



Steve Harman

TWO

SLICE

TOASTER

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Steve Harman

First published in the UK 2012
Revised 2019

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100901536

ISBN 978-0-244-76687-0

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Two Slice Toaster
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To Lesley

My love, life and inspiration

Chapter 1

Somewhere, in London

....Suddenly there was a knock at the door. As the door opened, a dark silhouette of a figure rushed through the doorway seizing the woman by surprise. Ripping fervently at each other's clothes they were soon naked and moving towards the bottom of the stairs. A quick reposition saw him gently lower the woman upon the stairs; squeezing her breasts and thrusting into her body, making her heave with delight....

“Bollocks Wes!”

“What’s the matter with that Vikki, for god sake?”

“Well, where exactly do you want me to start?”

Vikki paused. “Basically its crap!.. AND...” She drew out the last word of the sentence as if she was thinking about how to approach her next one without prejudice. But for some reason her mouth got the better of her, as she blurted out, “...It wouldn’t happen in a *million* years, now would it.... Honestly... and to think we pay you good money, only to come up with this stuff, which comes across like *Mills & Boone* on Crack!” She followed on. “No amount of women would let you shag them before you’ve even kissed them, or shut the door for that matter, would they? She could even be laid on the stairs

showing off the wrong *slot* to the postman for all we know... or heaven forbid... the Paperboy!" She discreetly shifted her position on the high backed leather seat she was sitting on, gratefully freeing her trapped thong, caught awkwardly on a *pube*. This is exactly how she imagined getting *cock*, but never quite achieving it!

She continued. "Um... however, we do have a commitment to your work, past, present and future, so in *our* best interests, and that of your reading public, we'll give you 3 months to sort it out."

Wes Deep did not say anything. In fact, he was a man of few words. Most of his communicative skills seeped through his veins into his books. This, however, was the lowest that he had been for a long while. That what flowed freely onto paper, giving him nine bestsellers had all but dried up. The comments of his best friend, cut more often than not to the quick, but in a positive kind of way. Not like this though. He had never seen her react like this before. Was it stress? Should he be concerned? Or was it that finally, nine bestsellers later, he had to say goodbye to the thought of another one.

Vikki Hart looked puzzled for a split second, as she noticed the desperate look appear on Wes's face.

Did she go in too hard on him? Will he hate me for it? She thought.

He used to seem to respond to it in the past and kicked a fair few books out of himself. Lately, though things seemed to be a little strained.

Awkwardness and intolerance reigned through their *realm*. One of such peace and tranquillity shattered by the death of his father that he has never quite recovered from. Nothing at all articulated itself, into his last bestseller, which would suggest that, without talking about it or for that matter writing it in somewhere, that it was all wrapped up inside. It's probably what is stifling that which would normally be flowing onto paper quite readily by now! She believed in him. He could overcome this and take his novel output into double figures with the addition of another bestseller.

Wes let out a little sigh before he spoke. "What's happened to me Vix?"

Last time he called her that he was fumbling hopelessly in her knickers, outside the front door of her flat after a wild book launch party. She was dying for a shag, and he was not up for it in his state. Pitiful really, she thought. All these years and they had never actually got that close. As friends, yes! But as lovers always something got in the way. Either another book to concentrate on or some excuse as to why things are better left as they are. Still they were inseparable. Drawn together at a Student's union bar, so many years before. Wes announced then, that he was quitting college to write this book that he had tucked away in his head for years. Vikki promised him, not withstanding her drunken state, that she would publish it, as soon as it was ready. The fact that she kept to her word was beyond everyone, due to the state she was in that night, but it proved to

be the making of her and Wes. She flew up through the ranks, book after book... and as for Wes. Well, he extended his contract, lining the pockets of everyone at Wiggle Publishing Ltd along the way.

Wes had got up early that morning, to try to focus on the day ahead. He knew that the manuscript wasn't up to his usual standard and that Vikki would see straight through it. But he was a 'Blogger' by nature and felt that somehow, whatever it took, he would prevail. He would ride again through his domain with his head held high, being cussed at by the peasants beneath him.....

Who am I kidding, he thought, as he was wrenched back into the room with Vikki and his *crap* excuse for a manuscript, lying dishevelled on the desk in front of her.

"Look Wes, I know there's something wrong... Is it your Dad?" she probed.

"Fuck off about my dad already!"

Vikki gaped and instantly backed off.

"Look... I'm really sorry Vikki," he added seeming to calm after his outburst.

"Listen Wes. I don't want to be one to judge but you're either in need of talking this through or a damn good blow job!" She followed, "I can't help you with the latter, but if you need someone to talk to."

Wes smiled, "Liar!"

With that, he leant across the desk and gently kissed her on her soft, red lips. Vikki's whole

body melted into her knickers. *Why does he kiss me like that, then leave me to hang?* Vikki thought, gazing back into his deep brown eyes. But the moment was gone, and he was soon pacing up and down her office uttering obscenities of self deprecation and doom.

“For Christ’s sake Wes! Sit down and talk. I’ve got the whole day set aside for you, because you’re special and mean a lot to me. I can’t bear to see you like this! Please Wes talk to me!”

Suddenly, after a long silence and seemingly out of nowhere Wes exclaimed, “He never read my books! Never took an interest! Never once did he say he was proud of me!”

“Oh I’m sure he was Babe... and besides, I hardly think it’s his type of thing, your writing style that is!”

Wes knew he was on the verge of collapse. He also knew that Vikki was right. He did need to talk to someone, and that someone was her. No one knew him better, and no one cared as much, but where could he start. There was so much that had gone on, not only recently but also a lot in the past. All of this had been locked away for years and it just kept being added to. Wes leaned back in his chair, looked up and picked a point in his head where he could begin.

“Do you ever think about your mum?”

Vikki looked up at Wes and smiled, “Yes. I do, not that I can remember her, but my dad has always shown me pictures and they became my memories of her. Where is this going Wes?”

