

LOVE IS AN OPEN ROAD



Don't Read in the Closet 2015

AGENDA

Alp Mortal

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

AGENDA

By Alp Mortal

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Photo Description

In a modern office space, two young men are in the throes of a passionate kiss. One of the young men is smartly dressed and standing between the legs of the other young man, who is sitting on a table. The young man, who is sitting on the table, is naked save for the pair of briefs he is wearing, which are being pulled down.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

For the last five years I've been his right hand man. I handle his schedule, I make his coffee, and I pick up his suits from the dry cleaner. I even make the arrangements for his hook ups with other men. The world sees a ruthless businessman, a cold bastard. But I know him. Behind the icy facade, I see HIM. The man who is meant to be my other half. Question is, when is he going to see ME? Not as his personal assistant, but as a lover, as a partner, as a man.

Thank you

Please only contemporary.

I would like a HEA and sex on-page, but the call is yours

Sincerely,

Eleftheria

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: British, humorous, quirky, office, angst, rampant asshattery

Word Count: 15,322

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Chapter One

Dream A Little Dream

“Take me, Jonathan. Please... fuck me! Oh God, that’s fuucckking awesome... harder! Give it to me. Make me scream, make me beg... Jesus! You’re so big. Fuck... I’m gonna come-come-come...”

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep!

“What the fuck? Shit!”

I have the sweat-drenched body, the reek of sex in my nostrils, the aching balls, the wet patch chilling beneath my thighs, the breathlessness and the palpitations... just not the man of my dreams.

The shower beckons but I want to revel in this moment of delusion for a minute longer. I imagine his weight shifting and a playful slap on my arse. He fingers me. I groan and turn my head to see his face—the satisfaction playing out on his lips, the tip of his tongue between his teeth, his eyes reflecting my complete defeat.

I reach out to touch his cheek and he disappears like a genie in a puff of pink smoke.

“I love you, Jonathan...”

It is five o’clock in the morning—Monday morning, June twenty-first. Summer... the fucking board meeting!

A three-minute shower, a quick shave, Monday’s suit-and-tie combination: the board meeting suit and tie. Coffee, teeth, phone, keys, wallet—I’ve forgotten something but I don’t have time.

“Goodbye, Humphrey. Try not to piss all over the living room if you can help it.”

A single, delusional, gay, cat-loving-hating, stressed, compulsive, vegan, Buddhist, graphic-novel-reading, coffee addicted, would-love-to-live-in-a-loft, pretentious, art-loving, fashion-challenged, horny-as-fuck thirty-something, executive personal assistant.

“Hey, Garth!”

“Good morning, Mr Enilon.”

I always make a point of getting to know the night security staff. In the past, they have mistaken me for an intruder and called the police. I have considered moving into the stationery cupboard to save time on the commute.

I just need to get ahead today.

I embroil myself in making notes against each agenda item for Jonathan to refer to as he answers questions from the investors who are attending the meeting today. He really appreciates the fact that I have an MBA and understand the markets. Janice has cleaned his office but I set out fresh glasses and unscrew the cap of the water bottle so that he doesn't have to waste time doing it himself. I log on and deal with the first batch of emails; I also produce a digest of all the relevant economic forecasts and statistics and lay out the newspapers, flagging all of the articles that I know he'll want to read over the first cup of coffee.

I take a breather, escaping to the rear courtyard, grabbing a coffee en route. I smoke three cigarettes while scanning his Twitter timeline and re-tweeting in an attempt to push his followers up to ten thousand.

Then I start to reconcile his expenses and fabricate three receipts. I confirm and reconfirm all of his diary appointments for the rest of the week, booking him into the tailor, the salon, the masseur and lunch with his mother—also arranging the catering for his get-together on Thursday, and recheck all of the RSVPs, adding profile notes to the summary of the guests who have confirmed.

Arabella arrives at eight o'clock to set up prior to Jonathan's entrance, to apply his make-up for the photographs, which are being taken for the latest company brochure. Denise leaves the black folder on his desk. I never get to see what is inside. Howard loiters, hoping to get five minutes to pitch for his new project.

Martyn texts as he drops him off at the kerb and I feel physically sick, realising that I have forgotten to apply deodorant this morning.

“Morning, Maris!”

“Morning, Jonathan...”

I scurry in after him, taking his jacket and briefcase, waiting on the next clutch of tasks, anticipating a meltdown when he sees the Bank of England's forecasts on economic growth. Poised with pad and pencil in my hand, I enjoy the best five minutes of my day, as Jonathan reels off his instructions—each one a firm stroke of my cock.

I hobble out, leaving Arabella to dust his forehead and apply a little lip gloss. Howard jumps in as she waltzes out, and she surreptitiously places a packet of deodorising wipes on the corner of my desk.

Howard barrels out with a flea in his ear. I glide back in to soothe *the temper* before PR phones down to announce the photo-call, hoping he'll agree to lunch with his mother on Friday. "Impossible! Put her off and get Lincoln on the phone for me—and what is that disgusting citrus smell?"

"Furniture polish... The caterer wishes to know if you want organic wines on Thursday."

"You deal... also need three *entertainers*—usual agency—all blond... and two tickets for the new production at Sadler's Wells opening on Saturday. You're looking peaky, Maris; get more sleep."

I leave him talking to Lincoln and make a beeline for Janey's desk to get Jonathan synchronised with Barry, his counterpart in the investment subsidiary.

"For fuck's sake, Maris, you look like shit!"

"Morning, Janey; I didn't sleep very well last night—"

"Or ever! Why do break your balls for that asshole?"

"I like working for Jonathan; he's good for my career."

"Maris... stop bullshitting yourself, wake up and get a life!"

I do like working for Jonathan. The last five years have been the most exciting in my professional career—and the most depressing in my personal one.

Over the last five years, my feelings for Jonathan have developed to the point where I am in physical pain if I am apart from him for longer than a few hours. The weekends are purgatory. He is tall, dark and handsome; highly intelligent and quick-witted; innovative—a risk taker at the top of his game and angling for a big promotion. He's already promised me that if he gets the job in Hong Kong, then I'm going with him. He always says, "Maris, I cannot do this without you. Please promise me that you won't leave."

I always promise that I won't. Why would I?

However—and it must be them and not me because I am closer to him—everybody else thinks he's a perfect shit and an asshole to boot. I have seen him take people down a peg or two, fire employees and have them frog-marched off

of the premises, make Cindy cry, and stiff Lincoln over budgets and deadlines more times than a King's Cross whore gets it on a Friday night.

I've proven myself to be a very capable and useful assistant. If we relocate to Hong Kong, then I feel it would be the perfect time for us to take the next step in our *relationship*.

"Maris!"

"Coming, Jonathan!"

"Have more self-respect, Maris! You run around him like a puppy and he doesn't even remember what your surname is... Pick me up for lunch."

"Okay, Janey..."

I scurry back to Jonathan's office, sensing energy levels rising.

"What is it, Jonathan?"

"Sabre Corp is rolling over. As soon as the board meeting is finished, I want the team assembled. We're going for the lot!"

"Right!"

"I hope you didn't have plans for this evening; this could be an all-nighter."

"No, that's fine. What about my appraisal?"

"Oh. Fill in the form and I'll sign it later. Right!"

I love the way he says 'Right!'; it gets me all squishy inside.

"And Maris..."

"Yes, Jonathan?"

"Remove the smell of furniture polish from this office by the time I get back. It's making my nose itch."

"Of course."

I decamp to the bathroom and attempt to wipe my pits with a screen wipe.

"What the hell are you doing, Maris?"

"Oh hi, Lincoln... forgot my deodorant."

"Your *dream of a boss* has just shafted me again. I swear I'll take a swing at that bastard!"

“Jonathan only has the company’s interests at heart, Lincoln. He’s extraordinarily visionary.”

“He’s a *cunt*. I hope you got your full bonus.”

“The appraisals aren’t due in until tomorrow.”

“Derek asked for the list of top performers at the meeting yesterday—deadline was last night.”

Jonathan will have put my name forward.

“I’m sure it’s all in hand. We’re going for Sabre Corp—Jonathan has called a team meeting straight after the board meeting.”

“Jesus!”

Lincoln bolts to muster his troops.

I scurry back to clean the office. My pits begin to itch and then flare up.

“Ouch!”

Janey appears. “What’s wrong?”

“I used some screen wipes to get rid of the citrus-perfumed deodorant I used this morning, and it burns like hell.”

“Why?”

“It was making Jonathan’s nose itch.”

“Prick! Heard about Sabre. What do you want from the deli for lunch?”

“Uhm... just a salad.”

“Get a life, Maris.”

I grind my teeth and picture Jonathan—just as he was in the photograph he posted to his Instagram account last summer; the one of him in white swimming trunks, standing beside Giovanni, at the poolside bar at the hotel in Hawaii. I Photoshopped out Giovanni’s hand, which was resting on Jonathan’s hip. I knew he didn’t like it but he was too polite to say anything to Giovanni. That’s Jonathan: all heart really.

When we’re in Hong Kong, it’ll be me beside him and my hand resting on his hip and he won’t mind at all.

Chapter Two

All-Nighter

“Right!” It’s one thirty in the morning and the team has just been dismissed with their orders. I am quietly gathering papers together and clearing rubbish from the table.

“Maris...”

“Yes, Jonathan?”

“You won’t leave me, will you?”

“Of course not!”

“Hong Kong is so damn close that I can smell it. Sabre Corp is it, the ticket I’ve been waiting for... just can’t afford to slip up on this.”

“You won’t. We’ll get it!”

“I can always rely on you to pep me up, Maris... Right! Off home. See you tomorrow.”

