

Everything to Nothing

A novel by Mark Henthorne.

Sequel coming soon!

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Chapter 12

Sally slept fitfully that Friday night. Although what sleep she did have was dreamless, she awoke often and one of two images were always there when she awoke.

The first image she saw was the man, the second was always David. When she tried to get back to sleep she focused all her mind on the image of David and desperately tried to force out the image of the man.

After waking up for what felt like the one hundredth time during the night, Sally gave up with sleep at about six in the morning. It was pitch black outside but she still decided to go for a run, then a swim and hopefully catch her father at breakfast before he went to work.

At first she could not believe that she was going back out into the dark after all that happened to her during the last night. She flicked on the bedroom light and she rummaged in a chest of drawers for her running shoes and sport clothes to wear. She slipped the clothes on, not bothering with underwear, and tied her shoes tight. She heard a noise outside her door and guessed it was one of the maids.

Sally quickly decided that she did not want to see anyone so she walked over to the French windows, thrust them open, and stepped out onto the balcony. She sucked in the crisp, clean night air and she was surprised about how mild it was for the time of year.

Her balcony faced east and she could see the first hint of dawn just touching the horizon, but she knew that full sunrise was still at least an hour away. Sally continued sucking in the fresh air as she did some light stretching of her legs.

She then closed her eyes and purposefully brought the image of the man to the front of her mind and then she said out loud, 'I will not let you affect my life! I will sleep at night, I will not be afraid of the dark!'

With that she sprung over the balcony wall and gracefully fell the ten feet to the lawn below. She landed with her knees bent and instantly started to jog. She jogged for a minute and then sprinted for thirty seconds. As she was running along the lawn she sidestepped bushes and trees, occasionally leaping over the smaller bushes which appeared out of the early morning gloom in a classic hurdlers pose.

After about five minutes running, the lawn ran out and she entered woodland. There was a path through the trees that she followed until it finished against the estate's internal wall after another five minutes of hard running. The path split into two at the estate's furthest wall and Sally took the left hand path.

Here, amongst the trees and firmly against the estate's inner wall it was practically pitch black. However, the darkness did not slow her repetitions of sprints and jogs, nor did it slow her overall pace. Every kink and turn in the path was second nature to her after living on the estate all her life.

When she reached a particularly thick patch of trees she stopped where she would normally have never stopped and closed her eyes. She was not out of breath at all, her breathing was normal, even though she has been running hard and fast for fifteen minutes. As she closed her eyes she again brought the image

of the man to the forefront of her mind. She stood there in the pitch dark with this image in front of her for five minutes.

At first she panicked and her breathing did build up, but then she thought of David and this calmed her. Then she was able to focus all her attention on the image of the man. After a few more minutes she opened her eyes and was comfortable that she had managed to already rid herself of the man's presence over her. She was proud of her own strength of mind and will-power to not let this, what she thought of as a pathetic attack, affect her.

Closing her eyes one more time, and just for fun, she brought the image of David to the front of her mind, only this time he was the image of what she imagined he looked like naked. She chuckled to herself, at her own boldness and then muttered to herself, 'Back to work young lady!' and she resumed her run.

Sally followed the wall right round the estate, noting as she jogged past the front of the mansion that her father's bedroom light was on. She kept on going, round the west side of the mansion until she came back to the original path through the trees that led back to the lawn. She turned left onto it, however, this time she sprinted as hard as she could back along the path, over the lawn, again leaping over some of the bushes, until she reached the landing place below her balcony. This time Sally was out of breath and she bent over with her head between her long legs sucking in mouthfuls of air. She remained in this position for about thirty seconds until her breathing returned to normal and then she lightly jogged around the east side of the mansion to the rear.

As she approached a rear door she caught the aroma of a cooking breakfast, a smell she loved and the memory it brought of a mother hardly known.

She entered the kitchen and quickly but silently made her way through it, desperately hoping that none of the kitchen staff spotted her as she did not want to speak to anyone. Thankfully, they all had their backs turned and she managed to get through unnoticed. Sally exited the kitchen and walked along a long corridor to the end where there was another door and she quietly exited the servants' quarters.

Instantly the décor changed and it became more opulent. Instead of tip-toeing along thin carpet she was now tip-toeing along marble, instead of single burning lights in simple light shades, there were numerous chandeliers burning many lights. Sally, of course used to such opulence, did not even notice this most impressive inner hall.

Instead she continued to tip-toe across it until she reached double glass doors which she quietly opened. As she stepped through them she entered a passageway, on her right side a marble wall, on her left marble columns, beyond which lay a large, deep swimming pool.

She walked next to the columns looking at the crystal clear water and the slight layer of steam that hovered over the pool, until she reached a door with the usual symbol on it that indicates a female changing room. She entered through this door and instantly the sensors detected her. Automatically the lights came on and she made her way over to large, ornately designed wardrobe.

Inside, on a shelf, were a bikini and a large, thick luxurious towel that were always prepared for her. She took the towel out and draped it over a towel heater

that she then switched on. Sally changed into her bikini quickly, just dumping her running gear on the floor, and stepped into one of the five shower cubicles where she rinsed off the sweat from her run. She stayed there only for a few moments, and then she went back to the pool and started her swim with an elegant full length dive that made hardly a ripple.

Her front crawl technique had been drilled into her from a young age and it was near enough perfect. She used this technique to quickly do twenty five lengths, after which she switched to breast stroke for another twenty five. After this, she threw technique to the wind and hammered out ten fast, powerful, front crawl lengths, which left her gasping for breath at the end.

Knowing that breakfast would be served in the bright, informal breakfast room promptly at eight o'clock, she had plenty of time for a long hot shower. While she was in the shower, to the casual observer, she appeared to be fondling and stroking her breasts. However, concerned that breast cancer may run in her family, ever since she had developed them, she had been checking them.

Usually she would start by looking in the mirror, but today she changed her routine and did the usual last step while she was in the shower. When she had finished though, she made a point of standing in front of the mirror and examining them with her arms by her side, also with her arms raised. She also checked her nipples by squeezing them, as she had read was the right thing to do, looking for any kind of unusual discharge. There were exquisite carved benches all round the changing room with thick padding on them, so she lowered herself down onto one of them and continued to examine herself while she was lying down.

Sally heaved a huge sigh or relief as she sat up, thankful that she had not found anything worrying in her examination. She had noted that it was best to do a full breast examination at least once a month, so she made a point of doing it on the first of the month after her daily swim. It was not the first of the month, and she cursed herself for not sticking to her routine. Also, she knew she had been a bit naughty doing the steps out of turn, but all she was thankful for was that there was nothing out of the ordinary. It was also coming up to the time of her regular check at the doctors of which her father insisted she partake in.