“I had never thought of my mum for years. When she left she tore everything that I had apart.

Every day after that I thought she is going to come home and put it all back where it belonged. I waited and waited and slowly, as time went on I grew less and less sure that she would come.”

Vikki, now with tears rolling down her face, reached across her desk for a tissue and wondered why she had offered to let Wes offload his *shit* onto her. Wes continued, “I grew to forget her as she was never around, until I never even thought of her at all. When dad died it all came flooding back. She is all I have left, and I don’t even know where she is, what she looks like or even... if she is still alive. All the years I spent without a word from her, I suppose it reached a stage when I turned bitter and resented her. It’s only recently that I wondered if she had a good enough reason for staying away. Maybe dad threatened her with something or other. Or maybe she just didn’t care. I don’t know. It did cross my mind to look for her but where would I start?”

“She’s your mum... she didn’t leave you; she left your dad. Nevertheless, no excuse is great enough to justify not contacting you in all that time, surely Babe?” Vikki questioned.

“You’ve got a point I suppose. It also crossed my mind that if she knew dad had died, whether she would turn up at the funeral. This is the first time I’d thought of her for years, and since then it keeps coming forward, like *an emergency stop... in a van full of shit!*”

Suddenly, it was very clear to Vikki. It was all too apparent. It had been staring her in the face for years, but why had she never noticed? How could she have missed this? The exact reason why they weren't an item; never have been, and never will be, unless this is sorted...and what better time than the present. Wes had been on her mind for years, but just recently even more. It had built to a crescendo early that morning, probably due to their meeting, but also due to the fact that Vikki can't seem to beat a path that doesn't lead to Wes' door. Scores of other young hopefuls have thrown themselves at her feet, and save the odd one or two lucky ones she has dragged back to her apartment, to feed her sexual appetite, they all failed to get off the mark. What Wes had just said about her mum had broken her dream from the night before. Vikki was stood in her kitchen preparing a meal. She carried a large silver platter, into the dining area. Seated around her large oak table were her father, step mother, her sisters and Wes. As she neared the table she noticed something moving, in the reflection of the silverware. She could see she was completely naked, and as she looked down through her cleavage, past her tight, flat stomach she saw to her horror, coming out from under her well shaped *Brazilian* was the biggest falcon looking bird of prey she had ever seen. Everyone around the table looked at the bird of prey as it hopped onto the platter and flew off into the distance. As Vikki placed the platter on the dining table, no one seemed to

notice her nakedness. It didn't seem to be an issue.

Vikki woke that morning with a start, almost a minute to the second, before the alarm went off. The black satin sheet on her super king sized bed was clinging to her body like a shroud and duplicating every contour. She switched off her alarm, threw off the satin sheet and walked over to a tall, window overlooking the Thames. As she stretched upwards the sun broke through the clouds and caught her *model* like body, causing two passing boats to collide. Unaware of this, she turned and headed for the en suite, ready to start another day, still unaware of her dream.

Yanked violently back into the room, Vikki wondered how much of Wes' heart wrenching story that she had missed. She knew she had to concentrate for his sake and fundamentally it was her who suggested that he should talk to her, so she'd be best advised to listen.

"...so that's it basically."

"What is?" Vikki probed.

"Like *an emergency stop... in a van full of shit!*"

Vikki was relieved to find out that she hadn't missed anything.

"Ok Wes. I know you don't want me acting all *trick cyclist* on you, but have you ever thought that maybe all of this hasn't done the way you handle relationships, any favours?"

"Dunno... but then again maybe others would see that quicker than myself."

“Wes... I want the truth... how many friends have you got?”

“Well. I’ve got mates. I talk to the postman most days. I often go down the pub for a drink and a *bit* of a laugh. I come in here every few weeks and catch up with everything and everyone. I’ve got mates... I suppose my biggest mate is you.”

“Are you calling me fat?” Vikki snapped with a grin.

“No... Vix of course I’m not,” Wes defended, slightly choked at the very thought, as well as knowing that for women, the three letter *F* word is far worse than the four-letter version.

“Wes... I was joking silly... anyway I mean real friends... someone who notices when you’re not there.”

“I was going to say...” Wes sighed “...you’re drop dead gorgeous.”

“And you’re a sad and lonely twat, who won’t admit it.” Vikki struck.

She was right again Wes thought to himself. “Ok I’ve got mates,” he said. “Not real friends, but I’ve had a laugh over the years. Got drunk on several occasions and ended up talking about things I shouldn’t and crying on someone’s shoulder. Most of the fun, laughter, tears, sharing secrets, hopes and dreams and watching films that make us laugh or cry was with you Vikki. It’s like you have always been there, even when we are miles apart. The truth is you are the only person that I have let close enough to me to make a difference... and I really do notice when you’re not around. How sad does that make me Vix?” he softly cried.

“Not sad at all, my darling...” Vikki replied reassuringly. She leant forward and gently kissed the tears that had formed on his lips
“...not sad at all.”

Chapter 2

Somewhere else, in London

The sun shone through the large window at one end of the large, dark wood panelled office. It lit the desk like an Altar. Which is quite ironic since the person sat in a halo of sunlight is the most ungodly person ever to walk the planet. Sid *the Slab* Brewer leant forward to pick up a thick plastic ruler on the far side of the desk. He was a large, grey haired man who knew what he wanted and exactly how to get it. He took shit from no one. He had done some *bird* in his earlier years, but managed to delude the Law ever since. No one was too large or too powerful for him to take on, but his natural Man Management skills were second to none. Gripping the ruler at both ends, he flexed it so far that it shattered and sent fragments flying in all directions, except his own. Four dark figures on the other side of the desk cowered as the debris shot past them.