“Goodnight, Jonathan...” *Sweet dreams.*

It’s after the lift has already closed that I notice the unsigned appraisal form still sitting on his desk.

“Damn!”

He can sign it in the morning. I have to get home to Humphrey, who will be very upset. I don’t know what I’ll do with him once I go to Hong Kong—perhaps Janey will take him.

There are no cabs to be had for love nor money so I have to grab the night bus from Piccadilly to Battersea. A journey of forty minutes and a walk of ten minutes to the flat, means that I get in at three a.m. It takes an hour to pacify Humphrey and wipe down the walls. I eat some noodles and shower; by the time I get into bed, the alarm goes off.

“I love-hate my life!”

Jonathan joined the company five years ago. I was assigned to be his personal assistant by the then-head of HR because Jonathan had specifically asked for a male PA. I was working for one of the senior accountants at the

time; he was just about to retire and HR knew that I had exceptional secretarial skills because I used to work for a publisher.

It was a match made in Heaven.

I remember our first day as if it were yesterday. He had said, “Maris—that’s a variety of potato—I’ll never ask you to do anything that I wouldn’t be happy to do myself. I’ll have a latte and you get whatever you want. I’d go but I have to prepare for a presentation to the board later today.”

I’d said, “No, absolutely! No point in having a dog and barking yourself, is there?”

“I think we’re going to get on famously, Maris.”

And we do... It’s just... I wish he would see me—the *real* me. I suppose I don’t really give myself a chance to shine in other ways because we are *so* busy and Jonathan gets very stressed when things are not ‘just so’. I would never want to know that I had ever let him down.

Tuesday—should be a little quieter as the team beavers away until the meeting tomorrow morning. Jonathan has an appointment at his tailor’s today and I must collect his dry cleaning and get the dog booked in to have his anal glands expressed—Winston, a bloodhound. I am a little stressed out over the choice of wines for the get-together on Thursday, which Jonathan is hosting at his warehouse-style loft in Saint Catherine’s Dock. I have a spare key so that I can go over and water the plants when he is away.

He said three entertainers for Thursday—all blond. I have the sneakiest suspicion that the young men who come along to these soirées are paid by the hour and offer gentlemen—such as Jonathan—sexual favours. Not that Jonathan would ever do anything like that.

Having collected the dry cleaning, dropping it at Jonathan’s, walking Winston around the block and emptying the dishwasher, I scuttle to the office to book the entertainers and choose the wines.

“Hello, is that Stud-For-Hire? Oh, good; yes for Jonathan Tate’s soirée on Thursday... three blond entertainers... I have no idea if they should be *cut* or *uncut*—personally, I prefer a man with a crew cut, as long as they’ve washed—and please ask them to avoid citron-perfumed toiletry products... I don’t know what ‘raw, bareback, creampie or snowballing’ mean, so best we say *yes* to avoid any disappointment... thank you!”

I assume ‘bareback’ is a type of salmon hors d’oeuvre—perhaps they hold back on the parsley; clearly ‘raw’ is crudités with a nice dip and ‘creampie’ is, I imagine, like Key lime pie, and ‘snowballing’ sounds like that disgusting drink that you only have at Christmas... Strange that they should offer to bring food and drink for the buffet...

Job done!

Jonathan says that all of the time and I know when he does, it means that he is especially pleased with himself.

I wonder if I would actually like Hong Kong.

“Morning, Maris!”

“Morning, Jonathan... Coffee?”

“No, thank you. I had one at Frenchie’s... Why do you have such ghastly dark rings around your eyes?”

“Oh, well by the time—”

“Can we check the quarterly reports?”

“Yes, of course!”

“What’s this?”

“My appraisal form. You need to sign it and put it into HR before the end of the day.”

“Right... You know, I do fancy a coffee.”

“I’ll go to the Viennese place. They do the mocha that you like.”

“Get yourself whatever you want... and I need everything we have on Sabre from the archives... plus the seating plan for the meeting with Thistle Inc. next week. Is the itinerary done for the trip to Cayman? I want the latest edition of the *New York Times*... Can you change my appointment with the masseur to Friday and put my colonic irrigation off to next week? Where are the latest hedge fund valuations? Get me Barry on the phone. I need a new iPad. Why are you still standing there?”

“Did you want chocolate sprinkles and marshmallows?”

“No, I’m on a new diet. Can you tell the caterer that the entire buffet needs to be vegan and gluten and salt free? Can you renew my golf club membership and get me the article on drones from *Time* magazine from last July and if you have time, I need a gift for Samantha... Maris?”

“Soya, almond, oat, chestnut, rice or hazelnut milk?”

“Uhm... organic, unsweetened hazelnut.”

“Right!”

A good PA will have anticipated most of this already—except for changing his lunch appointment with his mother, I have the rest in hand. I am paid a very respectable salary. Some of my friends work for much less than the minimum wage. As Jonathan always says, “Maris, by the grace of God.”

By three o’clock, I do actually allow myself a ten-minute break and pop along to see Janey.

“Do you like cats, Janey?”

“I *am* a lesbian, Maris.”

“Do all lesbians like pussies then?” I don’t think that it should necessarily follow. I mean, if all lesbians had a cat, then there wouldn’t be any advertisements on the TV from The Cats Protection League. I got Humphrey from the rescue centre in Cheam. He’s a Maine Coon crossed with a Bengal.

“Why do you ask?”

“I may need someone to look after Humphrey.”

“Don’t tell me that you’re actually going to have a holiday!”

“I had a holiday last year.”

“And painted Jonathan’s place whilst he was on a pilgrimage to Nepal.”

“*Namaste!* I may be taking a break as it happens.”

“Where?”

“Not sure... the Far East.”

“Depends on when... Did *Genghis* do your appraisal form?”

“Yes, well, he has it to sign.”

“Get it in or you’ll be too late. Lincoln said that the top performers have already been nominated.”

“Oh no, that can’t be right because Jonathan said that he was putting me forward for that.”

“Yeah, *whatever*... You coming out tonight?”

“Can’t. Didn’t get to sleep last night, what with Sabre.”

“Tell me this, Maris... Barry is on the same grade as Jonathan and looks after an *entire division*, and yet I get out of here at five o’clock every night *and* my appraisal was done last week. How does he do it?”

“Jonathan has very exacting standards and a lot of what he does is strategic and I have a lot of research to do for him and—”

“Which he could employ someone else to do. He gets a budget for a researcher but uses you so that he can save that budget and make himself look good in front of Basil.”

“I don’t think that’s quite right.”

“Sweetheart... fucking wake up and smell the aroma of toasted *turds* ’cos you’re so fucking clueless that you make Paris Hilton look intelligent.”

“Who?”

“We’re leaving here at five. Tell him that you need to leave on time tonight. Don’t say it!”

“I wasn’t going to... Where are you going?”

“Pussy Galore’s.”

“But—”

“It’s best gay friend night.”

“Oh thanks!”

“You’re welcome. Sasha cancelled.”

“Oh...”

“Of course he didn’t! *You’re* my best gay friend. Go and tell him.”

How am I possibly going to get everything done in the next hour?

Still, if I want to offload Humphrey on Janey, then I suppose it would be *politique*... and I don’t remember the last time I actually went out to a bar in the evening with a friend.

“Uhm... excuse me, Jonathan.”

“Yes, Maris?”

“I need to leave at five o’clock tonight—”

“Are you feeling okay?”

“Oh, no. I’m not sick. I just wanted to leave at five o’clock today.”

“Right.”

“If that’s okay...”

“Fine.”

“Right! Thanks. I’ll be in early tomorrow to catch up.”

When he’s disappointed, he gives me the silent treatment. I loiter, hoping to elicit a cheery ‘goodnight’. He looks so dejected. Perhaps Janey won’t be *too* angry if I cry off—

“Maris!”

“Coming, Janey... Goodnight, Jonathan.”

“Night.”

“Get that down your neck and don’t fucking mention Jonathan again tonight.”

“Thanks. He was—”

“Maris!”

“Sorry! How’s your mum?”

“Doing much better. Belinda is bringing a friend tonight—someone you might like.”

“Oh?!”

“His name is John and he works for a radio station. Please at least try and get a shag.”

“Janey!”

“What? If you don’t use it soon, it’ll fall off.” We titter.

I’m waiting for a certain someone to indicate that they are receptive to my carefully orchestrated overtures. I have investigated the possibility of being re-made a virgin but it’s prohibitively expensive. Jonathan will understand—he’s no virgin but then he has so many offers that it’s understandable that he succumbs from time to time.

Belinda and John arrive with a couple of the others. He's quite nice looking actually, nothing like Jonathan.

"So you work in radio?"

"Yes; for XFM. I handle the advertising. What do you do?"

I speed talk for ten minutes—just the edited highlights. "...and that just about covers it."

"Jesus! Do you ever get time to eat, sleep or shag?"

"Of course I do! Well, not really. I suppose I am a little bit obsessive about my job."

"Which is no bad thing if you balance it up occasionally. Do you want to go somewhere else?"

"Oh, uhm... okay."

"Only if you want."

"That would be nice, actually."

"I have to say goodbye to Belinda first."

"I must say goodbye to Janey." I find Janey at the pool table.

"Go, sweetheart. Get in there and enjoy yourself."

"We're just going on to have a drink somewhere."

"Invite him back and shag him senseless!"

"Janey! I don't do one-night stands."

"Sweetheart... oh, never mind. Have a nice time. See you tomorrow; love you."

"I love you too."

John and I live not too far from each other as it happens—in Battersea. It therefore makes sense for us to cross the river. We take the bus from outside Waterstones on Piccadilly and get off after the end of the bridge to pop into the wine bar.

