the names of the owners of these companies. I’ve met them all. Why did they drop Huntsberg? I’ll phone them and arrange a meeting, try and win them back. Looking out my office window I catch two of my accountants looking in. They quickly move their heads back down to their work. Two of them won’t be here come the end of the afternoon, I’m looking forward to that.

‘You’ve got a meeting with a new client at two o’clock tomorrow afternoon. The company is Tenco Steel. Their representative is Maria Yara. They’re a Brazilian firm.’

‘I’ll write it in my diary.’

Maria Yara. The smell of apricots washed in brandy blast into my nostrils. Heather honey coats my tongue. Gold and bronze flash before me.

‘Lucy what’s the deal with George?’

‘What d’ you mean?’

‘C’ mon. Did you fall on hard times? Run out of money?’

Her eyes flash like knives, exactly the same way as her daughters. I think I’ve hit a raw nerve. She comes around my side of the desk, sits on it, crossing her legs towards me. She puts her forefinger under my chin and lifts it up towards her stare. ‘You better watch that mouth of yours,’ she says, her face blushing under it’s foundation. ‘Remember I’m fucking the boss.’

‘Look at the age gap.’

‘We share a lot of similar interests. He’s the father of my child. I love him.’

‘Yeah. The child you walked out on.’

‘I was eighteen. I was told to leave. I was Huntsberg’s dirty little secret.’

‘What d’ you mean?’

‘George was engaged to a well connected woman. I was an affair. Joanne was conceived over this desk when I was an intern. I was just about to go to university. Fucked those plans up.’

‘I didn’t know.’

‘There’s a lot you don’t know. George’s father offered me twenty thousand to have an abortion. George knew about it. I refused. I said the child’s going to be adopted. In the end George decided he wanted her. Won custody through the courts on the grounds he was the father and he could give her a stable up bringing with his partner. Who left him when Joanne was six months.’

‘So why didn’t you stay in contact?’

‘I wasn’t allowed to. I was the one having her adopted. A biological mother has no rights if she decides to do that. George sent me a photograph of her every year on her birthday. It broke my heart watching my child grow up on a picture. Dan I was eighteen. What sort of life could I give her,’ she says removing her forefinger.

‘Why didn’t you get back with George when he split up from that woman?’

‘He didn’t want me. He said I was too young. That I needed to experience life. He knows I’m flighty. A bit of a wild spirit. He said it would of made me desperately unhappy.’

‘Clever man George.’

‘Not that clever. I would of done anything for him. I thought about Joanne and him everyday. My dream was to be with them.’

‘My dream is to be with her to.’

‘That’ll never happen. You won’t be sharing her bed again. She loves someone else.’

‘Why d’ you say that for you bitch?’ I say grabbing her wrist.

‘You better watch that little temper of yours sonny. You’re talking to a big girl now.’

‘Sorry,’ I say letting her wrist go. ‘It still hurts.’

‘Yes. I know it does,’ she says with a slight smile. ‘So does accusing me of being a gold digger.’

‘We evens?’

‘For the moment. But watch that cocky mouth and temper around me. I’ve tamed bigger and more dangerous boys than you over the years.’

‘I bet you have.’

She stands up straightening her wrinkled skirt. I’d love to get in- between those legs again for a second time.

‘Shall we do lunch?’ she asks. ‘We could go to that pub we met the first time.’

‘Why not. Will you be offering yourself up for desert?’

‘No. Not this time. My legs will stay firmly shut. The thought of you with my daughter turns my stomach slightly.’

It turned hers to. It looks like leopards can change their spots. A slight commotion erupts in the office. I look through the window. Christ! It’s fucking Joanne pushing a child’s buggy. The kid’s asleep. A man’s stood behind her with a denim bag over his shoulder. She goes to it, taking a tissue out and wipes the baby’s mouth. The office staff crowd around her, bending down looking at the infant.

‘Fucking Joanne’s here,’ I say to Lucy.

‘I had no idea she was coming down. Stay here Dan, you know what George said. I’ll go and see what’s going on.’

Watching Lucy walk through the office the two of them embrace. Lucy bends down looking

at the child. Joanne smiles turning to her dark haired handsome husband, he smiles back. Fuck this. I can't watch. Going over to the window I close the blinds. Why is she here? She must of known I start work today. Maybe she's got no feelings left for me, but she must realise I have for her. Her life's moved on two years. Mine has stopped still. She knows what I've gone through. She's got no reason to rub her new life into my face.

Sitting back at my desk I look at the blinds covering the window. That could have been me behind that screen. I should be the one married to her with a child. Not that fucking prick. Why did she have to get married and have a child for? Why didn't she wait for me?

The door knob twitches. It better not be her. The door swings open, she closes it behind her and leans against it looking down at the ground. What do I say? I've wanted to speak to her so much. But now I've simply got no words.

She lifts her head up, her long blond-auburn hair hangs over her cheeks. Her ice-blue eyes glitter, they look contented and happy. A big lipstick red smile pushes the fat of her cheeks upwards, two dimples appear from nowhere. My eyes moisten, I want to cry. I must hold on. I want to hold her. I wish I could go back in time.

'Sorry Dan,' she says.

'You've got nothing to apologise for.'

'I have.'

'Congratulations anyway.'

'Thanks. She's gorgeous. Simon and I are trying for another one. I was an only child, I don't want Lisa growing up to be one.'

'As long as you're happy Jo,' I say as Lucy comes in.

'Lisa's crying Jo,' she says.

'I'll go to her Mum. Nice seeing you Dan.'

'And you,' I say as she leaves.

Lucy closes the door and leans against it. 'You look like someone's stamped on your heart.'

'They just have,' I say wiping a tear from my eye. 'Forget lunch Lucy. My appetite's gone.'

Lucy comes over and sits on my side of the desk, she crosses her legs towards me. 'You'll find someone else soon enough.'

'I didn't want anyone else.'

'I know you loved her Dan. I've had my heart broken several times. I know how you feel.'

'What's her husband like?'

'Very nice. He's a dentist.'

'Oh... Shall we get down to business. It'll take my mind off her.'

She stands up giving me a salute 'Would Sir like to spank me over his knee first? Or shall we go straight to fucking over the desk?'

'A spanking would be quite nice.'

She bends down leaning over my legs, her large breasts droop over my thigh. She pushes her backside upwards, stretching her navy blue skirt tightly over her buttocks. 'Your mistress is ready,' she says.

'Are you serious? You haven't even got any pants on.'

'It's no knickers Tuesday. I never wear any on such a boring day.'

I stroke her backside with my palm, slipping my hand under the hem of her skirt, my fingers run over the back of her smooth legs, my finger tips touch the bottom of soft warm cheeks. She abruptly stands up. 'Sir's being a bit naughty.'

'You fucking tease.'

'Any time I want Dan Hargreeves. Not any time you want.'

The telephone rings, she picks it up. 'Send the first one in,' she says. 'Dan the first of your interviewees is here.'

'Let's get this over and done with,' I say as Lucy puts the phone down and gets a chair and sits beside me.

'She was nice,' I say.

'She's also pretty with big tits and blond hair. You need to concentrate on the job.'

'Send the next one in then. This is the fifth girl. I'm not doing any more today.'

'She's the last,' says Lucy phoning reception.

'Why don't you be my P.A? We'd have a lot of fun together.'

'I might fall pregnant. Now that would be complicated,' she says with a slight snort.

'What the fuck are you on about? It would be totally professional. I think at fifty you're well past your incubation period.'

'No. Everything still works fine. I still take precautions. George is quite virile for his age, and that's the reason I won't work with you. We want to travel. We both love Italy, fine wine, opera. We share a lot of the same interests. He's fluent in French. Myself Italian.'

'Sounds fucking wonderful. Do you ever fit in a bit of train spotting.'

'You're one notch up from a fucking lager lout. What my daughter saw in you is beyond my comprehension.'

'You didn't seem to mind dripping all over me and getting on your knees.'

'That was just sex. Not mental stimulation. To be honest you bored me within an hour of meeting you,' she says with a knock on the door.

'After this one you can fuck off to George and retire.'

'Can I now... Enter,' she says raising her voice.

A girl comes in and sits down. She looks like a frightened Dormouse. Her hair looks like a broken bale of hay, it's the same colour to. Her large gold framed circular rose tinted spectacles cover half her cheeks, I can't even see the colour of her eyes. She's got a white cardigan on

which looks like she knitted it herself. Her pink and red floral dress falls well below the knee. Fucking hell. Her legs have a mass of dark brown hairs on them. Her toes move up and down in a nervous motion, trapped in a pair of worn out sandals.

‘You’re hired,’ says Lucy.

‘You fucking what Lucy?’

‘She’s perfect. I’ve read her CV.’

‘I think I’ll make that choice.’

‘No. I will. You just be a good boy and listen to your bosses influential partner... Rose Delaware isn’t it?’

‘Yes.’

‘Would you like to take the position as Mr Hargreeves’s P.A.?’

‘Really? Honestly? I can’t believe it. I spent four years at night school and you’re the first person that’s given me a chance.’

‘Come to the desk Rose and sign the contract.’

‘Mother will be pleased,’ she says putting her signature to paper.

‘Is your mother still alive?’ I ask.

‘Oh. Yes. I live with her.’

‘That gives no hint that she’s still living,’ I say as Lucy’s eyes burn into the side of my cheek.

‘Sorry?’ says Rose.

‘Don’t worry about him,’ says Lucy. ‘Any problems I’ll sort him out, here’s my mobile number,’ she says passing a card over. ‘Give me a ring any time. Be here tomorrow at nine o’clock.’

‘I will. Thank you so much. I won’t let you down. Nice to have met you Mr Hargreeves.’

‘Yeah... The pleasure was all mine.’

‘Give the contract to reception Rose on your way out. Lock the door behind you,’ says Lucy.

‘I will,’ she says and leaves.

‘You fucking asshole,’ I say to Lucy. ‘You need to control your little temper. You’ve raised that poor girl’s hopes and I’ll have to sack her tomorrow. Just because I said something you didn’t like.’

‘She’s not going anywhere. You’ve never seen me lose my temper.’

‘You’ve never seen me lose mine,’ I say snarling at her, swivelling on my chair to face her. She does the same. Her face beams. ‘Look into my eyes,’ she says. ‘Who do they remind you of?’

‘Joanne,’ I say as she puts both her palms over my eyes. She removes her hands. ‘Now look into them again? What do you see?’

Her black pupils have grown twice in size, her ice-blue iris’s have miniature flecks of silver

in them that flicker and sparkle. They look like stars, bursting across a galaxy. 'Nothing,' I say.

A palm smashes me across my cheek. 'What do you see?' she asks.

'Your temper,' I say with mine brewing.

A palm smashes me across my cheek again. 'Correct.'

'Why the fuck did you hit me twice for?'

'The first one's for me, the second one's for Joanne. You broke her heart.'

'She broke mine.'

'I don't give a fuck about yours,' she says smashing her palm across my cheek a third time.

'Jesus. What was that for?'

'For someone you'll never know.'

'You can fuck off now. We're done here.'

'We are,' she says leaning over kissing my reddened, burning cheek.

She sits on my desk looking down at me. 'I thought you were leaving?' I ask.

She takes a round mint out of her skirt pocket and places it on the desk. 'I'm leaving after I've eaten that.'

'Well hurry up then.'

She kicks her stilettos off placing her feet on my knees, brings her knees together and leans back on my desk using both her palms as support. 'You've wanted to all morning. Now here's your chance.'

'I've lost interest in you.'

'Really?' she says moving her knees apart. 'Don't use your hands, I'd prefer it if you went tongue in first.'

'Do you actually think I'd be that interested in a well used fifty year old fanny?'

'Depends who owns it,' she says hitching her skirt up to the top of her thighs. 'I'm waiting,' she says pushing down on my knees with her feet, bouncing her backside up and down on my desk. She manages to pull her skirt under her buttocks and spreads her legs.

Her heart-shaped blond pubic hair stares directly at me, her outer labia is perfectly symmetrical, glowing a rose-pink.

Tilting my head upwards she looks down at me with her blue eyes. 'You really are sure of yourself,' I say.

'I always have been. Now hurry up I haven't got all fucking day,' she says moving her backside to the edge of my desk, putting her palm on the back of my head, forcing it between her legs. Her scent of a spring morning has left, replaced by an alluring musk of salted sea air, that smashes into my nostrils nearly snapping my nasal hairs off. My cock instantly hardens.

A fever from in-between her legs circles around my cheeks flushing them. Coiling out my tongue, the tip of it touches in-between her labia, they close around it, trapping it like a Venus fly trap. Intense heat floods into the blood vessels inside my swelling tongue, filling them with the



flavour of malted sea rain, dusted with nutmeg, expanding my lingual artery to nearly choking point.

Pushing my tongue in down to it's base, my lips touch hers, her thighs crush my cheeks. Her two outer labia's stick to my smile, palpitating, as blood flow shoots around inside them. A Leopard never changes it's spots. My smile broadens.

'D' you think this is funny Dan Hargreeves?' she says grabbing my hair, pulling my head out. I look up at her with my smiling face. 'It's a smile of enjoyment.'

'I don't think it is. I think it's one of arrogance.'

'D' you want me to carry on?'

'Yes. But no more smiling against my vagina. Just get on with it and do a good job.'

This woman's got a fucking nerve. She's used to getting her own way like her daughter. Standing up I look at her face to face. She tilts her head to one side. 'Is there a problem?' she asks.

'None,' I say undoing my belt, dropping my trousers and boxer shorts down to my ankles.

'Is the flavour not to your liking?' she asks.

'I like it very much. But I'm not a puppet on strings. It's my turn to take control.'

Placing my hands under her knees, I lift her bent legs up. Her coarse hair brushes against my approaching cock. Pushing down on it with my forefinger I guide it into her humid moist hole. She lies flat on her back. 'Tell me when you're going to come,' she says.

I say nothing as I pound away inside her. The soft flesh on the inside of her thighs burns my skin with friction. Her large breasts wobble in time with my arse. The desk creaks, she lets out a quiet moan. 'D' you still get your hallucinations?' she asks.

'Not any more.'

'What a pity.'

I speed up, cutting through her thinning stickiness. A sudden fear runs around inside me. What if someone bursts in? What if George uses his key to open the door? What if Joanne comes back? I'm going to get this over and done with.

'This takes me back,' says Lucy. 'I remember being like this when I was eighteen.'

'I'm going to come soon,' I say.

'Make it last longer George.'

'What did you just fucking say?'

'Sorry Dan. He was just a bit younger than you when he used to fuck me over this desk. I just got lost in nostalgia for a second.'

'I nearly lost an erection.'

'If it wasn't for this desk and George you would never have had the pleasure of my daughter.'

'Fucking hell Lucy. Don't mention her while I'm stuck up you.'

She undoes her shirt and massages her breasts. I feel myself about to come.

‘Take the bra off,’ I say.

She does. Her tits look like a larger version of her daughters. ‘Christ,’ I say. ‘They’ve stood the test of time.’

‘When I had my reconstructed surgery, I had some extra work done,’ she says arching her back.

A gush of hot liquid splashes against the top of my thighs.

‘Still squirting?’

‘Yes. Yes,’ she says.

‘I’m going to come Lucy.’

She sits up and gets down on her knees. Her eyes look up at me as she moves her lips up and down my soaking cock. I burst into her mouth. She closes her eyes and gulps.

Standing up she puts her bra and shirt on and slips back into her stilettos. She picks up the mint from the desk and pops it into her mouth. ‘That’s the last time you’ll ever fuck me,’ she says sucking on the sweet.

‘Really?’

She goes up to the door and unlocks it. ‘Lucy can you send David Chester and Martin Smith in.’

‘Of course Dan. Before I leave Dan can you wave at me with your penis? I want to remember it one last time.’

‘Missing it all ready are you?’ I say waving it at her with a big grin on my face.

She suddenly opens the door laughing, leaving it open. For fuck sake. My staff can see me. I fall down behind my desk, struggling to pull my boxers and trousers back up. Fucking bitch.

Tucker snuggles down by my feet as I sip on a glass of red wine listening to some opera, sat on my sofa in a dressing gown. That was a good start to my new job. I enjoyed sacking those two pricks. I also enjoyed their pleading. Lucy’s different to say the least, I wish she could be my P.A. What do I do about my new P.A? I’ll have to give her such a hard time, she’ll leave. I can’t sack her with Lucy looking over my shoulder. A beep comes from the intercom. Who the fuck is this?

Leaving the front room Tucker follows me. If this is someone trying to sell me something I’ll set the dog on him. ‘Yes,’ I say opening the front door.

She smiles. ‘Hi Dan.’

‘Joanne?’

‘Are you going to let me in,’ she says as Tucker excitedly sniffs around her.

‘Yes. I can’t believe it’s you,’

She follows me into the front room sitting on the sofa next to me. ‘I told mum, dad and

Simon I was popping out for an hour to see an old girlfriend. I can't stay long.'

'OK. It's great to see you.'

'And you,' she says holding my hand resting her head on my shoulder.

'Why Jo?'

'You pleaded guilty.'

'I had to. I didn't know if I did it or not. They were going to send Justin to prison. I had no choice.'

'I fell apart when I heard that. All those years we spent together, and all along you knew you killed a child.'

'I didn't know.'

'I know that now. Simon came along during my meltdown. I was reeling from shock. Fell pregnant, got married.'

'D' you love him Jo?'

'I'll learn to in time.'

'Grab Lisa and come and live with me.'

'No Dan,' she says with a smile. 'I've made my bed so I'll lie in it. I don't want Lisa to have any upheaval in her life.'

'My door will always be open for you Joanne.'

'Thanks. But it's time for you to move on now. Find someone else.'

'All I ever wanted was you.'

'I know,' she says squeezing my hand. 'Has mother been behaving herself around you?'

'Yes. You never let on that you knew about myself and her.'

'What's the point. You didn't know who she was and vice-versa. I don't want her feeling guilty about it, or embarrassed. We get on well. She's been a tower of strength. There's been a lot of dark periods.'

'Why is she with your dad? Is she broke?'

'No. She doesn't need dad for money. She's got five hair salons and a lot of property, she's quite wealthy in her own right.'