“You c**ts!... not only are you costing me a fortune in stationary, but you are fucking all useless! An effortless task becomes increasingly fucking complicated,” he paused for a second or two, then continued “It’s a fucking Gratin Dauphinoise! How simple do you want it? Sliced taters, salt and pepper, crème fraiche, garlic and

bang it into a moderate oven for an hour... job done. Now fuck off and send the other lot in!" The four figures uttered, "Yes Boss" and sloped off toward the door. This was one of Sid's lives, as a restaurant owner. The other, we can say is less attractive to the outsider. Three tall, well dressed men in suits entered the room, picking their way through the pieces of broken ruler and closing the door behind them.

"Gentlemen!" Sid sneered with a slight grin. "Did you have a good time, yesterday?"

The men looked at each other and nodded in agreement. Sid stood up and walked to a table to one side of the desk, picked up a heavy crystal tumbler and poured himself a large whisky. Sinking it in one, he turned and hurled the glass at the wall behind the men.

"You c**ts!... You're costing me a fortune in glassware!" He paused for a moment while a shudder of red mist ran through his body.

When he felt more of a balance, he continued, "I told you to do it my way... you ignored me and did it your own way and look where it has taken us; absolutely nowhere!"

We could deduce from this that he is talking about a *Ruined Pavlova* or someone left the gas on. As we can see, both lives are pretty much of a muchness.

"Now get out there and do it again, but this time I want closure!"

Did someone leave the gas on? Nah... this is the real thing. This is what makes London special. This is what Sid does best. He gets

others to do his dirty work, so he isn't left holding the baby. Whiter than white, our Sid moves eloquently through people's lives, leaving a trail of death and devastation behind. But this time it is a bigger fish. The job that Sid had been waiting for. The one that would mean that...

A:... He can leave a legacy behind... and

B:... He can finally move on from his double life to a single one and live out the rest of his days with his wife and family.

This had been highlighted to him, after the birth of his first child. Suddenly nothing made sense anymore. It all made sense before when he was doing bird... or breaking peoples legs for non payment of debts. But since an earlier cruel turn of events, he has been careful not to bring his criminal life anywhere near his family life. The restaurant has always covered his tracks along with the people who do the crime on his behalf. It's as if children install something that gives us a sense of mortality. Suddenly everything is intensely real and a virtual paranoia sets in for life.

Two of the three men left the room and the third walked over to the door and beckoned someone in. "Clean this mess up before some fucker gets hurt."

A nervous Chinese man, crept in with a broom and trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, began sweeping the broken glass and plastic, back towards the door.

"Chan!" Sid alerted, "Bring me something from the Kitchen... this could be a long wait." Chan nodded and disappeared out of the room and

down the stairs with the stealth of a Ninja. Meanwhile, Sid turned to Dave and spoke. "Give me an update... I want to know everything. We need to get our information, use it to our advantage and plan our attack."

Dave *the Greek* Smith, pulled up a chair and sat on the other side of the desk. He was Sid's *number one*. Like a thoroughbred horse, pure to the cause. As things were, everything and I mean everything moved through Dave. He was like the Midfielder that West Ham had always wanted, but never quite got. He separated Sid's two lives and made sure that no one became too aware who Sid actually was. This job was 24/7, and he was the largest cheque on the payroll. To Sid this was nothing compared to what he received in return. Virtual anonymity from one existence, to the other. Dave knew that this situation would not be forever. He knew that once this job was through, that he would be cast aside. It didn't matter that, even with Sid's assurances, some things just change and life changes with it. Dave wanted to take control after Sid's departure, but Sid, being Sid wanted to metaphorically 'Put the lot on the bonfire', so as to cover his tracks. He didn't want anything left that could lead to him or arouse suspicion with his family. Sid knew that Dave could become a threat, but for now, he was an ally... but for how long?

Chan returned from the kitchen with a tray. He placed it on the desk in front of Sid and nodded.

“What the fucking hell is this? A fish slice, two spoons and a dishcloth! When I said, bring me something from the Kitchen... I actually meant something edible!” Sid let out a sigh “How I manage to surround myself with so many *back to fronts* is untrue... now fuck off and get me something to eat.”

Chan nodded once again and beat a hasty retreat down the stairs to the relative safety of the Kitchen.

He knew what he was doing, but had to act a certain way, so he remained consistent with what was expected of him. After all... he didn't want to arouse suspicion.

Sid turned his attention from the door, “So... tell me...”

“Well, the motors are re-plated and re-sprayed; the vans too. All of the tools and gear are in a lock-up across town. I want you to do the final check Sid in case the lads have missed something. I can't put the word out that something is happening, until we finally get the data we are waiting for. I'm also going to need a 'bag of sand' upfront as a silencer in case we get anyone hovering around the lock-up.”

“A Grand for a piece?” Sid exclaimed.

“No a monkey... the other £500 is disposable. I've had the vans cleaned out so, I don't want to risk leaving any traceable elements.”

“Sound!” Sid replied, took a very uneasy breath and continued “I want the Wife and family well out of the way, long before any of this goes down.”

“Sorted.”

“How, when and where?” Sid was extremely surprised that this factor had been covered, since he was unaware that Dave, not being a family man had realised his need to get his family well out of the way when the ‘Event’ finally occurred.

“A few days before, I’ll send someone around acting like Pest Controllers. With suspected vermin about, your missus is bound to want to go somewhere else. So then it’s up to you to sort out something when she rings you all stressed. Anyway, there are a selection of brochures here for you to wade through. Pick something ‘Last minute’ and they’re safe.” Dave reached across and grabbed a pile of colourful books from the side and put them in front of Sid. Who in turn looked at them and threw them back onto the side cabinet in the office.

Sid placed his hand onto the desk and rose to his feet. He turned and moved behind the black leather, high backed chair and stood looking out of the large window behind his desk. The large sash window overlooked Seven Dials in Covent Garden. He often found himself standing in the window, watching what was going on in the world outside, but more often looking to see who was about to descend on him at a moments notice. He often saw his wife walking across the road and could manage to get rid of anything of his ‘Other’ life, before she crossed the restaurant and climbed the stairs to the office. This time it was Liam and Miles returning with Sid’s

'Investment'. The man he paid 10k to get insider information from and had disappeared ever since.