"My shout. What would you like, Maris?"

"A rosé, please, John; just a small one."

"I have to get up early too. I'm trying to move into production and they're letting me sit in on the morning show tomorrow to see how it all works."

“Wow!”

He has a peachy bottom and a... I shouldn't be ogling because I don't want to get all flustered and unnecessary. If I keep myself pure for Jonathan, he'll realise just how much I really do love him. He's making me wait as a test of my faith. I must prove myself worthy of the prize: those lips have been featured on the cover of *GQ* magazine. He has both Adam Levine *and* Colin Firth following him on Twitter. I am *so* lucky.

“There you go. Cheers!”

“Cheers!”

“How do you know Janey then?”

“Through work actually. I'm not from London originally... Cheam.”

“Carshalton Beeches... We always seemed to have been neighbours. Could be a sign.”

“Of?”

“Oh nothing. Did you want to come back to my place? I can show you my collection of *Green Hornet* scripts.”

“Oh I don't... uhm... We both have to get up early. Humphrey will be tetchy—”

“We don't have to shag.”

“Oh gosh. Crikey... okay!”

“Great! You have amazing eyes. They change colour in the light.”

“I was going to get tinted contact lenses.”

“Why spoil the view?”

“Yes... quite. Are you...?”

“Roger left me three years ago. It's taken me a while to get over it.”

“I'm sorry.”

“What about you?”

“Oh... no one for five years. I haven't met anyone that I have really connected with.”

“I don't do the scene much—too many dramas.”

“Me neither. Shall we?”

“Sure.”

John lives two streets away from mine, a walk of five minutes from the wine bar. I don't know why, but I have a crushing urge to hold his hand. I sense Jonathan is watching. I have to resist, to make myself stronger. I mean, when Jonathan and I are together, there will be many temptations. Just being within his aura is likely to make me a target. I must learn to repel.

Stopping at his street door, John pauses to rummage for his key and once he has withdrawn it, he turns and looks at me from beneath his eyebrows and smiles.

“S-s-scripts,” I stutter, and for some unaccountable reason this is interpreted as an invitation to kiss me on the mouth.

“You're really cute, you know that?”

“Wh-wh...?”

“Let's get inside.”

He has a very tidy little house—two up and two down—decorated with large murals of *The Green Hornet* and motorcars of the 1930s.

“I'm obsessed with him. Listening to the original episodes posted on YouTube got me hooked on radio.”

“He doesn't have any superpowers.”

“He doesn't need any. He's a *real* hero.” John sheds his jacket and offers to take mine, which he hangs in the hallway. “Drink?”

“Just water, please.”

“Make yourself comfortable. Put some music on. I'll get the scripts.”

Whilst John fetches the scripts and the water, I survey his vast collection of music and select—at random—something by Björk.

“There you go.”

“Thanks.”

“Björk... weird chick but kinda cool.”

“So, *The Green Hornet*...”

“Oh yeah. Well... did you really want to look at the scripts?”

What else does he think I might have wanted to look at? “Only if *you* want to. If you want to get to bed, then I can go—”

“No, I don’t want you to go.”

He moves in for a kiss. I am struggling with my conscience—surely a kiss doesn’t count. For Heaven’s sake! I kiss Humphrey—not on the mouth, *obviously*. That would be weird. And gross, because he eats his own poo.

Jonathan will appreciate my kisses more if I get a bit of practice. I am bewildered for a moment, like a satellite knocked out of its usual orbit. Spinning, I see the world upside down. His mouth tastes of wine. He uses his fingertips to gently trace a line along my jawline, starting under my ears and ending at the point of my pointy chin. His hands are in prayer. I cannot find a shred of resistance to push back, and I cling to him.

“Did anyone ever tell you that you smell fantastic?”

“N-no... do I?”

“Like furniture polish and printer toner.”

Our hands move like they belong to a pair of horny automatons, undressing awkwardly, guided by two-hundred-year-old gear wheels and cam followers until we are naked and lying on the sofa, enjoying the sensation of fur—his—on alabaster—mine, while listening to Björk give birth to a giraffe.

“Your skin is like porcelain.”

“At school, they used to call me Dracula. Some people still do.”

“Well, I think you’re beautiful. Can I suck your cock?”

“Uhm, sure.” My member inflates like a party balloon in time with the music, and I sense a hot flush burning my chest and throat. My bollocks rise up like a snail escaping into its shell. His lips caress my sticky end, making me quiver. My hands find themselves woven into his shaggy mane, I grip and thrust a little, finding his mouth both willing and hot. He sucks hard and draws me into the furthest reaches—well beyond the gag point—whilst simultaneously pushing one of his hands into the tight space between my thighs, kneading the crinkly mass of my scrotum, which is painfully tight.

I feel faint and gasp, sensing a cauldron of hot spunk beginning to boil. In my mind’s eye, I see the ravioli cooking on the stove and the strangely shaped pasta moving about as the bubbles begin to rise and break the surface, sending

little tendrils of steam up into the extractor hood. I want to thrust deeper and he wants it—a need communicated by groans and slurps. Humphrey tackling a bit of sea bass comes to mind. My breaths are irregular, breaking out like the puffs of smoke from a decrepit, old steam engine.

“Jonathan!”

My faux pas is masked, to a degree, by a particularly screechy bit of ‘Pagan Poetry’—good ol’ Björk.

My cauldron erupts. I’m pumping—really pumping—not like that pathetic squirt I usually manage in the shower as I try and rub one out, desperate to make the earlier bus. John takes it manfully before pulling away, shrieking, “Jesus!”

Before I have the wherewithal to duck, he grabs hold of his *baton rouge* and gives himself a few good strokes before pumping out a load all over my face.

“*Maris!*”

I have trails of spunk over both eyes, which I dare not open. John recognises my predicament. “Shit, sorry... Let me get you a tissue.”

He thrusts a man-size tissue into my hand and I adroitly wipe away his emissions, being careful not to rub my eyes too hard. I risk opening them to see him fiddling with the stereo, adjusting the treble for ‘Moon’.

“I’ll just go and wash my face.”

“No, sure... top of the stairs.”

His tone is ebullient but it betrays an awkwardness and I know he must have heard me shout out ‘Jonathan’ and not ‘John’.

As I mount the stairs and find the miniscule bathroom, which is shoe-horned in between the two bedrooms, in what was originally, I believe, the airing cupboard, I feel dreadful and not just because of my mistake... I was thinking of Jonathan and not John. I feel like a user.

Marshalling all of my sanguinity, I go back down to find John semi-dressed, sitting on the sofa, flicking through the scripts. There’s a damp patch in the front of his pants which draws the eye. With something like aplomb, I drag on my clothes and tip the remains of the water down my throat, smacking my lips, hoping to draw his attention and signal that I am planning to leave.

He keeps his eyes averted.

“I’ll be going, John... early start tomorrow.”

Turning his head quickly, he snaps, “Okay!”

“Sh— shall I call you?”

This earns me his full attention—and a look much like the one Humphrey gives me when I manage to sneak his medicine into a piece of goat’s cheese whilst he’s not looking. He chews and realises that he’s been had and then he looks at me as if to say ‘you cunt’.

“Yeah.”

“Goodnight.”

“Night, Maris.”

I do not loiter and slip out, closing the front door behind me firmly. As I scurry home, which is charitably only minutes away, I berate myself like I’m chanting a mantra: *idiot, idiot, idiot, idiot...*

Humphrey has pissed up the walls of the lounge and crapped in the middle of the kitchen counter. I feel suitably chastised.

“I love-hate my life and I wish I were dying, drowning in acid whilst having my teeth pulled out... Bless Jonathan... Amen.”

By the time I have cleaned up and showered to remove the smell of furniture polish and printer toner, it is two thirty. My phone vibrates and glows. It’s a text from Jonathan.

I hope you had a pleasant evening. Just finishing up. See you tomorrow. Meeting has been brought forward to 7. Jon.

“You cunt.” Obviously not him.

Chapter Three

The Supreme Anthurium?

I had hoped that it was an impossibility that I could look any worse or paler. “A panda on crack,” suggests the chav at the bus stop who always insults me.

Raoul in the coffee shop waves as I head into the office and I decide to grab a takeout, already wishing that a near-extinction event was just moments away. Having to look Jonathan in the eye and not think of pumping my man-milk down John’s throat is as likely as Prince Harry marrying Chelsea Clinton. Her mum is looking her age these days—and quite puffy.

“A seventeen-shot latte with an extra shot please, Raoul.”

“Heavy night, was it?”

“You could say that. Do you have those new stevia sweeteners?”

“No, sorry. Can I interest you in a yoghurt and strawberry muffin?”

“No, thanks. Has Janey been in?”

“Was waiting for me to open up. What’s going on?”

“Big acquisition. Could be just the ticket some of us have been waiting for.”

“Good luck. There you go.”

“Thanks. See you later.”

Janey waiting for the shop to open? The reason is apparent as soon as I enter the foyer outside of the lifts on our floor—the regulator has decided to throw a surprise visit into the mix, obviously sniffing around the deal which is going down with Sabre. It is absolute chaos.

Jonathan is in the middle of the office in a maelstrom of middle managers. He is magnificent, like some revolutionary leader, rallying the down-trodden—identified these days by the fact that they still wear D&G.

“Maris!”

“Coming, Jonathan!”

My champion rallies the troops and we beat the regulator’s staff into the boardroom where Bernice from Compliance pours Evian on troubled share options and dodgy bonus pay-outs, leaving us to re-group in Jonathan’s office.