'Oh. I didn't know. She told me why she left you as a child.'

'Yeah. I know about it. Sad. But dad gave me all I wanted.'

'She loves you very much you know.'

'I'm aware of that. She dotes on Lisa. I think it fills the gap when she lost me.'

'She thinks I'm one notch up from a lager lout. She can't comprehend what you saw in me.'

Jo laughs. 'She's quite feisty. You don't fuck her around. Only I can do that.'

'I heard you took the girls back.'

'I did. That fucking bitch lied. I couldn't believe it, all the shit we went through. The girls took me to a bar to see their mother. I thought once they saw she wasn't there they'd start to

except that she had gone. But no, there she was serving. I just got on the next available plane.'

'Justin's over there at the moment, he's back tomorrow night.'

'Are you going to bring them back over?'

'No fucking chance. I went over for two weeks to see them. I lasted two days in Molly's company. That was enough. Never again,' I say putting my arm around her.

'I wish I could go back in time Dan.'

'So do I. To be honest Jo, deep down I think this was destined to happen. People like me don't marry people like you. You were always too good for me. Your mother's right.'

'She's not. You were all I wanted,' she says gently sobbing.

'Don't cry Jo. All I really want is you to be happy.'

'I must leave,' she says wiping her eyes.

'Stay longer. Let's just cuddle on the sofa for a while.'

'No,' she says getting up with tears flowing.

'Stay.'

'No. I'll see myself out.'

'Can we meet up again?'

'Sorry Dan. This is the last time.'

'We could just meet as friends.'

'That'll never work,' she says and leaves.

Next day: 'I'd like you to come back to Huntsberg Rita.'

'No Dan. What can you offer me?'

'A better service than the one you've got. You know we're the best at being creative with money.'

'I'm quite happy with the accountancy firm I've got.'

'OK. I'll give up the chase. Let's just enjoy our meal... How's Trevor?'

'The usual. He's like an old dog you don't want to put down.'

'How's business?'

'Fucking hard in this recession,' she says as Rose tuts. 'What's her fucking problem?'

'She doesn't like bad language.'

'Tell her to fuck off Dan, she doesn't need to write any notes, I'm sick of looking at her.'

'Rose. Wait in the car, I won't be long.'

Rose gets up from her seat giving Rita a long glare.

'I would of thought you'd have found something a bit more attractive than that as your P.A.'

'She wasn't my choice. Joanne's mother chose her.'

'You still with that bitch?'

'Not any more.'

‘You dodged a bullet there.’

‘What’s she done to upset you?’

‘Kicked fuck into me in a toilet.’

‘Joanne wouldn’t do that.’

‘You told her about me coming on to you when you took me out, when you worked for that other company.’

‘Yeah. But nothing happened. She laughed when I told her.’

‘Because you knocked me back I went with Huntsberg. What a fucking mistake that was. I was at a function and went to the toilet. I sat down to have a piss and she kicked the door in plus my face. She’s got one fucking temper on her. I was covered in piss and blood. Next day I dropped Huntsberg.’

‘Are you sure it was Joanne?’

‘She said if I went near you again, she’d make sure I’d only be able to eat through a fucking straw.’

‘I’ve never ever seen her being violent.’

‘She’s one jealous bitch,’ she says gulping her whiskey down.

‘Another Rita?’

‘Go on then. Put two in there.’

I signal to a waiter. ‘Double whiskey and a double brandy please.’

‘Certainly Sir,’ he says. ‘Is there anything else I can get you?’

Rita looks up at him. ‘When d’ you finish your shift?’

‘Sorry madame. I’m not on the menu.’

‘Pity. You’d look good on top of me,’ she says smirking.

‘Rita you’re about as subtle as a fucking hand grenade.’

‘Don’t ask. Don’t get. So when are you going to pleasure your tongue on me?’

‘C’ mon Rita. We’ve been here before.’

‘But you’re single now. Aren’t you?’

‘I am.’

‘So what’s the problem?’

‘Rita you’re the same age as me, you’re attractive, but the thing that puts me off, is your fucking mouth.’

She smiles. ‘I can’t change who I am.’

‘If you acted like a lady now and again I would be tempted.’

‘I’ll hold you to that. I could be a lady for a weekend.’

‘I’ll have to go Rita,’ I say finishing my brandy.

She sighs. ‘Go on then. I’ll send over all my accounts tomorrow. But I’ll hold you to that weekend.’

‘Honestly?’

‘Yeah... You could do with a break. I’ve heard what you’ve gone through.’

‘I can’t thank you enough. You’re the first account I’ve won.’

‘It’ll be fun chasing you around. I can’t wait to see the look on your ex-girlfriend’s face when I walk arm and arm with you to a function.’

‘Rita leave her out of it, you wouldn’t want me to accompany you to the toilet every time you wanted to go?’

‘Until the next time Dan.’

‘Look forward to it Rita.’

Driving back to the office with Rose she hasn’t said a word. ‘You’re a good driver Rose.’

‘Am I Mr Hargreeves?’

‘Don’t ever tut when I’m with a client.’

‘But she was so rude.’

‘I don’t care. You know you’re on a trial period. There are plenty of people similar to her in this business.’

‘Sorry Mr Hargreeves. Are you going to sack me?’

‘No Rose. I hate to say it but Lucy made the right choice.’

‘Thank you Mr Hargreeves. I won’t let you down.’

‘Call me Dan when we’re on our own.’

‘OK Dan,’ she says with her face lighting up.

We park up by the office, walk through the revolving door and into the lift. I look down at Rose. ‘How tall are you?’

‘Four foot eight. I’m twenty-one now so I don’t think I’ll grow any more.’

Her neck stretches back looking up at my six foot one frame. Her large oval rose tinted glasses make her look like a cartoon character. We reach the floor and walk past reception. ‘Mr Hargreeves,’ shouts the receptionist. ‘Maria Yara is in your office.’

‘She’s early.’

‘She got the time zones mixed up.’

Going into my office Maria’s sat on a chair opposite my desk. I take my seat and Rose gets a chair, sitting next to me with a note pad and pen in her hand.

‘Maria Yara. I’m Dan Hargreeves,’ I say standing up leaning over my desk, holding my hand out.

‘Yes I know,’ she says in a velvety voice, which cuts through the air in a rich honey coated tone.

She keeps me waiting a few seconds, uncrosses her long bronzed legs, stands, takes my hand and kisses my cheek. She smells divine. I think it’s wild orchid.

She takes her seat crossing her legs. I take mine. Her black snakeskin skirt has risen showing off all of her flawless tanned thigh. Her feet are encased in black snakeskin knee length boots. My hard cock pushes into my trousers.

‘So what can I do for you?’

‘My family own five steel mills in Brazil. We want a presence in Europe using London as our base,’ she says placing her hand on her knee, tapping her red talon shaped manicured nails in a wave like motion. Her fingers have several gold rings which glint with the movement.

‘Fine. London’s a good place to use as a gateway.’

‘Yes I know,’ she says, turning her head to one side, disinterested in what I just said.

‘The office you’re using in London? Who is my point of contact?’

‘Me. I’m relocating,’ she says breathing in with a heavy sigh, which pushes her breasts outwards. Her black snakeskin waistcoat barely covers them, I think they’re going to burst out, but she breaths out just in time.

‘You don’t seem to happy about it?’

‘I’m not. My father made me,’ she says turning her head to face me. ‘Why would I want to come to this godforsaken freezing country for? The men are animals and the women are fat and ugly.’

‘Sorry you think that way Maria.’

‘My boyfriend Fernando won’t come over. Even though I told him there’s a lot of male modelling jobs in London,’ she says swishing her long black tousled hair back over her shoulder with her hand.. A tear drop cut diamond twists around on the end of a gold necklace, sprinkling chinks of light in-between her waxy, cinnamon coloured cleavage.

‘Sorry to hear that Maria.’

She goes to her briefcase and gets some files. She stays seated, leaning over and placing them on my desk using one hand. ‘Here are our last year summary of accounts. We turned over five hundred million dollars worth of cold cut steel last year.’

I can’t help looking at her half covered breasts, pushed up in a Regency style. I bet they’d taste divine, sweetly succulent, a great starter before you went down on the main course. Her eyes connect with mine, heavy mascara lashes flutter, dewy amber eyes seem to merge into me, they look like large drops of golden sap, that could melt at any time. A knowing slight smile comes to her face. She sits back up on her chair. My God this woman’s stunning. I wish I was younger. I could do things to her she wouldn’t forget in a hurry.

‘Thanks we’ll go through the numbers.’

‘I’m here for a couple of days. Can you recommend any good restaurants. I’m not in the mood for the usual pigswill that’s served in this country.’

‘Yes. Barreto’s is very good.’

‘Accompany me there. I don’t want to eat alone. I also don’t need any disgusting English

men trying to talk to me.’

‘I will. Which hotel are you at?’

‘The Royal Crest. It’s supposed to be five star. It would be if your last accommodation was a gutter.’

‘I’ll pick you up at eight.’

‘Make it nine. I need some sleep and a long bath. I want to clean this filthy British air off me.’

‘I’ll see you then.’

She gives me a quick smile, puts her black leather jacket on, which is hung up on the back of her chair, picks her briefcase up and leaves. The back of her bronzed long legs seem to go on forever as she walks out the door. What I’d give to have a taste of the sweet thing at the end of them. That woman is definitely out of my league.

‘Did you take notes Rose?’

‘Yes Dan.’

‘Let me see them.’

‘No Mr Hargreeves.’

‘Sorry Rose. Give them here,’ I say grabbing them from her.

‘Sorry Mr Hargreeves. I didn’t mean to.’

‘All you’ve written is bitch, bitch, bitch about a hundred times.’

‘I’m so sorry. It won’t happen again.’

‘Rose,’ I say laughing. ‘Your notes are exactly right. Keep up the good work.’

‘Thanks Dan,’ she says smiling with relief.

I’m starting to warm to this girl. If only she looked like Maria.

My spine melts into my mattress, my whole body contently burns away. Moonlight scatters across my ceiling, broken by the crack in my bedroom curtains. Happiness lights up every corner of my soul. This is the first time in years I’ve felt this good. Things have turned, my whole life back on track, heading in the right direction. Breathing deeply in my smile inflates to the biggest one I’ve ever had. With all the suffering I’ve endured I deserve to feel like this.

I can hear a key go into the lock in the front door. Justin’s back. Tucker’s paws tap on the hallway floor. ‘Good boy,’ I hear Justin say.

I can hear his footsteps climb the stairs, with Tucker following him. His suitcase scrapes the wall as he struggles with it. His bedroom door opens, his suitcase bounces on his bed. My bedroom door opens, Tucker’s nose pokes through. ‘Go away boy,’ I say.

His wet nose dabs at my cheek. ‘Dan,’ shouts Justin from his bedroom.

‘I’m trying to sleep Justin.’

He comes into my room. ‘I didn’t think you were in.’



‘Fuck off Justin I’m busy.’

‘What sleeping?’

Maria’s head moves up the duvet, her thick black tousled hair springs out. She looks directly into my face with her amber eyes. Her soft breasts push into my chest. ‘Who is this?’ she says in her rich coated accent.

‘My brother. I forgot he was coming back tonight.’

‘I didn’t realise you had company,’ he says.

‘What did you think that great lump in the middle of my bed was, a giant fucking teddy bear.’

‘I thought you had your knees up.’

‘Justin. Maria,’ I say.

‘Nice to meet you Maria.’

Maria wipes her lips with the back of her hand. ‘Likewise.’

‘You can fuck off now Justin.’

I can hear footsteps on the stairs. My door opens ‘Hello Dan. You fucking lady?’

‘What the fuck is she doing here?’

‘I brought her back. We love each other.’

‘Justin. Tomorrow morning I’ll personally kick her ass all the way up the street to the nearest fucking airport. She is not staying here.’

‘Yes she is... I always do what you tell me, but not this time.’

‘She pretty lady,’ says Poco. ‘Where you get hair and nails done?’

‘They were last done in Brazil,’ says Maria.

‘That long way go,’ says Poco looking at his own nails.

‘You two fuck off. I’ll talk to you in the morning.’

‘I’ll go Dan,’ says Maria.

‘No. You’re not going anywhere. These two will be gone in a minute.’

‘Dan...’ says Justin.

‘What,’ I snap. ‘Look what I’ve got on top of me Justin, can you just leave me the fuck alone.’

More footsteps tap on the stairs. No. He wouldn’t dare. My flesh turns cold. Maria looks at me in a bemused manner as my whole body drops in temperature. I’m dreaming. How could I get a woman like this in my bed? Justin would never bring a ladyboy back. He definitely wouldn’t bring them back. Of course it’s a dream. I’ll wake up in a minute, all alone in my bed.

‘Ass ole. How much whore cost you?’

I say nothing and just smile. ‘Whore. How much you cost?’

‘I am not a whore. Don’t be so rude,’ says Maria.

‘You look like fucking whore.’

'Dan,' says Justin. 'Why are you smiling?'

'Because this is all a dream. You'll be all gone in a minute.'

Maria puts her thumb and forefinger around my chin. 'Dan. I'm going.'

'That's fine Maria. I'll wake up in a minute.'

Her palm gently slaps my face. 'You fucking are awake,' she says.

I fucking am awake. My whole body shakes. I'm going to explode.

Maria slips out of bed looking for her bra. I didn't get a chance to get her knickers and boots off.

Polly holds her bra up. 'You look for this whore?'

Maria grabs it. 'Fuck me your ass size of Thailand. It eat all knickers up,' says Polly.

'It's a thong,' says Maria hooking her bra together at the front.

'Why keep boots on in bed?' asks Molly. 'Do feet smell?'

Maria slips her black snakeskin skirt on. 'You kill snake yourself?' asks Polly.

'No,' says Maria putting her arms through her waist coat.

'Did it crawl in-between legs and die from smell?' asks Polly.

'That's enough you two,' I shout.

Maria puts her black leather jacket on. 'I'll show you out Maria,' I say.

'No Dan,' she says wiping tears away from her cheeks with her palms. 'I'll do it myself,' she says barging through Molly and Polly.

The girls turn around as she goes through the door. 'You forget something,' shouts Polly.

'Fuck off,' shouts Maria.

Polly takes a handful of change from my bedside cabinet. 'Here's your fucking money whore,' she shouts throwing the coins across the landing at her. They both turn to me with big grins on their faces.

'Justin pass my boxer shorts over.'

I slip them on under the duvet. 'A word downstairs please.'

'Ass ole my suitcase in car,' says Molly. 'Bring upstairs, it heavy.'

Ignoring her Justin follows me. We go into my kitchen and I shut the door behind us.

'I'm trying my best to stay calm at the moment. One question. Why?'

'Because they're better off here. I love my nieces. You don't. Poco's the only real relationship I've had.'

'They're all going back tomorrow.'

'No they're not Dan.'

'Are you fucking defying me?'

'Yes I am you fucking little shit,' he says his face an inch from mine with anger sweeping across it.

I'm shocked. I've never heard him swear before, let alone get angry.

‘OK... Justin I can see you’re angry. They can stay a week.’

‘No Dan. They’re staying for good. You’re going to start acting like a proper father and treat Poco with respect.’

‘Am I fuck.’

‘You listen to me. My life has always revolved around you. I’ve got you out the shit on numerous occasions. I’m sick of it Dan. I need a life to.’

‘I’m not stopping you.’

‘Dan do you remember when you were sixteen and you asked me to cut you?’

‘I was bored with doing it myself.’

‘D’ you know how it feels to cut your own brother?’

‘No,’ I say.

Justin goes to the kitchen draw and gets a carving knife out, he places it in my hand and rolls his right hand sleeve up.

‘Cut me Dan.’

‘No. Don’t be stupid.’

‘I did it for you. Do it for me. I’m waiting.’

‘You’re not a self harmer like I was.’

He rolls his left hand sleeve up. ‘Really?’

His arm is covered in a criss-cross of scars. Jesus. Christ.

‘Justin. No.’

‘I started when you were in prison. I’ve never been happy. I covered up the fact well. The only time I’ve been truly happy is when the girls are around me. Poco’s completed my happiness.’

‘Justin why didn’t you tell me?’

‘Since when have you listened to me.’

Tears roll down his cheeks. I put the knife back in the draw.

‘Justin you won’t have to cut yourself again,’ I say with drips falling from my cheeks.

‘Thanks Dan,’ he says leaving the kitchen.

How could I have not seen it? I’ve been too occupied with my own life to ever think about his. I thought he was always happy.

I trudge upstairs into my bedroom. Justin’s been that unhappy all his life. I can’t quite believe it.

Sitting on the edge of my bed I put my elbows on top of my thighs and my chin in my palms. I think I’ve lost the Tenco Steel account. Rolling over I squish something soft.

‘Fuck off,’ shouts Molly.

Standing up I pull the duvet off. ‘Get out of my fucking bed,’ I shout.

She’s in her underwear, but still puts her arm across her breasts and a hand in-between her

legs.

‘Put duvet back on. I naked. No man see me like this.’

‘You’ve got your bra and knickers on. Don’t be fucking stupid. Now get out of my fucking bed.’

‘No.’

‘Go and share with your sister.’

‘No. She fucking snore.’

‘Well go in the box room with the single bed.’

‘No. It fucking small. You sleep there.’

‘Fuck off it’s my fucking house.’

‘Sleep downstairs with dog.’

‘Right,’ I say jumping into bed next to her and pulling the duvet over us. She turns her back to me. ‘You better not fucking snore either,’ I say pulling one of my pillows from underneath her head. ‘You don’t need two of the fuckers do you,’ I say.

‘It softer.’

‘I thought you hated me and this country. Why didn’t you stay in your own?’

‘Mama make me come. When I sixteen I go home. She not tell me what do then.’

‘That can’t come soon enough.’

‘Man?’

‘Yes Molly.’

‘Will Arsrole win league?’

‘How the fuck do I know.’

‘Man?’

‘Yes Molly.’

‘Don’t touch my tits.’

Waking up in the box room. I look at my watch. Eight o’clock. The house is silent. I’ll have a shower and get to work before any of them wake up. The door to the box room opens. For fuck sake.