She had not decided whether to go for a genetic test yet. It was something that she was giving a lot of thought to, but she was worried about how it may change her life if it turned out that she had inherited an abnormal gene from her mother. Her thoughts now lingered on the beautiful lady who she knew so briefly yet desperately wanted to know more. She had left Sally and her father when Sally was young, devastating both of them. Her father became a recluse, not holding an audience with anyone, running his business empire from the end of a phone or through emails. However, without his steadying hand being always present the whole of his empire nearly came crashing down. It took a brave young director to barge his uninvited way into her father's office in the mansion and laid it all down for him in black and white that the company was going down. With her father's strong hand returned to the helm of the company, it went from strength to strength.

Sally loved her father so, so much, but he had never quite filled the void that

a lost mother does. He ensured that she was sent to the best schools that money could buy, given the best tutorship that money could buy in everything that Sally fancied doing from one week to the next.

When she wanted piano lessons, he employed a world renowned concert pianist to come and teach her. When she announced that she wanted a pony, he invested in a full stable set up for her, with an Olympic gold medallist show jumper to teach her. The gold medallist did not last long with the spoilt little brat as he described her when he told Sally's father that he refused to teach her anymore until she developed some manners.

These words struck home with her father, especially considering that she was eleven at the time. The first time he remembered these words and actually said no to her it created a little bit of commotion. Well, not exactly a little bit, more like a small, yet potent hurricane had hit the mansion.

The sobbing, the tears, the tantrums were a sight to behold and lasted for a week or so. Ever since then she had been expected to work and earn her treats. Her Mini was paid for out of her own money that had she earned when she worked for her father during a summer. He still brought her presents now and then. Most of her attire was straight off the catwalk and he made sure no expense was spared when sending out one of his secretaries to get his daughter a little something during one of his many business trips overseas. The little somethings usually equalled at least a month's pay of the aforementioned secretaries, sometimes two or three months. Sally knew that she had been spoiled as a child, and that she was still treated like a little princess by her daddy. She sometimes wondered if her life would have been any different if her mother had still been alive to see her grow up.

Now she had to confront him about her eventful night and her trashed car, a chore she was not looking forward to. She knew that his reaction would be for personal bodyguards to be assigned to Sally and this worried her because she hated being followed by the guards everywhere she went.

Opening the ornate wardrobe when she was fully dry, Sally took out a silk robe in a Japanese style, draped and fastened it around her amazing body. Not giving another thought to the clothes and towel on the floor, knowing that somebody would tidy up behind her, she left the changing room and quietly and quickly made her way back to her bedroom.

Here she started to change into horse riding gear, and while she was doing so she glanced at the gold carriage clock on the mantelpiece and realized that she had enough time to check her emails before she went to breakfast. Switching on the computer in the corner of her room, she continued to get ready while it was booting up.

The top of the range computer started quickly and it automatically connected to the internet. When she was ready, Sally checked her email account, and also the B.B.C. website to keep in touch with current affairs. Nothing was happening on either website, no interesting emails or interesting stories. She did note, however, that her father's rugby league team that he owned had won last night which should hopefully put him in a good mood. She was meant to have accompanied him to the game last night, but she could not stand going there.

She loved the sport, the excitement and thrills and big hits made football look like the most boring sport in the whole wide world, but she hated the players who were always making hits on her, trying desperately to get her into bed. The football players were even worse. Always flashing their money around, inviting her out for drives in their Ferraris and not seeming to realize that her father paid their wages and that if she wanted to, with a sly word in her father's ear she could end their careers.

Aimlessly she continued to flick through the pages on the B.B.C., noting on the technology pages that one of her father's subsidiary companies was due to release a new MP3 player that was apparently, for the price, the best on the market. She was halfway through the article when the grandfather clock at the end of the hallway outside her room started to chime eight, so quickly Sally flicked off the monitor and made her way back downstairs to the sumptuous breakfast room.

She always briefly stopped and looked out of the window at the view every time she stepped into this room through the double doors. Out of the huge French windows was a large balcony, on which, in one corner, stood a Jacuzzi. Beyond the balcony were the large front lawns and also the driveway which ran along the side of a lake. Past the end of the lake the road disappeared into a coppice of trees towards the imposing wall and enormous gates of the estate.

At this time of the morning, there was still a light mist over the lake giving it an eerie appearance. The island that her mother loved, and where her body rested, was peaking faintly through the mist adding to the eeriness.

Her father was already at the table helping himself to some toast. When he saw that it was his daughter who had come through the doors he leaped to his feet, his face beaming. 'Now then young lady, to what do I owe this pleasure?' he said as he made his way across the thick carpet to greet her. 'Saturday morning and you are up?'

'Not exactly daddy, no.' She leaned forward offering a cheek to accept his offered kiss. 'Couldn't sleep and I haven't seen you all week.'

He took a step back from her, holding her shoulders in his hands, studying her face. 'You haven't slept at all have you? I can tell. Was that you I saw scampering through the trees this morning at some silly hour?'

'Yes, it was.'

'Crikey! Must be serious if you are well and truly up before me, especially on a Saturday! Come, sit down, eat and tell me about it.'

Sally made her way at her father's side to the breakfast table and sat down in a seat next to him.

'Have some toast while it is still hot.' He picked up a little hand bell and rang it. Instantly, from a side door a servant appeared. 'More tea and coffee please, an unexpected guest.'

'Yes Mr. Gallagher.'

'How's the toast?'

'It's good thanks.'

'Now, why don't you tell me what has happened that has made you go for a run before sun-up?'

‘Well, you know the road off the B5671? The short cut to town?’

‘Yes, of course, goes under the bridge.’

‘I was driving along it last night and the car...’

It was only then that Sally noticed the telephone that was resting next to her father’s hand as it started ringing. She of course knew that breakfast was the only time in the day that her father refused to be interrupted. You had more chance of phoning and being able to speak to him at three in the morning than at breakfast. If the phone was by his side then she knew that something big was happening.

‘So sorry darling, hold that thought.’ He picked up the phone and it was only a short conversation. ‘This had better be good Andrew, I’m at breakfast.’

Sally of course could not hear what Andrew was saying, but from the look of his face turning to thunder it was not good news. After a few moments the conversation ended with her father saying, ‘Right, give me twenty-five minutes,’ and with that he slammed the phone down. He instantly picked it back up and pressed two numbers. He had to wait only a split second before it was answered. ‘Ray, get the Ferrari out. Get me to the office in twenty-five, no, twenty minutes,’ and he slammed the phone down again.

For a moment Sally did not say anything, she let her father have his thinking time. She could tell from the slightly vacant stare that he was probably doing either complex mental arithmetic or working out how to make himself another billion pounds in ten seconds. She had learned the harsh truth the hard way of what happens when anyone interrupts him during this thinking. After a few more moments she saw her father seem to come back online as he liked to call it and he looked across at her and shot her another beaming smile. ‘Needless to say, something has come up.’

‘It’s okay daddy. We can talk another time.’

‘Flamin’ solicitors! They cost me a fortune and always make bloody mistakes!’

‘The acquisition not going smoothly then?’

‘It was until last night. Flamin, bloody solicitors. Anyway,’ he leaned forward and gave her another kiss on the cheek, ‘have to fly,’ and he stood up and started to make his way to the double doors.