Sweet he thought. *Bring it on.*

Liam *the Fish* Atwell and Miles *the Stoat* Baker stood either side of a man who looked a little anxious, but by breathing in deeply, helped establish a balance between tough and bottling it. He was the man who had been paid a rather large sum of money to deliver the goods... and until now hadn't. Time was being called by Sid who, by this time was growing a little concerned about his debtor's lack of concern. Dave, who had now risen to his feet, and was now slowly circling the trio like some kind of vulture, suddenly he struck a blow to the man's stomach. As he recoiled and sent out a gasp of air, Dave sent another blow to the back of his neck and sent him crashing to the floor. "Get up you fucker" spurted Dave. As soon as the man rose to his feet, Dave nudded him and sent him back down again. Liam *the Fish*, being sometimes wet, handed the man a cluster of tissues from a box to the right of him, as the man rose again slowly to his feet. He mopped his bloody nose and threw the cluster of tissues into a nearby bin.

Sid turned from facing the window, "How did you manage to find him so quick?"

"Ways and means Guv," quipped Miles "If I told you, I'd have to kill you."

"Ha fucking ha Son... Now if you value your Jacobs, as I'm sure you do..." Sid turned his attention to the man "...I would be inclined to

play ball with us. Ball, or in this case, balls being the operative word. Now since I've got a Restaurant downstairs with a trained Chef... albeit with a rather blunt instrument... It lends itself to the expression 'Cut off your bollocks, cook them and make you eat them'. Now that's the easy way out. Do you want to hear the hard way?"

The man swallowed hard and looked Sid in the eye. "Of course, I'll play ball," he replied with a slight grin across his face as he tucked his shirt in under his open jacket. With lightning speed, he pulled a piece, grabbed Liam by the neck with one hand and forcing the barrel of a gun in his head, with the other. Dave and Miles backed away to the side of the desk, blocking any exit to the door. The man forced Liam to sit in the chair once occupied by Dave, so as to free his left hand. This he thrust into his jacket pocket and produced what looked like a USB Memory Stick. Rubbing it between his fingers like a wad of ready cash, he spoke. "I take it this is what all the fuss is about eh?" returning the object back into his pocket.

Sid turned to Miles and said, "Why the fucking hell didn't you check him for a piece?"

"We did!"

"You obviously didn't because he's swinging one around now like a horse's dick! Fuck sake the lot of you are making me look like a right c**t."

"Er... excuse me BUT I'VE GOT A FUCKING GUN POINTING AT MY HEAD SO STOP TRYING TO WORK OUT WHO'S A C**T AND

WHO ISN'T AND TAKE THIS FUCKER DOWN...sorry, please before he blows my brains out of my arse... if it isn't too much trouble... PLEASE!" Liam's voice and persona were about to crack under the strain, but nevertheless, he still managed to reply to a text message. He read it out slowly as he wrote "Sorry mum, won't be home for tea, some cu..." The man snatched the phone and threw it behind the desk, smashing into pieces under the window. "Now can we get on with this", said the man retrieving the Memory Stick back out from his jacket pocket. "The way I see it, it's now worth 20 grand."

"Fuck off!" replied Sid "That's double."

"You can't slice me in, so the way I see it, it's worth more to you than you are letting on... so 20 g's."

"No way."

"20 g's, or the ginger twat gets it."

"Do it... he's replaceable... besides his mum isn't expecting him home for tea now."

"WHOA..WHOA..WHOA..!" Liam intercepted. He looked towards the window anticipating the impact of a bullet. A lorry drew up outside, with only the roof visible from the first floor, office window. Just at this moment Chan made his entrance with a tray of food. A moment's distraction, also caused by lightning and a clap of thunder rolling across the London skyline, threw the situation to Sid's favour. Dave, who had been quiet for a while, was eyeing up his chances. Upon hearing Chan moving ninja-like up the stairs, he seized his chance to throw the

balance. Liam had noticed this too, that was why he was bracing himself. Dave moved like a greased ferret across the office floor, kicking out at the man's gun hand, sending it up in the air and across the office floor. At this point the man, realising that it was probably *game over*, jumped onto the desk and crashed through the window onto the roof of the lorry. Chan went backwards down the stairs with a tray of food and an almighty crash, as Miles Liam and Dave, who was only last because he retrieved the abandoned shooter, cleared the stairs in two steps as they sped off in hot pursuit of the man. "He's making for Covent Garden... get the wheels!"

Liam Jumped into the waiting BMW and floored it around the corner sending the disabled parking badge hurtling across the dashboard. Liam *the Fish* Atwell knew that he had come once again, close to death. This was becoming quite a regular occurrence. Since working for Sid, he craved the excitement, the chase and the kill. He began his criminal ways as a weedy Irish kid, growing up on a Council Estate deep in the heart of East London. No car on the Estate hadn't been broken into and *joy ridden* by him and his mates. His parents had neglected him for a life of drugs and booze, so he was left very much, to his own devices. It was a miracle that he left school with four, decent grade O Levels, of which he used to get himself away from crime, to a respectable career. He wanted to become a Chef, so he started as a Kitchen Assistant in the

Restaurante del Sol. You know where this is going... anyway Sid quickly seized the potential of this young man and took him under his wing, *back* into a life of crime. Going by the phrase... *What doesn't kill you makes you stronger...* turned Liam, over the years into a, still scrawny but *hard as nails* man. He would panic in the face of danger as a cover and then turn cocky, with as much *balls* and *front* as any other Gangland criminal. He could hot wire any car on the road and drove like a pro. He owed a lot to Sid for steering him, albeit in the wrong direction. But he knew that wherever Sid went; he would go... Sid had assured him of this, by saying he was the son he never had.