‘Where toilet?’ asks Poco.

‘Poco get some clothes on. I don’t think I’ll ever get used to someone having a cock and balls with a pair of tits.’

‘He nice cock,’ she says grabbing hold of it.

‘I don’t give a fuck Poco. The girls are only fourteen. I don’t want you walking around naked when they’re about.’

‘They not mind.’

‘I’ll tell you what, I’ll pull the fucking thing off and make you into a real woman in a

minute. Now fuck off and get some clothes on.’

‘OK. But where toilet?’

‘Next door.’

Going to the shower I toss my boxer shorts on the floor. Hot streams of water flow down my body. How can my life be turned upside down in one fucking night? This is never going to work. What a fucking misfit bunch.

Poco walks in, lifts his red tartan skirt up and starts urinating in the toilet bowl. ‘D’ you mind,’ I say. ‘I’m naked having a shower here.’

‘I not mind. I seen lots of cocks before.’

She shakes her penis and looks at her face in the mirror. ‘I need get moisturiser, my skin so dry.’

‘Out way Poco,’ says Polly. ‘I dying for piss.’

‘D’ you mind I’m having a fucking shower here. Use the toilet downstairs.’

‘Uncle Justin in it,’ says Polly.

Molly comes in stamping her feet up and down. ‘Hurry up Polly. I wet self in minute.’

‘Where I buy lipstick Dan?’ asks Poco still looking in the mirror.

‘I’m having a shower here.’

‘I know shop in town,’ says Polly sat on the toilet.

‘Fucking hurry up Polly. I piss self,’ shouts Molly.

‘Pass my boxer shorts over Poco.’

‘You still wet.’

‘I don’t give a fuck.’

He opens the shower door and passes them to me. ‘You not shave tentacles.’

‘What?’

‘Your tentacles, they furry.’

‘What my bollocks?’

‘Yeah. Tentacles. Justin cock nicer than yours.’

‘Polly. I pull you off that fucking toilet in minute, you fucking itch,’ shouts Molly.

Putting my boxer shorts on I grab a towel and head for my bedroom. Fuck this.

Walking past the office reception, the receptionist shouts out. ‘Maria Yara’s in your office Dan.’

‘Is Rose with her?’

‘Yes. She made her a cup of coffee.’

Walking in my office Rose is chatting to Maria. ‘Can you give us five minutes Rose?’

‘Of course Mr Hargreeves,’ she says and leaves.

Sitting at my desk I look directly at Maria. ‘I’m so sorry about last night.’

'I've never been spoken to like that before.'

'Sorry again Maria. I'll give you the name of another good accountancy firm.'

'Who are those girls?'

'My daughters I'm afraid.'

'You didn't say you had children.'

'It's not something I publicise. They were an accident that happened in Thailand. I thought they were staying there. My brother had different ideas.'

'How old are they?'

'Fourteen.'

'They thought I was replacing their mother, that's why they were so horrible to me.'

'No Maria. They're horrible to everyone.'

She laughs. 'Nothing has changed business wise with us Dan. My skin's quite thick, those girls won't get under it.'

'Thanks Maria.'

'I'm flying back this afternoon. I'm back in a weeks time. I've rented a two bedroom apartment in London.'

'Great. Are you going to persuade your boyfriend to come over?'

'No. I've tried hard enough. It looks like you'll have to entertain me for a while.'

'The pleasure would be all mine.'

'Once I've found someone younger and prettier, with deeper pockets than you, I'll have to cast you aside,' she says smirking.

'I'm happy being used for a while.'

'Good. You can start by taking me back to the airport.'

'I'll pick you up from your hotel this afternoon.'

'Come early if you want something warm and soft, that's moist in the middle.'

'I'd like that very much. Maybe this time we'll get those knickers and boots off.'

'I always keep my boots on.'

'I bet you do. I'll see you this afternoon.'

'Looking forward to it Dan,' she says rising from her chair. Her black trouser suit is finely cut to accommodate her curves. No flesh on display today. But that'll change later.

Rose passes her as she walks out the door. 'Bye Miss Yara,' she says. Maria ignores her.

'I'll be taking Maria back to the airport this afternoon. Cancel any appointments I've got.'

'Certainly Dan. We've got a ten-thirty appointment with Perkin holdings this morning.'

What's George doing, still dealing with him? I'll fucking phone him.

I can see my screwed up angered face on the lenses of Rose's glasses, as I dial the number.

'George in a word. Perkin holdings?'

'He sold out about a year ago. We've taken the new owners on.'

'I see.'

'By the way he's up in court on multiple rape charges in two weeks time.'

'Really? If he goes to Trentville prison I'll make sure his time in there will be as sweet as candy.'

'That's two of us that'll be sworn enemies.'

'What do you mean?'

'I set him up. Everyone was too frightened to come forward. I didn't want Joanne dragged through the courts. I paid a few high class call girls. They didn't take a drink from him, just pretended to act drugged up. Went to the police afterwards.'

'How did he find out you did it?'

'His driver got hold of one of the girls, beat her to a pulp, she told. The other two were put under police guard. It won't effect the case with the solicitor I've put in charge.'

'Good. I'll speak to you later.'

'Look forward to it.'

'Rose Delaware. A coffee with four sugars would be absolutely wonderful.'

'Get it yourself. I'm a hired P.A. Not someone who just gets hot drinks.'

'Do I detect a slight terseness?'

'Sorry Mr Hargreeves. But that woman. We were chatting quite nicely before you arrived. Then the next minute she completely ignores me.'

'She doesn't need you for anything any more.'

'Are people that shallow?'

'Welcome to my world,' I say opening my arms out.

The office phone rings, Rose picks it up. 'Send him in,' she says.

'Who is it Rose?'

'Your father.'

'Rose leave for a few minutes. Don't let anyone in the office.'

'OK. Dan.'

I wonder what this person wants. I've got no interest in him. I'll make short work of him, send the idiot packing.

The door opens, he closes it. A large Stetson sits on his head, a red check shirt covers his chest. His jeans are held up by a grey snakeskin belt with a criss-cross of black lines on it. A brass buckle of an eagle sits in the middle. Worn tan leather boots dress the rest of him. He grips his walking stick which is dark mahogany, the handle is that of a golden duck. He lifts his head and looks at me with his faded blue eyes from underneath the peak of his hat. He's about sixty. And obviously a fucking nutter. Can't I have someone normal come into my life. He's one of those assholes that likes American stuff. If he talks with an American accent I'm going to punch the fucker clean out.

'Howdy,' he says.

'Where's your fucking horse?'

'He's at home,' he says in a thick Bourbon soaked southern American accent, which drips like Molasses after each word.

'Where you from? Basingstoke?'

'Texas born and bred boy,' he says limping over and sitting on a chair opposite my desk.

'Really? I had no idea you were a fucking Yank. Is Texas the home of steers and queers?'

His head moves back slightly. 'I've never heard anyone say that before, we've got plenty of steers. I've never met a queer.'

'I could introduce you to a few if you want?'

'Women are my thing.'

'What d' you want?'

'Meet you. I've been married twice, but never had any children.'

'You've met me so now what?'

'Son. I'm retired now. I've made my money. I want you in my will.'

'I'm happy to do that. Are you worth much?'

'A fare amount.'

'Did you make it from oil or cattle?'

'Ducks.'

'Fucking ducks?'

'Thousands of the mother fuckers. I've got the biggest ponds in the states.'

'Quack... Quack... Why did you leave my mother when she was knocked up?'

'She was married son. I asked her to come back with me. She said no.'

'Why were you over here?'

'Did my tour of Vietnam, then came over to an American base over here.'

'Is that how you hurt your leg?'

'No. I was making love to a young lady by a creek one afternoon, rolled over and sat on a Diamond back. Mother fucker bit me in the ass. Poison got into my leg, I had to have the leg taken off.'

'Unfortunate.'

'And for him. I made him into a belt. I'm wearing him now.'

Lucy comes in. What does she want? She puts some papers on my desk. I look at her, she smiles.

'Lucy you can give me those any time.'

'Oh. I see you've got company.'

My father stands 'Buck Silversmith,' he says taking her hand and kissing it.

'Lucy Chandler,' she says with a giggle.



'You are one fine looking lady. The pleasure is all mine,' he says taking his seat.

She sits on his lap and puts his Stetson on her head. 'A real life cowboy,' she says. 'D' you ride much?'

'I've got a couple of colts back home and a stallion called Thunder.'

'Give it a rest Lucy,' I say. 'He's my father.'

'I know that. Rose just told me,' she says putting her arm around his shoulders.

'Can you stop being nosey and leave,' I say to Lucy.

'I just wanted to introduce myself,' she says kissing his cheek. 'Are you married?'

'No Ma'am.'

'That's enough Lucy. He's got one leg and farms ducks that's all you need to know. Now leave.'

'One leg,' says Lucy. 'Does that put any strain on your love making?'

My father's cheeks flare. He lifts his jeans leg up revealing a carved ivory stump. 'I shot him in Africa. He was a seven and a half ton bull.'

'Is there anything that you're wearing you haven't fucking killed?' I ask.

He slams his walking stick down on my desk. 'I don't like cursing in front of ladies,' he says.

'Temper, temper,' says Lucy standing up and placing his Stetson on his lap. 'I thought I'd cover him up. I could feel he was getting quite excited by my ass cheeks.'

'Sorry Ma'am.'

'Nice to have met you Buck.'

'Ma'am your the sweetest lady I've ever met. It would break my heart not to meet with you again.'

'Sorry. I'm with his boss. But if I wasn't things could be very different. I've always fancied lamb instead of just having the mutton,' she says, beaming a large smile at me.

'You know where the door is Lucy.'

'Until the next time,' she says and leaves.

'The women sure are friendly around here. That woman could be wife number three.'

'Like she said she's with my boss. They've got a child together.'

'Pity. I could fuck that all the way to Massachusetts.'

'How long are you in town?' I ask.

'Two weeks.'

'I suppose you better meet your granddaughters.'

'I've got grandchildren?'

'Twin girls. That cursing thing around ladies. I'd hold on to that thought if I was you and keep it on the sideline.'

Pulling up outside my house in a taxi with my father on the back seat, my cock feels numb. Those Brazilian girls certainly know a trick or two. I'm going to enjoy spending time with Maria.

'We're here Dad.'

'I can't wait to meet my granddaughters.'

Walking into my house we go into the front room. 'Everybody this is my dad.'

The two girls, Justin and Poco look at him from the sofa.

'My granddaughters are Gooks?'

'No,' I say.

'Flips then.'

'They're from Thailand,' I say.

'Pony heads.'

'Old man,' says Molly. 'You got fucking problem?' she says raising her eyebrows.

'Young lady,' says Buck. 'Don't try and be smart and curse in front of me. I am your grandfather.'

'I not care if you fucking snow white and seven fucking dwarfs. You call me name like that again I break other fucking leg.'

'It isn't broken. It's a false one.'

'OK,' I say. 'Dad you'll have to put up with their swearing. I've tried everything. They won't stop. This is my brother and Poco his partner.'

'Nice to meet you Justin,' he says limping over to Poco, taking his hand and kissing it. 'She's a firecracker Justin.'

'Dad she's a bloke.'

'Jesus Christ,' he says wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. 'What sort of family have you got?'

'This is quite normal in England.'

'I know you Limeys are strange, but fuck me. Sorry ladies.'

'Old man,' says Polly. 'Why you dress like fucking cowboy?'

'Sweetheart. The cursing. I've got a large ranch in Texas. It's what I like to wear.'

'Papa like wear ladies clothes. I see him dress in ladies bra and knickers.'

'Son you're a queer as well?'

'No. I was playing a game with my ex-partner. She's female. The girls caught us.'

'Well thank the Lord for that.'

'Old man?' says Molly.

'I'd like to be called pops.'

'I like be called fucking Mandy. I not know you. Only call that name when do.'

'OK young lady. I respect I have to earn that name. By the way I'm over here to put your father on my will. Seeing that you two are my flesh and blood, you will be on it to. I'm a very

rich man with no other relatives.'

The girls rush over to him and grab his hands, taking him to the sofa and sitting either side.

'Tell us about life Pops?' says Molly.

'Pops is America best place in world?' asks Polly.

'Sure is. I was born in Houston Texas. My father owned a smallholding. I bought my first duck when I was five.'

I can see this is going to be a long fucking night.

'Son. You got any Bourbon?'

'I'll find some.'

'Crazy chicken's my favourite.'

'Yes we've got plenty of that over here. Tomorrow I'll take you to our Space centre. Our astronauts are flying to Mars for the second time, in a newly built space shuttle.'

'You have a space programme over here?' asks dad.

'He only joke,' says Molly. 'Only man in Mingland that been near space go up in balloon. He crash.'

'I'll get that Bourbon,' I say.

Three weeks later: Black melting candles bleed out their burgundy interior, watching the flames dance, the scent of lemon and ginger lingers from the oil they feed on. Steam twists, moving at a lethargic pace, only being excitedly disturbed when it crosses the naked licks of fire.

My submerged naked body has all it's joints soothed by hot salted water, which seems to have entered my pores, washing over my bones.

My brains confidence has been lifted. The arduous journey of it's new friend has come to an end.

'Dan. D' you want another one?' asks Maria.

'No. I'll just sip on this champagne.'

She takes a silver straw, gliding it across a line of her tranquillity. She sits back up, her nostrils flare as the last of it gets sucked up with air drenched in serenity. Milky water laps against her drifting breasts, a mahogany coloured nipple appears, it descends into the cloudy depths. Her bright amber eyes are glazed with a thin layer of bittersweet elation.

She takes a sip of champagne and smiles. 'I suppose you want to use my body later?' she asks.

'Of course. This is just the starter. This is all your idea.'

'Do you like me inside and out?'

'I prefer the inside of you.'

She grins rising from the water. Her tanned body drips hundreds of droplets, she looks gigantic, like a ship resurfacing from a watery grave, she moves up to the middle of the bath and

opens her legs into a V-shape. A thin line of black pubic hair leads to her soft opening. It's time for me to be inside her again.

'Dan move in-between my legs.'

Moving my buttocks along the slippery enamel I look up. What a wonderful sight. I've had the pleasure of both those holes. I must admit that girl does overwork my tongue, but I'm not complaining. A golden watery line suddenly shoots from her opening.

'What the fuck are you doing?' I shout as boiling piss splashes on my face.

She stops in mid-flow, and looks down at me. 'Am I being a little bit too forward for you?'

'I didn't expect you to piss in my face.'

'You said you preferred the inside of me.'

'Maria. You've obviously done this before?'

'No it's my first time. I've thought about it, but not actually done it.'

'Thanks,' I say as another golden burst splashes over me. 'For fuck sake Maria,' I say standing up.

She puts her arms around me, smirking, staring directly into me. 'You smell of apple juice.'

'Your piss smells of apple juice? I don't think so,' I say wiping it off with the back of my hand. 'You've probably put too much of that shit up your nose.'

Her thumbs push into my cheeks, her lips connect with mine. Urine gushes over my penis and legs, it does smell like apple juice with a hint of fermented wheat. Her tongue snakes around mine. My cock goes hard. I push the belly of it against her thin track of hair.

'Lay me down and fuck me in the water,' she says pushing my face away from hers.

'In all your piss?'

'Yes. It didn't do me any harm a minute ago when it was inside me.'

Laying her down I step outside the bath. 'Baby,' she says with a sulk.

'Maybe another time Maria.'

She sits up in the bath and leans over the side of it. 'Dan. Have you thought about going home yet?'

'Why? D' you want me out?'

'No. I'm happy with you staying. But you said two days and it's been two weeks. You have to see your daughters sooner or later. Plus the one and a half hour commute to work must be tiring.'

'I'll go back tomorrow night. Justin's sorting them out. It was his idea to bring them over. I don't want to be in the same house as that lot.'

'Move in then Dan. Make it official.'

'Are you sure? I thought you'd want to play the field in London?'

'I'm thirty-two, I've played the field long enough. My legs have been stretched open many times, by plenty of different people. It gets boring after a while.'

‘I’ll get my things after tomorrow night. Tell the girls and Justin the good news.’

‘When will Tenco Steel finally become a legitimate business in the UK?’

‘We have to be careful with foreign companies. But I’ll bypass a couple of things for you Maria, or it’ll take forever.’

‘Thanks Dan. So are you going to fuck me in my own piss?’

‘No,’ I say drying myself off with a towel.

She stands and gracefully steps out the bath. ‘Dry me off first.’

Moving the towel over her back, her skin returns to it’s natural beauty. Her buttocks goosebump as the soft towel runs across them. Kneeling down I dry those never ending legs. She turns, her vagina looks me square in the face. ‘You’re not going to piss on me again?’ I ask.

‘No. Finish drying me.’

Moving the towel up both her legs, I pay special attention to what’s in-between them.

‘Don’t dry it too much, I need to keep it moist.’

Standing. I cover her breasts and stomach with the towel. Bringing it down, scraping the water off to just above her pubic line, she lifts her arms out into a crucifix position, I dry both of them. She takes the towel from me, placing it neatly on the edge of the bath and sits on it crossing her legs.

Looking up at me she smiles. ‘Piss on me,’ she says.

‘I’ve just fucking dried you off.’

‘So. I want you to.’

Holding my cock in my hand, I feel odd, I feel guilty. A few droplets fall from the end of it. I move closer to her. She’s still perched on the edge of the bath with her legs crossed with both hands on her knee. The droplets join together. She uncrosses her legs and puts both her hands on the edge of the bath. ‘Piss on my breasts,’ she says.

I push with my stomach muscles, an arc of urine hits her left breast, I move the arc to the other one. Urine foams and splashes, it moves down the insides of her breasts, flowing in-between her cleavage. Watching it make it’s journey over her stomach, her black line of pubic hair slows it, soaking it up like a sponge. She opens her legs and my piss drips from her vagina.

‘I’ve nearly finished,’ I say.

She kneels down lifting her face up. How can I piss on something so beautiful. It’s so degrading. She opens her mouth as my flow loses it’s momentum. Urine spills over her chin as she pushes it out with her tongue. She puts my cock into her mouth. I strain the last few drops out of myself. I hear her swallow.