‘Try and make sure that Ray gets you there in one piece,’ Sally called after him.

‘He will. He is the best driver in the country.’

‘I hope so. Good luck and see you later daddy.’

He turned briefly and shot her another smile. ‘You certainly will. We’ll finish our talk later, definitely.’

‘I hope so.’

He opened one of the double doors and stepped through it and quietly closed it behind him. A few minutes later Sally heard the roar of the Ferrari so she turned to watch it as it raced towards the gates of the estate. Although the office was thirty miles away in the heart of the nearby city, she knew that her father would be there in twenty minutes.

Sally continued to work her way through the breakfast that kept on being put

in front of her; cereal, full English breakfast and then fruit to finish. She knew that there was more chance of her flying to the moon today than finishing her conversation with her father. Another problem with having a very successful business man as a father was that it was extremely difficult to get his attention for more than a couple of minutes without something interrupting him. In a way she was glad as her father would probably over react to the prior nights occurrences and refuse to let her out without some kind of security being with her.

Eventually she finished the breakfast and stood up. She looked down at how she was dressed and remembered that it was her original intention to go riding. Now she did not feel like it. Instead she picked up the phone and dialled two numbers and instantly Alfred answered. 'Hello?'

'Alfred, it's me.'

'Good morning. How are you today?'

'I'm fine. Can you do me a big favour?'

'Of course, anything at all.'

'Don't tell my father though, promise?'

'Of course.'

'Can you run me into town?'

'Of course, but where is the Mini? Nobody heard or saw you come in last night. We were most worried.'

'Yes, I know. I sneaked in. I didn't want to see anyone. Security knew I was home though; they drove me in from the gates. That is what I don't want you to tell my father, the fact that I wasn't in the Mini.'

Sally had made the police drop her off away from the gates so the security guards did not see the police car. They definitely and would have been obliged to tell her father if they had seen the police.

'Not a problem my dear. I'm sure you have your reasons. Shall we take the Rolls-Royce?'

'Yes, that will be fine.'

'Say, ten minutes outside the main entrance?'

'Better make it twenty, I need to get changed.'

'Not a problem my dear. I will be waiting for you.'

'Thank you, Alfred.'

Sally replaced the phone onto its holder and made her way back to her bedroom and got changed. She had decided that she needed some shopping therapy and while it was early there would be no crowds.

After changing quickly into Armani everything; jeans, shirt and pullover with Nike trainers, she made her way to the main entrance and exited the mansion. As promised, Alfred was there behind the wheel of the quarter of a million pounds car, and Sally entered the rear of the vehicle.

Without a word between them, Alfred proceeded at a stately pace to the gates of the estate than her father's driver had done, and then turned onto the road that would take them into the town.

During the drive she did not really think of anything, only looked at the familiar countryside as it drifted past her window. As the car made its stately

progress it received lots of envious glances from other drivers, and when Alfred stopped at traffic lights people peered into the rear of the car expecting to see someone famous, looking away disappointed when they realized it was not anyone they recognized.

Sally was used to this. All throughout her life people had been staring into the back of the highly expensive cars her father owned. Once she had asked him why he did not get blacked out windows. His response was that he had worked eighteen to twenty hour days for much of his life; the last thing he was going to do was hide away from his success. Slowly Alfred made his way through the morning traffic and reached their usual drop-off point. 'What time would you like to be picked up dear?'

'I will call you Alfred. I think this is going to be a long one.'

'Oh dear. It must have been a rough night. I'm sure you will tell me what happened in your own time. Take care.'

'I will. Thanks for driving me in.'

'Anytime my dear.'

Sally then shuffled along the seat and exited the car out of the left hand rear door and watched as the Rolls pulled away and moved back into the traffic flow. Most of the people were heading up a street into the main part of town but Sally did not follow them. She took another street which led to the exclusive shopping area which was full of shops like Prada, Gucci and Armani, the kinds of places that the daughter of a billionaire, with one of her bank cards in her purse that magically got paid off at the end of each month, could quite happily spend an unhappy day getting some serious shopping therapy.

What Sally did not realize at that time was the shock she was going to receive in this exclusive part of the town later that same day.

Chapter 13

David also slept fitfully that night, but for a different reason than Sally. Every time he closed his eyes all he could see was her face. That last smile seemed to be imprinted, burned onto his retinas. Whenever he opened his eyes it was as if Sally was stood in front of him the image his mind created of her was so perfect. Eventually he did drift off only to be woken at some time in the early hours by a drunken reveller making their very late way home singing loudly nonsense. David's eyes rested upon one of his many tool boxes and the image of him hurling a wrench through the window and wrapping itself around the singer's neck made him smile and briefly replaced the image of Sally. He resisted the temptation to maim the drunk and instead his brain quickly and annoyingly flicked back to Sally.

'Dum, da, dum, da dum,' he muttered to himself, 'oh when will sleep come?' He contemplated his ramblings for a moment and then said, 'I'm a poet and I don't even know it. Right now I wish I had never met that stupid girl! Who takes their car along that road at that time of the night anyway?!' He closed his eyes but he knew he was wasting his time. 'Ohhh come on now!' again, he spoke out loud, 'I am acting like a twelve year old who has got his first ever crush! She is not that nice!' Again, he contemplated his words and then added, 'Who am I trying to kid?! She is, without question, the most gorgeous woman I have ever laid eyes upon! Right, no point lying here if I am not going to sleep, up you get young man!'

He sprang out of bed and glanced at the clock after which he let out a long groan. 'It is so, so early! What am I going to do?' He thought about his question as he made his way to the toilet and it was while he was there he came up with the idea of going to the garage and making a start on fixing the Mini which he had been intent on doing later that day. David had volunteered to work on Saturday anyway and he would try to make the car better than it was. 'She obviously likes the car,' he stated to himself, 'so what better way to get in her good books than by fixing it?'

Whilst having a quick wash he was thinking about how on earth he was going to fix the car. His thoughts soon stopped though as he remembered the man's bodily fluids and solids that were in the car and he let out a little shudder as he thought about it. Deciding to not come up with any plan until he had arrived at the garage, he returned back to his room and pulled on some overalls along with an old jacket. He then went downstairs into the kitchen and grabbed an apple and a banana, not having anything more substantial for breakfast as his boss always brought the Saturday workers something fatty and filling for their first meal of the day. After putting on his work boots and getting his keys, David exited his house and entered his car. It started with a mighty roar, mainly due to the large muffler attached to the exhaust system rather than having anything to do with the power of his old Ford Fiesta. He expertly reversed the car off the driveway, sped down the street and raced his way to the garage.

While he was driving he had passed the entrance to an estate that he always slowed down to look at when he had time. He could not see anything through

the main gate, but after he turned onto a smaller road that wound up and onto the brow of a hill, it gave him a view over the whole of the estate. He pulled over to the side of the road and munched quietly on the fruit while he thought about the lucky people who lived in such a place. He had no idea who lived there, but he imagined they were of course very rich, with garages full of expensive cars. From this position he viewed the house down on an angle so he could see the front and also one side of the expansive mansion. Surprised, he noted that one of the windows was showing a light. 'Didn't think people that rich would have to get up this early!' he commented to himself out loud. Shaking his head in bewilderment as to how anybody could be that rich and still have to get up at six in the morning, he started the car again and continued his drive to the garage.

