

# Everything to Nothing

A novel by Mark Henthorne.

Sequel coming soon!

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## Chapter 39

Sally was stressed. It was the morning of her birthday ball and she had popped in to speak to her father about a small matter. Now, on top of ensuring everything was perfect for the evening, she now had the added stress of listening to the reason why her father had told her boyfriend to quit his job.

‘Why didn’t you tell me, us, you had this in plan? Why have you decided to drop this bombshell today of all days?!’ She was stood in his office in the mansion, leaning on his desk towering over him with her fists clenched.

‘I thought it would be a nice surprise for you, give a good finishing touch to your day.’

‘Daddy, I love him to bits, but he has no, none, zero academic qualifications. He’s got good common sense though, but he’s not a Cambridge or Oxford business school graduate that you usually employ! He’ll be totally out of his depth!’

‘Neither have I.’

‘Neither have you what?’

‘I don’t have any academic qualifications. Neither does James. What we do have, as you’ve said, is plenty of common sense. Look at, Bill Gates.’

‘What about him?’

‘Dropped out of Harvard, self-made billionaire. Warren Buffet. Nothing special, standard degree, a Masters too, but self-made billionaire. Carlos Slim Helu...’

‘Who the hell is he?’

‘Watch your tongue and show him some respect!’

‘Sorry.’

‘You’ve met him. A few years ago now mind. Mexican, started as a taxi driver and is one of the richest men in the world. Limited academic qualifications too. Self-made billionaire.’

‘Right. What’s your point?’

‘My point is that some of the richest people in the world have limited academic qualifications and are all self-made!’

‘Right. So how does David fit into this?’

‘I’ve not worked my arse for the last few decades only to see my company handed over to a group of business school graduates who couldn’t make a correct decision between the lot of them! I want and the company needs a successor. You’re not interested; the only other people I meet are these business school graduates who try numerous different ways to impress me and fail miserably!’ He stopped for a moment and looked at Sally intensely. ‘I need someone fresh, someone with no pre-conceived ideas about how a company should be run that others think they know. I need someone I can groom, someone I can train to fit into the shoes that I’ll be leaving empty one day.’

‘You need an apprentice.’

‘Yes! Exactly that. And he’s perfect. He’s got good common sense and I can tell he’s got a good character. And what better barometer do I need apart from the fact that you’re dating him?!’

‘And if we break up?’

‘Is that likely?’

‘Right now, no. But you never know do you?’

‘You’re right, you don’t. But we can cross that bridge if we come to it.’

‘That will be a little awkward if I catch him sleeping with someone behind my back and then he’s taking over my father’s company.’

‘True and if you do break up for some reason like him sleeping with someone else then I’ll fire him, but this is my decision. Starting from Monday he’s working for me.’

‘That’s it?! You’re not even going to ask for my opinion?!’

‘I know what your opinion is.’

‘Oh yeah?! What?’

‘You think I’m crazy.’

‘You’ve got that right in one.’

‘Look,’ he stood and walked round the desk to take one of her hands and place the other on her shoulder, ‘I’m going to be paying him a salary which is double what he earns now. I’m going to lay out the ground rules to him that if this does not work out he’s back fixing cars. He presumed that anyway.’

‘Hang on. He’s already accepted?!’

‘Erm yes, although I didn’t tell you that.’

‘Well this gets better and better and better!’ She pushed away from him and walked towards the door.

‘I’m sure he’s got it in plan to tell you...’

She did not reply. Instead she stormed out of his office slamming the door behind her and made her way in furious anger through the mansion. One of the maids saw her coming who was well used to her mistress’s moods and with one glance at her face the maid scuttled out of her way. When she reached the door to her bedroom she flung it open and David jumped as he was stood there naked having just got out of the shower.

‘And when the hell did you plan on telling me about my dad’s offer?’

‘Huh?’

‘Don’t huh me!’

‘Can I get dressed?’

‘No, you can’t.’ She grabbed his Calvin Klein underwear, a present from her to him, and threw them to the other side of the room. ‘Well?!’

‘Sally, calm down. I was...’

‘Don’t... tell... me... to calm down!’ She grabbed one of his shoes and threw it at him.

‘Ouch! Okay, sorry. I was going to tell you now. I was going to tell you directly after I’d spoken to him but I couldn’t find you!’

‘You’re as bad as him!’ Her voice screeched as she threw another shoe at him which this time he managed to dodge. ‘Scheming together behind my back!’

This time the thrown hairbrush did connect with his lifted arm that was protecting his face from inbound missiles. ‘Ouch! Jesus! Look, let’s sit down and we can talk about this...’

‘We’re talking now!’

‘Right, okay, okay. He called me up to this office about an hour ago. He spoke

to me about his plan. He told me to think about it, discuss it with you. I came down here to talk to you but you weren't here. I then realised there was nothing to think about and went back up to accept his offer.'

'Without speaking to me?! How dare you!'

'Owww! Stop throwing things at me!'

'No!'

'Owww!'

'And what happens if we break up?! Have you thought of that?!'

'Is that likely?'

'Right now, yes it bloody is!'

'Great. I'll get my things.'

'Don't be stupid.' Sally sighed and dropped her hand to her side which was holding a perfume bottle. 'Just talk to me about things like this!'

'I tried, but you weren't here. I guessed you would have said yes anyway?'

'I might have done, but you never know. And what if I said no now?'

'Then I'd go straight upstairs and revoke my acceptance and find another job.'

'Find another job?'

'Yes. I've already quit the garage.'

'What?!'

'Ouch!'

'Another thing you should have spoken to me about!'

'Okay, okay. No matter what and how obvious it is I'll always speak to you first. Okay?'

'Good. He'll be an arse to work for you know?'

'I can imagine.'

'I only worked for him as an admin assistant and he had me run ragged.'

'I can imagine.'

'You shouldn't imagine, you should know. You'll be working long, long hours.'

'I do that anyway.'

'You'll never be home.'

'I'm always here now.'

'Well you'll never be home or here.'

'That's fine. But to work with your dad, surely that is too much of an opportunity to miss?'

'It is. But it is going to have a bad impact on our relationship. Oh my, it will be like being married to my dad! I'm not sure I like this. I've seen the hours he works. He's never home. I'll never see you.'

'You will. I've negotiated with him.'

'You've negotiated with him?! I would have loved to have seen that! And did your negotiation work?'

'Yes. He talked about the impact it will have on my life and our relationship. But he's also said that it won't be as bad for me as it was for him because the company is already set up. He's said that unless I really have to he'll never expect me to work past six, and never on Sundays, but to expect occasional Saturdays. Of course there will be long nights and some days I won't make it home, but

thousands of couples do that and survive.’

‘I suppose we can see how it goes.’