She looks up at me and smiles. ‘That was different,’ she says.

‘You are one dirty bitch.’

‘I’m sad you think that. I think it’s quite natural.’

‘Is there anything you wouldn’t do?’

'Umm. I'd only have sex with human beings.'

'Oh. Right. So the animal kingdom's safe.'

'Well. Yes. But I do find some horses very attractive,' she says laughing.

'I wouldn't put it passed you,' I say as she stands up.

'Kiss me.'

'Fuck off.'

'Fuck me then,' she says bending over grabbing the edge of the bath.

Parting her lips, I push myself inside her, I bury my thumb deep in her anus.

Watching my cock move in and out, the essence from her vagina form translucent tiny beads of fat on my hard flesh, which glisten in the candlelight.

I'm going to enjoy living with Maria very much. What more could I ask for. Times like this make you feel alive.

The next evening: Sitting on my sofa in my dressing gown, Tucker lies at my feet. I sip some red wine and listen to some music. The girls, Justin and Poco seemed very happy with the arrangement with myself and Maria. In fact they seemed over the moon. I said I'd finance everything for them, with Justin taking full control of the girls well being. Justin said he was having problems with visa's and finding a school to take the twins on. I told him I'll get George's solicitors to deal with it. I've decided to visit once a week. Mainly to see Justin and Tucker. So all in all it's worked out quite nicely. They're all in bed now. Peace at last.

The intercom beeps. Who the fuck is this? It's fucking midnight.

Opening the front door Rose is stood there. Her hair is soaking wet, she looks up at me, her glasses are steamed up. Tiny droplets of rain cover her lenses, tears flow down her cheeks. Tucker sniffs around her.

'Rose?'

'Mother died this afternoon. I don't know what to do Mr Hargreeves.'

'Come in,' I say taking her hand and sitting her on the sofa. 'You're soaking wet Rose. I'll get a towel and one of my old dressing gowns.'

'I don't want to be a burden.'

'Just sit there.'

Fetching the items from upstairs I sit next to her. Taking her glasses off I dry her hair.

'She died in her chair this afternoon,' she sobs.

'Didn't you have any relatives to turn to?'

'No. I haven't got any. No friends either. I just work and look after mother.'

She looks at me with weeping pretty blue eyes. 'Rose you're going to have to take those wet clothes off.'

'I know,' she says standing up.

Looking away from her I use the dressing gown as a shield as she removes the items.  
'They're all off Mr Hargreeves.'

Wrapping the gown around her I pick her wet clothes up and put them in the dryer. Picking up Molly's brush I sit next to her on the sofa. She stops sobbing as I run it through her hair.

'Stay here the night Rose.'

'Thank you.'

'You can have my bed. I'll sleep downstairs.'

I finish brushing her long hair, she turns and faces me, I place her glasses back on. 'Are you going to marry Maria?'

'No. What ever made you say that?'

'Everyone in the office thinks you're in love with her.'

'I didn't know anyone knew I was seeing her.'

'Don't marry her Mr Hargreeves. She's a fucking bitch.'

'Rose Delaware. That's the first time I've heard bad language come out of your mouth.'

'It's the first time it ever has.'

'Rose. My personal life has nothing to do with you.'

'Sorry Mr Hargreeves.'

'C' mon. I'll show you to your room,' I say taking her hand and leading her upstairs.

I open the door to the box room and switch the light on. 'You sleep in here?' she asks.

'The house is a bit full at the moment.'

'Stay with me Mr Hargreeves.'

'I will for a little while Rose,' I say switching the light off.

I hear her dressing gown fall to the floor. I hang mine up. I slip into bed beside her. Her breasts push into my back as she puts her arm over my shoulders. Her hairy legs push into the back of mine. Christ. It's like sleeping next to a fucking Chimp. 'Make love to me Mr Hargreeves.'

'No. Rose.'

'Please. No one's ever made love to me before.'

'Rose. No. I'm not the right person.'

'Is it because I don't look like Maria?' she say grabbing hold of my cock, which is covered by my boxer shorts.

I grab her wrist. 'Save yourself for a person you love.'

'All the women in the office say you'd make love to anything with a heart beat.'

'Did they now.'

'Please Dan,' she says sobbing, rubbing her hairy vagina over my covered buttocks.

'I'm going downstairs now.'

'No. Don't. Stay with me. I won't ask you for sex.'

‘OK. Just for a little while.’

A loud scream bursts my eardrums. Flickering my eyes open I’m still in the box room. I must of fallen asleep. Rose comes running into the bedroom and jumps into bed beside me wearing my dressing gown. ‘Dan there’s a lady in the toilet with a willy.’

‘That’s Poco. I fucking told him about walking around naked.’

Molly and Polly come rushing into the bedroom. ‘Who scream?’ shouts Molly.

‘Rose. Poco gave her a fright.’

Molly looks at Rose and smirks. ‘You fuck her?’

‘No. And I don’t think that’s the type of question you should ask your father.’

‘She not seem your type,’ says Molly. ‘She look like little monkey.’

‘Watch your fucking cheek. It’s too early in the morning to start winding my fucking ass up.’

‘Everything OK Dan,’ says Justin coming into the bedroom.

‘Tell your fucking boyfriend to get some clothes on. He is not walking around naked with the girls around. They’re only fourteen.’

‘I’ll have a word Dan.’

The intercom beeps. ‘For fuck sake who’s this? One of you lot get that.’

‘I will Papa,’ says Polly.

Poco comes into the bedroom. ‘What did I say about walking around naked?’

‘It OK. It natural.’

‘You’re about as natural as a fucking stuffed unicorn.’

‘Molly. You not mind me naked?’ asks Poco.

‘I don’t give a fuck if Molly minds. You do as I say.’

‘But it only cock.’

‘Right that’s fucking it,’ I shout jumping out of bed grabbing his penis.

‘No... Dan not pull him.’

‘I told you I was going to rip the thing off.’

‘Leave him Dan,’ shouts Justin. ‘Don’t be so cruel.’

Tightly squeezing his penis I give it a good tug. ‘Ow. You hurt little Justin.’

‘What?’

I pull him along by his penis onto the landing. ‘You pulling too hard. He come off.’

‘This is a lesson. One you won’t hopefully forget,’ I say giving it another hard tug.

‘Ow. You pull cock off.’

‘Dan,’ says George Huntsberg.

Turning my head over my shoulder George is there with Lucy behind him. Polly stands in front of him.



‘What you do to Poco Papa?’ asks Polly.

‘Teaching him a lesson,’ I say letting go of his penis.

‘Look he all red,’ says Poco putting his hands on his hips, turning around and facing George and Lucy. ‘Little Justin been killed,’ he says shaking it from left to right.

‘Just get some clothes on Poco,’ I say. ‘Sorry George.’

‘D’ you want us to come another time Dan?’ asks Lucy. ‘I can see you’re busy. I never realised you enjoyed men so much.’

‘Sorry Lucy.’

‘We were just driving down to the coast to see Joanne,’ says George. ‘When my solicitor rang. Toby Perkin’s getting sentenced today. He’s getting six years. My solicitor’s friendly with the Judge, he told him.’

‘That is great news.’

‘We were just passing your street, so we decided to pop in,’ says George.

Justin and Rose come onto the landing. ‘Hello Mr Huntsberg. Hello Miss Chandler,’ says Rose.

‘Jesus. Christ. Hargreeves. Is any female safe around you?’ says Lucy.

‘It’s not what it looks like.’

‘We’ll leave Dan,’ says George. ‘I can see this is an awkward time.’

‘Thanks George.’

Walking back into my bedroom Rose follows me. ‘Sorry about all of that Rose. My family is a bit fucked up.’

‘Your daughters are very pretty. They’re from Thailand aren’t they?’

‘Yeah. A pity they didn’t stay there.’

‘I didn’t know ladies could have a willy.’

‘He’s a bloke trying to be a lady.’

‘Oh.’

‘Rose take some time off. Come back when you feel up to it.’

‘Thanks Mr Hargreeves.’

Poco comes into the bedroom wearing his red tartan mini skirt and a black bra. ‘Happy now?’ he says.

‘That’s better. If I catch you naked in front of the girls again. I’ll fucking hurt you. D’ you understand?’

‘Yes. But you hurt my cock.’

‘Oh. Stop fucking moaning. If I see your cock again, it’ll be the last time you see it.’

‘Dan?’ asks Poco. ‘Can you give little Justin a kiss, he sad,’ he says lifting his skirt up exposing his red raw penis.

‘Come here you little fucker,’ I shout chasing him out the bedroom and along the landing.

Two weeks later: Walking across the office car park, reds, yellows and oranges blaze on the horizon. Bursting like fireworks. Miniature whirlwinds swirl in the building's corners, whipping up fallen leaves. I can't wait for the days to shorten and the nights to deepen. Snow's on the way, I can smell it in the air. It smells of vanilla ice cream. Autumn is my favourite time of the year. I never liked summer. Too many bad memories.

One of my female office staff walks through the revolving door. Look at the arse on that. Speeding up my walk I catch her in the lift.

'Morning,' I say.

'Morning Mr Hargreeves,' she says raising her hand brandishing a wedding ring.

'Married long?'

'Not long enough. You'll have to wait Mr Hargreeves.'

The lift reaches it's floor. 'Have a good day,' I say.

'And you Mr Hargreeves. My names Sonia by the way.'

'Is it,' I say going to reception. 'Anything I should know?' I ask.

'The final documents for Tenco Steel are here,' she says passing them over. 'All you need is Maria Yara to sign them.'

'Thanks. I'll get her to do it tonight.'

Walking to my office I notice the door slightly ajar. Creeping in a young girl is bent over my desk. Her short skirt has risen, exposing tanned buttocks which are split by a white thong, the back of her smooth legs strain as she balances on tiptoe in red stilettos. Long blond hair falls down her back, which is covered in a black blouse. Not another temp. It's about time Rose came back to work.

'Can I help?' I ask.

She spins around, her blue eyes sparkle. Her fresh face has just a hint of make-up. Too young for me, but very pretty. I'm going to enjoy ogling her all day.

'Mr Hargreeves. I'm just looking over an account that Joanne Huntsberg lost.'

'Are you. What account's that?' I say sitting behind my desk.

'The Steven's account,' she says passing the file over.

Looking through it I can feel her staring at me. 'Can you get me a coffee please.'

'I don't do hot drinks.'

'Sorry,' I say looking up at her. 'Obviously you don't want this job for long.'

'Oh. I'll keep it for as long as I want.'

'You're fucking cock sure of yourself. You're fired.'

'No I'm not,' she says coming around my desk and sitting on my lap.

'You're a bit forward.'

'Am I. I have to be. The last person I asked for sex knocked me back.'

'They must have been blind.'

'Yes they were. They were also very shallow and didn't realise the precious thing they had in their bed. Someone who was genuine and honest with the kindest heart.'

'They need their head read.'

'Yes. They preferred a dirty, lying, Brazilian slut over me.'

'Who the fuck are you?'

'The new Rose.'

'Rose? It is you. What the fuck have you done to yourself?'

'A complete make over. Mother died. I decided it was time for me to fit in.'

'You look stunning,' I say putting my hand on top of her soft thigh.

She grabs my wrist. 'I don't think so,' she says. 'I was told to save it for someone special.'

She jumps off my lap and goes to the opposite side of my desk.

'So you're off limits?' I ask with a smile.

'Yes. Let's get down to business. I phoned Clive Steven and arranged a meeting this lunch time.'

'Good. Why did we lose the account?'

'Because of Joanne Huntsberg's affair with him.'

'You fucking what?'

'That's what they said in the office.'

'Joanne never had any affair. It's just idle gossip.'

'Fine. Well ask him at the meeting.'

'I'll be happy to come back Dan,' says Clive Steven. 'My lot are hopeless.'

'Thanks Clive. Another brandy?'

'Why not.'

'Rose. Can you get a couple of brandies from the bar.'

'Certainly Mr Hargreeves. But you do realise you'll be over the drink driving limit when you have that.'

'You can drive.'

'OK,' she says leaving.

'She's a pretty little thing,' says Clive.

'Yes. Innocent to.'

'Not for long with you around.'

'Have I got some sort of reputation of being a womaniser?'

'That's what a lot of people say.'

'I was with Joanne for twelve years. I was never unfaithful.'

'You never strayed once?'

‘No. Never. I was tempted many times, but never followed through with it.’

Rose comes back with the drinks, she sits by my side and sips on a glass of water.

‘So Clive. I’ve heard rumours about you and Joanne.’

He slips his hand in his coat pocket. ‘Sorry Dan,’ he says pulling a tub of pills out. ‘It was a long time ago. You and her were going through a rough patch. My marriage was to,’ he says swallowing one.

‘I don’t recall going through a rough patch. How long did it last?’

‘Six months. It was eight years ago Dan. Ancient history. You’re not together now.’

‘So my whole relationship with her was a lie. What a fucking idiot.’

‘Dan I’m sorry. But it takes two. She got back with you. I got back with my wife.’

‘I didn’t realise we had split up.’

‘She told me you and her were having problems.’

‘It’s the first I’ve fucking heard of it.’

‘Dan I’m sorry.’

‘C’ mon Rose we’re leaving,’ I say getting up from my chair. If I stay any longer I’m going to end up beating this cunt.

Walking briskly out the pub Rose struggles to keep up with me. ‘Dan slow down,’ she says as we walk across the car park. Jumping on the passenger seat I sit stony-face looking out the window. My blood boils as I brood away.

Rose sits in the drivers seat panting. ‘Dan I know you’re upset. But you’re not with her any more.’

‘I fucking know that.’

‘She’s married with a child now. You’re with Maria.’

‘What the fuck do you know about relationships? You’ve never fucking had one,’ I say snarling at her.

‘Calm down Dan.’

Putting my forearm across her chest I pin her to the seat. Undoing my belt and trousers I pull them down to my knees. ‘What are you doing? Don’t Dan.’

‘You wanted it the other night. Now you’re fucking going to get it. You’ve been flashing your tits and ass at me all morning,’ I say pulling my boxer shorts down.

‘No Dan. Please. No,’ she says struggling.

I push my forearm harder into her chest, she’s no match against my strength. Slipping my hand up her skirt I tug at her thong. She holds onto to it with one of her free hands. Wrenching it from her I pull it down her legs and over her feet. I hold it up in front of her weeping eyes.

‘When you put these on next you’ll be a real woman,’ I say chucking them on the back seat.

Prising her shut knees open with mine, my hard cock rubs against the inside of her thigh.

‘Dan don’t rape me,’ she says sobbing.

The tip of my cock touches her vagina. I nudge it at her entrance.

Her blue eyes have stopped crying. She stares calmly at me. 'Don't come inside me,' she says. 'I don't want a child.'

She stops struggling. Her blue eyes are soaked with anger. I push the tip of my cock at her tight entrance. A fold of flesh moves to one side. What the fuck am I doing? Fucking hell. What am I thinking? I sit back in my seat, glaring out the front windscreen.

'There's nothing I can say that will change what I just did.'

'I know,' she says.

'You can't work with me any more Rose. It's not safe for you.'

'I know.'

'Drive to your house.'

'OK Mr Hargreeves.'

Parking outside Rose's house I turn to her. 'I'm so sorry Rose.'

'Sorry isn't good enough.'

'Joanne brings the worst out of me.'

'You'll always love her.'

'I know. You were just in the wrong place at the wrong time Rose. I think a great deal of you.'

'So now I've got to find another job. A good reference will help.'

'I'll write one.'

'Thanks for fuck all,' she says slamming the car door behind her.

I need to hurt someone. I know just the candidate. This will calm my blood lust down.

The presence of this place pushes down on me. It's tainted air suffocates. Air that traps men into small spaces. My bones feel like jelly, my fingers drip from my palms, my hip joints melt like butter, the ligaments inside my kneecaps feel like they're being scooped out like scallops from a shell. This place is squeezing me to bursting point, my innards are going to rupture my skin, blown out across the perspex glass, cascading down in lumps of brown and reds. Greasy blue intestine and yellow body fat mixing together, hiding his face in a slimy screen of gore.

He smiles. The scar on his cheek copies. He lifts the telephone receiver.

'Dan what a surprise.'

'Nice to see you Sinbad.'

'So why have I got the pleasure of your company?'

'Just catching up with an old friend.'

'Get to the point Dan. This isn't a social visit,' his warmth changing in an instant.

'We are uppity. Has someone hurt your feelings? Don't tell me, he forgot to buy you flowers'

on Valentines? Poor little Sinbad.'

'We're different people now.'

'No. You're the fucking same. Nothing but a faggot rapist.'

'Why the fuck are you here?'

'I need a favour. A ten grand one.'

'I'm listening.'

'Toby Perkin has been sent to Trentville. About three weeks ago. D' you know him?'

'Yeah. The fat guy.'

'Get a couple of sisters to go through him. I'll put five grand in your mother's account.'

'And the other five?'

'Take one of his ears.'

'That's a bit much. He must of pissed you off?'

'I'm not in a forgiving mood at the moment. Dangle his ear in front of his eyes, and say this is from Dan Hargreeves.'

'I want fifteen grand for doing it.'

'Consider it done sweet cheeks.'

Looking up at Maria's apartment her light's are on. The documents she has to sign stare at me from the front seat. I can smell Rose's fear, trapped in this very seat. How could I attempt to rape someone? What am I? I need to do something for that girl, just to rid myself of the guilt.

Maria's shadow flickers across her curtain. She'll take my mind off Rose for a while.

## Chapter 15

Five months later: 'Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow.'

'You must be used to it by now?' I say.

'Getting there. It's like getting used to cold water. Once you're in, you're fine after a couple of minutes.'

'I'm in now.'

'Let me just relax for a little bit.'

'How was work today?'

'Fine. Making quite a lot of headway.'

'I see you bought new boots.'

'D' you want me to take them off.'

'No.'

'I went shopping with the girls.'

'You didn't buy them anything?'

She smirks. 'They're fifteen. They wanted boots to.'

'I told you not to spoil them.'

'I deal with them. That's our arrangement now.'