David arrived at his place of work not too long after his viewing of the estate. He parked round the back, tucking his car out of the way in a corner of the courtyard. Briefly he went up to the office, rearranged the furniture to how it was and washed the cups so no questions would be asked as to who he had had in the office. After flicking a switch that turned on the lights in courtyard he left the office and went down to the truck that was carrying Sally's car. He switched the truck on and then lowered the ramps at the rear of the truck. Pressing some buttons on the side of the truck released the cables that were attached to the car and it slowly rolled back. When the car was fully off the vehicle David unattached the cables and then moved the truck away to its appropriate parking space. He then returned to the car and studied it.

First of all he realized that he would have to face the gross task of cleaning the inside. He returned to the office and rooted around in there until he found some gloves. Also, he filled up a bucket of water adding lots of soap, grabbed some old rags along with a few copies of a newspaper. Going back to the car he pulled on the gloves and laid out one of the newspapers open on the tarmac yard. He then flung open the driver's door and simply scooped up the faeces in his hands and dumped it on one of the papers. He wrapped up the paper and coolly walked over to a skip and threw it all in it. It was only then that he let himself feel a little nauseous but he quickly shoved that aside as he returned to the car to remove the fluid that was around the steering wheel and which had also dripped onto the floor of the car. Taking one of the rags that had been soaking in the soapy water, he wiped away all the 'egg white' and when it was all removed he calmly again walked over to the skip and threw away the rag. Nausea again threatened to overwhelm him but after a few moments he composed himself and started to feel happy now that the gruesome task was out of the way.

Returning to the car he started to scrub the driver's seat trying to get rid of all traces of the excreta. As he worked he pressed the power button on the radio and was happy when it came to life. Humming and sometimes singing along to a popular love song, while the song was reaching its end he thought and thought of the previous night, how beautiful she looked considering the horrendous night she was having, considering how wet and bedraggled she was. He was sure that he would see her again, but he knew that last night they had shared some moments that would hopefully stay with them for a life time.

As the song changed, he resumed his scrubbing and slowly the stain faded.

When he was happy with the interior of the car he sat in the driver's seat, not minding the wetness, and tried to start the car. The key was turned three times until, with a cough and a splutter, the dried out engine caught. 'Yes! They don't make them like they used to! Can't believe it started!'

David closed the door and took the Mini for a quick spin around the yard, loving the wind blowing into his face through the window frame. He did a couple of handbrake turns, enjoying the handling of the Mini, and then he stopped outside one of the doors to the garages, wiping the wind-tears out of the corners of his eyes with a big grin on his face. 'They really don't make them like they used to!' he exclaimed again.

Stepping out of the car he opened the garage and then returned to the vehicle and carefully rolled it in. Inside was everything a person needed for the removal of dents, however, this was definitely not one of his strong points. 'Give me an engine to dismantle any day off the week,' he muttered to himself. However, he got to work, not listening to the radio because he was worried about the power of the battery, and removed the dents as best he could.

David continued working until he heard voices in the yard. He stopped what he was doing and stepped into the enclosure and sucked in the crisp, clean morning air. It was dark when he had entered the garage and now he was glad to see it looked like being a glorious day. Two of his work colleagues came across and he told them how he managed to acquire another broken car since they had left the previous evening. The only thing he did not tell them was a description of Sally. He wanted to keep that image to himself.

Leaving the Mini for the time being, David had to carry on with the garage's work. Around 11am his boss arrived bringing bacon, sausage and fried egg sandwiches with him for his workers. They broke off their respective tasks and sat on chairs in one corner of the yard, ate their sandwiches, and talked man talk. David's two colleagues had been out the night before and they talked about their successes with the women, the copious amount of beer they had consumed and they fight they had been involved in. David listened and laughed along, but when he asked how much money they had spent he inwardly winced. Going out, getting outrageously drunk and fighting was something that had never interested him. He had always thought that instead of drinking all his money away he would save it and spend it on something worthwhile. He was interested in the women side of their stories though.

Knowing he was not academically gifted, David finished his education at the age of sixteen, knowing it was pointless to even try and attempt a college course. Mechanics was something that had always interested him, and he obtained an apprenticeship at this time. Due to him saving and rarely going out, along with his male dominated profession he hardly met any women never mind stunningly beautiful women like Sally. Therefore, all his thoughts, as he feigned interest in his work colleagues' stories, was to make sure that he did all he could to impress Sally and make her want to be with him.

Eventually, long after David was beyond bored with their success stories, his boss came across and shoed them all back to work. With some more overtime under their belts and the work done, his manager dismissed them all, but David

said that he was going to stay. His boss had noted the Mini in one of the garages but had not commented upon it until now. 'Where did we acquire that Mini from?'

'It is a friend's. She broke down last night. I picked it up. Been doing some work on it.'

'Is she paying?'

'No, I'm doing it for free in my own time.'

'What about the equipment costs?'

'Take them out of my pay.'

'You did say "she" yeah?' David nodded. 'She must be special if you are spending money on her. Tighter than cramp you are!' To this his colleagues laughed and David joined in with a pretend laugh. 'In that case you had better get to it. Are you removing dents?' David nodded again. 'Oh to be a fly on the wall! Not exactly your forte is it?' This gained another laugh from them all, but David did not join in this time. 'Come on then boys, beers on me at The Oak! Let's leave this da Vinci of the mechanical world to his creation, or should that be destruction?!'

With another laugh they left a forlorn looking David stood alone in the courtyard, walked to the boss's car and left him alone to his destructive creation.

He started to feel down as soon as they had left; he always did whenever he was the butt of their jokes, which was quite often. Just because he was different and did not believe in spending vast amounts of cash on nights out, pissing and vomiting out the purchases of the money, he was frequently made fun of by his colleagues. This time though, it did not last for long him being down. This time he was here working, not for the money, for something one hundred, a thousand, a million times more important than money, he was working for the heart of Sally.

*

David worked and worked for the rest of the afternoon on the Mini. He painstakingly removed the dents to the best of his ability, and he was busily finishing a paint touch up when his mobile rang. He looked at the caller identification on the screen and saw it was Simon. He did not really want to speak to him but he thought it would be rude not to. Simon had had a date last night and David supposed he wanted to gloat another success story to him. He pressed the green button on his old, battered Nokia and answered the call.

'Alright Dee. Where are you?'

'Bloody hell Simon! Dee is short for Diane! How many times do I have to tell you?'

'Don't be soft and answer the question!'

'I am at work.'

'At this time on a Saturday? You're usually done by now aren't you?'

'Yeah, I am. Doing some extra work.'

'Some extra, extra, extra work more like. When will you be done?'