‘Of course we can. And if it doesn’t work then I can quit and go back to fixing cars. Sound like a plan?’

‘I suppose.’

‘Cool. Can I get dressed now?’

‘Yes, sorry.’

While David was getting dressed Sally flopped on her bed and stared at the ceiling. She was not sure about this new development because she had seen over the years how hard her father had worked, but she did not want to block this astonishing development and opportunity in David’s life. As she propped herself up on her elbow, she looked at him as he got ready and she could already see that something had changed with the young man who she had grown to know and love a lot.

Even now, only a few hours after finding out her father’s plan, he seemed to be holding himself differently or was it just the tuxedo he was not used to? Either way, what definitely could not be denied was that there was a glint in his eye that had not been there before, a feeling and an aura of confidence about him.

For a few moments she watched him as he struggled with the bow tie until she called his name and patted the bed beside her. Muttering and cursing under his breath he waved away her offer of assistance so instead she started to count down from ten in her head. Exactly as she reached one, for the final time he muttered and walked over to sit next to her.

‘How do you know how to do this?’ he growled at her. ‘Done it for other boyfriends?’

‘No my jealous boyfriend. I’ve done it for my father loads of times. He’s rubbish at it too!’

‘Pardon me?! How dare you!’

Quick as a flash he turned round and leapt onto her, forcing her flat onto the bed, pinning her arms while straddling her across her stomach. For a few moments she wriggled and kicked under him but he was far too strong for her. She stopped and stared into his blue eyes with a look of anger at being manhandled in this manner and as they stared into their eyes he leaned forward to kiss her. She flung her head to the side so his kiss missed and as he readjusted his aim she flung her head the other way.

Changing tack, he pulled her wrists together so he could hold them in one hand and with his other hand gently grabbed her jaw to keep her head still. He kissed her, running his tongue over her lips, not feeling any response at first, but then her lips parted slightly and he felt her relax under him. Her tongue met his and soon each of their tongues were in and out of each of their mouths, running around and along lips.

Sally was only wearing a thin cotton t-shirt and David glanced down as he moved his lips to her neck and noticed how her nipples were pressing firmly against the cotton top. David’s lips gently kissed her neck, flicking out his tongue against her warm flesh and as he did this he stroked her right nipple with his thumb. She gasped and was reaching for his belt before her hands stopped and

pressed against his chest.

‘Stop David, please stop. I need to get ready.’ She could not help noticing the flash of emotion across his face. ‘Tonight we can carry on from exactly this spot. I promise.’

Smiling he rolled off her and cradled her head in his arms, stroking her hair for a few moments. ‘I love you very much Sally.’

‘Me too David, very, very much.’

They cuddled for a little longer until there was a knock on the bedroom door.

‘Miss Gallagher. The beautician is here. She is waiting for you in the dressing room.’

‘I’ll be there in a minute. Are you going to take the tuxedo off?’

‘Yeah, of course. The party is not for hours. I only put it on to see what it was like. Never worn one before. What colour are you going to have your hair tonight?’

‘What colour do you want me to have it? I’ve got a selection of gowns that I can pick to match.’

‘I love it when it’s copper red. You know that.’

‘Then copper red it shall be.’

‘Perfect.’

‘I’d better go.’

‘No worries. See you later.’

With a kiss Sally left David in the room and walked the short distance to the dressing room. The room was wall to wall mirrors with a seat in front of an ornate dressing table with another mirror on it. Here Sally’s beautician waited for her and when she entered the room she was told to sit at the table.

For the next hour or so Sally had a full makeover. She was manicured and pedicured; she was plucked and waxed in all places including her most intimate areas. Attached to the room was another smaller room with sinks and this was where her hairdresser waited. Her hair was washed, deeply conditioned and coloured from black to the copper red that David requested. This took another couple of hours, and while she was waiting, Adrienne, who had been flown in especially so Sally thought, paraded gown after gown in front of Sally, chattering away at her about the pros and cons of each gown.

In the end, after much deliberation, she opted for a beautiful baby-blue coloured gown, with real pearls and diamonds dotted around the gown that gave it a shimmering effect. When her hair was ready and had been lightly curled and her nails painted and polished to match the gown, she returned to the dressing room where Adrienne measured. ‘I never forget sizes Sally, and in the last few months since I last measured you you’ve put on weight.’

‘Really? I hadn’t noticed.’ Sally had noticed and in fact her weight had only been gained in the last couple of weeks since she had started taking the contraceptive pill for the first time in her life in preparation for tonight.

After the measurements had been done, Sally dressed and was dismissed by Adrienne so the necessary adjustments could be made to the gown. When Sally returned to her room David had been chased out by one of the maids as instructed by Sally so she could finish getting ready without the added distraction.

In private she tried on numerous different sets of lingerie and eventually after much deliberation and a frantic call to Michelle as well as some picture messages being sent, she opted for a set of rose lingerie from the *Victoria's Secret* range.

Once this decision had been made all she had to do was wait for Adrienne to adjust the gown and she was ready for her ball. Anxiously she made a call to the organiser her father had hired and she was informed that everything was proceeding as planned.

With her mind slightly more at ease Sally sat and stared out of the window over the lawn to where the large marquee had been erected. Even her mansion was not big enough to hold the number of people that had been invited, but the marquee had been kitted out with wall-to-wall oak flooring along with ornate tables and chairs.

The number of people who were working around the marquee surprised her when viewed like this from her room from a detached point of view. The waiters and waitresses walked quickly between the marquee and the house carrying plates, or glasses or bottles of champagne and other such items.

Eventually there was a knock on her door and Adrienne was told to enter. In her arms was the gown and she told Sally to strip down to her lingerie. She slid into the gown and Adrienne fluttered around her, commenting and muttering as she made some subtle adjustments to the dress. When she was happy she stood behind Sally with a hand on her shoulder, both of them looking into the mirror.

‘You look, my dear, astonishing.’

‘Thank you.’

‘Even in the height of your mother’s beauty she could not have competed with you and that is the biggest compliment I can give you.’

‘Thank you again. How long have you been seeing my father for?’

The question struck Adrienne like a hammer and for a moment she struggled to compose a suitable reply. ‘I’ve known your father for years as you know. As time has gone by since your mother passed away we’ve grown closer. I’m sorry you found out in the manner you did.’

‘It’s okay. I guess my mum would have wanted him to carry on his life, but it was still a surprise.’

‘And neither of us would have wanted you to find out like that. I’ll be honest with you now Sally, I have no intention of replacing your mother in your father or your affections, but things are growing serious between us. I don’t suppose he’s told you, but I’m here as your gown designer and I’m also here as his guest.’

‘He hasn’t told me, but I presumed that. It’s okay. I’m not fine with it now; I will be fine with it given a bit more time.’