He's wearing the Armani—the petrol-blue—and a crisp, white shirt teamed with a subtly iridescent tie. He must have been up all night because his eyes are puffy, and he's abandoned the contact lenses for the comfort of the spectacles which make him look like Rob Lowe.

“We must not panic. The Sabre investors who are unhappy with the buyout probably tipped the regulator off. We can handle this!”

“What are we going to do, Jonathan?”

“Offence is our best defence. Pull the dish-the-dirt file and start dishing dirt!”

From a secret, locked cabinet, we extract the dirt we have on every investor and employee in Sabre—and serve it up.

Jonathan is brimming with energy. His aura is fizzing, and twice his perfectly proportioned mound appears to swell. Power is a potent aphrodisiac, I have to remind myself.

We work like Trojans, spreading dirt and calling in all manner of favours with vloggers, bloggers, tweeters and even some real journalists. It has the desired effect and by the end of the day—8 o'clock—the regulator has so many other tip-offs to investigate that they leave us with just a five-thousand-pound fine for a minor non-disclosure infringement.

“Well done, team!” Jonathan has tears in his eyes as he runs around the group, shaking hands with the lesbians and hugging the rest of us. I swear he clasped me just that little bit tighter than he clasped anyone else. His breath fanned my cheek as he whispered, “Stay back after the others have gone.”

Janey is looking in my direction as the room clears and it is a look of invitation to join the team for drinks at the pub. I smile and raise my eyebrows a couple of times to indicate that I am otherwise engaged.

She mouths, “Moron!”

I clear things away whilst Jonathan straightens his photograph collection which got disturbed in the mêlée. He even has a signed photograph of himself standing beside David Cameron: Jonathan has his arm around David's shoulders, and he doesn't seem to be minding at all—potent.

“Maris—”

“Yes, Jonathan?”

“I'm seeing Basil on Friday. I think we know what that means.”

“Hong Kong?”

“Hong Kong. Don’t make any holiday plans.”

“No! I won’t. How exciting!”

“There are going to be a lot of changes. I hope you’re up for it.”

“Absolutely. I am *so* up for it *like you can’t believe!*”

“Before that we have the get-together on Thursday... You get home, Maris.”

“Oh, okay. I thought—”

“I’m beat.”

“Goodnight, Jonathan. Thank you.”

“Goodnight. We did *good* today.”

I’m floating on waves of euphoria. I literally cannot believe that within a matter of weeks, I am going to be kissing all this goodbye and heading to Hong Kong to start a new chapter of my professional career with the man I love by my side.

“Thank you, God. I *love* my life.”

I celebrate and cuddle with Humphrey and watch *Pretty Woman* before going to bed, where I wank repeatedly, until my bell-end is throbbing and glowing like a Belisha beacon.

“*Wan an*, Humphrey.”

Jonathan’s get-togethers are the hottest, coolest ticket in town. Unless you have personally been on the *London Times Magazine*’s coolest dude list, you stand absolutely no chance of getting into the building. I, of course, always attend to make sure that everything is absolutely perfect.

During the course of Thursday, I spend the day running around London, trying to locate things like lavender-coloured arum lilies and organic, sea-cucumber-flavoured kombucha tea. I pick up the party bags from Wolf Whistle, and champagne flutes shaped like penises. I ferry Winston to Jonathan’s best girl friend, Agnes, and drop by the office of the magazine to alert them to who is possibly attending so that the paparazzi can be in position in good time.

I always change in Jonathan’s bedroom. Using his shower is a treat but we don’t really mention it. Wrapped in just a towel, I exit the shower to find him

standing in the bedroom, framed in the doorway which leads out onto the terrace. He turns his head when he hears my polite cough.

“Don’t mind me, Maris. I was just soaking up the view whilst I have the chance.”

“What is going to happen to Winston?”

“Going to stay with Mother.”

“Will you sell?”

“Not straight away... probably rent it out for fashion and film shoots.”

“I don’t know what to do with my place.” Silence and I think Jonathan is avoiding making any suggestions for fear of taking too much control.

“Need to start getting ready. Did you douche?”

“Wh-wh-wh-wh-why?”

“Always good to be prepared.” With which he saunters into the shower room, leaving me agog.

Is tonight the night? Oh, fuck! This can’t be true. I mean, what if... how... but supposing... Oh dear, God. Christ! I don’t... Shit! I take myself out onto the terrace and sneak a cigarette, helping myself to a vodka to calm my nerves.

“Maris!” Jonathan’s summons from the shower room animates me but I can’t coordinate my hands to open the terrace door and the towel falls from my hips as I struggle with the catch. I dive for it and strike my head against the triple-glass door and knock myself out.

“Maris... Maris... Maris...”

“Ouch. Where am I?”

“Maris, it’s Jonathan. Just relax. You hit your head.”

“I’m so sorry!”

“It’s fine.”

I blink and gather my senses, only to find myself lying on Jonathan’s bed with him standing over me, a glass of water in one hand and a couple of ibuprofen in the other.

“You were only out for a few minutes. Take it easy. What happened?”

“Uhm... I dropped my towel and as I dived for it, I hit my head.”

“Take these whilst I get some ice. You’re gonna have a fair-sized lump on your head.”

“Yes. Thank you.”

I prop myself up and Jonathan hands me the glass and the tablets. Turning, he says, “You’re way too thin.”

“*Humpf.*” A drop of condensation runs down the glass and falls, splashing on my naked chest; I shiver and then realise that I am completely naked. *Oh, goodness. He’s seen everything.*

When Jonathan comes back wearing the silk robe which I bought him for Christmas three years ago, he has a concerned look on his face. “I thought you’d had a seizure or something. I panicked.”

“Just clumsy ol’ me. Thank you.”

“I don’t know what I would have done if you had dished yourself a serious injury. I really don’t know what I would have done at all.” Handing me the ice pack, he sits on the edge of the bed, takes the empty glass from my hand—which he sets down on the bedside table—and then picks up my hand, which he kisses very tenderly.

“Jona—”

“Shush. Relax, Maris. Close your eyes.”

As I close my eyes, he places my hand by my thigh on the counterpane. Relinquishing his grip, he then places his hand on my knee. I gasp because his hand is cool—deliciously cool. He exerts a slight pressure and glides his hand up my thigh, causing me to squirm as my spine corkscrews. As his hand moves to the top of my leg, I stop breathing and when his fingertips graze the side of my scrotum, I gasp in a final mouthful of air, filling my lungs to bursting point. His fingers continue their journey and slide in between my thigh and my sac. With his thumb, he draws small circles on my skin and, as if he was winding a clock, I feel myself tightening like the spring, finding it almost impossible to keep my eyes closed and even harder to stop myself from raising my hips to increase the pressure of his hand. When he begins to withdraw his hand, I whimper... until I suddenly find his fingers curling around my shaft, which is hot and thick but not yet hard.

“I’ve dreamed of this moment for the last five years. I just never thought of myself as worthy enough to even dare to think about asking if I might touch you. Can I touch you, Maris?”

“Ye-ye-yes... *please*...”

He tightens his grip and pulls back, unfurling my head, which expands as the foreskin retracts completely.

“Can I suck you, Maris?”

“Pl-pl-please. Oh, God. *Fuck*.”

I sense a pause and then his lips—the ones featured on *GQ*—touch the very tip of my cock and I am gradually, by infinitesimal degrees, drawn into his mouth—which has been very close to David Cameron’s ear—and it feels like I am being eaten by an arum lily, being photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe under flattering lighting.

“Oh Jonathan, that is *so* good. Yes, suck... take me—Oh God!”

When he slowly backs off, I die a little death, only to be resurrected by his next request. “Turn over. I want to fuck you.”

I am not even aware of turning, but within a few seconds, I am lying on my stomach with a pillow under my hips, raising them to the perfect height and angle so that my rose bowl is ripe for an exploration. Firstly, by his tongue, which flicks over my tight little pucker, making me flip like a fish on the beach. I can smell his sex—honey and chestnuts. It reminds me of the air down at Salcombe, during the regatta, the last jolly, which Jonathan organised for the troops. Then he probes with his fingers—two fingers—first rubbing, then, finding my resistance weakening, pushing and stretching, releasing waves of euphoria to infuse me with the most perfect sense of bliss. Receptive he finds me; he opens me up, locating my prostate, caressing it until I am sure that all of my internal organs are going to explode out of my body and go into orbit.

“Jon-Jon... Jonathan, please take me! Fill me, crush my petals, release my essential oil. Seed me, breed me... *Fuck!*”

The withdrawal of his fingers gives me temporary respite, allowing me to take a breath, and gain a little control over my heart, which is thrumming like the wings of a hummingbird. But almost immediately, his weight is on my back and his glorious member—that ramrod straight, wrist-thick, glistening cock—is easing into my body. I am possessed. Each thrust is to the hilt. Each thrust causes his pendulous sack to *thwack* me on the perineum, sending a bolt of electricity straight into my brain where the fireworks are going off and bursting into bouquets of chrysanthemums.

“Oh fuck, Maris. I’m coming!”

“Sow my furrow. *Expultrice semen tuum in visceribus meis!*” In my mind’s eye, I am riding the supreme anthurium. We are magnificent and infinite! His ejaculation rends time. We are in the timeless space. Every molecule of my penis, from the neatly trimmed bush to the seeping eye, achieves nuclear fusion. I create a galaxy of stars.

“Maris... Maris... Maris!”

I suddenly feel oddly cold.

“Maris, what are you doing on the ground?”

“Wh... what?”

“Did you faint?”

I become aware of the fact that I am lying in a heap outside the terrace door, naked and in a state of semi-arousal. I cannot work out if I am more embarrassed about being on the ground, being naked or having just come over the £189-per-square-foot AstroTurf.