'Don't know, hopefully soon. I'm knackered. How was your date?'

‘She didn’t turn up the bitch!’

‘She didn’t? Shame, she sounded good.’

‘Good? Good?! A sweeping understatement there matie! Stunning more like.’

‘Funny, I met a Sally last night.’

‘Did you? Where?’

‘She brought a car to the garage late on,’ said David, slightly twisting the truth. ‘Not your Sally though, this Sally had black hair and blue eyes. Yours has blonde and green doesn’t she?’

David again twisted the truth a little. Although Sally did have black hair last night, when Simon met her she had blonde, but she definitely had green eyes; he would never forget those eyes. He was inwardly wishing that Simon’s Sally was different from his, but he already knew the truth before he started asking the questions.

‘Yep, indeed she does, although she changes her hair colour a lot, but my Sally has definitely got green eyes. Coincidence,’ stated Simon.

‘Must be. What car does your Sally drive?’

‘Don’t know for sure. Think it is a Mini.’

‘Oh, right, my one had a Focus, must be a coincidence.’

‘Sounds like it. Hey, I do know something though; I met someone amazing last night. Well, I didn’t meet her, I already knew her, just didn’t realize how fantastic she is!’

‘Oh yeah, who?’

‘You won’t know her, someone from college.’

‘Oh, right. What’s her name?’

‘Michelle. Really pretty and a good figure, but man, what a personality!’

‘Not like you to go for personality.’

‘I know! But I think this is the new me! She is wonderful and we are going out on a date next week!’

‘Winner. Good on you.’

‘Cheers matie. Hey, did you hear about Mike?’

‘No, I haven’t spoken to any one today. Why, what has happened to him?’

‘He only got himself banged up!’

‘Banged up? Where?’

‘In the police station, where do you think?! He got out late last night. Have a guess what for?’

‘I don’t know, hitting a police officer with a stick?’

‘No, indecent exposure! He was only walking along with his tackle out and walked straight into the arms of two police officers! You should have seen his face!’

‘Sounds like a right hoot.’

‘Believe me when I say it was! When do you think you will be done then?’

‘Don’t know.’

‘Coming out tonight?’

‘Are you going out again? Where to?’

‘Probably town again.’

‘Nah, I will leave it tonight. I’m broke.’

‘Broke? My arse! The amount of work you do!’

‘I know, but all that goes to savings.’

‘Okey dokey then. See you tomorrow or in the week. Don’t work too hard!’

‘Defo. Have a good one. I won’t. See you.’

‘See you Dee!’

David threw the phone away in disgust onto a pile of tarpaulin sheets in the corner of the garage that broke the phone’s fall. Lots of things were raging through his mind. The first being that the amazing woman he met last night was the same woman that one of his friends was meant to meet for a date! The second, while David was going along with no-one, Simon moved on from someone as stunning as Sally to another girl in the blink of an eye!

It annoyed him a lot that Simon could move on from one to another without giving a serious consideration to the feelings of someone as lovely as Sally. ‘What the hell are you moaning at?! If he has moved on already, and it sounds like he likes this Michelle, then it leaves the road open for you!’ This thought, expressed out loud, put a small smile back on his face. ‘Excellent! Now that you have thought about it rationally instead of getting angry it turns out that there is probably no reason to get angry in the first place!’

David hummed a happy tune as he walked the few steps to retrieve his old phone. It had switched off but he pressed the on button and it flashed back into life. ‘Nokias!’ he again exclaimed out loud. ‘You can do anything, anything to them and they still work! Now to call in some favours!’

Happy that so far he had got the Mini into the best condition that he could, he sat down on the garage floor, leaning his back against one of the walls, and flicked through the phone book on his mobile until he came to the person he wanted to call. He pressed the green button and listened to the ringing until it was answered.

‘Hello?’

‘Hello Brian. It is David from Gladstone Garage. How are you?’

‘Oh, hello Dave, I’m good. And yourself?’

‘Getting by. You still at work?’

‘Yep, just finishing off. What can I help you with?’

‘Remember that big favour you owe me?’

‘You’re joking?! On a Saturday?!’

‘Sorry, I know, but I really need your help.’

‘Go on then. I’m all ears.’ David explained the situation to him, again missing out any word about Sally. ‘And where, exactly, at this time on a Saturday, do you expect me to land my hands on a full set of windows for a Mini?!’

‘Come one Brian, don’t give me that, you are the man are you not?’

‘Bloody hell Dave, I am good but, ah, bloody hell. Give me an hour. We have got a few Minis in the scrap yard but I have no idea what condition the windows are in. Give me an hour and I will call you back and let you know what I can find.’

‘You are the man!’

‘Yeah, I am. Bear this in mind though, this cancels out my favour and puts you in debt to me!’

‘Not a problem. If you can do this then I will do anything you ask of me for all eternity!’

‘I’m sure you will. My wife is going to kill me. Fancy calling me up at this time on a Saturday. Give me an hour.’

‘Sounds good Brian, speak soon.’

Brian did not reply but David could hear him cursing him as he hung up the phone. He chuckled to himself for a few moments until he stood up and decided to put the hour to good use by washing and polishing the car while he had all the equipment there to do the job quickly. He worked until the car was practically sparkling and it was then that he looked at the clock on his phone and saw that Brian had now passed his allotted hour. He was reaching for his mobile when he heard a horn blow. He looked towards the entrance of the garage and there, driving a large flatbed truck with a stack of windows strapped to the back of it, was Brian. He saw David and he trundled the truck over to him where he stopped it and jumped down out of the cab.

‘You are truly a miracle worker!’

‘Tell that to the wife. This is going to result in me getting a call from the solicitors on Monday. She is not a happy camper!’

‘Sorry, but a favour is a favour is it not?’

‘Tell that to the wife! She thinks I am with some fancy woman! Here you are. Seriously, phone her, you’ll find her under “T”.’ He passed David his mobile. ‘Try to resurrect my marriage why I unload the windows.’

David took the phone and pressed the appropriate buttons to find the entry labelled “The wife” in Brian’s phone book. He walked away from Brian and the truck, out of ear shot, and for the first time that day, he told the woman he had met only once the full story. By the end of it she totally understood why he needed her husband’s help so badly. What woman is not touched by a tale of romance and trying to win a lady’s heart?

David swore her to secrecy before he walked back and passed the phone back to Brian. He spoke to her for a few more minutes until he turned to where David waited. ‘I don’t know what the hell you said to her, she wouldn’t tell me, but she was like a little kitten and told me to stay here for as long as I was needed! She’s not spoken to me like that for twenty years!’

‘Oh well, guess I must have a way with the women! Glad she said you can stay as long as you are needed. How are you at fitting windows?’

‘You what?! You want me to help you bloody fit them as well?!’

‘Yeah, that would be nice.’

‘Nice?! I’ll give you bloody nice! This had better be for a good cause!’

‘Trust me, it is.’

‘Who managed to get all their windows smashed on a Mini?!’

‘I can’t tell you, but she is worth it.’