'You can fucking deal with them. I just don't want them manipulating you.'

'They wouldn't do that. They're just normal teenagers.'

'Normal doesn't even fit into their personalities.'

'I'm relaxed now. You can start if you want.'

'My pleasure.'

'Just slow at first. My ass is still getting used to your cock.'

Putting my hands on her buttocks I move in and out of her. My knee caps crush the mattress. Her spine strains, her nails dig deep into the pillows.

'My last hole,' I say.

'You wanted a three way split tonight. I doubt if you've got any semen left after the amount that's gone into my mouth and vagina tonight.'

'I think I can find a little bit,' I say speeding up my rhythm, stretching her to breaking point.

'Ow... Careful Dan.'

'Sorry.'

'You've gone in too deep. Take it out. Do something else to me.'

'Hang on a minute. I've got a surprise for you.'

'You're not going to put me in the bath and piss on me again?'

'No,' I say reaching over to the bedside cabinet and taking an engagement ring out.

I place the box on her back and hold the ring in-between my thumb and forefinger.

'Will you marry me?'

'You're proposing to me in this position.'

'It doesn't matter what position you're in. It's still the same question.'

'A girl dreams about being asked that question from a person she loves. Never once did I think it would be asked to me like this.'

'Sorry.'

She removes herself from me. Turning around, the box falls from her back, she sits on my bed and looks up at me. Still in my kneeling position I hold the ring out to her.

'Say it again,' she says.

'Rose Delaware. Will you marry me?'

'Yes.'

I slide the ring on her finger, it's too big. 'I'll have to get it adjusted,' I say.

'It's beautiful.'

'It's Joanne's old one.'

'That's not very fucking romantic. Is it.'

'I looked everywhere Rose. Nothing compared to this ring. This ring is for the person I love most in this world, and the one I want to marry.'

'I feel a bit better.'

'This ring was never meant for Joanne. It was meant for you.'

'Feeling a lot better. I love the silver sharks.'

'They're dolphins and it's platinum.'

'Oh Dan. You really want to marry me?'

'I love you. The girls love you.'

'They're like sisters I never had.'

'They took to you straight away. I've never seen them do that before.'

'They're good judges of character.'

'Yeah. Right. Be careful with them Rose. I know what those two bitches can be like.'

'As your future wife. If you ever refer to those girls as bitches in my presence again, you can take this fucking ring back.'

'Sorry Rose. I didn't think you felt so strongly about it.'

'They are the first real female friends I've had.'

'They certainly do what you tell them.'

'I don't tell. I ask. Something you should learn how to do.'



'I don't do parental skills.'

'So if we have children. What are you going to do then?'

'That's a long way away. I haven't even thought about it.'

'I have. I'd love a daughter. Someone's life I can share with mine. I've often thought who that future person would be. How they laugh and cry. A child's personality is always a lottery. I've always wondered what my number would be.'

'Yeah. Mine was fucking thirteen. I'm not having any more girls. We'll go to a special clinic, where you can determine what sex the child will be.'

'I don't think so. Nature will choose.'

'Can we change the subject?'

'Of course. When do you want to set the date for?'

'A year from now.'

'Dan you'll never be unfaithful to me?'

'Rose. I was never unfaithful to Joanne. I would never be unfaithful to you.'

'Maria's not coming back?'

'No. As soon as those documents were signed she went back to Brazil. She said her father told her to. I deal with a different representative from Tenco Steel now.'

'Not another Brazilian woman?'

'No. It's a male.'

'Good. I feel a lot more comfortable with Maria out of the picture. How's Poco getting on?'

'OK I suppose. I still don't like the fact that he's my new P.A.'

'Not just my choice. Lucy thought it was a good idea to.'

'Yeah. She would.'

I lie next to her and pull the duvet over us, she puts her arm across my chest and her knee in-between my legs.

'So the future Mrs Hargreeves. Are you happy?'

'Yes. Very much. We'll have children when I finish my accountancy course, that's another three years away. The girls will be eighteen then and hopefully off to university. I don't want their lives disrupted by a young child.'

'They're going back to Thailand when they turn sixteen.'

'No they're not Dan. Before I entered this relationship I put down certain conditions. One was I make most of the decisions.'

'I know. But can't we just put them into a flat when they turn sixteen?'

'No Dan. They're staying with us.'

'For fuck sake,' I say turning my back to her.

I feel her breath on the back of my neck. 'The trouble with you, you like your own way all the time. We set these rules because you nearly raped me,' she says putting her arm around my

waist and squeezing my soft cock.

'You'll never let me forget that.'

'No I fucking won't,' she says pulling it.

I turn around and face her, she's smiling. 'I suppose a blowjob's out of the question?' I ask.

'Yes,' she says. 'It's just been up my ass.'

Putting my arm around her, she puts her cheek on my chest. 'So my little trainee accountant. Will it be a white wedding?'

'Of course. Even though you've defiled me.'

'You made me wait long enough.'

'I don't think a month is a long time.'

'I didn't think I was ever going to get your knickers off.'

'They've been off plenty of times since.'

'It took you a week to even answer your door to me.'

'You know what you nearly did to me.'

'I did it to you any way.'

'Yeah. With my fucking permission.'

'Rose. You do truly love me?'

'With all my heart. Yourself?'

'We're meant to be together. I couldn't love anyone else, but you.'

'D' you want to finish off what you started?'

'Go on then.'

'I'll straddle you. At least I can control the length inside me,' she says sitting on my stomach, feet either side of my waist.

My mobile vibrates on my bedside cabinet. 'Who the fuck is this? It's fucking midnight,' I say picking it up.

'Don't answer it Dan.'

Georges name flashes. 'I better. It's the boss.'

'Dan...' He says. 'I don't know how to say this.'

'Say what George?'

'Dan... Joanne's dying. She won't last the night.'

'What,' I say sitting up in bed.

'We're at Chegwell private hospital. She's asking after you.'

'I'll get right there.'

'Dan,' says Rose. 'You've gone as white as a sheet.'

'Joanne's dying Rose. She's at Chegwell private hospital.'

'Let's go.'

Standing over her hospital bed, she's asleep. Rasping air struggles from her mouth. Her body's covered in thin blue linen, just one arm is exposed. Pallid translucent skin sticks to her bone, splashes of red spiral underneath it, broken by a needle that can't find a vein. Spindly fingers are twisted around each other, contorted in emotional agony, asking for help. No rings are attached to them, they must of fell off a while ago. Her once beautiful hair has fallen out, just a few isolated clumps remain. Her scalp has tracks of scabs running all over it. I think she's dug her own nails into it. Kneeling down I look at her asleep face, her once dimpled cheeks have sunk inside her mouth. The rasping air from her mouth slows. What the fuck has gone on? What's happened to her?

I take her hand with both of mine, it's death cold.

'Jo,' I say.

Her lids flicker open. Her sparkling icy-blue eyes have died and turned silent and grey.

'Dan,' she says forcing a smile. 'Don't leave me.'

'I won't Jo.'

'Dan... I nearly killed Lisa today. Tried to drown her in the bath. Simon stopped me just in time,' she says as a tear slips over her sunken cheek.

'Joanne what's gone on?'

'You pleaded guilty Dan,' she says with her face screwing up and more tears falling.

I look over my shoulder at George, Lucy and Rose stood behind me. I turn back to her.

'I know I pleaded guilty.'

'Why Dan? You didn't do it. None of this would of happened if you said you weren't guilty.'

'I had no choice.'

'I haven't really eaten since I last saw you,' she says closing her eyes.

'Why didn't someone tell me?'

'Mum and dad said it was best to keep it in the family.'

'If they had said something, you might not be in this bed now,' I say turning my head around to George and Lucy. They look down at the floor.

'Dan take me home with you.'

'Jo you're very ill. You have to stay in hospital,' I say turning back to her.

'Dan you'll look after me. You'll make me better again,' she says with more tears falling and her eyes opening again.

'Save your strength Jo.'

'You won't leave me. None of this would of happened if we'd stayed together?'

'I'll stay here as long as you want me to.'

'Dan... She says bursting into tears. 'I think I'm going to die.'

'Not while I'm here you're not.'

'Dan...' She says sobbing. 'Do you still love me?'

I look over my shoulder at Rose. She nods at me.

'I'll always love you Joanne.'

'Dan would you live with me again?'

'Yes. Of course.'

'You'll never leave me?'

'No.'

'Lisa... She's your daughter,' she says bursting into tears.

'You What?'

'You're the father Dan,' she says sobbing. 'You were in jail. You pleaded guilty.'

I heard someone say once, you'll hear something in your lifetime that freezes you to the core. Something that shocks your soul out of you. This moment is mine.

'Save your strength Jo. You're coming home with me,' I say slipping my hands underneath her and cradling her in my arms. She weighs nothing, she's just a sheet full of bones. I Turn to George and Lucy.

'This is your fucking daughter,' I yell.

'We thought what we were doing was for the best,' says Lucy.

'What? Watching her fucking starve herself, because she was living a lie.'

'Dan. Trouble just follows you,' says George. 'I just wanted Joanne to have a stable life. You were in jail for child murder when Lisa was born for Christ sake.'

'Where's my daughter?'

'Simon's looking after her,' says Lucy.

'Get my daughter and bring her around to my house, or I swear to God, if I have to get her I'll kill that bloke Joanne was fucking married to.'

'You can't take her out the hospital, she'll die,' says Lucy.

'If she stays in here any longer she definitely will,' I shout.

'Rose get the car. I'll hold her on the back seat,' I say.

Laying Joanne down on my bed, I place the duvet over her, and pull her blue linen sheet out, and throw it on the floor. I sit on the edge of the bed.

'Don't leave me Dan. I'm frightened,' she says her voice weakening.

'I'll never leave you. Save your strength Jo. Try to sleep.'

Stroking her scalp, her eyes close. Rose comes into the bedroom.

'This belongs to someone else,' she says placing the engagement ring in my hand.

'Rose I'm so sorry.'

'So am I Dan. You've never stopped loving her,' she says her eyes moistening over.

'No. I'm afraid Rose she's my soul mate. You only get one of them in your lifetime.'

‘Did you love me Dan?’

‘Very much.’

‘But not as much as her,’ she says turning on her heels and leaving.

I hope I’m doing the right thing. She has to be back in her bed with me. It’s the only way I can see her surviving. She needs contentment, she needs warmth. Hopefully the last six months of trauma and turmoil will leave her. She has to start eating. I need to talk to the twins. I need their help.

Going downstairs they’re sat on the sofa in their pyjama’s. If their eyes could produce daggers I think I’d have a thousand stuck in me.

‘Girls. Joanne’s very ill.’

‘If Rose go and Ho stay. We fuck off back Thailand,’ says Molly.

‘You can go back when I’ve sorted a few things out. You’ve got a baby sister. I need you to look after her.’

‘I not look after fucking baby,’ shouts Molly.

‘Well Polly can do it.’

‘I not Papa. I go back Thailand with Molly.’

The intercom beeps. Opening the front door Lucy’s got Lisa on her hip. ‘I hope you know what you’re doing?’ she says.

‘Look at the state of Joanne. Did you know what you were doing? Why didn’t you tell me you fucking bitch,’ I say taking Lisa from her.

‘It was for the best. You’re nothing but fucking trouble.’

The back of my hand swishes through the air, catching the side of her cheek. Her head abruptly moves to the right with the impact. She moves it back, focusing her eyes back on me. The specks of silver on her irises sparkle.

‘If anything happens to Joanne and Lisa I will personally make sure you will never breath again,’ she says as blood trickles from the corner of her mouth.

‘Happen to them. Your daughter’s on the brink of death and nearly killed her daughter.’

‘We had it under control.’

‘D’ you understand the word out of control? Tell George he’s banned from this place, and he can stick his job up his ass. As for you, I’ll call you when I need you. Now fuck off,’ I say slamming the door in her face.

Taking Lisa into the front room, she rubs her nose on my shirt, she can smell her mother on me. Her purple-bluish mottled palm moves up towards my face, her tiny hand grabs my shirt collar, miniature nails shine. Her oblivious blue eyes look up at me. She senses something different. The house has a different smell, I have a different smell. But she seems quite content. Maybe a child instinctively knows who her real father is. I place her on the floor, she starts to crawl towards Molly and Polly. They both turn their heads away from her and stare at the TV.

Molly Hargreeves: This bloke is bloody unbelievable. If there was ever an asshole for a father, he'd be top of the list. Now he expects me to look after a child that isn't his.

'Polly I'm done now. I cannot live in this household any longer.'

'We promised mum and the elders.'

'I don't care any more. The things we've had to put up with. Did you see Rose's face? She's devastated. She was such a lovely woman. Joanne doesn't want us here.'

'I know. But we have to fulfil our destiny.'

'No. Look what's happened since he's been around. He never bothered bloody seeing us until we were twelve. What sort of father does that?'

'Yeah, but look at the circumstances on how we were conceived. I don't blame dad for that.'

'You think the sun shines out of his ass. What about being in jail for child murder?'

'He was innocent.'

'How about him nearly killing that man at mum's bar?'

'You pushed him.'

'He was bloody rude to me.'

It's going to take me a bit of time to persuade Polly to come back home. I'm not leaving her here with him. I'll phone mum and the elders tomorrow. Make them see sense. They'll tell Polly to come back.

'Molly I think you better have a look at this baby.'

The child's eyes move towards me as she sits on Polly's lap. No. It can't be. Why me?

'It's only a little likeness,' I say.

'Molly her eyes are exactly the same as ours. You know we can't leave her.'

'We'll take her back to Thailand. At least she'll have a bloody chance of a normal upbringing over there.'

'Like what chance have we got of doing that?'

'You heard what Dan said to granny. Joanne tried to bloody kill her.'

'She's depressed. Some women do that.'

Taking Lisa from Polly I look deep into her lost eyes. 'Young lady. You've got a lot to answer for, and I've only just met you. You owe me bloody big time.'

'Molly,' I say. 'Have you two finished talking in Thai? Also Molly I don't want you swearing in front of the baby. For the last two minutes all I've heard is that nonsense you speak and the word fuck about ten times.'

'Fuck you ass ole,' shouts Molly.

'Dan. Dan,' Joanne screams from upstairs.

Rushing to her she's sat up crying with her face in her hands. 'Dan you said you wouldn't

leave me.'

'Sorry Jo. It won't happen again.'

'Dan,' she says sobbing. 'I've messed myself.'

'I'll clean you up Jo. Don't worry.'

Picking her up with the duvet on top of her, I take her to the bathroom. Placing her in the empty bath. I throw the duvet on the landing. Water flows as I turn the taps. She's asleep again. Water edges its way up the white enamel, circling around her flesh bag of bones, her yellow jaundice skin makes the water look sallow. As it rises it covers her rib cage, which looks like a carcass stripped of all its meat. Her breasts are flat, they look like they've been ironed on, her nipples hang like red berries, the only thing on her that hasn't changed. Her delicate neck could snap at any time, her almost bald head makes her look elf like. Why didn't anyone tell me?

I turn the taps off, her ravaged body covered. I kneel by the bath holding her head in my palm. She has to start eating.

'Baby got fuck all, she hungry,' says Molly.

I turn my head over my shoulder. Molly's stood in the bathroom doorway with Lisa on her hip. Polly's stood beside her.

'Well get her something.'

'I got no milk in tits.'

'You're an intelligent girl Molly, sort something out.'

'You got no fucking food in house that baby eat.'

'Well go to my wallet, get some fucking money and buy something.'

'It fucking three in morning. Where I buy food?'

'The twenty-four hour garage.'

'That got fuck all.'

'For fuck sake Molly. You're a female, you should know how to look after a baby. Use that fucking brain of yours.'

'Ass ole. You lucky she fucking sister. She got same eyes as me and Polly.'

'Good for you. Now fuck off,' I say as Molly storms off downstairs.

'Papa? You want me do anything?'

'Put fresh linen on the bed sweetheart. And put that duvet in the wash.'

'OK Papa.'

Washing her skin her eyelids flicker open. Her irises seem duller, she's fading away. 'Dan I'm so tired.'

'Don't speak Jo, save your strength.'

Pulling the plug, I dry her the best way I can. Lifting her fragile body out, she rests her head on my shoulder. Taking her to the bedroom I lay her down on the fresh linen and put a clean duvet on top of her. Polly comes into the room, holding a glass of water and a bowl of steaming

chicken soup.

‘Ho need this,’ she says placing it on the bedside cabinet.

I put my arm around Polly’s waist, she stands up on tiptoe and kisses my cheek. ‘Thanks sweetheart,’ I say.

‘If need anything Papa. Just shout.’

‘I will darling. Go downstairs and help your sister.’

‘OK Papa,’ she says and leaves. If only her sister was the same as her.

Sitting on the edge of the bed I wake Jo.

‘You need this water and soup.’

‘I don’t want it.’

‘You are having it,’ I say lifting her up and putting the glass of water to her crusted lips.

She swallows it. I take a spoon of soup and put that to her lips. ‘I don’t want it.’

I tip it, it spills over her chin as she pushes it out with her tongue. She turns her head towards me. Her dying eyes look embarrassed.

‘Joanne do you love me?’

‘Yes. Very much.’

‘Well eat this soup for me. Because if you don’t, I won’t have anyone to love back.’

Four weeks later: Putting a spoon of soup to her lips, she looks up at me, her old colour is returning back to her eyes. ‘We start solid food tomorrow Jo.’

‘I’m not a baby. Talk to me like an adult.’

‘When you’ve put on four more stone I can fuck the ass off you.’

‘That’s better.’

‘Jo I want to try something. I want you to spend five minutes with Lisa.’

‘No Dan. I don’t want her near me. Please don’t make me.’

‘Just for a couple of minutes.’

‘No Dan.’

‘Lucy,’ I shout.

She comes into the room holding Lisa. ‘Place her at the bottom of the bed,’ I say.

Lisa crawls up the bed, she’s got the scent of her mother.

‘Take her away Mum.’

‘Jo. We made her. She’s part of both of us,’ I say putting my arm around her.

‘Dan. I’m not ready. I could hurt her.’

‘You love her Joanne.’

‘No. Give me more time.’