That brings us nicely around to Sid's offspring... the Brewer Group. Four exceptionally attractive women, all different, yet remarkably striking. He maintained that there looks had nothing to do with him, being the ugly twat of the family. The oldest, Victoria was from another relationship way before he met his wife. He was involved with a woman called Connie in the late '70's, who used to be his right hand man, so to speak. She knew every aspect of his two lives, in much the same way as Dave *the Greek* does now. She would work in the restaurant as a waitress cum cashier, sort the accounts and also run the *Racket* side of things. They had a daughter together, but never married due to the fact that she was already married, even though she never saw her husband, who thought Victoria was his own. He was in the Merchant Navy and rarely came home.

In '87 when Victoria was four years old her mother was killed in a *drive by shooting* incident and her legal father (That's how it was in those days; easier to explain I suppose) was lost at sea. Sid had lost everything and wasn't about to give up Victoria to the Social Care System. He fought the High Court to prove he was Victoria's legal and biological father, with every last penny he had... and although the court wouldn't allow Sid to change Victoria's surname, he knew she had the heart of a Brewer, so this didn't matter... he had won. Never again would he EVER mix business and pleasure. Thus, Victoria became a little bit special to him. Although very successful and the only one so far to leave home, she never stopped being Sid's Little Princess, an accolade the other three couldn't quite achieve. Nevertheless they were all unique in their own way, and he would die trying to protect them. Kimberley, Amber and Rebecca were triplets that came around shortly after he married Joanne, his wife of now twenty odd years. They live in a house, in a more upmarket part of the East End. Sid in a desperate attempt to separate both his lives, moved there, just after losing Victoria's mother. Neither Liam or for that matter any of Sid's entourage, had ever visited there before, let alone knew exactly where it was.

Sid walked to the far side of the office through to the toilet "What a mess," he cursed. Chan, who was busily trying to clean up everywhere, glanced across at Sid, who was

admiring himself in the mirror. Sid produced a comb from his back pocket he proceeded to neaten his hair. *You're not getting any younger, you old twat*, he thought, but also didn't know how much longer he could keep this up before it all caught up with him.

Chan spoke, "Misser Bleuer... we have clean window flom stleet, and glass off payment but we muss get new window before you cock get lick."

"What!?" Sid perplexed.

"You vawable cock on wall... get lick by someone."

"Oh yeah... right... why don't you tell my wife when she arrives and get her to sort it?"

"Ok, but last time talk to me she got nice tit and said I should fuck her."

Chan hit the deck like a sack of shit due to a punch on the nose by Sid "Fuck me Chan you get worse!"

"Just like that!" Chan cried mopping his bloody nose on his shirt, "Boss you nice tit and want me to fuck you too? No one risten!"

"Oh right... you meant *nasty*... ok Chan get up... we'll get you booked in for English lessons."

The mobile phone in his pocket began to vibrate with a stifled tune becoming clearer, as he pulled it out to answer. "Yeah!", he was a man of few words.

"Job done Guv... got the USB thing and we're on our way back."

"Sound."

Liam drove a different way to the lads on foot and by virtue of the *one way* system, ended up

outside an Italian restaurant on Henrietta Street. Dave caught up with Miles and together, dodging the crowds and jumping over the pushchairs of startled mothers, kept the man firmly in their sight. They were able to gain on the man only because a Street Entertainers crowd shifted right into his path slowing him down to a jostle. The man turned his head for a split second and ran straight into the entertainer sending them both in a 360° spin. Liam, who was now stood in front of the parked car, caught a glimpse of this and moved forward to intercept. Dave moved in at this point as well and discreetly stuck the barrel of the shooter into the man's back. They hustled the man into the back of the car, with Miles and Dave either side of him. Liam took the wheel, three pointed the motor and sped off in the opposite direction. Dodging the traffic and nipping up a few one way streets the wrong way got them to where Dave was instructing Liam to head for. With a screech of brakes and a pitch to the left, in a cloud of smoke the car disappeared down into an underground car park. The car stopped at the lower floor. Miles took the Memory Stick from the man's jacket pocket, grabbed the gun, in a gloved hand from Dave and dragged the man from the car. Miles pushed him to the floor and sent a bullet through his forehead. He threw the gun onto the lifeless corpse, sat in the front passenger seat and Liam sped off in a cloud of tyre smoke.

Chapter 3

The Garden

The sun was beginning to set across the city, as Vikki and Wes headed for the Tube Station. It was Vikki's idea to grab a coffee and something to eat, in a little place they often frequented near Covent Garden. After all, they had missed lunch, and spent the rest of the day discussing the best possible way that Wes could turn a whole book around, within the three month time limit that Vikki had forced upon him. He wasn't angry with her over the decision, but he did feel a little let down, especially since earlier, he had poured his heart out to her. But he knew Vikki, unlike him, was professional enough to separate her business life, from her social life. He just had a life; singular and *all in*. She could shout profanities at him one moment and hug him the next. Then again, was that just a *woman* thing? He searched the idea, deep into his psyche. For it was there, deep in the far reaches that he had ever interacted, so close to someone else, other than Vikki. He could remember his mother, when he did something wrong, that she would scald him, then make light of it by reminding him of nice, pleasant occurrences, or praised him for something he did well. His father's reaction to the same *scenario* would have been to sit in silence and ignore Wes, for hours. It was as if it

became a part of the punishment. Could that also be the way that he would react, under similar circumstances? He remembered a time that his father had put a pair of bright red Y fronts in the washing machine, turning all Wes' light blue school shirts, a funny violet colour. He never spoke to him until they were replaced with new ones... and a promise never to go near the washing machine again. And the time Vikki tried to open a bottle of wine with a traditional corkscrew, punching him square in the bollocks. He rolled about the floor in agony, for twenty minutes before tipping the wine down the sink and getting a, less painful beer. He didn't utter a word to her for the rest of the evening. Even though she tried apologising profusely, whilst trying not to laugh, Wes didn't want to know, so she let herself out, and left him to get on with it. A week or so later, she rang his doorbell and when he answered she said, "Wes... I.. am.. so.. fucking sorry. I don't want to fall out with you over this. I've got a bottle of Rioja... with a screw top." Maybe he was too fractious and stubborn; whereas, Vikki wasn't. Maybe he could try to be a little more flexible in his attitude. After all, it could be just what he needs to do to save his flagging career. He had a substantial head start by off loading a proportion of his baggage earlier, with Vikki, and if there were to be a glimmer of hope, then this would be it. He was up for the challenge and had a lot to prove. The only thing was that, since his father's summer house had been left to him in his will, he hadn't

actually visited the place. The last time he visited the place, it was two years earlier. He and Vikki had gone down for a week, to try to give her a break from the pressure she was under. He had to go down anyway, since the *Daily*, who's tasks had become more like *Weekly*, with thirty five years of service behind her, was due to retire. He thought it most fitting if he could personally thank her for her loyal service on behalf of his father, and to welcome her daughter, who was taking over her duties, into the fold.