‘She? Well, why didn’t you just say? We’ll have these fitted in no time!’

‘Excellent! Let’s get to it then!’

‘Yes boss!’

David laughed at Brian's joke and together they lifted the rear window and fitted it quickly. They fitted the other windows equally quickly, while laughing and telling each other jokes and amusing stories. Soon they had the windows done and he departed as soon as it was completed back home to his spouse. Later that night, with some pillow talk, Brian got the full story out of his wife about why David so urgently needed the help.

After Brian had gone, David decided that enough was enough and that no matter how hard he tried he could not get the car any better than it was now. He wandered out of the garage into the yard and across to a small flat bed van. Hopping onto the side of it he sat on the edge with his legs hanging over the side and took his phone from his pocket. He flicked through the phone book on his phone until he reached the "Ss". There, at the top was the new addition to his phone book, the new addition to his life. The entry simply read Sally. He took a few deep breaths and pressed the green button. It started ringing.

Chapter 14

Sally spent all morning and afternoon getting some shopping therapy. All the shops recognized her when she entered them and they could tell from her unhappy face that they could make a lot of sales to her that day. She moved up and down the street, going from one exclusive shop to another, trying on shoes, dresses, jeans and every type of clothing that there was.

At lunch time she called Alfred to come and collect her shopping because she could not carry the bags she had accumulated anymore. When she saw the Rolls-Royce depart she got a slight twinge of guilt as she thought about how much money she had just spent. She knew her father could afford it, and she knew that he would happily pay off anything if it made her happy. Sally gave a resigned shrug of the shoulders and for the third time that day she entered a Prada shop to again try on a pair of shoes that had caught her eye.

At around three she decided to have a break so she went to a little coffee shop that she liked and took her usual table in the window. The waiter knew her order and did not ask her. He discreetly got her a cappuccino and a small slice of chocolate cake, leaving the bill on a saucer by her side.

She sat staring at the new apartments across the street that had been erected in the last few months thinking how better it would be if the coffee shop still had a river view. She was lost in her thoughts when she noticed movement at the entrance to the apartment block.

Stood at the door was a young man who she instantly recognized. It was her intention to phone him later that day and she was half out of her seat to go and speak to him until she noticed someone else coming down the flight of stairs. For a moment she froze halfway up while she glared at the young woman leaning affectionately towards the man she was meant to meet for a date last night.

She slumped back into her seat when the man opened his arms and accepted the offered hug, and then she thought that she was going to cry when she saw them engage in a deeply passionate kiss. The kiss lasted to Sally for an eternity and she watched again as her best friend took a step away from him, still holding his hand, and made him laugh with whatever she said to him. He took a step and opened the glass door and again they hugged and kissed while Sally's jaw got more and more clenched, while her knuckles got whiter and whiter as she held the edge of the table top in a fierce grip.

Michelle stepped through the door as Simon held it open and this time it was Simon that had Michelle laughing with some kind of joke. Sally was using all her will power not to run across the street and confront them. Michelle leaned back in and pecked him on the lips and then turned on her toes and walked down the street where she flagged down a taxi. By the time she had stopped watching and glaring at the back of her friend, Simon had returned back upstairs to which ever apartment he had access to.

With a few deep breaths Sally managed to compose herself and relaxed her grip on the table. Leaning back in her chair she could not believe what she had just seen. Her so called best friend kissing her date after obviously spending a

night with him! She spent some minutes trying to calm down but she could not. Sally reached for her hand bag and took out her mobile phone. She phoned her friend.

‘Hi Sally. How are you?’

‘I’m okay. How are you? Good night?’

‘Yeah, it was good.’

‘I bet it was.’

‘Yeah, it was. What happened to you? I saw Simon out with all his friends. Did he not turn up?’

‘No, I’m the one that didn’t turn up. My car broke down.’

‘Oh, okay. I spoke to him. He was wondering what happened to you. Did you not call him?’

‘I couldn’t get a signal where I broke down and by the time I did get one it was too late. Where did you end up? Score with some hottie?’

‘No, unfortunately not! You know me Sally; I was home and tucked up in bed for one.’

‘Were you? Are you sure?’

‘Of course I’m sure.’

‘Oh, okay then.’ Sally paused for a second. ‘Bloody hell Michelle! How long have we known each other for? How long have we been best friends?!’

‘Erm, a long time. Why?’

‘Because I thought that my best friend, someone who I have been friends with all my life would not lie to me!’

‘Erm, I am not lying.’

‘Michelle, I can’t believe you have just said that! The sensible thing to have done was to let me speak and then you would not have had to lie to me about lying.’ There was a long silence between the two friends. ‘Anything to say?’

‘No, I am doing as advised and keeping my mouth shut. Why do you think I am lying to you?’

‘For some reason, I don’t know why, but Simon has access to one of the new apartments on Church Street, I presume you know the ones?’

‘I know the apartments, yes.’

‘You know that there is a coffee shop directly opposite the entrance to these apartments?’

‘Of course I do. We have been there many times. Just here please. How much is that?’

Faintly Sally heard the taxi driver speak, and then there was a pause while Michelle got the money out of her purse.

‘Thank you. Yeah, you too. Bye.’ Sally then heard a car door open, close and then the clip-clop of Michelle’s heels as she walked presumably to her front door. ‘What about that coffee shop then?’

‘I am sat at the window table right now.’

Sally heard nothing for a few moments, not even the clip-clop, presumably because Michelle had stopped walking and was trying desperately to think of something to say.

‘How long have you been there for?’

‘Long enough Michelle, long enough.’

‘I am so sorry Sally; I don’t know what happened...’

‘Michelle how could you?! My date!’

‘I know, but after you didn’t turn up I didn’t think you were interested and he is so nice, and, and...’

‘And what?’

‘Nothing.’

‘So was he good in bed?’

‘Now hang on a minute, I didn’t sleep with him!’

‘Watch that nose Michelle, the end of it will be jabbing the President of China in the eye pretty soon if you tell one more lie!’

‘My nose isn’t growing this time because I am not lying to you this time. I swear I didn’t sleep with him. I woke up this morning on the sofa. He was in bed on his own!’

‘Yeah, whatever Michelle, whatever.’

‘Oh I give up. I will call you later when you have calmed down and we can talk about it properly.’

‘Don’t bother!’

Sally pressed the end call button on the phone and slammed it down onto the table. The waiter glanced over at the noise and noticed how angry Sally looked.

Sally was again way past angry. She could not believe what she had just seen and she could not believe the conversation she had just had, the lies that her best friend had told her in such a hard faced way. She stood up out of her seat and ripped a five pound out of her purse and threw it onto the saucer. Picking up her phone she flung it back into her hand bag and collecting her shopping bags she stormed out of the café.

Now that she was so angry she did not even feel like shopping. She could not remember ever feeling so angry, even seeing her car last night had not made her feel like this. There was only one thing that usually got rid of such anger and that one thing was Storm.