‘You take whatever time you need. Now it’s my time to go and get ready. I will see you later.’

‘Thank you, Adrienne.’

‘My pleasure darling.’

Adrienne left her room and Sally glanced across at the clock. It was still an hour before she was due to go down so she walked across to the window and noted that some of the guests had already started to arrive. She perched on the edge of the seat for the next forty-five minutes, noting that Michelle and Simon had



arrived, being chauffeured in the Rolls-Royce and she watched as they were escorted into the marquee. As Sally's closest friends they would be sat on the top table with her and David, along with Sally's father and now, as Sally has just found out, Adrienne and few more close relations.

Soon there was another knock on her door and Alfred entered who informed her it was time to go. Sally nodded and walked out of her room then through the corridors in the mansion towards the front entrance to the house. There she was met by David who said that she looked stunning, but this did not help ease Sally's nerves. When the last guests had been seated one of the organisers indicated to Sally that it was time to enter the venue.

David linked her arm and she glanced over her shoulder to see that her father had linked arms with Adrienne. This made her surprised again but with a word to herself she concentrated on negotiating the steps down from the entrance to the mansion and along the short path to the marquee. Here, two of Adrienne's assistants made one or two final adjustments to her gown and then Sally and David were beckoned into the marquee by the lead organiser.

Breathing deeply because she was still feeling nervous, Sally entered the marquee with David on her arm. As one the assembled guests turned to look at her and as one they all gasped as they saw how stunningly amazing Sally looked that day. The orchestra played an upbeat song as they walked through the tables, Sally pausing occasionally to speak to people she knew until she reached the table that was raised on a platform. David and she stepped up onto the platform and turned to face the guests and, as one, applause rippled through the guests. Primly Sally curtsied and David bowed and then they took their seats and their place on the platform was taken by Mr. Gallagher and Adrienne. The applause continued while they bowed and curtsied and then they also took their seats.

For a short time the guests chattered amongst themselves and Sally and David talked to Michelle and Simon. Then the first of many courses arrived and the guests enjoyed the sumptuous banquet with a seemingly endless amount of food and drink being brought to them.

As planned, after the meal Sally made a short speech where she thanked the guests for coming and also her father for making such a great party possible. Mr. Gallagher then also made a speech which of course concentrated on Sally, her early days including embarrassing incidents which had her cringing and slumping down in her seat, but which had David and everyone else present chuckling merrily as the champagne started to have an influence on them. His speech concluded by him stating how proud he was of his daughter and how her mother would have been equally proud of her. 'Anyone who knew my wife would know that she was beautiful, and it is clear to see that her beauty has been passed down to my beautiful, wonderful daughter. So, may you all be upstanding as I offer a toast to Sally as we celebrate her eighteenth birthday! To Sally!'

Every one of the guests rose to their feet to toast her and after such an endearing speech Sally was quite emotional and wiped away the tears as she stood to hug and thank her father. For a few moments she composed herself and then she took David's hand and led him onto the dance area.

The orchestra played the first few opening beats to Shania Twain's You're Still

the One and with a round of applause Lady Gaga took to the stage to sing the song as Sally and David danced together, with Sally's head resting on his chest.

By the end of the song Sally was even more emotional and she buried her head in David's chest to hide her tears from the audience. At the start of the second song her father and Adrienne made their way to the dance floor as did Michelle and Simon. This was also another slow love song, but then the orchestra and Lady Gaga upped the tempo and the dance floor filled up with couples. Lady Gaga performed for an hour and after she had finished there was demand for an encore to which she obliged and when she left the stage Sally and Mr. Gallagher went and personally thanked her for performing.

The night rolled on, with Sally and David dancing together or sometimes just Sally and Michelle when their boyfriends could not be persuaded to leave their seats. Apart from a minor scuffle involving two very drunk revellers which the security quickly sorted out by escorting them both off the estate, the night went without a hitch and Sally loved every moment of it. When she noticed that the guests had started to dwindle she took David's hand and led him out of the back of the marquee towards the mansion.

'Shouldn't we say goodbye to people?'

'It's okay. No-one will notice we're gone.'

'I'm sure they bloody will. You look amazing, a glowing beacon of beauty, believe me they'll notice!'

'Oh David, you do say the nicest things.' Flinging her arms around his shoulders she kissed him passionately and longingly, shuddering against him as he ran his fingers up and down her spine. 'Let's go in.'

Without waiting for a reply, Sally led David back into the mansion and up to her room. A maid had lit candles in the room as Sally had instructed.

'Very nice. Very romantic,' was David's comment.

She closed the door behind him, locking it too, and then turned to him and kissed him passionately again. This time she did not stop him as his fingers traced a path up and down her spine and she did not stop him when they slid round to the side and he gently slid the zip of her gown down. Gently she pushed him away and took a couple of steps backwards away from him. She slid the gown off her body and stood in front of him in her sexy lingerie.

David admired her figure for a few moments, admired her large breasts that were being pushed up in the bra, her flat stomach, her long slender thighs and the point where her thighs met that he knew no other man had touched. He had shown a lot of patience over the months knowing that she was a virgin and he did not want to rush her. But now as he admired her body and her stunning face he decided he must have her tonight. He was desperate for her.

He took a step towards her and with a show of strength he picked her up in his arms and carried her to the bed where he laid her down. Standing over her he quickly stripped down until he was naked and Sally was pleased to see that he was already fully erect. She had seen his penis before, she had placed it in her mouth until he had an orgasm, but she could not remember ever seeing it looking so large, so hard and so big.

After kneeling onto the bed he lay gently on top of her, kissing her, and she

could feel his penis pressing into her belly so she took it gently in her hand and stroked it, feeling it throb and as she peeled back his foreskin she ran her thumb into his glands. Her thumb came away feeling slick with his pre-cum and this feeling that he was so turned on by her, that he found her so desirable, stirred an instinct inside her. She felt a rush of blood to her intimate areas and then she felt her fresh, virgin juices start to flow out of the entrance to her vagina. She had felt turned on by him before and had only just managed to resist full intercourse with him, but she had never felt this aroused before.

The feeling was enhanced as he reached round to her back and undid her bra, pushing it off her breasts, releasing them and her nipples grew hard and erect. David took one and then the other in his mouth, running his tongue along their tips, sucking delicately on them, causing her to gasp.

With an eagerness she had never felt in him before, her now wet knickers were pulled down her body and flung away. Sally squeezed her legs together, shy and unsure about showing herself to him, but after a few well-placed kisses she found her legs involuntarily opening to give David a view of her shaved pubic mound. There was a thin strip of hair leading from her clitoris up her belly for a couple of inches and David noticed that this was a deep black so he now knew her real hair colour.