It was a large house on the west coast, within the spit of a village public house. A gravel drive led from the road outside the pub, to steps leading to a double front door. Two large windows left and right of the door let copious amounts of light into the lounge and dining room respectively. The front was laid to lawn and adjoined that of the pub. Along the front of the pub, running along the drive and curving around the back of the house, was a constantly flowing, babbling brook. Wes practically grew up there spending most summer holidays as a child, enjoying the idyllic surroundings. This was a far cry from the life he had developed in the City, but on reflection, five of his most successful books had been written, on the solid oak table, in the middle of the large kitchen. But there was an underlying problem that had to be overcome every time he went near the place. For some years earlier, when he was five years old, his parents had a flaming row in the middle of the night. Upon hearing the muffled voices, he slowly crept down the stairs towards the lounge

door. The voices were getting louder, but he didn't quite understand the issues involved. He only made out the sound of his mother crying as she uttered the words, "How could you?... Here in the lounge... With Wesley here... What were you thinking?"

A dead silence ensued only to be broken by the muffled sound of his father's voice. Wes couldn't quite make out what he was saying as he strained his ear against the lounge door. The sudden injection of his mother's voice made him jump in his crouched position, lose balance and fall head first through the now gaping doorway, as his mother let rip with the words, "Don't touch me, you monster. I don't want you anywhere near me!"

With that she stormed out of the room and hardly noticed poor little Wes, heartbroken, confused and frightened laying on the floor, in the doorway as she stepped over him. She doubled back, picked Wes up off the floor and carried him back to bed. "You poor darling. You didn't have to hear that. Don't worry mummy's coming back to get you, as soon as I can sort things out."

Wes has never seen his mother since. He had often questioned his father about that eventful night, but his answer never quite explained what Wes had seen for himself. Did his Dad have an affair that led to scenes of a sexual nature happening in the lounge? This he didn't know for sure, but why had his mum left him with this so called monster. Why? He was too young at the

time and didn't understand, and now that he was older, he was *none the wiser*.

He was woken of his deep thought by a roll of thunder, as it clapped across the sky. They continued their way across the square and took a seat on the last empty table outside the Café. Wes dropped his jacket on the back of one of the chairs and pulled out another for Vikki. It had been extremely hot for the last couple of days, and London was already flagging with the heat. No sooner than they sat down, a waiter appeared to take their order, and then he promptly disappeared back inside the Café. Across the square a large crowd had gathered, encircling a Street Entertainer, sat astride a rather high unicycle, rocking to and fro, trying to stay on the *business* end. His distant voice could be heard followed by sporadic bursts of laughter from the crowd, as he did his utmost to keep them entertained.

Wes felt a hand on his knee and turned to Vikki, who was now gazing at him with a deep concern, "You will be ok, won't you Wes? I mean really ok with the house and everything. Just say the word and I'll be down there if it gets too much."

"Thanks mate, but I'm sure that once I get there and the old place starts to flow through my veins again, I believe I will uncover the *Bestseller* you are looking for, quite quickly."

Vikki tried not to show her disappointment, but she knew deep down that he was right.

Nevertheless, this did not detract from the fact

that she wasn't done yet. She still had this resounding desire to be alone with him in the middle of nowhere, and that was something she felt she could convince him to want too. He just didn't know it yet. Vikki felt that the only thing she couldn't do, was make him love her in the way that she wanted him to, especially when most of their contact, revolved around the Office. This would need to come from him alone, and what a prime opportunity this could have been to put everything in its place, once and for all. The waiter returned with their order and carefully laid it out on the table. Vikki removed her hand from Wes's knee and began to pour a little milk, first into Wes's coffee, making a total mess of it and then her own.

Wes frowned a little and said sarcastically, "Whatever's the matter with you?"

"I'm going to miss you that's what, you fucking tit!" replied Vikki, rather loudly, bursting into tears and drawing the attention of everyone around her, including most of the Street Entertainer's audience. The Street Entertainer, at this time, was letting the crowd know about his media items for sale, since these items made up half of his income. He had various DVDs of his act, captured in various parts of the UK. He was trying to push his new idea; an eight gigabyte memory stick packed full with ALL of his DVDs included, plus links to his website and loads of other fun things, and loads of room left to add user files etc; holding it up to show the crowd. He was in the middle of his spiel and sensing he

was losing his grip on the crowd, he popped the item back into his jacket pocket. Upon hearing this sudden diversion, created by Vikki, the Street Entertainer seized the opportunity to incorporate this into his act, so as not to lose his once captive audience. The crowd parted as the Street Entertainer bumped into some idiot running through his crowd, sending them in an arm locked 360° spin he gesticulated to go the other way with him, like some highland fling, but the man disappeared through the crowd on the other side. The entertainer laughed this rejection off and walked across to where Vikki and Wes were sitting, holding a rather wilting and dilapidated rose. He leant across, kissing Vikki on the cheek and in everyone's distraction, discreetly slipped the memory stick from earlier, into her hand; she dropped it straight into her open handbag beside her, on the cobbled floor below.