Lucy picks Lisa up. ‘That’s enough for today,’ she says.

‘D’ you sleep well in the box room last night?’ I ask.



'No,' says Lucy. 'I jumped into bed with Polly. I hate sleeping on my own.'

'D' you get the girls off to school on time?'

'Yes. I've taken that large curved knife out of Molly's bedroom. I don't like it by Lisa's cot.'

'She said if anyone tries to hurt her she'll kill them,' I say.

'Who's going to hurt her,' says Lucy.

'I could,' says Jo. 'I told Molly to do it. I told her to use it as well if need be. Put it back Mum.'

'Jo you're not in that state of mind now,' says Lucy.

'I don't care. I tried once.'

'I'm taking Lisa downstairs,' says Lucy.

'Jo. D' you know your mother's a slut.'

'Watch that mouth of yours Hargreeves.'

'Yeah. Her daughter follows her,' says Jo with a smile.

'Dan. George asked if he could see his granddaughter,' says Lucy.

'No. I still haven't forgiven him for letting Joanne get into this state.'

'I did as well.'

'I need you when the girls are at school. Otherwise you wouldn't be here either.'

'But he's going to have to see his girls sooner or later,' she says and leaves.

Joanne looks over at me. 'I found out I was pregnant two weeks after you got arrested. I came off the pill when we split up just to give my body a rest.'

'When was she conceived?'

'That night dad caught us. I'd started taking contraception again, but obviously not long enough.'

'What night?'

'The night you tried to do something naughty to my backside.'

'You can't fall pregnant that way.'

'You fucked me just before that you idiot,' she says her eyes flashing like knives. Her old self is returning. 'You pleaded guilty. I fell apart. Life just went by as if I wasn't in control of it. Felt lonely, vulnerable and pregnant. Married Simon.'

'Why didn't you tell me when I got out?'

'I didn't want the upheaval in Lisa's life. I'd made my bed. Kids first Dan. On the outside we looked the perfect family. Dentist. Rich girl with a beautiful blue eyed baby. I thought I could handle living the lie. But obviously not.'

'Jo. There's one issue I'd like to clear up.'

'What's that baby?'

'In a word Clive Steven. If you did have an affair with him, it's OK.'

'I never had any affair. I'd never be unfaithful to you.'

'He said you did.'

'He's delusional. He took me out a couple of times for lunch when I was at work. I felt sorry for him, he was splitting up from his wife. In the end dad got a restraining order out on him. Then he left me the fuck alone.'

'Why didn't you tell me?'

'So you could go around and beat the living daylights out of him. That's the last thing he needed.'

'Oh. I see.'

I can hear a male's voice downstairs. It's fucking George. I fucking told him.

Joanne grabs my wrist. 'Send dad up.'

'No.'

'You've tortured him enough.'

Going downstairs George is holding Lisa. 'Just five minutes Dan.'

'Why don't you give my daughter to me and go upstairs and see your own.'

He smiles. 'Thanks Dan,' he says passing Lisa over.

I sit on the sofa next to Lucy and bounce Lisa on my lap.

'Once upon a time there was a girl called Lucy. Lucy loved men. She tried every nationality known to man.'

Lucy coughs. 'I haven't tried Mexican.'

'Sorry Lisa. I stand corrected. Lucy loved her knickers around her ankles, or getting down on her knees. She gobbled all those men up as fast as a freight train. Choo. Choo.'

'Once up on a time Lisa,' says Lucy taking Lisa from me. 'There was a man called Dan Hargreeves. I suggest young lady you stay well clear of him. He's a complete fucking asshole.'

'Don't swear in front of the baby Lucy.'

'With your daughters around, I'll expect fuck will be the first word to come out of her mouth.'

## Chapter 16

Three years later: A milky-white sun slips behind the tree line. Exhausted after a summer of fierce burning. It's light shattered into hundreds of beams by branches and leaves, which are ready to flutter from their mother's arms. Cool autumn air carries the scent of vanilla ice cream. My favourite time of year.

Sipping a glass of Champagne in a black suit and tie. Rose emerges from a white marquee, dressed in a wedding dress, she lifts the pure white ruffles up as she makes her way across the green grass towards me. Dipping my hand in my pocket I smile as I crush the knickers she had on earlier. In my other pocket I rub a golden locket attached to a broken gold chain. Whom the fuck am I supposed to give this to?

'Best day of my life Dan,' she says putting her arm around my waist.

I give her backside a gentle squeeze. 'It has been a great day.'

Molly and Polly come out the entrance of the marquee wearing purple bridesmaid dresses, with purple and white orchids in their hair. They're both holding a bottle of champagne each. They better not be pissed and ruin everything.

'Look at those two Rose. Are they fucking drunk again?'

'They're just enjoying themselves.'

'Oi. You two,' I shout. 'Come over here.'

'What want?' says Molly taking a drink out the bottle.

'Take it easy on the alcohol.'

'It only one bottle.'

'You better behave yourself today,' I say taking the bottle from her.

She smiles putting her hand up her dress. She holds up a half bottle of vodka.

'You want this to. I keep it under garter.'

'Yes I fucking will,' I say taking it from her.

'I see you later ass ole. I dance with boyfriend,' she says skipping off.

'Papa here my bottle,' says Polly.

'Keep it sweetheart. Just use a glass instead of drinking out of it.'

'OK. I go dance with boyfriend to,' she says stumbling on her stilettos, holding the bottle by it's neck.

'What can you do with two eighteen year old girls Rose?'

'Not a lot Dan. Go with the flow.'

I can see Joanne running across the grass towards me from the portable toilets. She's bare foot.

Four weeks earlier: 'Molly. Polly,' says Jo. 'Have you seen my purple suede boots and red nail varnish?' she shouts from our bedroom.

'Why I want look like slut for?' shouts Molly from her bedroom.

'I not like slut red,' shouts Polly from her bedroom.

Joanne storms out into their rooms.

'Papa?' says Lisa attached to my hip.

'Don't call me that Lisa. You know I don't like it. It's dad.'

'Papa? Are Molly and Polly being fucking naughty again?'

'What did I say about the swearing. You're not even five yet.'

'I nearly fucking five.'

Joanne comes back into the bedroom holding her boots and nail varnish. 'I can't understand those two pinching my stuff all the time. They've got enough of their own clothes.'

'Maybe they think your stuff is better.'

'Lucky they're a little bit shorter than me, or they'll be walking off with all of my clothes.'

'Tell them to be on time tonight. I'm sick of them turning up late all the time.'

'I'll drop them off at their boyfriend's houses and then pick you up.'

'What time is Rose here?'

'Eight o'clock.'

'Rose looking after me tonight?' says Lisa clapping her hands. 'She fucking funny.'

Joanne kisses Lisa's cheek. 'Bye sweet cheeks,' says Jo. 'Mummy loves you.'

'Bye Mummy,' says Lisa putting her hand up and moving her fingers up and down.

Walking across the landing with Lisa. Molly and Polly are still messing around in their bedrooms.

'Will you two hurry up.'

'Fuck off,' says Molly.

'Stop swearing in front of Lisa. I thought we had an agreement.'

'I not know she there,' says Molly.

'Just hurry up. I want you on time tonight,' I say taking Lisa downstairs into the front room.

'Papa? We watch Arserole?'

'No. Think of something else.'

'Put me on floor.'

Placing her down she kicks my shin. 'Why did you do that for young lady?'

'Molly show me kick boxing,' she says crying. 'She say you fall down. I no good.'

'Try it again Lisa and stop the tears.'

As she kicks me I fall down in slow motion on my back. 'You see Lisa. You are good.'

She smiles down at me, her blond curly hair drops by the sides of her cheeks. Her blue eyes light up from her smile. She lifts her foot up and stamps on my testicles.

'Fucking hell Lisa. What d' you think you're doing you little fucker?'

'Molly say do that to.'

Joanne rushes into the front room from the kitchen. 'Don't you ever speak to her like that,' she shouts.

'She stamped on my bollocks.'

'I don't care, she's only four.'

'I nearly fucking five mummy.'

'Ho we ready,' says Molly.

'Molly I do what tell me,' says Lisa.

Molly comes over. She looks down at me in my scrunched up foetal position. 'She need protect self. She need practice on you,' she says with a grin.

'She can find someone else to practice on.'

'Good girl Lisa,' says Molly giving her a kiss on the cheek. 'I see you tomorrow.'

'Bye Molly,' says Lisa.

'Dan get up,' says Joanne. 'I'll be back in half an hour.'

All three of them leave and I pick Lisa up and sit her on my lap on the sofa.

'Papa. I want sister when mummy have baby.'

'If it's a girl it's getting adopted.'

'Papa when baby come to stay?'

'In three months time.'

'I fucking five then.'

'Lisa. Please. Stop swearing.'

The intercom beeps on the front door. Walking across the marbled floor, I open the large wooden door with Lisa on my hip.

'Rose,' shouts Lisa holding her arms out.

'Hello sweetie,' says Rose taking her from me.

'Hi Peter,' I say.

'Hi Dan. Thanks for what you've done. We can afford to put a deposit on a house now.'

'No problem Peter,' I say as we walk to the front room.

Sitting on the large tan leather sofas Rose smiles. 'Dan rehearsals are in a weeks time.'

'Do I have to go?'

'Yes. You're walking me down the aisle. You paid for the wedding and honeymoon.'

'I suppose I'll have to.'

'At least seem a little enthusiastic.'

'I am Rose. Sorry. I'll be there. You two don't mind not going to the Huntsberg dinner tonight?'

'We're happy just being together Dan,' says Peter. 'We see enough of that lot at work.'

'Joanne will only let Rose or family look after Lisa.'

'I'm privileged,' says Rose. 'You looking forward to the speech?'

'No. The twins are there for the first time. I can see everything going sideways.'

'They'll be fine Dan,' says Rose. 'They'll be off to university soon. You're going to miss them when they've gone.'

'Will I fuck.'

'Dan. Not in front of Lisa,' says Rose.

Sitting opposite Joanne, she takes a sip of water. 'We've nearly got all the family here,' I say.

'Apart from two,' she says putting the glass down.

'Yeah. Where are they? It's half past eight.'

'They always late,' says Poco sat next to Joanne.

'So Jo?' says Justin sat beside me. 'D' you want a boy or a girl?'

'I don't mind either.'

'Dan say,' says Poco. 'If girl he chuck in bin.'

'Well Dan can keep his crass comments to himself. If he doesn't like it he knows where the door is.'

'It's just a figure of speech Poco. I don't really mean it,' I say.

'You're lucky to have any children at all,' says Lucy sat the other side of Joanne. 'I'm surprised any female wants to breed with you.'

'If you had bred with all the cock that's been up you, I'd expect we'd be able to fill this room with your offspring a hundred times over.'

'You two stop it,' says George sat the other side of me.

'She started it. Sorry George,' I say.

'Here they are,' says Poco.

The two girls walk through the full tables. Staff members stare at them. Their first glimpse of my Thai prostitute's children. The ones they thought I hid away.

The girls have big grins on their faces, their boyfriends blush as tables start to whisper. Molly takes her seat by Poco. Polly takes her seat by Lucy. Their boyfriends sit by Justin.

'Where the fuck have you been?' I say.

'Kevin stop car, teach me drive. I sit on his lap, but I keep changing wrong gear stick,' says Molly.

'What's your excuse Polly? Did he stop the car and feel your tits or something?'

‘How he feel tits? When I bent over bonnet of car.’

Lucy smirks. ‘Did you give the bonnet a good polish?’

‘It really shiny now Grandma.’

‘I know I’m from an older generation,’ says George. ‘But can we change this quite rude conversation.’

‘Oh. George,’ says Lucy. ‘I’ve polished your car many a time on it’s bonnet, roof and boot.’

‘Mother,’ says Joanne. ‘I’m going to eat in a minute.’

The waitresses bring the starters over. ‘I have pint cider,’ says Molly to one of them.

‘Have Half. At least try and look like a lady,’ I say.

‘I have two half ciders lady.’ she says giving me a big grin.

The smell of prawns wafts up from the plates. Molly pokes at hers. ‘I not eat sea maggots. You tell me we have fucking steak.’

‘That’s afterwards. Just eat it.’

‘Lady,’ she says to a waitress. ‘Pint cider.’

‘You better not get drunk tonight. You’re here to make a good impression. You both want to be accountants,’ I say.

‘The chances of them getting through the whole night, without upsetting someone is pretty slim Dan,’ says Jo.

‘They will behave. They’re eighteen now. It’s time they started acting like adults.’

We start the main course. Molly picks her steak up and hangs it in the air with her fork.

‘Are you going to drop it in your mouth and swallow it with one gulp?’ I ask.

‘It covered in some shit.’

‘It’s fucking Port and Stilton sauce. Just eat it, and act like a lady for once.’

‘I not like cheese.’

‘Eat the fucking thing.’

The desert’s devoured and bottles of Champagne are put on the table. Molly and Polly immediately grab a bottle.

‘You two better use a glass,’ I say.

‘I know,’ says Molly. ‘I got manners.’

They both pour a glass and drink it in one. Two loud belches fire across the table. I look at them with hostility shooting from my eyes.

Standing I tap my Champagne glass with a spoon. ‘Quiet please,’ I shout.

The hum of voices fades away. All eyes are on me. I hate public speaking. I can feel my throat tightening. Molly and Polly cross their eyes and poke their tongues out. Lucy spots them and does the same.

I lean down towards them and whisper. ‘You know I’m fucking nervous. Just fucking behave. You should know better, you old witch,’ I say standing back up.

‘It’s been a difficult year for Huntsberg. There have been a lot of changes. But hopefully the bad times are behind us and we can look forward to a brighter future. I don’t like public speaking so this speech will be brief. After the birth of my next child I’ll be looking at buying a few small accountancy firms. I’m here for a reason and that’s to expand Huntsberg. My goal is to make it the biggest accountancy firm in the UK.’

‘I’d also like to take this opportunity to introduce everyone to my daughters Molly and Polly. Who will be joining the company after they’ve graduated from university.’

Everyone looks towards them. Christ! They’ve got a bottle of Champagne in each of their gobs. The room starts to laugh.

‘As you can see I’ve got my work cut out. In time they might learn some manners,’ I say glaring at them.

‘I got manners ass ole,’ shouts Molly.

‘So enjoy your meal, and thanks everyone for all the hard work,’ I say sitting back down with a rush of applause filling the room.

‘I thought you say something funny?’ says Molly.

‘I did. I’m surprised everyone didn’t piss themselves laughing when I said you were joining the company.’

‘I am.’

‘I fucking doubt it.’

The evening goes surprisingly well. The girls charmed the staff. They know how to if they want to. Some of the young male accountants took a great interest in them. They’re terrible flirts, a bad habit they picked up from Thailand.

‘Those girls are setting everyone’s tongues wagging,’ says George sat beside me.

‘It’s not the only thing they’re getting to wag around here,’ I say.

‘You jealous?’ says Joanne. ‘I bet you’ll be distraught when someone finally sleeps with one of them.’

‘I couldn’t give a fuck. How do I know they haven’t already? No one tells me anything.’

‘They would of told me,’ says Joanne. ‘Your precious daughters are still intact.’

‘That’s not a particularly nice way of saying it,’ I say.

‘How would you like her to say it Hargreeves?’ says Lucy. ‘It’s not as if you left Joanne well intact when she was eighteen.’

‘Yeah. What about you at eighteen, trussed up over George’s desk being stuffed like a squawking turkey.’

‘Again,’ says George. ‘What is it with this family. What happened to nice polite conversation?’

‘That went out the door when you married Lucy,’ I say.

Lucy smiles. ‘No,’ she says. ‘We dumb down the conversation when Dan’s around George.’



After Joanne married this one notch up from a lager lout, all conversation about literature, the arts and subjects he's got no idea about are put on hold. Otherwise he'd look like a little chimp trying to catch flies with his tongue.'

'The only thing you fucking know about is how fast those knick...'

'That's enough Dan,' says Joanne kicking me under the table. 'And you Mum as well.'

'He started it,' says Lucy.

Joanne takes Lucy's hand and places it on her stomach. 'You feel it kick?'

Lucy's eyes moisten over. 'I can't wait to be a grandmother again. I'd love another granddaughter,' says Lucy smirking at me.

That stirring child better be a boy. I am not having another fucking daughter.

'Papa?' says Polly standing behind me. 'Can I go on Kareoke with Molly?'

'No sweetheart. It's been a good night, I don't want you two spoiling it.'

'Of course you can Polly,' says Joanne.

'Thanks Papa.'

'I don't know why I even open my fucking mouth.'

Watching the girls take the stand everyone looks at them. The girls grab the microphones.

'Is fucking thing on?' says Molly with the sound of her voice blasting through the speakers.

'Yeah,' says Polly. 'What song you want sing?'

'I not know. What one you fucking like,' says Molly with her voice travelling around the room.

'What song that lady sing about man getting thingy out?'

'What? Cock?'

'No. I think it mouth organ.'

'I thought mouth organ was cock.'

'You see Joanne,' I say.

Walking towards them they both look down at me. 'You two off that stage.'

'We not sing fucking song yet,' says Molly.

'Do as I say or I'll come up there and drag you off.'

'Fuck off. Go back seat.'

'Right,' I say jumping up. 'I've had enough of you Molly Hargreeves,' I say grabbing the front of her blouse. She pulls away, her blouse rips, shooting a couple of buttons across the stage floor, exposing her black bra.

'You want feel tits again Papa?' she says into the microphone.

'Shut the fuck up.'

'You not want kiss me in front of people?'

'Will you shut up you little bitch.'

The microphone stand hits the back of my legs, my back smashes into the stage. She drops

the stand across my throat, she squeezes down on it with her foot.

‘You never fucking learn,’ she says squeezing down harder.

‘Stop fucking choking me,’ I splutter out.

‘C’ mon Polly, let’s get fuck out of here,’ she says releasing me and jumping off the stage with her sister.