“Oh, I...”

“Chop-chop, Maris. The caterers will be here in fifteen minutes.”

I stumble to the bathroom, assaulted by the throbbing pain in my head, feeling sick and sweating profusely. The disappointment accompanying the acknowledgment that it was just a dream is only eclipsed by the shame I feel when I realise that he must have seen that I haven’t waxed recently. *What must he think?*

“Maris, c’mon! The champagne flutes are *cut* and should be *uncut!*”

Chapter Four

“Did you douche?”

I am a consummate professional—even if I haven’t been consummated. Washing my face and wet-wiping my sticky toffee apple, I slip into my hand-picked ensemble of black jeans and cashmere sweater—teamed with white high-tops—and glide into the main entertainment space to pour fragrant oils on disarranged potpourri and attempt to iron out the creases in Jonathan’s brow by convincing him that the evening will be a resounding success.

“Was it a mistake to invite both Davids, Maris?”

“Of course not, Jonathan. No one else could pull it off but you. And may I say, without fear of being contradicted, that inviting Siobhan *and* Greta was a master stroke.”

“It was, wasn’t it, given the tabloid headlines today? Let’s start having some fun, Maris!” My heart is fit to burst with pride.

A-listers arrive and mingle, circulating like ice-cold moons, barely touching each other for fear of a gravitational advantage. I exist merely to orchestrate the waiters to ferry the amuse-bouches out on trays decorated with carved vegetables which look like lotus flowers. A pianist plays Satie, interspersed with hits by The Irrepressibles and... Björk. *Oh, dear.*

There are stages to the evening. Some of the guests arrive early, before their curtain calls; others fill the dead zone between eight and eleven—normally the politicians and the artists. Later, the younger crowd arrives, including the designers, the musicians and the all-important entertainers. Jonathan treats everyone like they are *the* most valuable art treasure. He really *appreciates* them. Everyone is captivated—aroused—by his mere presence.

A chill-out space, strategically placed near a guest bedroom-bathroom suite, cloaked by shimmering voiles in iridescent colours and a curtain of lights, provides a haven for the clandestine, for the *liaisons dangereuses* of those feeling a little gauche. The entertainers set up shop, draping themselves over the chaise longues like golden peacocks. It is where I find Jonathan talking to an up-and-coming architect, Nial, who built a monstrosity in the City referred to as The Nipple.

“Jonathan, sorry to interrupt but Ashton wishes to say goodbye.”

“Thank you, Maris. Let me introduce you to Nial. Nial, this is Maris, my executive personal assistant.”

Jonathan quits the tent to say goodbye to Ashton, a footballer recently signed to Arsenal, and I am left to entertain Nial, who has bad breath and a monobrow—by the grace of God. I merely have an apple-sized lump on my forehead but at least I had the wherewithal to dust it with some face powder to take off the shine.

“So, tell me how you conceived the idea for The Nipple, Nial.”

“It’s an existentialist metaphor.”

When it is clear that Jonathan is not coming back to rescue me, I feign a crisis with the syllabub and quickly vacate to the terrace to breathe in some clean, fresh air and sneak a cigarette. A soft rustling sound to my left in the faux-laurel attracts my attention and I glimpse Prolev, a young Russian dancing star, having his *attitude derriere* slavishly worshipped by Jonathan. I slide away, hoping that neither of them has seen me.

And from that point on, Jonathan appears to be wearing Prolev like a buttonhole in his lapel. What is going on? And I get the distinct impression that they must have known each other for longer than just an hour or two. I loiter, hoping to get introduced. I don’t. In fact, I get ignored and resort to chatting to one of the entertainers, Ajax, who specialising in self-sucking—much to everyone’s amazement and gratification. After his ‘bit of a turn’, he whispers—breath reeking of cum—“Did you wanna go someplace and get nasty?”

“Did you douche?” I’m rattled by the episode with Jonathan. I may not be very important in the grand scheme of things but I don’t see Prolev giving Winston his worming tablets or expressing his anal glands.

“Yeah, of course—always.”

“Let’s go someplace and get nasty!” If *he* wants to make me jealous then I’ll make *him* jealous, and I leave with Ajax. I feign complete indifference as I head out, sensing Jonathan’s eyes on our backs. I will not be put down by a stick-thin Russian ballet dancer, even if he can do the splits... *and* it’s all padding!

Ajax has a flat close by. The fact that he charges me two hundred and fifty pound to get nasty is of no consequence. His penis is a good twelve inches long and deliciously fat with a bulbous head. He admits to using a stretching device which resembles an apparatus of medieval torture. “Borrow it, if you want.”

“Thanks!”

“I like small cocks like yours but you could do with hanging some weights from your sac to give yourself a good swing.”

“You think?”

“You’re really cute but you could do with a makeover. The crack-whore look is so old.”

“What could we do?” Now, it is not very often that I hatch a dastardly plan—especially one that involves Jonathan. But if he thinks that I am going to allow Prolev to screw up my chances of moving to Hong Kong, then he has a very big cock coming to him—I meant *shock* but it’s the same difference. “And you could make me into a desirable *piece of ass*?”

“No problem, but it won’t be cheap.”

“That’s okay! It’s an investment in my future. Where do we begin?”

“Lie on the bed and bite the pillow.”

“Why?”

“We’ll start with some ball-stretching. I won’t charge because I get off on it.”

“Right!” I lie flat on the bed, face down, holding onto the headboard whilst biting the pillow—all the while, Ajax pulls on my sac, massaging my prostate with a vibrating toy.

“I could lend you a cuff with a two-pound weight. Wear it all the time. You’re too thin and way too pale—steroids and fake tan... Hair needs a decent cut and your teeth could do with whitening. I’m *really* gonna pull now—just for a minute.”

“Arghhh, I’ve come.”

“Just leave a tip.”

As tempting as it is to stay and spend all of my savings on an overnighter, I decide to go home and think very seriously about my future... and that starts with a very serious look in the mirror.

“Oh God!”

Janey can help and Belinda works in a beauty salon, so I should get a discount. In fact, having been given the day off to compensate me for my hard

work on the party, I have all day Friday and all weekend to kick start this metamorphosis and woo my Jonathan back from the clutches of the Russian. Who gives a fuck if his *arabesque* won him a trophy?

“Goodnight, Humphrey. Stop playing with those weights!”

Chapter Five

The Man From Mars

“Are you sure you want to go blond with your complexion, Maris?”

“Absolutely positive! Once I have the muscles and a tan—and a fuck-off hairdo—I’ll knock that prancing prawn into a cocked hat. You see if I don’t!”

“I like your fighting talk, Maris—about time you stood up and asked for what you wanted. So... blond?”

“Blond!” A basin of peroxide is emptied over my head, which is then wrapped in cling film and I am placed under a hairdryer for an hour—plenty of time to contemplate the decision to bleach my pubes—collars and cuffs should match as a rule.

“Okay. I’ll just get that washed off, Maris, and then we’ll put you in the cubicle and spray you with the tan—definitely Saint Tropez tan and not English South Coast?”

“No, make it Californian. No point messing about.”

“Don’t worry about the colour until we’ve put the toner in. We’ll leave that in whilst you’re being sprayed. Come over to the basins.”

I will make him see me. I will not be ignored after I traipsed around London looking for champagne flutes that looked like penises—uncut penises!

“It’s yellow.”

“Wait until the toner has had a chance to work. Now, are we spraying everywhere?”

“Yes. No tan lines.”

“Get your kit off then and take a shower. Exfoliate and moisturise thoroughly and dry off. Then we’ll spray. And don’t worry if it looks quite orange to begin with, it’ll calm down.”

“Okay. And then you’ll do my eyebrows?”

“Yes, plus a manicure, pedicure, facial, ear and nose hair removal, blocked pore treatment, anal bleaching, bush trimming and crack and sack wax. You’re lucky that you’re smooth everywhere else.”

“And this will make me irresistible?”

“Jonathan will be putty in your hands.”

“As long as he *sees* me...”

“Don’t worry, sweetheart, he’s gonna see you. They’re gonna see you from space!”

“Uhm... Belinda... I look like Boris Johnson soaked in piss for a week. Suggestions?”

“Let it all calm down. Where to next?”

“Teeth whitening at that place in King’s Cross.”

“Right. Have you given any thought to having your tongue dyed?”

“Janey said to eat a punnet of strawberries.”

“That can work. Try this stuff.”

“Thanks! I’m feeling so much more confident already.”

“Go get him, tiger!”

Strange, the chav at the bus stop called me a *tiger*—or was it *todger*? Well, it must be working because I feel like a tiger, a Siberian tiger, padding through the streets with a hitherto unfelt confidence in my stride. Why did I not do this years ago?

“Open wide for me and once I put these shields in place, bite down and relax for thirty minutes. Nice hair, by the way.”

“*Fan-gu!*” All I need to do now is consume the five kilos of whey powder and pop the pills Ajax gave me; then, Prolev—stupid fucking name—we’ll see whose arse Jonathan worships!

“Oh...”

“Oh? ‘Oh’ doesn’t sound good.”

“Did you try that new tongue-cleaning product?”

“Yes. I sucked a pastille on the way over here. Why?”

“You should have said; the whitening agent reacts with it and turns your teeth lavender—but all is not lost!”

“Do something!”

“Let me try the extra-strong cleaner. Open for me again.”

Despite having teeth a lighter shade of pink, I toddle off home to ‘muscularise’.

“Jesus, Humphrey. This stuff tastes like ground-up, dried poo. Oh well, no pain, no gain!” The label on the tin suggests a cup full of the powder mixed with water, to be consumed every four hours. I use coffee instead because the taste is absolutely awful. The pills look a little suspect because they come in a plain tube—although Ajax did say that they were imported.