Phase One of her double plan was in place, *Phase Two* would happen later. All she had to do now was convince Wes to let her go with him, at least for a few days or so. She knew if she pushed hard enough, he would give in, but she felt it would be better if he came up with the idea. This wouldn't be easy, knowing how stubborn he could be.

"Please accept this rose as a token of the way that I feel about you," said the Street Entertainer, in a rather broad Scottish accent. The moment Vikki touched the rose, it sprung back to life. He continued, "I am in awe of your beauty... which

stiffened this wilting flower, and other wilting items, concealed about my person!” Everyone who was in earshot of this was in raptures of laughter, as he added, “Don’t cry and be sad around the rose, the ancient symbol of the vagina, for who would want a sad orgasm?” Vikki, at this point was grinning broadly, as she replied, “It’s a good job that I know you Jimmy!” “Ah yes... known by you madam... but still unknown and god knows how, to the Metropolitan Police and the HM Inspector of Taxes,” he added and disappeared back into the crowd, awash with laughter.

Vikki popped the rose into the vase already occupied by a couple of large daisies, in the middle of the table, wiped her eyes and turned towards Wes as he spoke. “Well Vikki, that looked like it cheered you up?” and added, “I must remember to send you a dozen red *vaginas*, when I get to Cornwall.”

Vikki laughed politely, but she wasn’t amused. It was the orgasm bit that interested her and even a *sad* one would be better than nothing. She had to think quickly, for her time to convince Wes, was running out fast, and she knew it wouldn’t be easy to get her man. How could she make him think that he needed her down there with him? There must be a way, but how, especially since it was her, putting pressure on Wes to produce something substantial. Of course, that would be the only thing on his mind by now, so any kind of *foothold* she could get on the

situation, could swing the next vital turn of events.

I'm thinking too hard, she thought. C'mon Vikki... eyes closed... deep breath... and relax.

That was the advice her doctor had given her to tackle the *stress waves* as they crashed over her. *That's it, she thought. The very thing that had started Wes' growing concern for her.*

The crowd had dispersed, and Jimmy was packing the last of his props into an unusually large black trunk. Locking the lid he turned and started walking back towards where Vikki and Wes were sitting. Changing pace to a run, he jumped, cleared an empty table and landed on the chair opposite with his arms outstretched "Taa dah!" he implied.

"Dr Scolari," Wes interjected, then turned and nodded to a waiter who acknowledged him.

Seconds later he returned from inside the Café clutching a cold can of Cola, which he placed on the table in front of Jimmy.

Jimmy Scolari had known Vikki and Wes for years. After he had graduated from University with a PhD, he studied under Wes' father, before pursuing his dream of a life on the road.

They sat there chatting until well after anyone was left sat outside the Café and the waiters were busy cleaning and clearing the tables.

"So you're leaving us, Wes?" Jimmy questioned.

"Afraid so. Only for a few months though. Just until I get this book out of my head and onto paper. Well actually get it into my head first and then onto paper."

“What’s your view on it Vikki?” Jimmy cut in, as he noticed Vikki welling up. She drew breath and started. “Well actually it was my idea. Maybe he could wipe out a few ghosts while he’s down there, and when he returns I’ll get a *shag* out of him... sorry did I say *shag*?... I meant *book*.” She began to shake slightly, causing her voice to crack and drew another breath before going in for the kill. “I need this as much as Wes does. In fact, in view of the current financial crisis, *cock* sales... sorry did I say *cock* sales?... silly me, I meant, book sales have been down as much as 40%, so if Wes’ new book goes south I’m afraid we might all go with him.” She broke into tears as she continued “I really don’t know if I can cope anymore, with the constant wave of competition out there. Especially since I’m relying on some *stiff opposition*, provide by Wes, to carry me... did I say carry?... I meant *fuck*... Oh Christ look at me I’m shaking. Did I just say something?” With that, she burst, and sat there sobbing her poor little heart out. Wes moved across to her and scooped her into his arms. “There, there Vix. Why didn’t you tell me you were under so much pressure Babe? That’s so typical of you. All day you’ve helped me sort myself out, listened to me and cried with me even though you need as much support as I do.” *Steady on pal*, she thought. *Don’t get above yourself*. But she had to keep up the pretence just long enough to get her way with him. “Vixxie Babe...” Wes kissed her softly on the forehead.

Vixxie? That's a new one, she thought, *This could be going... direction knickers!*

"...I can't leave you like this. We'll check you in with a doctor and I'll postpone going down west until you're the other side of this."

BOLLOCKS, she thought and knew she had to think and act quick... ..and then spurted out, "But Wes... what about the book?"

"It can wait. Your health is far more important to me, than anything else."

BOLLOCKS, she thought again. This is proving more difficult than she first imagined. "But Wes the doctor would only tell me to do what I did before. Lots of rest and get away from it all."

"Ok Vix, I'll book you a fortnight in the Caribbean."

"AAAAAAAaaaaaaHHHHHHhhhhhh!!!", she tried to think this, but it spurted out before she could stop it.

"Ok, Ok I think you had better come with me for a while. It'll also mean we won't have to *miss* one another."

Re... fucking... sult...!! She thought, slightly pleased with herself whilst still trying to appear helpless and vulnerable, so as to milk the hugs and attention for all it was worth.

Jimmy wished them both the best of luck and a safe journey, before going on his way. His assistant, Gemma had brought the van down Henrietta Street and after waving to Vikki, she begun loading Jimmy's gear in through the side door. Jimmy hurled the last few pieces in, shut the sliding door, jumped into the front and sped off out of sight. "I'll just send Gemma a text

message, to let her know that I'm going away with you for a few days," said Vikki. "I want her to keep an eye on my apartment, and make sure the Cleaner is able to get in."

Seconds later a reply from Gemma came in, "*Ok hun. Hve a nce tme. R u gng 2 gt a shg out of hm ths tme?*" Gemma, who had known Vikki since school, also knew her quest for Wes' cock. Well, it was deeper and more meaningful than that, but as a bottom line, that was about it.