He looked at her vagina and admired it for its perfection. 'My God Sally. Is there any part of you that isn't perfect?!' And he buried his head into her mound, his tongue tracing up and down her vaginal lips, flicking against her clitoris for glorious moments.

This was all new for Sally. She had received hand pleasure before from David, but never oral. This was the first time her vagina had ever been touched like this and after the first shock of the intensity of the feelings she relaxed and it was not long before she was bucking and writhing, pressing her pubic area against his face forcing him to lick harder and faster. He took her to the brink, leaving her feeling pleased yet frustrated at him stopping when she was just about to climax. He pushed himself along her body, discreetly wiping his soaking face on the duvet, until his hips were lined up with hers. Staring down into her eyes, he kissed her while he took the base of his penis in his hand and lined up the bulbous head with the entrance to her now waterfall wet vagina.

Her breathing increased as she realised she was about to be penetrated for the first time and she tensed as she felt his penis rest gently against her outer lips. He left it there for a moment, until gently he pushed with his hips opening her outer lips with the engorged head of his penis. Again he paused, letting her get used to the feeling, and then with great care he pushed again opening up her virgin vagina which the huge head of his penis filled.

Sally let out a groan as she felt like her vagina was being ripped in two. As the first couple of inches of his engorged organ entered her the pain was intense so she placed a hand on one of his hips pushing gently so he waited until her body got used to the feeling before he entered her further.

When he first entered her he stopped for two reasons. First, her comfort, secondly he almost ejaculated straight away. He had never felt anything so tight in all his life. He could not think of an adequate description apart from a hot, soft

incredibly wet tube of flesh that was gripping his penis like it was being squeezed in a vice. The physical pleasure was intense, but the mental pleasure of taking this beautiful young woman's virginity, knowing that no man had entered her before, took him to the edge. But with a great effort he managed to control himself and not orgasm inside her yet.

After a few moments she dropped her hand and nodded so he pushed, literally forcing his penis along her tight vagina for a few more inches. She groaned again as the pain of having her vagina stretched and torn ripped through her body so she placed a hand on his hip again. A part of her wanted him to leave, but she had read that this was the worst action to take. She knew her body would get used to it, but she hoped it would get used to it too soon. And it did.

Her vagina quickly stretched around his penis like it was designed to do, so again she dropped her hand and nodded, and again he pushed into her the final few inches until his pubic area was pressing against her with his penis fully penetrating her.

The pain was still quite intense but was subsiding and Sally could definitely start to feel some pleasure as he paused again with his penis deep inside her body. The pleasure though was intense for David. How he was holding on he did not know but he was desperate not to ruin Sally's first sexual intercourse experience so he was thinking of the most boring politicians he could think of and trying not to think of incredibly wet, hot, tight vagina that was wrapped around his penis which was buried inside the sensationally stunning woman underneath him.

She dropped her hand from his hip again and David took this as the cue to start making love to her. Very gently he pulled half of his penis out of her, which made it feel like it was being ripped from his body at its root as it was being gripped so firmly by her vagina, and then he slid it gently back in. This time he noted that Sally's groan was definitely one of pleasure.

For the next five minutes he slowly, gently made love to her, slowly and gently increasing the tempo until Sally was moaning and groaning under him. Too eagerly though he slammed his penis into her and she screamed making him jump.

'Shit, sorry. Did I hurt you?'

'No! Carry on! That was a scream of pleasure! Please carry on. I'm used to it now. Hard like that!'

So David obliged. He took the full length of this penis out of her so just the head was being gripped by her, and then in one movement he slammed his penis into her hard which caused Sally to buck underneath him and scream loudly.

'Again! Like that! Faster!'

David obliged again. He forcefully rammed his penis in and out of her, enjoying the feeling himself, but also the pleasure he was giving to Sally. This continued for a few more moments, and while he was doing this David sucked on her nipples which caused Sally to buck and writhe under him more, to moan and groan and scream even louder.

The feeling of having him deep inside her, the sensations that were ripping through her body, quickly reached a crescendo and then Sally had the most intense orgasm she had ever experienced. Her whole body tensed and she let out one more almighty scream and then she just moaned and groaned underneath him as the

orgasm made her whole body shake and quake under him.

At the start of her orgasm, David had felt her vagina clench even harder, squeezing his penis so tightly it took him over the edge into ecstasy. David slid his penis inside her to its hilt and then for the first time in her life Sally had a man orgasm inside her body. As he did, her own orgasm was subsiding and she felt him tense above her and then moan. Deep inside her body she felt his penis grow harder for a moment and then she felt his ejaculate spray into her, touching the deepest parts of her body.

As she looked up at him, as he gently rotated his hips with his penis still inside her, his eyes closed lost in the pleasure of the moment, she knew at that moment that they would spend the rest of their days together. Seeing how much pleasure she had given him, and how much pleasure he had given her, she knew that she did not want to be with anyone else ever again.

## Chapter 40

For the rest of her eighteenth birthday night Sally made love with David until the early hours of the morning until they collapsed in a heap of exhausted intertwined limbs. They slept together for the rest of that night until Sally was woken by a knock on her door. One of the maids informed her through the door that breakfast would be served in half an hour.

She woke David and they showered together, lathering each other's bodies until they had to leave the shower and get dressed for breakfast. When they entered the breakfast room Mr. Gallagher was already present as were Simon and Michelle who had stayed over in one of the many bedrooms.

'Morning daddy.' Sally walked over to him and kissed him firmly on his cheek. 'Thank you so much for last night. It was amazing! I felt like a princess all night!'

'My pleasure. I'm glad you enjoyed it. You deserve it.'

'Did everyone else have a good time? Michelle? Did you sleep okay?'

'Yeah, we had a great time as did everyone. And we slept fine. You left early?' Michelle left the question hanging there but Sally handled it well.

'Yeah, David was too drunk!'

They all tucked into the breakfast, enjoying the conversation and the company until Mr. Gallagher announced that he had to leave for a flight to New York.

'On a Sunday daddy?'

'Unfortunately so dear. Ready David?'

'Pardon me?' asked a surprised Sally.

'Erm, your dad wants me to go to New York with him.'

'Excuse me? You only decided to start to work for him yesterday!'

Simon and Michelle exchanged a look, surprised at the way this conversation was going.

Her father intervened. 'It will be one of the rare opportunities in the next couple of weeks I'll have to speak to him about it. My schedule is totally crammed. An eight-hour flight with no interruptions is a perfect opportunity for me to speak to him in private.'

'But, but...'

'I'll be back on Tuesday Sally. Sorry to dump this on you after your birthday celebrations,' stated David.

'We'll be meeting important clients. All David has to do is sit there to watch and learn which is all he's going to be doing for the next few years.'

'Right, fine. Michelle? Shall we go shopping?'