I can hear footsteps from the gravel outside. Joanne’s fast asleep beside me. Looking at the alarm clock it’s two in the morning. Muffled voices outside talk by the front door. It’s Polly, she’s not the one that I want. The door opens and her shoes tap on the marble floor. Tyres on gravel come to a halt. I’m going to fucking kill that girl when I get hold of her. I hear Polly slip into her bedroom. Her sister’s by the front door. I can feel my rage brewing, my head hurts as my temper crushes my brain. I’m going to do something I’m going to regret. I must try and control myself.

I push Joanne’s shoulder. ‘What Dan?’

‘She’s back. Go down and bollock the fuck into her. If I do it’ll end badly.’

‘For fuck sake Dan. Leave it until the morning.’

‘I not ready,’ says Molly, her voice coming through the intercom.

‘It’s just a feel of your tits,’ says Kevin.

‘I not ready yet. Mama and Papa not like.’

‘Why don’t you do something for me?’

‘Like what?’

‘How about a blowjob?’

‘You want me suck it?’

‘I’ve dreamt about it Molly. Please.’

‘No I not.’

Joanne smiles at me. ‘What a fucking dork, that stupid bitch has got her ass on the intercom button,’ she says.

I can feel my rage subside. ‘Follow me Jo. It’s about time she had some stick.’

We creep into the spare bedroom and open the window. Looking down at them they’re embraced with their tongues down the back of each others throats.

‘Go on. Suck him off,’ shouts Jo down to them.

They quickly part and look up. ‘Take him around the side of the house, that’s where you usually suck your boyfriends off,’ I shout.

‘Fuck off ass ole,’ she shouts up.

‘What’s this ones name? I keep losing track,’ shouts Jo.

‘Tim I think, she changes her boyfriends as often as she changes her knickers. Which don’t usually stay on her backside for very long,’ I shout.

'Fuck off. I not slut. I see you tomorrow Kevin,' she says coming through the front door.

'Mummy, Papa. Noise wake me up,' says Lisa rubbing her eyes.

Jo picks her up. 'We're just welcoming Molly home.'

All three of us go on the landing as Molly climbs the stairs. 'Welcome home slut,' I say as we all clap.

She turns as she passes us on the landing. 'You think I slut?' she says raising her eyebrows.

I grin from ear to ear. Lisa carries on clapping. 'Molly slut. Molly slut.'

Molly takes Lisa from Joanne. 'You sleep in my bed tonight Lisa. I not want you around these ass oles.'

Molly walks across the landing to her bedroom with Lisa on her hip. 'You not call me slut Lisa.'

'OK. Molly.'

Joanne and I turn to each other and burst out laughing.

Light filters through the curtains and rests on my eyelids. My beds empty. Jo must be up with Lisa.

Now to deal with those two fuckers. Slipping my dressing gown on I go into Polly's bedroom. I rip her quilt off. 'Fuck off,' she says crawling up into a ball with just her underwear on.

Bloody hell she's got two love bites on her neck. I thought she was the quiet one. I poke her stomach with my forefinger. 'You better not be fucking pregnant or I'll kick your ass all the way back to Thailand.'

'I not. Go away.'

'Downstairs in five minutes,' I say going into Molly's bedroom.

Picking up a black felt tip pen from her dresser I look down at her. I'll have to be quick. Pulling her quilt off I jump on top of her.

'What you fucking doing? You gone fucking mad?' she says.

'We had an outbreak of large mosquito bites last night. I'm checking if they got you.'

'What? What you fucking talk about? Get off.'

Writing slut across her forehead she starts to struggle. 'If you not get off. I fucking hurt you,' she says.

'Downstairs in five minutes,' I say releasing her.

Walking into the kitchen Lisa's sat on a high chair eating a couple of sausages. Joanne's got her back to me doing some washing up. Polly's sat at the kitchen table with her hands on her cheeks and her long black hair covering her face.

'I'm not angry with you Polly. It's the other one,' I say.

'Thanks,' she says blowing a gap in-between her curtain of locks.

Molly comes into the room and sits next to her sister.

‘Mummy,’ says Lisa chewing on a sausage. ‘Why Molly got writing on head?’

‘Because she’s a slut darling.’

‘I not fucking slut,’ shouts Molly slamming her fists on the table.

‘Last night was supposed to show my staff that you’re intelligent, well mannered young women. In time you’ll have to work with these people. First impressions count. Last night was a fucking disaster.’

‘Ho got more sausages?’ asks Molly.

‘Are you listening to me?’ I shout.

‘I’ll put some on,’ says Jo.

‘I might as well talk to my fucking self.’

Lisa throws a piece of sausage in the air, Tucker snatches it. ‘Don’t feed Tucker,’ says Joanne.

‘Fucker hungry Mummy.’

‘He’s always hungry,’ says Jo.

‘Another thing,’ I say. ‘Boys. If one of you falls pregnant it’s straight back to Thailand.’

‘They won’t fall pregnant Dan,’ says Jo.

‘How do you know?’

‘I put them on the pill at seventeen.’

‘So they’ve been having sex since then?’

‘They haven’t had sex with anybody. I did it just as a precaution.’

‘Does anyone tell me anything around here?’

‘They’re not going to tell you about female things.’

‘You got more say?’ says Molly.

‘Yeah. In two weeks time when I take you to university it’ll be the happiest day of my life.’

‘Mine to,’ says Molly. ‘One thing I need know when I go uni,’ she says getting up and putting her hands over Lisa’s ears.

‘What?’ I say.

‘When I suck cock for first time. How far I need put in mouth?’

‘Get the fuck out my sight.’

‘Happy to. Let’s go Polly.’

Looking at the back of Jo she’s shaking. ‘It’s not fucking funny Joanne.’

‘Dan give up. You’re not going to tame her.’

‘We’ll see about that.’

## Chapter 17

One week later: 'You're a bloke,' I say taking a sip of my pint.

'I not care. Everyone get married. I want get married.'

'Don't be ridiculous. You and Justin are quite happy as you are.'

'He want get married to. He want you be best man.'

'Am I fuck.'

'He want Joanne walk him down aisle and twins bridesmaid.'

'I could ask Tucker to do the nuptials if you want.'

Poco turns his head away from me and takes a sip of his pint. 'I not talk you about it any more.'

'D' you want another pint?'

'Yeah. But not get drunk. Joanne shout at me. She think I lead you astray.'

'She's pregnant. Her brains not working properly.'

'I'd love child. Justin talk about adoption.'

'If my next one's a girl you can have that if you like.'

'It not joke... When give me pay rise?'

'Poco you ask me that every fucking week. Look at yourself. You got two hundred pound stilettos on. Christ knows how much that dress cost. You spend two hundred quid a week on your hair, nails and make-up. You're usually the prettiest looking thing in any place we go to.'

'You think I pretty?'

'Yeah. It's just that slab of meat in-between your legs that puts me off.'

Poco leans his back against the bar and surveys the room. 'I glad I not single. Every man in pub ugly.'

'Those women over there are pretty.'

'One keep looking over.'

'I wonder if she wants you or me.'

'We go over and find out?'

I smile. 'Why the fuck not,' I say as we walk to their table.

'A drink ladies?' I ask.

'Why?' says the blond one.

'Why not?'

'You're with someone,' says the dark haired one.

'We not couple,' says Poco. 'I got cock.'

'You're one of those ladyboys?' says the blond one.

'He likes men and women,' I say taking a seat. 'I see you like playing tennis.'

'We've just played a couple of sets,' says the dark haired one. 'I'm still a bit hot and sticky.'

Poco sits next to the dark haired one, she turns her head and faces him. 'I would never of guessed you were a man.'

'There only one way you really find out.'

She giggles. 'You're quite forward.'

'He's from Thailand,' I say. 'He's lived a free and easy lifestyle.'

'What about you?' says the blond one.

'I love the company of beautiful women.'

'Are you trying to pick us up?' she says. 'We are married you know.'

'So am I.'

'I only fucking person not married,' says Poco.

'You want to get married?' says the dark haired women leaning over resting her palm on Poco's thigh.

'I dream about it.'

The blond one smiles at me. 'I thought you were buying us a drink? A bottle of white wine would be nice.'

Going to the bar my phone vibrates. 'Yes,' I say.

'Ho drunk,' says Molly.

'What the fuck are you talking about?'

'She upset so we take her to bar. She think you not love her.'

'For fuck sake. Which bar are you at?'

'That one by your office.'

I go back to the table. 'Poco we're leaving. Joanne's drunk. Sorry ladies.'

'What a pity,' says the dark haired one. 'I've just found out he's really a man.'

'Maybe another time,' I say.

'We're here every Thursday afternoon,' says the blond one.

'I'll bear that in mind.'

Walking towards the pub entrance someone in a black suit and tie is vomiting against the wall. We enter. Fuck me. It looks like a wild west bar.

'Everyone drunk,' says Poco.

'It looks like a wake, that's got out of hand.'

'They over there,' says Poco pointing at the end of the bar.

The twins are downing shots with some of the mourners. 'Where is she?'

'She in alcove. She sleep,' says Polly.

'Why the fuck didn't you stop her? She's fucking pregnant.'

'She cry. She say you not love her.'

'Where's Lisa?'

'Grandma look after her,' says Polly.

Going over to Joanne she's slumped on a sofa. Look at the state of that. Pissed and fucking pregnant. I sit beside her and shake her shoulder. 'Joanne. Joanne.'

'Go away,' she mumbles.

Fuck this. I lift her up cradling her in my arms. 'You two fuckers,' I shout to the girls. 'You're coming home with me.'

Stripping her off and slipping her into bed I rub her back. 'There's a bowl by the side of the bed if you want to be sick.'

'Go away,' she says.

Lucy comes into the bedroom with Lisa on her hip. 'She OK?'

'Look at the state of her Lucy.'

'Mummy tired?' asks Lisa.

'Yes sweetheart,' says Lucy. 'Go downstairs and play with Molly and Polly.'

Lucy puts Lisa down. She runs across the landing while Lucy puts her hands on her hips and raises her eyebrows. 'It's your fault she's like this.'

'Fuck off Lucy. I forced the drink down her throat did I?'

'You've been neglecting her.'

'I haven't.'

'When was the last time you had sex?'

'None of your fucking business.'

'She needs to feel wanted.'

The sound of vomiting hitting the bowl, followed by coughing comes from Joanne.

'I do want her.'

'Well fuck her then.'

'What now.'

'You don't love me any more,' says Joanne crying. 'You don't touch me like you used to. You spend more and more time with Poco.'

'I love you very much Joanne.'

'Prove it,' says Lucy. 'Jump into bed and cuddle her.'

'I will. You can leave now.'

Watching Lucy close the door behind her I strip off. Joanne's boiling to the touch as I cuddle her from behind. She retches again. The acidic smell makes my eyes water, fermenting

food washed with alcohol make my stomach turn.

‘Make love to me Dan.’

Gulping hard I can’t get erect. I rub myself against her wetness. I can feel movement from the child in her swollen belly. ‘Go down on me Dan,’ she says retching in the bowl again. You must be fucking joking.

‘I want to make love to you Jo.’

‘He’s not working. You don’t find me attractive any more,’ she says sobbing.

Please let me get hard. Little man do your stuff. I’m good with my mind. Closing my eyes I think of Joanne when she was eighteen. Those curves, that creamy skin without stretch marks. Her rosy nipples. That’s better. I grow inside her. Moving in and out of her she’s gone quiet. I think she’s fallen asleep. Reaching for my mobile on the bedside cabinet I text Lucy to bring some tissues up and wipe Joanne’s face. I honestly didn’t think Joanne felt this way. I’ll have to spend more time with her.

Lucy comes into the room. ‘Clean her face up a little bit Lucy. She’s asleep now. I want to carry on cuddling her.’

Lucy goes to Joanne’s side of the bed, kneels down and wipes her face. ‘You need to spend more time with my daughter.’

‘I know Lucy. I will.’

‘Relationships go through a lot of ups and downs Dan. Women are at their most vulnerable when they’re pregnant. You need to work at these things.’

‘I know Lucy. I’m really sorry. She means the world to me.’

‘I know she does Dan. But tell her sometimes.’

‘Mother,’ Joanne shrieks.

‘It’s OK darling I’m just cleaning you up.’

Gripping Joanne I speed up my rhythm inside her. ‘I have missed fucking you,’ I say. ‘I’m about to come.’

Lucy stands. ‘You are fucking disgusting Hargreeves,’ she shouts. ‘How dare you have sex with my daughter in front of me.’

‘It’s. Good. Good. Good,’ I say as Joanne struggles in my arms.

Lucy storms towards the bedroom door. I whip the duvet off us. ‘Jump in and join us,’ I say.

‘Fuck off. You horrible creature.’

Joanne grabs my hard cock and pulls it out of herself. ‘That’s both my parents that have seen me have sex now.’

‘She was getting on my nerves.’

‘Sorry Dan.’

‘I’m sorry to. It’s just with work, the kids. We simply haven’t got enough time to have our own space.’



‘We’ll make time. Go downstairs and apologise to mum.’  
‘Do I have to?’  
‘Yes. I’ll get her to babysit tonight so we can go out for a meal.’  
Slipping my dressing gown on I look down at Jo. ‘I think you need to clean yourself up.’  
‘I know that. Just go downstairs and see mum.’  
Walking into the front room all four females are watching the TV.  
‘Asshole,’ says Lucy.  
‘Ass ole,’ says Molly.  
‘Papa ass ole,’ says Lisa.  
‘D’ you want to join in Polly?’  
‘Ass ole,’ she says.  
‘Thanks ladies. Can I have a word in the kitchen Lucy?’  
‘No. I’m watching TV.’  
‘It’ll only take a minute. Joanne told me to.’  
‘For Christ sake,’ she says getting off the sofa.  
Putting the kettle on I look at Lucy. ‘Sorry.’  
‘What if you saw one of your own daughters have sex, how would you feel?’  
‘Depends who it is.’  
‘Don’t try and be smart. It doesn’t suit you.’  
‘By the way you look absolutely stunning today.’  
‘Do I... Dan we have to find some middle ground. This family has got a long haul in front of it. I’m sick of you and I causing friction.’  
‘Lucy I’ll try my best.’  
‘Good.’

One week later: They fall. Two black dots holding hands. It’s nearly over, the waterfall of life will end soon. They plunge. Metal softened by men who believe the earth is still flat, if told so. They’re gone now to a place they love the most. Their minds bent and contorted like the act they committed. Sacrificing themselves in the name of someone. If that person was alive today, he’d condemn them to fire.

People have stopped falling; but the brave sent to save them are paying the ultimate price. Unlike the same flesh and blood that steered them in that direction, who got what they wanted.

Their internal guts bellows down the avenues, making ghosts of men and women, who walk lost and afraid. Some still run, but it starts to settle. Their white powdered faces, streaked by tears, black eyes forlorn. Looking like skulls in business suits and neatly cut skirts. Their days plans jolted into insignificance. Minds pouring thoughts of family and bewilderment.

The horizon has lost two of it’s favourite stars, cut down after years of watching their own

landscape change from the exchanges made inside it.

Those two glints of metal falling from a crisp blue sky changed the world forever. Fifteen years on and people are still dying everyday because of it.

‘Papa,’ says Polly pulling my hand. ‘Come dance with me? Not look at TV.’

Bass music blasts into my ears, breaking my thoughts. ‘No sweetheart. I’m too old.’

‘You not. Not sit at bar on own. Enjoy self.’

‘Darling I can’t stay long, I’ve got to drive home soon. This is your night. You’re both independent women now. Away from me and at university.’

‘When leave say goodbye.’

‘Of course I will,’ I say.

Letting go of my hand she wanders back to the dance floor, where her sister is already dancing with some spotty, floppy haired youth. She looks over at me and smirks. I turn my gaze back to the TV. The barman has switched it off. It’s time for me to leave. This beer shandy tastes disgusting. I don’t belong in this pit of teenage pheromones. Polly wanted a last drink with me in this student bar. I’ve done that now.

‘Another?’ asks the barman.

‘No. Here’s fifty quid. You see those twin girls dancing? That’s for them and one for yourself.’

‘Thanks. What are their names?’

‘Thank fuck and you’ve gone. They’re from Thailand.’

‘I’ll make sure they get their drinks.’

A young girl leans over the bar. Her black skirt rises revealing pale blue silk, that smother two perfect arse cheeks, her auburn hair flows down her back, two large breasts compress into the black granite top of the bar.

‘Two shots of vodka,’ she says and turns her face towards me. ‘You finished looking at my tits and ass?’

My God. She’s the spitting image of Joanne when she was eighteen. ‘I wasn’t. I’m just about to leave.’

‘You must be the only bloke in here that hasn’t.’

‘I didn’t realise they did degrees in I love myself.’

She smirks and pushes the shot of vodka towards me. ‘Have this on me,’ she says gulping hers down.

‘I can’t. I’m driving.’

‘You a mature student?’

‘Yeah. Studying accountancy.’

‘Boring. Boring. Boring. Myself creative writing.’

‘So when you enter the big wide world d’ you expect that’ll bring you financial security?’

‘Money. Who cares. What’s the point of a big house and big car?’

‘You may have that carefree attitude now, but it’ll change.’

‘I don’t think so. What I do lasts an eternity. What I do gives me everything I desire. It surges through me.’

‘What? Writing ten different ways on how big a cat is? I’ll tell you how big it is. It’s fucking big.’

She walks towards me. ‘I colour plain paper with words. Those words gush from my soul.’

‘You can only colour paper with paint. I’ve read plenty of words. They’re words.’

‘What was your last read?’

‘A newspaper. I don’t read books. I can’t stand fiction. It’s a waste of time.’

‘Fiction is like a delicate soup. It starts off slightly watery and as each spoonful peels away each layer, the flavour intensifies, until you come to the last drops. Those drops encapsulate the whole essence of what you are tasting, like the end of a good book.’

‘Bollocks.’

She sits on my lap draping an arm over my shoulders, she crosses her creamy white young legs and looks at me with her icy-blue eyes. ‘A cat you say...? Sally sat on her masters lap, her purr vibrated through his thighs. His hand stroked her sleek fur, she turns over on her back. He runs his forefinger along her velvety underbelly, her legs splay open. She’s deep in a dream. Cream flows. She can taste it. That rich buttery smoothness.’ she brings her lips to my ear and whispers. ‘She wants to be covered in it.’