After the first two doses of the powder-tablet combination, I begin to feel a sensation in my nether regions—like a lava lamp has been turned on inside my guts. Only by lying down can I quell the nausea and slow the spinning.

“Oh, Humphrey... Oh shit!” And that is exactly what I do for the next four hours. My poor bottom feels like I’ve been fucked with a size 12 Army boot. All is not lost, though, because I appear to have cured myself of IBS.

I continue unabated until the tin is empty and I have taken all of the tablets—including the blue one, which I assume is like an activator. And it is. Apparently Ajax dropped a Viagra into the tube by mistake because now my penis—which is *not* that small—is rock hard and the colour of a strawberry, pulsing and dribbling.

A knock at the door is rather inopportune therefore.

“Janey!”

“Maris?”

“Yes, it’s me. You could be forgiven for thinking that you had rung someone else’s doorbell—an attractive, successful and going-places kind of guy.”

“You look like Boris Johnson marinated in piss. Why are your teeth pink? And what is that *disgusting* smell?”

“Progress!”

“Let me in.”

“I can’t really—”

“Let me in and tell me what the hell you’ve been doing.”

“Only if you promise not to stare.”

“At what?”

“I... oh, what the hell!”

“Didn’t you realise that it was a Viagra?”

“Uhm, obviously not.”

“Call John.”

“This isn’t for John.” I explain the whole sad and pathetic affair and why I have chosen to enhance my looks.

“Can I be really honest, Maris?”

“What?”

“You look like a freak. He’s gonna laugh in your face.”

“You think?”

“Sweetheart, look at yourself.”

“Oh, dear. This was going to be my perfect moment.”

“I have an idea—”

“Yes?”

“I can fix this but you’re going to have to trust me.”

“I will—I mean I do.”

“First things first: the hair has to go.”

“But—”

“Maris! It’s the colour of piss and looks like straw. Shaving it off is gonna be an improvement. Anyway, the buzz look is really hot right now.”

I suffer to have my straw cut off, down to a number-one buzz. I never knew I had a heart-shaped birthmark under my hairline at the back. Actually, it’s kind of liberating.

“Now go and sit in the bath.”

“Bath?”

“Yes. And do you have any Vim?”

“Under the sink. What are you going to do?”

“Change you from Tango man to bronzed demi-god. Are you sure that you don’t want to call John? Seems a pity to waste it.”

“I feel terrible about what happened. I mean, shouting out ‘Jonathan’ at that precise moment... He’s really nice, isn’t he?”

“He is, and he would probably appreciate a call.”

“How do you know? Did Belinda say something?”

“No, sweetheart, I just think he would. Wouldn’t you?”

“I guess. What a fool I’ve been all of these years—”

“Maris, I didn’t say that you don’t have a chance with Jonathan. He doesn’t respect you because you don’t respect yourself.”

“Thanks, Janey, for being so honest. I love you.”

“I love you too. Now get your scrawny arse in the bath and don’t wuss out on me.”

“Arghhh... oh, I’ve come.”

“Now put fingers in your ears and hold your breath.”

“Why?”

“Just do it!”

“I don’t believe what you just did; I mean, no one—and I mean, *no one*—goes there.”

“Sweetheart, they looked like a couple of lemons. Now you’ve got a pair of golden balls. Should call you David Be—”

“Thou shall not take the Lord’s name in vain. What about my teeth?”

“Open!”

“Wh—”

“That’ll keep you quiet for five minutes. Marilyn Monroe used lemons to whiten her teeth. They all did.”

“*Wo-ba-ma-to?*”

“What about your tongue? I think we’ll just say that you had it tattooed. It’s kind of cool—like a Chow Chow.”

“*I-a-su-a-idio.*”

“Well, I wouldn’t say a *complete* idiot. A black tongue is quite sexy actually. I might ask Megan to have hers tattooed.”

“*Oo-mu-in-fa-ma-shon.*”

“Take those out now. Let’s have a look...”

“They do look better.”

“Much better... Oh, you’re deflating.”

“Finally! What’s next?”

“Wardrobe—”

“What? I spend a fortune on clothes.”

“And look like a seventies porn star.”

“What?”

“A seventies porn star. Let’s go shopping.”

“But I’ve spent *so* much money, Janey.”

“You’ll have your bonus to come, won’t you? He did put the form in, didn’t he?”

“I think so. It wasn’t on his desk.”

“There you go. C’mon!”

A fucking seventies porn star! I *do* spend a fortune on clothes—religiously, slavishly—following every damn trend and fad that every twenty-first century’s cutting-edge, gay man’s stylist has ever dreamed up. Okay, I can’t afford the labels that they recommended so I buy a lot of stuff in charity shops. My mother makes a lot of my clothes, creating patterns by adapting the paper outfits that I had as a child, which you cut out of the comics and attached to the paper man—also cut out of the comics—by folding over the little tabs. You remember.

We hit the stores. Nothing too up-market. And I spend the promised bonus.

“Thanks, Janey. Do you think I should call John?”

“Up to you. By the way, did Jonathan have an appointment with Basil on Friday?”

“Yes, he did. I think it’s going to mean a lot of changes.”

“If he gets promoted, then you will be too. Great!”

“I don’t want to count my chickens... Monday is going to be a very, very important day for me.”

“How’s your bum hole?”

“Nearly closed up. I’ll use the lemons like you suggested. Bye, sweetheart. Thanks for everything.”

“Bye, sweetheart. Wear black on Monday. It makes you look *dangerous!*”

“Get away! Ciao.”

Strange that Jonathan hasn’t texted at least once over the weekend to at least tell me how things went with Basil.

“Time for bed, Humphrey.” I clean my teeth, marvelling at my black tongue. The barista in the coffee shop, where we stopped for a break, gave me his number.

“Humphrey! Stop playing with those weights, will you?” I suppose I should take them off. Ajax didn’t say how long to leave them on for.

Twang, snap

“Arghhh!”

Chapter Six

“What’s in the folder?”

“Seventeen-shot latte with an extra shot please, Raoul.”

“Maris?”

“The executive personal assistant formerly known as Maris!”

“What have you done to your... everything?”

“As they say in the USA, upscaled. Can’t go fishing for big fish without the right-sized hook or bait.” I wonder if I should have taken off the penis stretcher?

“Whatever it is, you’re looking hot!”

“Thanks. Take one for yourself. Has Janey been in yet?”

“No... no one. Was beginning to think that you guys had upped and left.”

“Not Jonathan? How strange. It’s Monday and he’s always in early on a Monday. Thanks. See you later.”

“Have a good day... Yo, Maris!”

“Yes, Raoul?”

“Did you want to grab a coffee some time?”

“Sure.”

My level of anticipation could not be higher, what with the meeting between Jonathan and Basil last Friday. I set the metal detector off as I walk through security and have to admit to Garth that I am wearing the stainless steel penis stretcher.

“Why?”

“We need a little extra, Garth.”

“It ain’t how much you got but what you do with it.”

Usually, I would agree but if I have any chance of wiping the floor with Prolev and hooking *my* Jonathan, then excruciating agony for the sake of two more inches has to be worth it. Who doesn’t want to be above average?

“Is Jonathan in?”

“First up... along with Denise.”

“Right. See you later.” I take the lift because walking in the contraption is rather difficult. I had to strap it to my leg to stop it from swinging so much.

The foyer is silent. It is only seven a.m. A noise from Jonathan’s office confirms what Garth said. I stride slowly—but still confidently—into my office, trilling, “Jonathan!”

“Maris?” His tone suggests that he wasn’t expecting to see me.

“Jonathan...” I step up to his door. “Jonathan...” He has his back to me.

“I thought you were off today.”

“No, only Friday... What are you doing?” I ask, as it is clear that he is emptying a cabinet drawer.

“Uhm...” he mumbles as he turns round to address me properly. “Jesus!”

“What?”

“You’ve... changed... Christ!”

“Oh, just a little upscaling. I thought it was time. How did it go with Basil?”

“Did you leave the party on Thursday with one of the escorts?”

“With Ajax, yes... Sorry, should I have said something?”

“No, no... just a little surprising, that’s all.”

“So?”

“Oh, everything is fine... The move to Hong Kong is confirmed.”

“Oh my God! That’s excellent!”

“Yes, it is. Did you talk to Prolev on Thursday?”

“No... There wasn’t an opportunity. He was... in demand.”

“Oh, this is all sort of awkward... Did you not get a call from Denise on Friday?”

“I don’t think so. If she called, she didn’t leave a message. Why?”

“Oh well, you see the thing is... you see the thing is, Maris, *I* am going to Hong Kong but unfortunately, you are not.”

“Wh-wh-wh-what?”

“It’s just that the company feels that you’d be best serving its interest—”

“But we belong together—I mean we’ve always said—you said—”

“I don’t think I ever made a promise.”

“You said ‘Maris, you won’t ever leave me, will you?’ And I won’t, not ever!”

“It worked all the time we were here. Hong Kong is a very different—”

“But I work *so hard*. I deserve this—we deserve this. Who will fetch your coffee, produce the news digest, analyse the figures?”

“There are plenty of people who can do all of those things, Maris. I need a strategic thinker, someone who really gets the emerging markets. I’m sorry.”

“You can’t be serious. I’ll study and work even harder!”

“I need smart, not hard, Maris.”

“This is all to do with Prolev, isn’t it?”

“What are you talking about?”

“I saw you on the terrace with your tongue buried in his bum. I knew it!”

“This has nothing to do with Prolev... and what you saw is none of your business.”