'Yeah, of course. Simon is playing football anyway today.'

'Fine. So you're going now?' Sally asked her boyfriend.

'Yes. Someone should have packed my bag.'

'We need to go,' stated Mr. Gallagher.

He stood from the table and left the room after which David stood to follow him. Reluctantly Sally stood too. 'I'll come and see you off.'

David offered his hand and again reluctantly Sally accepted it and they walked to the entrance to the mansion and watched as their bags were loaded into the back of the Rolls-Royce. 'Sorry about this. I had a fantastic time with you last night.'

I'll miss you while I'm away.'

'I'll miss you too. Be careful in New York.'

'I will be. Sorry I didn't tell you last night but I knew it would ruin your night.'

'It's okay. I understand and I know that this will be a one off, hopefully.'

'I'm sure it will be. I'll miss you because I love you.'

'Me too David, me too.'

With a kiss they parted and David got into the Rolls-Royce next to Mr. Gallagher and she watched them until the car went out of view in a fold of the land along the driveway. When she returned to the breakfast room she was surprised to see Michelle sat on her own.

'Where's Simon gone?'

'He had to dash. I asked Alfred to sort him out a ride home. He's got to get to his match. He said sorry he didn't see you but that he had a great time last night.'

'Oh right. No worries. Well that was a shock.'

'What's going on with David and your father?'

So Sally explained the situation and she could not help noticing Michelle's surprise. 'Yeah, I know. Crazy isn't it? David my dad's, well, apprentice I suppose.'

'But why David? He has no business experience whatsoever?'

'That's the point. He wants someone fresh, clean, unsullied. To tell you the truth Michelle, I'm as baffled as you. I have no idea what my dad is playing at but I can see David ending up getting badly burned. But what can I do? How can I refuse him this opportunity no matter how crazy it seems now?'

'You can't, but it does seem to be moving very quickly with trips to New York.'

'No, that part I understand. It will give them chance to talk about it. Getting my dad available for last night was a nightmare. He's so busy. He had to move so much stuff. I think his secretaries were all on Valium by the time they'd finished!'

For a few moments they both laughed together until there was a silence between them. Sally stared at the table thinking about all that happened in the last twenty-four hours, and her eyes rested on Michelle's left hand. It did not register with Sally straight away but there was something not right about what she was looking at, something not right at all. And then it clicked into place.

'What is that on your left hand?!' Before Michelle could react Sally had grabbed Michelle's hand and was scrutinising her ring finger. 'Is that what I think it is?! He didn't?!' With a glance at Michelle's face she knew that he did. 'Oh my! Why on Earth didn't you tell me?!'

'Believe me when I say I was at least a thousand times more surprised than you are!'

'He proposed to you and you said..?'

'Well I'm wearing the ring silly!'

'Good point! I can't believe it! Where did he do it?'

'Well, he wanted to do it in the marquee but he rightfully thought that that would have been inappropriate because it would have taken the spotlight away from you. I would have killed him if he'd done that.'

'I wouldn't have minded.'

'Maybe not, but I would have. I thought there was something wrong with him

all night. He seemed tense and a bit moody but I just put it down to the fact his team got beat so I ignored him. Turns out I was a little bit wrong!

‘Just a little bit!’

‘So he proposed in the bedroom. It was really romantic, with the four-poster bed and the candles flickering in the wind because the balcony doors were open. He made me close my eyes and he got down on one knee with the box open and asked me!’

‘Did you answer straight away?’

‘Well I burst into tears and said yes!’

‘I can’t believe it! I’m so happy for you both!’

‘Thank you Sally. That means a lot to me.’

‘Right, shopping to celebrate! My treat and no limit to what we spend!’

‘Sounds good!’

‘Let’s go!’

With that Sally ran out of the room waving her arms and whooping in delight. She found Alfred and ordered a car to take them into the city to celebrate her friend’s love and new engagement.

\*

After the trip to New York, David’s life was never the same. His work varied from being his new boss’s administration assistant to attending high level business meetings, all the while he watched and learned from Mr. Gallagher.

Sally and Michelle both studied at Oxford, Michelle reading Law, Sally studying Physics. Both keeping their respective relationships strong through hard work from all parties. When Michelle was not studying, she was planning her wedding which was due to take place in the summer of their graduation year, and when they both graduated with Firsts their excitement built. Sally had obtained a position with an airline on a pilot scheme and Michelle had gained a position at a top law firm. Both were due to start in the autumn of that year so that meant they had a full summer to relax and enjoy their time together.

Sally was now twenty-one and her beauty was at its zenith. That summer she looked radiant. Her life was perfect. She had a handsome boyfriend, her best friend was due to be married in the summer and she had landed a modelling contract with one of the best agencies in the country.

At first her modelling jobs were mainly adverts in the body of some of the magazines, but then she started to get cover work. It was not too long before her natural beauty was recognised and she was soon on the front cover of *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*. And the offers of work kept flowing in. She was offered large amounts of money to do catwalk modelling, television commercials and even a few movie offers, but she did not want the hassle or the fame.

Instead she did the occasional shoot for the magazines just to give herself a small feeling of independence from her father. Any money she did earn she invested so she could contribute to her own wedding and university fees for her children. David had not yet asked her to marry him but her twenty-first birthday ball was approaching and she thought something would happen then. If it did not,



she would have to start dropping more unsubtle hints.

Life had rolled on perfectly for all of them, until the summer of Sally's twenty-first birthday.

## Chapter 41

It was a beautifully perfect day that summer when the four of them met in the city centre for the final fitting of their outfits for the wedding. Sally and David were maid of honour and best man respectively and they were fitted out for the last time in one of the top wedding shops in the city. Michelle and Simon had to attend separately of course so Simon did not see the dress. After he had visited the exclusive wedding shop he waited in a bar with David while Sally attended with Michelle.

‘Do you know who that druggie is who keeps staring at us?’ David asked Simon.

‘Nope mate. Never seen her before in my life.’

Simon had though, but her drug ravaged body and face had changed so much since the day he last saw her when she was being escorted out of a department store.

‘Well I think she knows us. She hasn’t taken her eyes off us since we sat down.’

‘Ignore her mate. I’m sure she’ll crawl back to whatever sewer she crawled out of.’

‘How do they get the money to come and sit in a bar and drink?’ David queried.

‘I have no idea.’

Sarah was not there to drink though. She had been walking out of an alley when she saw Michelle walk past with another woman by her side and then they were greeted by two handsome men who had stepped out of a wedding shop. She darted back into the alley, peering around the wall, and saw the two women walk into the wedding shop and the two men walk into a bar. Thinking that this was too much of an opportunity to miss, she knew she would not be welcome in the shop though, so she followed the men into the bar, guessing correctly that the women would follow shortly.