Vikki and Wes gathered their belongings and began to walk together, slowly across the square direction tube station. They discussed a few tactics and decided that they would pop back to Wiggle Publishing to pick up Vikki's car that remained parked almost permanently in the underground car park, beneath the office block; drive to Vikki's to pack a few things and spend the night at Wes' before heading off to the west country, early the next morning.

It was just before 8pm when they reached Wes' apartment. It wasn't modest by any means, but it was a great deal smaller compared to the vast, seldom frequented *living space*, that Vikki called *Home*. Situated on the side of a canal, just outside West London, it was the top floor of a disused Mill. Converted in the late '90's it provided safe and quiet location for Wes to live and work in. The whole complex comprised of five converted buildings with six dwellings, two of which situated in the main Mill building itself. The complex was contained within a perimeter wall

with security gates, offering a totally safe environment. Wes loved the location and the virtual seclusion that it provided. Vikki followed Wes up the external brick staircase and entered the apartment behind Wes, closing the door to the outside world behind her. The lobby she was standing in was roughly three metres square with a cloakroom to the right-hand side. A solid oak door, in an oak framed glass panelled wall, led through to the living area. It was quite a large room with the kitchen at one end, under one of the bedrooms and a lounge area at the other. The master bedroom was gallery style over the top of the lounge area with an oak staircase leading off from one side. In the middle was the dining area with a vaulted ceiling from the bedroom wall at the kitchen end; right over the galleried master bedroom, at the lounge end. It was pretty impressive, and Vikki loved it more than her own. She found her own apartment pretty sterile in comparison, but to her it was just bought as an investment, rather than a place to live. Wes', on the other hand, was large but still cosy and full of character. Basically, a proper place to live and settle down.

“Go and make yourself comfortable in the lounge and I’ll fix us something to eat.” Wes said disappearing into the kitchen. Vikki hung her jacket in the lobby and walked through to the lounge. She sat on one of the large brown sofas, kicked off her shoes and put her feet up. She untwassed her skirt, laid back and relaxed.

Here... she thought. This is where I want to stay forever. Wined, dined, sixty-nined and fucked

*within an inch of my life, by Wes... My Wes...
Ahh bliss. But for now, little steps.*

She was woken out of her deep thought by Wes as he brought two plates of Pasta through to the lounge. He placed both meals on the coffee table, in front of where Vikki was sat, climbed over the sofa and returned to the kitchen. He returned with two large wine glasses and a bottle of red wine. He vaulted the sofa, this time upon his return, and sat down next to Vikki, who by this time had begun eating her meal. Wes picked up the bottle of Chilean red, unscrewed the top and poured Vikki and himself a glass. He picked up the remote and turned on the massive, flat screen TV, on the wall in front of them. He began feeding himself in one hand and flicking through channels with the remote, with the other. Suddenly aware that it had gone too quiet next to him, he turned to Vikki. Wes stopped *mid chew*, and noticed as she glared at him. "Sorry Babe..." he swallowed. "I'm not really helping you. Am I...?"

"You're making me a little nervous actually... by the way, this is gorgeous, what is it?"

"Something from a packet, don't sweat it... I can't take any responsibility for it. Cheers." They both clinked glasses and drank a sip of the wine. "This is lovely too... don't tell me... since it's out of a bottle, you can't take responsibility for that either?"

Wes smiled across at her. He loved her sense of humour, then spoke, "We could watch a film if you want, after this?"

“Ok that sounds like a plan,” Vikki agreed. The thought of cuddling up on the sofa far outweighed her hunger at that time, but she did eat as much as she could manage. They cleared the remnants of their dinner away into the kitchen, and then returned to the lounge area. Wes searched through his vast library of DVD’s for a suitable film as Vikki caught the end of the news.

“Police have identified the body of a man they found earlier, in an underground car park in London,” the Newscaster announced.

“Did you hear that Wes?”

“No... what’s that?” he said, turning his attention from his search.

“This guy, murdered in town today... Christ, look at him. He looks like the guy who bumped into Jimmy this afternoon.”

Wes looked at the picture on the screen.

“He has been identified as John Poole, an IT Consultant from Stratford, East London. Police are appealing for witnesses who know anything in connection with this crime, to come forward by ringing the number at the bottom of your screen.”

“Fuck me Vikki I think you are right... are you going to ring?” Wes turned his attention from the screen, to see Vikki put her mobile phone up to her ear.

“Aww... it’s a bloody automated service,” she moaned as she began punching in the required digits. “Er... yes, that was quick. Sorry I didn’t expect to get through so quickly.” Vikki gave her mobile number and answered a few other

irrelevant questions before being asked what her reason for ringing, was in connection with. "The guy on the news earlier, John Poole was it? We... I mean, I think he was the same man who bumped into my friend, in Covent Garden, then disappeared along Henrietta Street towards the tube station." There was a slight pause, then Vikki continued "Ok, honestly that's no problem... thank you... and you too... bye." "Well?" Wes probed.

"They've taken the details and asked me to ring back if I think of anything else," Vikki said sending a radiant smile across to Wes. The spotlight above the sofa lit up Vikki's face in a way he had never recognised before. A strange force in his stomach that once was a gentle simmer, was beginning to develop into something far greater. Something like hunger, but not for food; like thirst but not for water; like a yearning... but more like, desire. He felt like shouting loudly, *I love you Vix*, but he thought she'd laugh or make fun of his feelings. Surely she wasn't seriously interested in him.

Why does he look at me with great depth, and then leave it at that? Vikki thought. *Is it that he doesn't find me attractive?* She knew that was untrue. She had often seen his *cock* move, in his trousers when he looked at her, or felt his trousers tighten when they hugged. *I'm the woman!* She thought *I shouldn't have to make all the moves, surely?* She wanted to go over to him and snog his face off, but she would rather that he approached her, since it was a pivotal

move. This didn't stop her from wondering, how long would she have to wait? Then she thought back to when she was laid on the sofa, before dinner. *Little steps Vikki... little steps!*