“You can’t leave me here, Jonathan. I deserve to go! Everything will be fine once we’re there, together. You’ll forget about him—”

“Together? As a couple? Are you really *that* deluded?!”

“But... *You* love me. *I* love you.”

“Maris, Maris. I do not love you and I have never led you on. This just proves that you’re not right for the job.”

“You *do* love me! It’s him—that shrimp on steroids in padded tights that has turned your head. Forget him!”

“Who?”

“Prolev!”

“I’m not taking Prolev—or anyone, Maris. It’s time for us to go our own separate ways. I have a car waiting. Please go and see Denise.”

“But... but...”

“Thanks for everything, Maris. I’ll be seeing you.”

“Please don’t leave me, Jonathan. What can I do? Let me get you a coffee. What about the quarterly report from the Federal Reserve? I could analyse that. I know, I’ll research the—”

“Maris... it’s over.”

“It can’t be. I’ve stretched my penis by two inches!”

“Goodbye, Maris...”

“No!”

“Please take your hand off of my arm or I will have to call Garth.”

“You—you—you simply can’t leave me.”

“I have to go—*please*, Maris.” I suppose the emotions, and the combination of steroids, Viagra, Vim and lemon juice were all going to have an effect in the end. Add to that, the heightened sexual stimulation of the penis stretcher and the two-pound weight hanging from my balls and I just lunge—I mean, really *lunge* at him.

Thwack.

“He’s coming round. It’s okay.”

“Janey?”

“You’re all right, sweetheart. Took a bit of a tumble and hit your head on the desk.”

“Where’s Jonathan?”

“Not here, honey. Left about half an hour ago.”

“I have to stop him—Whoa!”

“Easy, tiger. Keep your head between your legs and breathe normally. Denise is coming down.”

“But I can’t let him go. I have to go—”

“Sweetheart, he’s gone.”

“But I did everything I could and I even shaved my head.”

“I know, sweetheart. Just let it all out. There, there.”

“Maris?”

“Hello, Denise.”

“I’m really sorry. I should have called you on Friday but I... forgot.”

“It’s okay. What’s in the folder?”

“Oh... uhm, a few things that you need to go through.”

“Am I being transferred?”

“In a manner of speaking... nice tan!”

“Thanks.”

Denise hands me the folder—the fabled black folder—and scarpers, sending in Janey.

“So?”

“I have a transfer or something. It’s all in here.”

“Where?”

“You open it. I don’t really care anymore.”

“Oh, sweetheart... This could be good for you.” Janey takes the folder from my hand.

Whilst she’s examining the contents, I collect up the gifts which I have given Jonathan over the years—the William and Kate commemorative egg cup and spoon, Winston’s first poo, set in a formaldehyde paperweight, the framed photograph of Jonathan standing with Tony Blair in which Tony has some spinach between his teeth—

“Maris...”

“Yes, Janey?”

“What did Denise actually say?”

“I’m being transferred ‘in a manner of speaking’. Why?”

“You’re getting the push, the *heave-ho*. You’re being made redundant.”

“What?”

“Here’s your P45, a cheque for fifteen thousand pounds and a testimonial. It says that you have to give your security pass to Garth and return all company equipment, including your phone, laptop and keys. I’m so sorry.”

“What did I do wrong, Janey?”

“You didn’t do anything wrong, Maris. You gave everything to the job.”

“But it wasn’t enough... and now I have nothing.”

“That’s not true. You’ve got fifteen grand and a black tongue.”

“Do they need any freaks for the show?”

Chapter Seven

It couldn't get any worse, could it?

“Call me, sweetheart. Go home. Try not to think about it too much. There’s no rush for you to do anything.”

“Suppose... see you later.”

I trudge—*clanging*—the toll of the bell of doom.

“Hello, Humphrey. Why don’t you just go and piss over everything?” The idea of crawling under the duvet and dying is very appealing—or letting Humphrey fill the bath and drowning in his piss, even more so. I am such a fool!

I change into my lounge pants and flick on the TV, hoping some banal chat show will provide the antidote—perhaps I should apply to go on one of these shows. A commercial break reminds me that I should have checked my lottery ticket. Perhaps I’ll just stab myself with the pen and let Humphrey feast on my organs whilst I watch my life force seep out, listening to Björk gut a rhinoceros. I do not do depression well.

I must have dozed off because the ringing of the doorbell wakes me up. *The Grim Reaper no doubt...*

“John!”

“That’s absolutely awful. Poor *you*... and after all you did.”

“I was a complete idiot and deserved it—”

“No! Don’t blame yourself.”

“Thanks. Why are you not at work?”

“I did the early shift. I was hoping that you would have called.”

“I was embarrassed. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. Can I be completely honest with you?”

“Please!”

“I’d like to get to know you better.”

“You would?”

“Yes.” This is the benefit of lounge pants. They give you more freedom of movement, especially when you have machinery strapped to your junk. “You’d never have to change a thing for me,” John suggests whilst unbuckling the straps and easing the tensioner off of my cock which is now—conservative estimate—two full inches longer. “I thought you were pretty perfect to start with.”

“John...”

“Don’t say a thing.” Without announcing his intentions, he slips me into his mouth and pokes my above-average man-pleaser into the pocket of his cheek and bobs steadily. Delirium sets in. “Oh, John... *Björk* me!”

I am the supreme anthurium, riding giraffes and floating on rhinoceros-shaped clouds, dodging ravioli which are filled with iridescent embryos that resemble David Beckham. I am majestic!

We drive our Delahaye-styled passion into the bedroom and he takes me. I am opening for him like an Ipomoea in the dawn sun. My testicles, which are like overripe aubergines, are gently massaged. He milks them, dipping to lick up my seed like a hummingbird sipping nectar.

He drives into me; I am Kato to his Green Hornet. He sucks my tongue, imagining it to be—he says—the prehensile cock of the mythical Popobawa. I’m all for ass-ravaging demons at this point.

He pummels my oversensitive, swollen, lemon-sized prostate and earns himself a shower of jizz. It sends him into free fall. He fills me with the coin of his loin and I am his jukebox, playing Icelandic folk melodies to the beat of Humphrey hitting his head against the cat flap.

“Af góðu upphafi vonast góður endir!”

“I’m hooked on you.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“But I don’t have a job and prospects are pretty thin.”

“What are you *really* good at?”

“I don’t know, John... organising things, I suppose.”

“I read the *Standard’s* write-up of the party at Jonathan’s last week. You could do worse than be an event organiser.”

“But those sorts of things don’t come along too often. I need a steady income.”

“Why not organise weddings?”

“I’d need a heap of referrals.”

“If I let it slip that you organised Jonathan’s bash...”

“You’d do that for me?”

“Of course! At least get something out of him.”

I wanted so much more out of him! “Let me think about it. Are you staying over?”

“Only if you promise to—”

“I won’t mention him. Believe me!”

“I was going to say... only if you promise to start believing in yourself.”

“That’s blackmail.”

“Pay up.”

Just when you thought to yourself that it couldn’t get any worse, occasionally someone comes along and restores your faith in human nature.

Chapter Eight

Koyaanisqatsi

“Janey!”

“Yes, Maris?”

“Do we have the photographs back from the Eccles’s bash to review yet?”

“Being couriered over this afternoon. Want a coffee?”

“Yeah! Let’s go to the new place around the corner.”

“You know, every time I think about what happened, I have to say that it was for the best.”

“I agree with you up to a point. Scooping fifty thousand on the lottery certainly cushioned the blow and allowed us to start this up. It still hurts to think about just how little I meant to him.”

“John got you over the worst, didn’t he?”

“He did. I’m really happy that we chose to remain friends.”

“Much more important at the end of the day. What you having?”

“Flat white please, Janey.”

Whilst Janey gets our drinks, I allow myself a moment—brief—to regurgitate the whole, depressing and shattering affair, then blow my nose and remind myself that I have good friends and a thriving wedding service business. Janey came in with me when she got her bonus, and we haven’t looked back.

“You’re sure that you want to do the organising for Megan and me?”

“Of course!”

“We have a tight budget and I don’t want to feel as if we’re abusing you.”

“It’s fine... more than fine. I really couldn’t be happier for you, you know that.”

“Yeah. Thanks, Maris.”

“Want to see a film tonight at the Renoir? They’re showing *Koyaanisqatsi*.”

“Probably not. Ask John.”

“I was going to, and perhaps have dinner in China Town?”

“Let me call Megan.”

“Okay.”

After our coffee and a heap of calls to confirm arrangements for three planned nuptials, Janey heads off to take the photographs of the centre table at the wedding reception being held tonight, which we organised for Belinda’s brother and his fiancé, Andrew.

Our office is rather small and located just off of Bolsover Street, north of Oxford Street. We don’t have a manned reception desk because we don’t really need one. If a client calls in, usually they just walk straight on into the office, which has a nice seating area at the front. There is a middle area where we have our desks and there’s something slightly bigger than a cupboard at the back where we have the filing cabinets and photocopier. By virtue of being in the back, doing some filing, I am unaware of the arrival of a client and it is only when I re-emerge that I see the man standing just inside the doorway of the main office.

“Sorry! Be with you in a tick.” Gliding smoothly up the office, between the two desks, I am arrested, first by the unmistakable scent of Acqua di Parma Assoluta and second, by the Rob Lowe-esque spectacles.

“Hello, Maris...”

“Well, I’ll go to the foot of our stairs, if it isn’t the cunt formerly known as Jonathan Tate!”

“And he stood there as bold as brass?”

“Yes!”

“And you’re seeing him later?”

“If you’re a definite no-no for the film.”