‘Here they are! My beautiful bride to be and her maid of honour!’

After curtsying Michelle sat down next to Simon, taking his hand in hers, and Sally sat next to David giving him a kiss in welcome.

‘How’s the dress?’ Simon asked.

‘It’s perfect! It fits like a dream!’ Sally replied eagerly.

‘It doesn’t! I look fat!’

‘You don’t look fat, you look amazing!’

‘I can’t wait to see you. I can’t believe it is only one week away now.’ Simon shook his head in seeming bewilderment. ‘The time has gone by so quickly...’

‘You getting married then Michelle?’

Everyone jumped and turned to look at the woman that stood next to their table.

‘Do you know her Michelle?’ asked Simon to which she shook her head firmly in the negative. ‘I’m sorry, do we know you?’

‘You don’t recognise me Michelle, your so-called friend?’

‘No, sorry, I don’t.’

‘How about if I said, Michelle, you are a fat little porker who used to waddle around school. Bring back any memories?’

‘Now I don’t know who the hell you think you are...’

‘It’s okay Simon. I’ll handle this.’

For a few more moments she studied the face in front of her. She looked about forty, at least. Her face was wrinkled, like old tree bark. When she spoke, Michelle had noticed that she had barely any teeth, and those that were still present were black and rotting. It was the eyes that got Michelle though, those haunted drug taker’s eyes, with bags and black circles underneath them and it was the eyes that finally triggered a memory in her mind. It had been years since she had seen her last, and the woman who stood before her now was a shell of the woman she had known then.

‘Sarah, is that you?’

‘Bingo! We have a winner! And here’s your prize, a bacon sandwich and a lump of lard to add to the lard you carry around in your knickers every day!’

‘My God Sarah, what happened to you?’

‘Why? What’s up? Do you not think I’m pretty?’

‘You’re pretty sick,’ muttered Simon.

‘So who’s the lucky guy who’s going to be sticking his cock into this lump of fat for the rest of his life?’

‘Right, that’s it...’

Simon made to stand but Michelle lightly placed a hand on his arm to stop him. ‘Simon, please. We don’t need to lower ourselves to her level. That’s what she wants. Sarah, what do you want? Do you want some cash? I’m sure we could scrape together the cost of a few hits of heroin for you if you like?’

‘Oh no Michelle. H is old school. Crystal meth is the new black now Michelle. I’m a meth addict and look what it’s done to me. Do you not think it’s made me pretty?’

‘No, not really Sarah. I think it has made you evil. I think you need help. Why don’t you come with me now and I’ll get you booked into a rehabilitation clinic...’

‘You will do nothing of the sort!’

‘Simon, please be quiet. What do you think Sarah? I’ll help you to help yourself.’

‘I’d prefer to be taken into the toilets and given a good hard fucking by your friend there. Who is he? He’s gorgeous!’

Sarah made to sit down next to David but with a firm hand Simon pushed her away. ‘Go away before something happens that you will regret.’

But Sarah was not listening. Her eyes had fallen onto Sally who had remained motionless and silent in the corner of the seats, mentally restraining herself from intervening, knowing too well that Michelle could handle whatever this vile creature threw at her.

‘I know you. I’ve seen your face, recently too. I know I’m gorgeous, but you make even me look like a hippo! Fuck me. That’s it! Front cover of *Vogue* last week! Well look at me! Little Sarah is in the presence of modelling royalty! Can you get me some work there? I could easily go on the front cover. Get me some work, pleeeaaassee!’

‘The only work you’d get is licking the sewers clean,’ retorted Sally.

‘Fuck you slag. Can I shag your gorgeous boyfriend, fiancé perhaps? He hasn’t

been able to keep his eyes off me since I walked in. He wants his cock to slide into my tight vagina don't you honey?'

'Right, that really is IT!'

With speed Simon was up from his seat and he grabbed Sarah by one of her arms and twisted it up her back. Sarah though had lived on the street quite long enough now to deal with such an assault, so as quick and as lithe as a snake she had twisted out of Simon's grip and launched her own attack.

Her hands rained down towards Simon's face, trying to get her nails to scrape at his flesh. One or two of the blows landed, but they had no power, and after a few moments David had grabbed hold of both her arms. The women had also got up to help but for a split-second Sarah got one hand free, and without anyone noticing slipped a translucent substance into David's drink.

Quickly she was brought back under control by the two men and they dragged her kicking and screaming to the door of the bar. Unceremoniously between them they swung her up in the air and dumped her in the gutter.

With a scream she leapt to her feet and ran at them with arms swinging and legs kicking but with ease the two men pushed her away. She lost her footing and with a hard fall she crashed back into the gutter but this time she did not get up because the wind had been knocked out of her.

For the first and last time in his life Simon spat at another human being as she lay on the floor, wheezing and gasping, and then they both turned to re-enter the bar.

'I think we'd better go,' stated Simon to the women. 'She's out of it now but I don't think she will be for long. Let's go out the back way.'

They all nodded their agreement and quickly finished their drinks. By the time David had got back to his drink the substance had totally dissolved.

None the wiser he knocked his cola back in one.

\*

They went for another drink in another bar to calm their nerves and they stayed there for a while, Michelle explaining to them what she knew about how Sarah's life had gone so badly wrong. With a sigh she said she had had enough for today and wanted to go home but instead Sally invited them to her house for a meal and more drinks.

'You can stay over if you like? Let's not let that wicked woman ruin our day!'

'We'll come for the meal, but we'll see about staying over. Right now, I don't really feel in the mood. What happened to her?!'

'Michelle,' Simon took her hand and stroked it, 'don't worry about it. There is nothing you can do now, and there is nothing you could have done then. I remember her now and she was nothing but trouble back then. I remember she disappeared from college but I didn't give it much thought at the time. I thought good riddance and you should think that too. You've worked so hard; we all have, to have what we have now, to be so happy. If she'd done the same then who knows what she could have made of her life. Instead, she'll be dead in a couple of years whereas we have our lives stretching in front of us. Forget about her and forget

about her forever.'

'I suppose you're right. Thank you, Simon. Everything you say makes sense all the time, that's why I love you!' She kissed him, passionately. 'Shall we go then?'

'Come with me Simon. I'll show you what my new car can do!'

'Okay David. See you there then ladies!'

'Yeah, be careful.'

They walked to the cars and the women got in Sally's while the men got in David's new Audi. Through the city Sally followed David along the crowded streets, but once they reached the country roads that led to Sally's mansion, David pulled away quickly.

'Crikey. He's gone off quickly.'

'Don't worry.' replied Sally. 'He knows this road and he always drives quickly.'

'Yeah, but, he's out of sight already.'

'They'll be fine.'