She retrieved her phone again from her bag to call Alfred and demanded that he pick her up. Alfred recognized the tone in her voice, one of the few remnants that was left from her spoilt little brat days, and even though he was having a very rare break he did not refuse her request and left the mansion in the Rolls-Royce.

While Sally was waiting she paced up and down in front of the coffee shop trying to control her fury. After what seemed like an eternity she saw the Rolls making its stately progress towards her. While Alfred was still bringing the car to a stop Sally flung open one of the rear doors, threw her shopping onto the rear seat and then flung herself into the car. ‘Home Alfred.’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

He knew that when his mistress was in this kind of mood it was better to resume all formalities or he could be in for a huge tongue lashing from her, and possibly an audience with Mr. Gallagher himself if Sally thought he had been particularly rude.

‘Phone ahead Alfred, have them saddle Storm.’

‘Certainly ma’am.’

Alfred pressed a few buttons which switched on the car’s inbuilt phone, and when the call was answered at the mansion he told them to do as Sally asked.

As the journey progressed Sally just stared out of the window and occasionally Alfred glanced at her in the rear view mirror. He noticed the frown line and also the slight pout to her lips. He had come to recognize all the signs in all his years as the family’s butler as to when Sally was upset. Her haughty attitude, the pout and the clenching of her jaw was a sure sign that if Storm did not make her feel better, Alfred’s working life was going to be misery for the next few days.

As they approached the gates of the estate Sally stated, ‘I’ll go straight to the stables thank you Alfred.’

‘Yes, ma’am. However, the road down there is very boggy due to the rain last night, and you know how your father refuses to have it surfaced. Therefore the Land Rover should be waiting to drive you down there if that is okay?’

‘Yes, it’s fine. Make sure my bags are taken up to my room by somebody. You personally take my hand bag though. Don’t let anyone else touch it. I will take my phone should anyone need me.’

‘Yes, ma’am.’

Alfred pressed a button on a remote control which made the gates swing open and the car advanced onto the estate. After about half a mile along the road there was a fork. The fork led through a coppice of trees and was nothing more than a dirt track. At the start of this track was a brand new Land Rover Discovery.

The Rolls-Royce came to a halt and as Sally exited the car, without saying anything to Alfred, she saw the driver lean into the cab of the Discovery and use the radio. She presumed that he would be radioing ahead to inform the stable hands of her impending arrival. Stepping up into the rear of the car she again did not say anything to the driver, she just stared out of the window and watched the land roll by as they made their way a mile down the track to the stables complex.

The complex could easily hold ten horses. The stables were organized in a horse shoe around a central paddock that had a small equestrian course within it. Behind the stables, out of view as the Land Rover advanced into the complex, was a full circular track about two miles long. This track was split into two, one side was flat, the other had jumps included along its length. Usually, once or twice a week, Sally would take her beloved Storm around both courses, the flat and the jump, and sometimes around the equestrian course.

A large, powerful mare standing at sixteen hands, Storm was not at home on the tight and little equestrian course. Her reason to be as far as Sally was concerned was to sprint the flat course and jump the bigger fences. Today though she did not think that either of the courses would be enough.

As the Land Rover pulled to a stop, Sally exited the car and walked over to the side of Storm where she stood ready for Sally to ride her. The stable hands went about their work not taking any notice of Sally; they had been forewarned about the mood she was in.

As Sally approached, Storm looked up and let out a little whinny as she saw Sally. She rested her cheek against the side of the horse's head and stroked and muttered some loving words to her. After remaining like this for a few moments she then made her way along the side of the horse checking the saddle and all the equipment was satisfactorily fastened, in place and looked safe. After this check, Sally put one foot in the left stirrup and swung herself quickly and adeptly onto the saddle.

Not concerned that she was wearing nearly a thousand pounds worth of designer clothes and no safety helmet, Sally dug her heels into the side of Storm. Instantly the horse sprang into a trot and Sally guided the horse across the cobbled yard to the open gate that led out onto the circular track.

As the surface changed from the hard cobbles to the soft grass of the course, she dug her heels in hard into the flank of Storm and the horse surged underneath her. Quickly it accelerated past canter and into a full gallop. Sally's hair flowed out behind her as the wind whistled past and wind-tears appeared at the corner of her eyes.

She did not slacken the pace of the horse though. She did two full circuits of the course, the first along the flat, the second over the jumps which Storm leapt over with ease. Only after two circuits did she ease off the speed and allowed them both to catch their breath. Storm walked along the course for a mile until they reached the top end of the circuit. Here Sally leapt off and walked over to the white fence and lifted up a panel so they now had access to the area outside the course. She mounted Storm again and they went through the gap in the fence. On the other side of the fence, through a wooded area, was a narrow path.

Storm instantly headed to this path, not needing any coaxing from Sally. Slowly she walked the horse along the path and therefore the tears building up in her eyes this time were not wind-tears. Thoughts were raging through her mind, most of them focusing upon the sights that greeted her while she was having a relaxing coffee. As they advanced along the path Sally tried to bring her thoughts together and come up with some kind of plan.

She knew she would forgive Michelle eventually, she had to. They had been through so much together and Michelle had always been by her side through Sally's darkest days, through her mother's darkest days of illness. However, she could still not believe that her best friend would spend a night with the man she was meant to meet for a date that same night. But she knew she would forgive her, eventually.

Simon though was a different story. It had always been an ideology of Sally's never to date someone who had been with one of her friends. Though Michelle said she had not slept with Simon, she could not believe Michelle right now. Even if she did eventually believe her there would always be that question mark hovering over Simon's head. It was something that Sally knew she could not cope with thinking about every time she looked at him. That, therefore, put him off limits, which kind of totally messed up Sally's intended love life.

But then an image entered her mind, an image that had been out of her thoughts until that moment, the image of her modern knight in wet T-shirt and soggy jeans. This put a smile back on her face and her body experienced a rush

of blood as she thought about him.

Suddenly, out loud she shouted, 'Don't be so silly young lady! You don't even know him! You shouldn't be having thoughts like that! Come on then my angel, my darling Storm. Let's get rid of our demons and fly with the wind!'

Twice digging her heels into Storm's flank the horse accelerated quickly and burst out of the wood at a full gallop. Sally loved the exhilaration, the feel of the beast in between her legs as Storm thundered along the path. Suddenly in front of them a waist high fence of barbed wire appeared but the horse and Sally did not miss a step. Without decreasing speed they leapt over the fence and for a moment they were flying with the wind. Sally let out a wild cry as they landed and Storm maintained her pace as they exploded out of the landing. They maintained their speed across a field along another path. In the distance was the furthest corner of the estate and the large outer wall wound its way to the corner of the field they bounded across. Built into the wall was a gate and as they approached Sally pulled back lightly on the reins. Storm responded with a reduced speed and they trotted and then walked the last few yards to the gate.