“Do you want to see him?”

“I think there are things that need to be said. I said I would listen to what he had to say. Nothing more than that.”

“Then go... Oh my God, has he changed?”

“Not really. I recognised him instantly. There was something different about him though. Time to push off. We good?”

“Yeah. Call me if you need anything.”

“Okay. See you tomorrow.”

“Bye.”

“Ghost-of-Humphrey, smart casual or uptight?” Actually, I only do smart casual these days—the uptight version of Maris Enilon was left behind six months ago.

Dressed in just jeans and a T-shirt, slipping on a sturdy reefer-style jacket, I wander over to the bar for the appointed time of eight o’clock. Jonathan is already waiting for me. He’s parked at the nice window seat with a bottle of rosé and two glasses already sitting on the table.

“Hi!”

“Hi, Jonathan. I didn’t see the car outside. Did you get the bus?”

“I sold the car. Yes, I hopped on the bus.”

Well, there’s the first change—a bus? “So...”

“Would you like a glass of wine?”

“Thanks.”

“Thank you for agreeing to see me. I had no right to expect that you would.”

“I’m not going to break down and admit to all of the pain and suffering that you put me through. That’s behind me. Why are you here?”

“I wanted to apologise. I was a complete—”

“Cunt? Yes, go on.”

“—and I wanted to try and explain... and try to put things right.”

“Start by explaining.”

“I was an egotistical, self-centered, arrogant, uncaring, ignorant and loathsome prick.”

“What’s changed?”

Jonathan takes a large swig from his glass and palms his face before saying, “I treated you abysmally and there is no excuse for what I did. I made a terrible mistake. I realise that now. When I got to Hong Kong, I realised that I was *nothing* without you. I just couldn’t do it.”

“But there were plenty of people who could make coffee and analyse figures, weren’t there?”

“They never did it as well as you. They just didn’t understand... well... me.”

“And?”

“It got worse and worse and suddenly I was making a fool of myself, getting things wrong—missing deadlines! It all came crashing down and... well... they fired me.”

“So you’re without a job?”

“Yes.”

“Crikey! So what now?”

“I’ve got a few leads—some consultancy work.”

I sip my wine and stare intently into those eyes which, in the past, could make or break my day by the mere increase or decrease in the size of his irises. “And now you’re going to tell me the truth.”

“S-s-sorry?”

“I *can* read, Jonathan. I lost my job, not my mind. I still study the financial press.”

Another glug before he says, “Then you’ll know that I made a terrible mistake and incurred some horrendous losses for the firm—also covered up some infringements which resulted in a personal fine. I’ve sold everything to pay it off and apart from the interest on a small investment, which pays the rent on a bedsit in Edgware, I have absolutely nothing.”

“Why did you look me up? The truth!”

“I missed you. You were the best thing that ever happened to me and I trashed it. I can’t begin to tell you how sorry I truly am.”

“Are you hungry?”

“What? Oh, a little.”

“Come back to mine and I’ll make us some cheese on toast if you want.”

“I... I would like that very much.” We finish our glasses of wine and take the rest of the bottle with us, ambling back via the riverside walkway to enjoy the view. “I’ve never been to your place before.”

I ignore the comment. It may have been intended to be a casual observation but it is also a reminder that, in the past, the entire universe circled around Jonathan Tate. “How are you going to put your life back into balance, Jonathan?”

“I don’t have the foggiest idea. I’m just happy to be surviving for now.”

At my door, I stop and place my hand on Jonathan’s arm, drawing his attention. “I’m inviting you in because I know what it’s like to have nothing—to have your world completely turned upside down. I don’t know if I can forgive or forget—”

“I don’t have the right to ask you for anything... except maybe to give me a chance to be your friend.”

“Let’s start with cheese on toast and work our way up, shall we?”

“Where’s Humphrey?”

“You remem—”

“Some things...”

“He died a couple of months ago.”

“I’m sorry.”

“He didn’t suffer. Park your bum and I’ll put the grill on—one slice or two?”

“Two please. Wow! You have such a lot of music.”

“Choose something—except Björk.”

“Why not Björk?”

“Too many painful memories of giving birth to giraffes and gutting rhinoceros...”

“Right... How’s Janey?”

“She’s good. It was such a good decision to set up the company with her.”

“Do you only organise gay weddings?”

“Usually. It’s all word of mouth so I guess that’s the reason. Actually, we’re being asked to organise a major literary event, so it looks like we could be branching out.”

“Congratulations. You were—are—*the* most organised person I know.”

“In some respects, leaving the firm was the best thing ever—Don’t imagine that I’m thanking you for it—”

“I didn’t know that they were going to do that.”

“If you had bothered to put my appraisal form in—or even put me forward for the top performer bonus—it might have helped.”

“Christ! Could I have been a worse shit?”

“No... which means you only have one place to go.”

“Up?”

“Yeah. Here you go. Branston pickle?”

“Tomato ketchup, please.”

“Dig in.”

“Thanks. Are you seeing anyone?”

“No. You?”

“No. Everyone ditched me when the shit hit the fan over the losses and the fine.”

“It’s at times like that when you know who your friends are. Janey got me through the worst.”

“I could do with a *Janey* myself.”

God! He sounds so lonely. I’ve never heard that tone of voice before.

“It’s just *so* hard.”

I guess the tears were bound to fall at some point—his not mine!

“Jonathan... Jonathan, it’s gonna be okay... shush...” Fortunately for him, I am not a complete shit and I move to his side and put my arm around his shoulders; he leans in, placing his head on my chest and bawls for five minutes. “I imagine that feels a whole lot better.”

“Like you can’t believe... Thanks. I should really be going. I imagine you have lots to do.” He rises from his seat and heads towards the coat rack to find his jacket, rummaging in his pocket for a tissue to blow his nose.

“Jonathan...”

“I’ll call you, yeah—”

“Jonathan...”

“Yes?”

“Stay.”

He has crow’s feet developing at the corners of his eyes and a little crease running down either side of his lips—most apparent when he smiles—like now. His hair is not as coiffured as it used to be. It’s a little ragged at the ends and slightly curly—also streaked a little with tell-tale grey which reminds me that we are both approaching thirty-five. His eyes, without the spectacles or the contact lenses, look kinder, less flinty—a blue sky troubled by a few, harmless clouds which just take the edge off of the glare of the full sun. The lips—the ones featured on the cover of *GQ*—have hardened a little but they are as sweet as I always dreamed they would be. He’s fascinated by my black tongue—extremely fascinated, especially when I twirl it around his proud little buds which I think ache for a piercing.

The torso—in fact everywhere—remains tight and lean, still bearing the vestiges of the colour of the East. He showered and used my joboba-infused body wash, so now, as he lies here in my bed, I imagine myself tending the Gardens of Babylon. He can’t help it if he’s gorgeous.

Now the cock was always a somewhat mythical beast—the perfect—*achingly* perfect—mound which occasionally twitched like the stuttering hands of an ancient clock. In the flesh, it is less daunting, shorter than I imagined—but thicker—lying atop a pair of plums which I cannot leave alone. I play with them like I have a pair of meditation balls in my palm. His groans sound like a Zen sutra. *Oh-my-god-oh-my-god-oh-my-god...*

It was an assumption on my part that he was a top. Far from it. He loves to be fucked, and he likes to rim. I part his perfect cheeks and drool over the sight of the marigold which lies within the deep cleft. My cock—a satisfying seven and a half inches—first nestles amongst the closely packed petals to be anointed. Then I enter swiftly, having fingered him beforehand, to pummel that apricot-like gland, edging him closer to a release. Only then to back off and pick up the precum which has leaked out of his cock and demand that he sucks my fingers.

I am the Popobawa, invading him with my black tongue to taste the first pressing of his essential oil—somewhere between cedarwood, lemongrass and ylang-ylang.

When I come, my pearls find a hot and willing bed where they cling for harvesting later. He's desperate to release and thrusting back to get beyond his edge. I turn him, raising his legs, popping them over my shoulders, plugging him with three fingers whilst stroking him to a climax which I take into my mouth. Then I lean in to share the manuka-tasting flux, getting off again on seeing it paint those lips. I withdraw my fingers from his stoned peach and finger myself to a second release, which I pump over his bollocks, diving in to suck those fruits until he slumps, sweat-sheened and panting.

“Job done!”

Epilogue

“Are you nervous?”

“A little. What if they don’t like me or think I’m stupid?”

“Smile. Be *that thing!*”

“Maris, I don’t think I can do this.”

“Where’s the Jonathan who rubbed shoulders with both Davids? Show that professionalism and charisma that wooed politicians and averagely talented male ballet dancers. Go!”

“Right!”

It was Janey’s idea to get him working at the charity shop which supports the animal rescue centre...

The End

Author Bio

I'm English by birth, from the Isle of Wight, living in the town of Newport, spending part of the year in France in the stunningly beautiful department of Haute-Saône in the Franche Comté region. I also spend increasing amounts of time in the USA, co-managing The Carter Seagrove Project LLC, an independent publishing house. I will be 50 years old in 2015. I only started writing in 2009, proving, I suppose, that it is never too late. I didn't think about self-publishing until late 2012, now, more than two years later, I'm even more energized by the process than ever before.

I write M/M romances and LGBT-themed thrillers. I write full-time, producing roughly a story a month. Together with Chambers Mars, I am half of Carter Seagrove, the author of Dust Jacket and The Inspector Fenchurch Mysteries. I'm a member of The Society of Authors, The Society for Editors and Proofreaders and The Independent Author Network. I have no great philosophy except 'energy follows intention' and 'honour your gifts'. These two principles keep me sane, very happy and exceedingly busy!

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