'I hope so. He was going bloody quickly'

David indeed did know the road and he wanted to impress Simon with his new car. Simon was used to David driving fast, but today he seemed to be taking it to the extreme. Not once did he change gear below the red line and the Audi was literally screaming along the road. About a mile before a pair of s-bends that David intended to take at speed he suddenly started to feel very strange. As quick as a flash a cold sweat broke out of his forehead and his hands started shaking.

The drug that Sarah had slipped into his coke had taken its time to start to affect his body because he had orally ingested it, but when it did start to affect him the chemicals rushed through his body to his brain and took their hold before he was able to react.

His eyes rolled back in their sockets and he slumped over the steering wheel. Before Simon could grab the wheel they were off the road at the first right corner of the first s-bend. They bounced over a small grass verge and down the other side. Simon made a frantic grasp at the wheel but missed, and by then it was too late.

With David unable to press the brakes the car hit a large, old oak tree at a tremendous speed.

\*

'Sally, what's that up ahead?' Sally was taking her time with the drive and she was fiddling with the radio while Michelle was speaking. 'It looks like there's debris in the road.'

Sally grunted in acknowledgement and started to pay more attention expecting to find that something had fallen off one of the many farm tractors that used these roads. As they got closer though it was clear that it was debris off a car.

Slowing down to a stop they both got out of the vehicle and saw the fresh tyre tracks going over the verge. Without saying anything, they both took a few steps up the verge and looked down the other side.

‘Oh my God Michelle, oh my fucking GOD!’

Screaming, Sally ran down the verge to the car but Michelle did not follow. It looked like it was not too badly damaged from the angle she was looking at it from. She was viewing it from the right-hand side and the main shell of the car looked like it was intact and the numerous airbags had deployed which obscured her view through the car. She could see David though, and as she approached she heard him moan.

‘David! David don’t move, please don’t move!’ She stuck her head through the side window that was down when they crashed and moved the airbags off David. It was then that she realised all was not right with the car. ‘Oh my God, where’s the other half of the car!’

Length ways the car had been ripped in two straight down the middle. Frantically she looked around unable to see where the other half of the car was, and then she looked back up the hill to where Michelle had not moved. For some reason she seemed to be staring at a tree. ‘Michelle? Michelle?! David, please don’t move!’

At a fast run Sally moved back up to Michelle, stood next to her and followed her eyes. At the base of the large oak tree was a twisted, crumpled, crushed lump of metal that could not be described as resembling anything like a car.

‘Sally, oh my God Sally...’ whispered Michelle, her voice shaking.

‘It’s okay Michelle, it’s okay! He would have been thrown clear!’

Ripping her eyes from the base of the tree she looked at Michelle who was shaking from head to toe and shaking her head from side to side. Slowly she raised her shaking hand and pointed. Sally quickly saw what Michelle was pointing at.

A solitary arm was lying on the ground and glinting in the sun. Clearly visible around the wrist, was the watch Michelle had given Simon for his twenty-first birthday.

Without saying another word Michelle collapsed next to Sally in a dead faint.

## Chapter 42

Simon's funeral took place on a Saturday, two weeks to the day after his wedding to Michelle should have occurred. For the first week Michelle had been in hospital on a strong sedative to calm her because every time she woke she was hysterical. After the week the doctors slowly brought her off the sedative and Sally was by her bedside to offer her support whenever she could be away from David's bedside.

He had got through the accident relatively unscathed considering the force of the impact. With cuts and bruises his most serious injury was a broken leg and a fractured wrist. The airbags and the fact that Simon's half of the car had taken all the impact spared him from more serious injury. For him though, like Michelle, the most serious injury was psychological.

The toxicology report had shown a high concentration of chemicals usually associated with the drug crystal meth in David's blood. Everybody of course remembered the encounter with Sarah and the blame for the crash was laid firmly at her feet, but the police had been unable to trace her.

David though was still taking full blame for the crash because he knew he was driving too fast. He had screamed at Sally one day that if he had been driving slower when the drug took its hold Simon would not have died. She stated once again it was not his fault but David became hysterical so the doctors had to sedate him again.

Later, the police spoke to David about the incident as he lay in hospital and when the questions turned to drugs one of Mr. Gallagher's top lawyers swiftly intervened stating that David had never shown any evidence of drug taking, not even a cigarette never mind such a vile substance as crystal meth and that the police had a name to follow up. Confronted by one of the best lawyers in the country whose reputation went before her, the police did not press the matter and David was formally exonerated of all blame for the crash.

This did not help him though. He stayed away from the funeral hiding behind the excuse that it would not be appropriate and it would upset Michelle and Simon's family. Michelle was relieved when Sally told her that he would not be coming, but she would of course be there to support her.

Michelle was relieved because she knew that if he saw him she would end up trying to kill him. In her heart and in her head the blame for her fiancé's death lay firmly with David for driving too fast and she knew that she would never be able to forgive him. Her opinions were never voiced to Sally but they were voiced openly to Simon's family.

But they were not concerned with attributing blame. All they cared about was the fact they had lost a loving son and that the driver had been illegally drugged by a crazed drug addict. That fact was enough for them; they did not want to ruin another young man's life by openly blaming him.

\*

For the next few months David's physical wounds healed but his mental

scarring did not. He slumped into a severe depression and nothing that Sally could do or say could bring him out of it. Despite numerous vacations to luxurious hotels and appointments with psychologists, David's depression seemed to deepen. Mr. Gallagher noticed it at work but did not do anything about it, deciding to give David whatever time he needed.

Sally did see a slight improvement but one day she walked in on him unannounced at work and caught him drinking from a bottle of whiskey at his desk. Furious she ripped it from his hand and smashed it against a wall where it left a whiskey blot pattern that a psychologist might have liked to analyse.

The argument raged for over an hour, which included David missing an important meeting, and he pleaded with her not to tell her father. When she had slowly calmed down she reluctantly agreed, knowing that if he lost the job he loved it could finish him off. She did clearly state that if she saw anymore evidence of him drinking that it would be the end of not only his job but also their relationship. So David invested in the strongest mouthwash he could find and carried on drinking.

The numerous private investigators they had hired to try and track down Sarah had so far turned up nothing. All the investigators came back with the same story, that the streets were awash with drugs and trying to find one drug addict out of so many was, well, it was needle in a haystack time.

Without this closure of justice that everybody craved for, David slumped even more into a severe depression. His drinking picked up and Sally suspected this, but in her heart she still loved him and supported him as best she could.

One day though, for the first time David came to work drunk. And not a little drunk either, a lot drunk.

The first action he took that day was to swear at his secretary and make a lewd comment about the size of her breasts. The next action he took was to consult his calendar on his computer which showed him that he had a meeting with an important South Korean company about a huge contract that his boss had been negotiating for months.