‘Um. Does she?’

‘Yes. She doesn’t like young alley cats, she prefers mature ones. They take their time. Their experience can blow her mind.’

‘Papa. Papa,’ says Molly ‘You come dance?’

‘Fuck off I’m busy,’ I snap.

Molly gives the girl a twenty pound note, the girl stands up and straightens her skirt.

‘She look like Ho. He fall for it?’ says Molly laughing.

‘Hook, line and sinker. Sitting on his lap was quite uncomfortable with his thing poking into my backside.’

‘You little b...’

‘Not say. I warn you.’

‘You little fucker then. Is this what I’ve become? A joke?’

‘You idiot. You think you got chance with eighteen year old girl? You should feel ashamed.’

‘I don’t know do I.’

‘Man brain go out window when female around.’

‘OK. You’ve had your fun. Give me that vodka, I need to bury my mind.’

'You staying?' asks Molly.

'Yeah. I'll stay at your place. I'm going to get drunk and embarrass you. Have you ever seen anyone dance like a robot?'

'What fucking talk about?'

'You'll find out.'

Someone's removed my brain and hung it up from a tree. Vultures pull it to pieces. What happened last night? I was in the student bar with the twins. Vodka shots. An eighteen year old girl that looked like Joanne. Fuck. Where am I? I'm frightened of opening my eyes. Someone's led next to me. All I can smell is alcohol and teenage sweat.

Something splashes across my face, it's warm. I think someone's flicked hot water over me with their fingertips. It tastes slightly salty.

'Sorry mate,' says a male.

Opening my eyes he comes into focus. He's naked behind a girl on all fours. Her long black hair covers her face.

'Have you just come over my face?'

'Only a little bit, most of it went over her back.'

Looking at the tanned skinned girl, that better not be one of fucking mine. The person next to me starts to move. I wipe my face with the duvet covering us. Lifting it up a young female is topless apart from a pair pale blue knickers on. I didn't, surely not. I can't remember. I remember drinking vodka with her at the bar. I remember her being in on Molly's joke. Mind you her tits are fucking fantastic. I gently squeeze one in my palm. This takes me back. It's like having a brand new eighteen year old Joanne again.

Standing in just a pair of boxer shorts I survey the room. Bodies are everywhere. Where are the girls? This is their apartment.

Stepping over the carpet of youth I go into the main bedroom. I pull the duvet from the bed. There's my two.

'What the fuck happened last night?'

They stir but no reply. My mobiles on their bedside cabinet. Picking it up it's got eight missed calls from Joanne. Fucking hell. She's going to kill me.

'Girls. Girls,' I say shaking Polly.

'Go away,' she says.

'What happened last night?'

'You get drunk. Invite everyone back for party.'

'I don't know where my clothes are.'

'I not fucking know.'

I can feel warm breath by my neck. Her familiar smell of perfume mixes with my alcoholic

lined mouth.

‘That’s the last time you have a party here Molly Hargreeves.’

‘Fuck... off. Your idea. You dance like spastic. I embarrassed,’ she says.

‘I didn’t pay for this apartment so you could use it like this.’

‘Stop it Dan,’ says Joanne. ‘Why didn’t you just fucking phone?’

‘Sorry Jo.’

‘All you had to do was bring the girls here, drop their stuff off and come back home.’

‘I joined them for a farewell drink. It got out of hand.’

‘You’re fucking telling me. This apartment is for myself and Lisa to come down once a week as well. How can I bring her to this car crash.’

‘I know. Sorry. I won’t be visiting again.’

The young girl comes into the bedroom with just a pair of knickers on. ‘Mr Hargreeves have you seen my clothes?’

Joanne’s eyes flash like knives. A fist with a single diamond ring set in two platinum dolphins smashes into my face. I stumble onto one knee. It’s surprising how much venom a pregnant woman’s punch can produce.

‘We need a holiday,’ says Jo.

## Chapter 18

One week later: Melting moonlight flicks across a ink-black sea, carried by tiny waves. It's the biggest moon I've ever seen. Floating there since the dawn of time. Watching over us. It's lunar face whispers soft silver light.

'Look at the moon Jo.'

She turns her head over her shoulder. 'Yeah. It looks like a ball of lard. You're supposed to be fucking me on this beach, not looking at that.'

'It makes it more romantic.'

'I've got sand up my ass. I'm sat on top of you because I'm too fat for any other position. It'll take more than the fucking moon to make this romantic.'

'Your idea.'

She stands buttoning the gusset of her all in one swimsuit back together.

'C' mon. Let's get back to the hotel. This sands every fucking where.'

Standing I pull my shorts up and take her hand. 'We'll just have a romantic stroll,' I say.

'I feel like a fucking elephant. What time we flying tomorrow?'

'Early. It's only about an hour flight from Koh Samui to Bangkok. Are you sure you want to meet Thip?'

'Yeah. I've helped look after her daughters for the last three years. I want to meet her.'

I hold Jo's hand as we cut through traffic in a tut-tut. Her nails are freshly painted, hair done up with a full face of make-up. A red dress amplifies the curve of her stomach. A pair of red stilettos sits by her bare feet.

'You didn't have to put all that on. It's only a Bangkok bar.'

'She knows we're coming, she'll do the same.'

'I doubt it.'

Pulling up Thip's dressed up to the hilt. What is the matter with women? Taking Joanne's hand she slips her shoes on, she daintily steps out of the vehicle and takes a stool. Thip comes over clasping both her hands around one of hers. I sit next to her.

'Joanne,' says Thip. 'I finally meet you. Thanks for looking after daughters.'

'My pleasure.'

'I can't believe they at university in England.'

'They're straight A students, they'll breeze through.'

'They love baby Lisa.'

'I know. They'll have another brother or sister soon.'

'When due?'

'Two months. This'll be the last holiday for a long time. We'll have our hands full back home.'

A man walks into the bar and puts his arm around Thip's waist.

'This Peter,' says Thip.

He holds his hand out to Jo. 'Nice to meet you,' he says in an English accent.

'He's gorgeous,' says Jo. 'Look at those muscles. Give me a kiss on the cheek. Don't be shy.'

Fucking free loader. Not another washed up sex tourist. I thought Hippies died out in the fucking sixties.

'On holiday?' I ask.

'No. I'm a translator for the British Embassy. Deal with any British criminal convictions over here. Got my law degree back in England. Came over here ten years ago,' he says shaking my hand.

'Oh,' I say. 'Nice to meet you Peter.'

'So Peter,' says Joanne sitting on my lap. 'What made you come to live in Thailand?'

'Laid back life. I find England too much.'

'You been with Thip long?' I ask.

'Two years.'

'Molly and Polly have never mentioned you. They come here twice a year on holiday,' I say.

'They know Dan,' says Thip. 'They not talk to you about my private life.'

'So Thip,' says Joanne. 'When are you going to visit England?'

'Soon. I want see girls at university. Peter come with me.'

'Stay at our house,' says Jo.

'Thanks. I like that.'

'So what do you plan to do for the rest of your stay?' asks Peter.

'Just tourist things,' I say. 'We've only got three days left. Then back to reality.'

Thip looks to her left, puts her hands together and bows her head. Following her glance a monk in a black robe is sat on a bar stool. Thip fetches him a whiskey. He whispers in her ear. She comes back over.

'Dan he want speak with you.'

'Does he. I've got nothing to say to him.'

'Dan please. It must be important.'

'No.'

'Dan go,' says Joanne getting off my lap. 'These people are very religious. Not like us.'

Show some respect.'

'For fuck sake,' I say getting up and sitting next to him.

He faces the bar sipping his whiskey.

'What the fuck do you want?'

He silently carries on sipping. His head turns. Two glossy black eyes draw me in. He gives me a half-smile. 'In my mind I've killed you. That's all I allowed to do. Someone else have that honour.'

'Look mate. What the fuck do you want?'

He produces a gold locket with a broken chain from his robe pocket.

'You have to give this someone. Lady you know get married. You meet person on that day.'

'Will I. It all seems a bit silly to me. Who is it?'

'You find out soon enough,' he says finishing his drink.

'Is that all?' I ask.

'Your wife carry child.'

'It's either that or she's swallowed a fucking whole pig.'

'Twisted child is ugly. If not live... Other one take place.'

'What the fuck are you going on about?'

He smiles leaving with the swish of his black robe.

Looking at the locket I pick it up and try to open it, it's stuck solid. What the fuck was that all about?

Putting it in my shorts pocket I go back to Jo.

'What did he want?' asks Jo.

'Last time I was here I hit him. He wanted to know if I'd do it again. I said no.'

'Is that all he ask?' says Thip.

'Yeah. Nothing else. Hang on. He said twisted child is ugly,' I say knowing the locket will bring up a lot superstitious nonsense.

'Joanne,' says Thip. 'Child in trouble. I take you hospital.'

'The pregnancy's fine. I had a check up last week.'

'Baby move. I think it got cord round neck.'

'I really enjoyed that holiday,' says Jo sat with me in the back of a taxi.

'We needed it.'

'How did that monk know about the baby?'

'I've got no idea.'

'If it wasn't for him...'

'I know Jo. But it's fine now.'

As we pull up to George's old house, two security guards are by the front gate. They stop



the car and one of them peers through the side window. He nods to the other one and he opens the gate.

‘What’s going on?’ says Jo.

‘I don’t know, but it doesn’t look good.’

Pulling up outside the house Jo goes inside while I get the suitcases. Dragging them across the gravel Lucy comes to the front door.

‘You fucking idiot,’ she says.

‘Morning to you as well.’

‘Leave those cases outside and get in here.’

Following her across the marble we go into the front room. Jo’s sat next to her father with Lisa on her lap.

‘Papa,’ shouts Lisa.

‘Hi sweetheart.’

‘Go and play with Tucker in the hallway for a minute Lisa,’ says Joanne.

‘OK Mummy.’

‘Dan,’ says George looking up at me. ‘We’ve lost everything.’

‘Lost what?’

‘Tenco Steel was a front. It was a money laundering operation.’

‘It can’t be. I did all the checks. We’ve been with them three and a half years.’

‘You weren’t thorough enough.’

‘Too busy with your cock up Maria Yara to do a proper job. By the way she’s been arrested. She’s a high class prostitute,’ says Lucy.

‘I don’t believe any of this,’ I say.

‘The money in the accounts over here has been frozen,’ says George. ‘It’s Afghan heroin profits. The people involved will come looking for it sooner or later.’

‘How does it leave the business?’

‘There is no business. No one’s going to deal with us any more. The serious fraud squad will take us to court and fine us as much as they want. Enough that you and I are penniless. All assets will go to.’

‘They can’t.’

‘They can. The government’s skint. You’ll do time as well Dan. I’ve spoken to my solicitors. The serious fraud squad will interview you Monday.’

‘I’ll find a way around it.’

‘How?’ Says Lucy. ‘There isn’t a way. You’ve ruined him.’

‘Let me get Rose’s wedding out the way tomorrow, and I’ll find out what actually has gone on.’

‘Dan,’ says George with his palm on his forehead. ‘It’s over.’

## Chapter 19

Rose's wedding: She smiles at me, I kiss her cheek. The snow white ruffles of her dress nearly cover the whole of the back seat. 'If you're not sure we can cancel it,' I say.

'I love Peter... It was nearly you.'

'I know. You've got your soul mate, I've got mine.'

She leans over putting her arms around me and rests her head on my chest.

'Will we always remain friends Dan?'

'Of course. Does Peter do the same things to you I used to?'

'I'm not going to answer that.'

The driver's eyes look at us in his rear view mirror.

'I'd like a memento to remember this day Rose.'

'Anything you like Dan. You paid for it all.'

'How about those knickers you're wearing.'

She smiles. 'Control yourself.'

Driving up the church driveway, Molly and Polly wait at the stone pillar entrance. Rose sits back up. She puts her hand up the ruffles of her dress.

'I was only joking,' I say.

She pulls her flimsy briefs down her legs and over her shoes and holds her white thong up in front of my face. 'Here you are.'

'What's Peter going to rip off tonight?'

'Saves him a job.'

'Give them here. Molly and Polly will see in a minute,' I say putting them in my pocket.

The driver coughs.

'I'm not her father,' I say.

'Well thank God for that,' he says.

'Ready Rose?'

'Let's do this.'

Joanne's bare feet pound across the grass, her reddened face has streaks of tears.

'She's gone Dan. Lisa's gone.'

'Where Jo?'

'She wanted to go to the toilet on her own. I went in the cubicle next to her. I finished and

she was gone.'

The two bottles of alcohol drop from my hands. My mobile vibrates in my pocket. I put it to my ear.

'Call the police she's dead. I'll phone you back in a couple of hours,' says a male.

'Rose get Molly and Polly,' I say.

Back at our house Joanne sits sobbing on the sofa opposite me, her face in her hands. Molly and Polly sit beside her in their purple bridesmaid dresses holding large curved knives. My phone rests on top of my thigh. We sit here silent just waiting for the phone to buzz.

'Girls stay calm. We do it my way. If you blaze into the situation Lisa could be harmed.'

'You better get fucking right,' says Molly tapping the knife in her hand.

The phone goes. 'Yes,' I say.

'Meet me at the red barn with the blue roof. We've got something to discuss,' he says.

'I'll be there. Don't hurt her.'

The faded red barn with the blue roof stands in front of me. My nightmare is back again. Pushing the door open he's at the back, stood in front of a bale of straw.

'Nice of you to make the effort,' he says.

'Where is she Shaun?'

'In good time. I was released three months ago. Been watching you all that time. Waited for my chance.'

'Why Shaun? What about Charlotte and your kids?'

'Charlotte. The lovely faithful Charlotte. Prison life didn't suit her. The thought of her children being raped in a children's home was too much. It's surprising what a shard of glass and twelve hours to play with it can do to someone. That's how long they said it took her to die at her post mortem. She didn't rush.'

'Sorry Shaun. I didn't know. But your kids Shaun?'

'The authorities take a dim view on child killers having access.'

'Lisa's innocent. She's done nothing to you.'

'Her father has. Had me raped. All you had to do was two years. Charlotte would still be here. I would be with her, with my children.'

'Where is she?'

He moves away from the bale. A sheet covers a child. It's still.

'You've killed her.'

He smiles. 'I've done it before. In this exact same spot.'

I run towards him. He does the same. My fist swings, I miss. A knife plunges into my gut. We fall to the ground. He's on top of me, he twists the knife around, it's serrated edge splitting

my organs. I feel them burst, spraying against my stomach wall. I feel no pain. He pulls it out, the saw-toothed blade guts me further, the notches opening it's entrance to allow an outpouring of my black insides. Deep purple with small black lumps eases over my white shirt at the speed of pouring honey. His eyes grin. I can't hold him, he puts the tip of the blade under my breast bone, it's smooth insertion makes no sound. The fatal blow. He smiles down at me, his work done.

A flash of curved steel hits the side of his cheek, ribbons of flesh fall, like flaps of sliced ham as Polly uses it's razor edge with an expert's touch. He puts his hand up. Polly takes it cleanly off. She kicks him off of me, she stands over him. I can't speak. I feel my stomach filling. She bends down and runs the blade over his throat. Throwing her knife on the ground she kneels at the back of my head lifting it up.

'Papa. Not move. Not speak.'

Molly comes running in. She looks at me, then looks at Rix. Her knife spins through the air, plunging into Rix's chest. 'Mother fucker,' she says kneeling by Polly.

'Papa you dying,' she says.

That girl really needs to stop doing that. I can't speak. My stomach's full. A rich sweet flavour tickles my throat.

'Die easy Papa,' says Molly. 'Don't fight.'

Joanne's face looks down at me. She's holding Lisa, Lisa's face smiles. Lisa's alive. I feel the warmth of a tear slide down my cheek. Thick blood fills my mouth, it expands my cheeks as I try to keep it in. I can't. I don't want Lisa to see. It spills over my chin in a slick of dark-red. The colour only seen when death is approaching.

Lisa smiles, she raises her hand, moving her little fingers up and down. 'Bye Daddy,' she says.

All their faces start to fade. They turn to shadows. It's time. Darkness covers my eyes.

## Chapter 20

Standing on the edge of a blazing cornfield, the red barn with the blue roof sits there in its majestic glory. I can see a figure in the distance to my right. The barn seems to pull me. Walking through the field the sun soaks into my back. The sky's an electric blue. The air's silent. Reaching the door it opens for me. A young boy sits on a straw bale. His glossy light-brown eyes look up at me, he smiles and his cheeks produce dimples.

'At last Dan,' he says. 'I've nearly met you a couple of times.'

'Tim?' I say.

'You've come for me at last,' he says putting his arms out.

Picking him up he rests his head on my shoulder. 'What now?' I ask.

'Take me to mum.'

Walking out the barn, I walk towards the figure in the distance. Her brown eyes light the whole place up, her smile produces dimples as well. I hand him over. She kisses his forehead.

The golden locket in my pocket opens. I take it out and look at its pictures. It's the two people in front of me.

'I think this belongs to you,' I say.

She takes it from me. 'I left it to Jake Watley after my passing.'

'How long have you waited?' I ask.

'Too long. Tim couldn't be released until the person that took his life was no longer alive. The place you're stood in is a halfway house. Mine isn't.'

'I've nearly come here a couple of times.'

'Yes. You would of kept Tim company until Shaun Rix had passed.'

'Why did I have to bring him to you?'

'You were the first to arrive after Shaun's death that knew Tim. He can't come to me on his own. He doesn't know the way, and I can't leave this place.'

'Can I watch my own children grow up from here?'

'Yes.'

My book has come to an end. I thought I had a lot more chapters to go. But no. There were a lot of dark pages, mixed with some sticky sweet ones. You could really say my life was a mixture of bad grammar. Unrealistic plot lines. The ability to tell people and not show, and at times lacked a lot of maturity with the prose that would make a dead man's toes curl. But then my life was never perfect.

'I suppose we better go,' I say.  
'No Dan,' she says.

THE END

Comments about this book, good or bad would be greatly appreciated. Email me at [sjhowe66.soh50@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sjhowe66.soh50@yahoo.co.uk)

Thank you for taking your time to read this book.