Sally jumped off the horse's back and stepped over to the gate. Attached to the wall was a small metal box containing a small numeric keypad. She tapped in the code, always an easy number to remember: her mother's date of birth. Knowing that as the gate unlocked a light would have gone off in the security centre housed in a room in the mansion, so she paused for a few moments and looked up at the camera that was on the wall next to the gate. Sally gave a little wave as she saw the light on the camera flash three times as the guards acknowledged it was her by flashing the light. They then saw her disappear from view for a moment, and then reappear leading the horse. They then saw her push the gate open and then they disappeared from view as they stepped through the gateway.

Pushing the gate closed behind her, she listened as the electric locks slid back securing the estate once again. There was no way to open the gate from the outside, no numeric keypad, however Sally knew that if she phoned up the security centre later and gave the appropriate password they would unlock the gate for her. She never saw the guard again who had refused her entry into the estate because she forgot the new password. She presumed that he was given his papers after she had spoken to her father about him.

Remounting Storm they proceeded at a more sedate pace along the path that continued on this side of the gate. Sally was not really thinking of anything as they walked. She was trying to remove the image and thoughts of David out of her mind but she was failing, miserably. She knew that he had touched her with his immense good looks, his willingness to help her even though the situation she was putting him into was potentially a dangerous one. As she remembered all that happened last night a sensible voice piped up in her head and it was telling her that she should have informed her father.

She was under strict instructions, and had been from a young age, to report all incidents of this nature to her father just in case the incident was not going to be a one off and in fact the attacker was following her. However, as Sally thought about this, she just knew that her father would insist that she would have

to have a bodyguard, or possibly guards, and be escorted everywhere by him, or possibly them. Hate was probably too mild a word to use when she thought of the times that she had to have a personal bodyguard. Her father had frequently stated to her that a girl, now a woman, in her position was a major kidnapping target.

Sometimes, usually two or three times a year, her father would annoy the wrong person and then he would receive death threats or Sally would receive kidnap threats. It was then that she was followed everywhere by a huge lumbering oaf of a man, or possibly men, usually ex-military with all the personality of a damp rag. Her privacy was invaded, everything was invaded. He would stand outside her room as she got changed, he would jog behind her when she ran, he would stand by the side of the pool when she swam, he would watch with eagle eyes if she shopped for lingerie, everything was invaded. Even after all this, if she thought for one moment that last night was anything more than a one off and not just an unhappy coincidence she would tell her father. It was just not worth taking the risk of upsetting him. If he lost her on top of his wife, Sally knew it would finish him off.

As Sally thought, she did not seem to realize that she was leading Storm to the top of a hill that looked down onto a certain road that went past a certain garage. They reached the brow of the hill and Sally was surprised when she looked down the hill and there, at the bottom, was the garage where David worked. She looked down onto it and through the fading light she noticed a figure appear out of one of the garages and wander over to one of the vans on the yard. This figure hopped onto the rear of the van and for a moment it looked like he was staring at something in one of his hands that was held out in front of him. Then the hand moved to the side of his head and after a few moments she felt her phone vibrate in her pocket followed by the ring tone ringing. Storm shifted under her as the noise startled her a little but she quickly settled. Sally looked at the screen of the phone after she had removed it from her pocket and was surprised to see that it was an unknown number that was calling her. Her thumb automatically went to the red button to reject the call, but then something unknown, a feeling inside her, made her accept the call. She lifted the handset to her ear and simply said, 'Hello.'

'Hi. Is that Sally?'

'It is. Who is this?'

'Erm, hi, it is David. I guess you remember me but I guess you get lots of guys calling you?' David gave a nervous little laugh as he thought his attempted joke crashed and burned. What he did not see was Sally's face visibly brighten, flush and then smile.

'That's a bit silly isn't it David? Of course I remember you. How could I forget you?'

'Erm, good. Erm, how are you anyway?'

'I am okay. Didn't sleep very well.'

'That isn't surprising. Neither did I.'

'Well it wasn't a very nice night for either of us.'

'Erm, no, I suppose it wasn't. Erm, good news about your car, it has been

fixed.'

'Oh! Wow! Did you do it?'

'Yeah, with a little help.'

'David you shouldn't have. I would have paid to get it done. You didn't have to spend your day off working on my car!'

'It's okay. I was working anyway. It didn't take long.'

'Well, anyway, I'm touched. I will make sure I pay you for it.'

'I must warn you that it is not like it was, I mean, everything is fixed, but the amount of damage... It was impossible to get it like it was.'

'I didn't even expect you to attempt to fix it and I certainly would not expect you to get it as it was so whatever you have done will be fine. How much do I owe you?'

'Well, erm, I don't want money and I would never take money from you anyway.'

'No, I insist. How much?'

'No, like I said, no money. You can pay me in another way...'

Sally put on a sultry tone and said, 'Why David, I have only just met you!'

They both laughed at Sally's joke and David went on to say, 'Erm, I didn't, erm, exactly mean that. You can pay me, by, well, erm, going out with me sometime, I mean, well, you wouldn't have to pay even then, I mean, erm, the payment would be going out for a date with me.' David was shocked as the words came out of his mouth. He had an idea that he was going to ask her out but not like this and he then thought that she was going to put the phone down on him. However, her answer surprised him to the point of jaw-dropping.

'I would absolutely love to so long as I you let me pay for everything. That is my only term and is, quite frankly, un-negotiable.'

Sally had been watching the figure on the back of the van as they talked. Not long after the conversation had started she had seen the figure hop back down off the van and start pacing up and down the yard. After she had given her reply she saw the figure leap in the air and start punching the air.

For a few moments there was silence as David tried to regroup his thoughts and finish his celebration manoeuvres. Quickly he thought about what she said and he concluded to just accept even if she wanted to pay for everything. 'Okay then, if you insist. When would be a good time for you?'

'Anytime. I am free all nights this week.'

'Okay. How about Wednesday?'

'Perfect.'

'What would you like to do?' asked David.

'Surprise me.'

'What time would you like me to pick you up?'

'Well if my car is okay I will drive and pick you up.'

'Are you sure that is okay? I don't mind driving.'

Sally thought that she did not mind driving but she did mind him seeing her house and realising how wealthy she was. 'No honestly, it is okay for me. Let me know your postcode and house number and I will find directions to your house.'

David gave her these details which Sally easily remembered and then he said, 'When would you like to pick the car up?'

Sally noticed that he had returned to his seat on the back of the van and she was so tempted to inform him that she could come for it right now but she managed to bite her tongue. Instead she did say, 'How about tomorrow? Not too early though! Need my beauty sleep if I have a date on Wednesday!'

'I don't think you do. How about eleven tomorrow?'

'Perfect again. Eleven it is then. Give me a call if anything changes.'

'Will do. See you Sally.'

'See you tomorrow.'

Sally pressed the red button on her phone and looked down and saw David jump off the back of the van and do another dance of joy. She felt awful spying on him like this but she was also very impressed about how much a simple date with her obviously meant to him. She looked down at her phone and entered the menu Received Calls and there was David's number. She created a new addition in her phone book and then quietly said to Storm, 'A new addition to my life angel, one that I am immensely looking forward to developing.'

With those words she turned Storm around and made her way through the dusky evening back to the estate.