With a loud belch he reached into the bottom drawer of his desk and took a swig from a bottle of vodka. Wiping his hand across his mouth, he farted and then chuckled his way out of his office up to the boardroom.

As soon as he entered the room Mr. Gallagher knew there was something seriously wrong but the South Korean representatives were already present. Desperately he tried to make eye contact with James but he was deep in discussion with one of the Korean directors and before anyone could react David was introducing himself to the Chairman of the massive South Korean conglomerate.

'Pleased to meet you. And your name is?'

'Chairman Kim.'

'Chairman Kim. Well at least that's going to be easy to remember. Why are you all called Kim? It's like those fucking Indians; they're all called fucking Patel. Why is that? Well hello legs! And who do we have here?' Brushing past the Chairman who looked at Mr. Gallagher in total surprise, David sat next to a beautiful Korean woman. 'And what is your name? Hang on, let me fucking guess. Kim, right?'



‘I’m sorry, but I find you very rude. Please apologise to Chairman Kim or this meeting will go no further.’

Without even bothering to turn around, David lifted his hand and waved it in an arrogant fashion. ‘Sorry Chairman. Didn’t mean to be rude. Hey,’ he then said, turning his attention back to the female executive, ‘I’m not too keen on being here today. I know the manager of The Ritz who can get us the Presidential Suite right now. We could have a day and night there of some serious fun!’

With a look of total surprise she turned to look at the Chairman and then her eyes met Mr. Gallagher’s. He had a look of horror on his face and they all heard him say, ‘James, in the name of all that is holy get him out of here!’

James though had not needed any prompting. He was already at David’s shoulder by the time Mr. Gallagher spoke and he gently laid a hand on his shoulder. ‘David, why don’t we go up to your office and we can talk about this?’

‘Fuck you old man,’ and he shook his hand off. ‘I’m talking to this lovely lady. We’re bonding, getting to know each other.’ Now in a stage whisper from behind his hand he said, ‘I think she kind of likes me.’

‘David, please. Let’s go and talk about this outside.’ Again, very gently, he laid his hand on David’s shoulder.

Quick as a flash David was up out of his seat and he pushed James hard and shouted, ‘Stop fucking touching me!’

James went flying and crashed into the solid oak boardroom table and there was a crackling noise as five of his ribs cracked and snapped with one being pushed firmly inwards puncturing the delicate tissue of one of his lungs.

Everyone let out a cry of astonishment and without saying another word David straightened his jacket and walked out of the room.

For a moment nobody moved, but then the Korean female executive leapt out of her seat and rushed over to James. ‘I think you’d better call an ambulance, and quickly! He’s hardly breathing and his pulse is faint. Quick, call an ambulance!’

Another member of the board called for an ambulance while Mr. Gallagher tended to James and made him as comfortable as he could. Soon the paramedics arrived and after they had stabilised him they carefully placed him on a stretcher, wheeling him out and down the elevator to the waiting ambulance.

Mr. Gallagher saw him down and then had an argument with himself about going to the hospital with James or going back upstairs and trying to calm the Koreans. Thinking about what James would have wanted him to do, he returned to the boardroom only to be greeted with empty seats where the Koreans had been sitting and flustered members of his own board.

‘I’m sorry Mr. Gallagher,’ apologised one of his directors. ‘I tried to stop them but they stormed out without saying a word.’

Also without saying a word Mr. Gallagher sat in his chair at the top of the table and discreetly snapped a pencil in two. He was beyond angry.

\*

‘James is lying in hospital with a collapsed lung which the ribs that David broke punctured. This is it Sally. I’ve supported him for as long as I can. He is no

longer part of the family.’

Mr Gallagher had returned home not too soon after the Koreans had left and had called Sally up to his office in the mansion.

‘What?! You can’t possibly mean that, surely you can’t?’

‘I’ve paid for him to have the best psychologists money can buy and they have had no effect. He is not going to snap out of it!’

‘So that’s it. You’re just going to abandon him?!’

‘Yes, and so are you. I want you to break up with him.’

‘You want me to do what?’ Sally’s voiced screeched. ‘I don’t think that is a decision you have the right to make!’

‘As long as you live in my house with my ongoing support you will have nothing more to do with that man! If he had not been driving like a lunatic none of this would have happened!’

Before he could stop himself the words were out. Straight away he cursed himself but rallied instantly preparing for the onslaught that he knew was about to happen. But it did not come. Instead, across the face of the daughter he loved more than life itself, was a look of so much hurt he thought his heart would break. But he needed to snap her out of it, to get rid of this man who was like an anchor around the family and the company, dragging them down.

‘I cannot believe you just said that.’ Tears were now welling up in Sally’s eyes.

‘Oh wake up and smell the coffee Sally! Everyone blames him for Simon’s death, everyone. Michelle does. Simon’s family does.’

‘They don’t. It was Sarah’s fault, everyone knows that.’

‘No, what everyone knows is what everyone read in the police report which stated that to have such a catastrophic collision that actually ripped a car in two length ways, the car would have had to be travelling at over seventy miles per hour, maybe even over eighty. Eighty miles per hour on that narrow, twisty stretch of road. Eighty Sally, eighty. The police only let him off with my intervention. I only intervened because I thought he and you had suffered enough! If he’d just been driving at thirty or forty... Now you tell me who is to blame?’

‘Sarah. He’s a good driver it wouldn’t have happened if she hadn’t spiked his drink.’

‘I don’t care if he’s Lewis fucking Hamilton! He should not, should not,’ he hammered his fist into the desk for emphasis, ‘have been going at that crazy speed!’

‘So you blame him?’

‘Yes, as does everyone else. And now he’s drunk in meetings and he’s assaulted my best friend, a sixty-year-old man, putting him in hospital with fractured ribs and a punctured lung. He’ll pull through, but the doctors say he’s been lucky. Unsurprisingly that is not the kind of man I want my daughter to be associated with so you *will* break up from him.’

‘No, I won’t. He needs me.’

‘No, he doesn’t. He needs a five year one on one session with a psychologist in a padded room! Where are you going?’

‘To see David.’

‘At last you see sense!’

Sally had one hand on the door out of his office and she turned to look at him. The tears could not hide the fierce look of determination in her eyes. 'No, you misunderstand me. I'm going to see David to tell him that I'll be there for him, forever, and that we are going to get through this, together.'

She opened the door and made to exit the room but her father's voice stopped her.

'You step out of this room now in this manner and you can expect no more support from me. You'll no longer be allowed to live in my house. Your bank accounts that I am trustee of will be frozen which will leave you penniless. You need to realise the mistake you are making and the actions I take will make your life unbearable until the day he has nothing more to do with your life. Do you hear me? Do you hear me?!'

Without responding Sally stepped out of the room and gently closed the door behind her.