

A Boy Called Q

A Rough Ride – A Short Story

Fox Emerson

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Jackie

The tears had run dry. The months of torture, grief – pain that was so deep – she ceased to function as a woman and a mother. She ached every day over the loss of her son, Eric. She did stop crying – eventually – but then only to spend countless hours staring into space; often pulling out her most treasured photo of him and remembering what a wonderful boy he was. *19*, so young, it had become her mantra.

When her best friend told her she needed something to do, other than what she couldn't change, she was adamant that she couldn't; that she herself might need a way out. Then Debbie insisted that she meet with Steve, because Steve had also been down that same road and had created a helpful path to assist with recovery. Debbie was sure that Steve could pull Jackie up.

A year after Eric's suicide, Debbie came over with biscuits and to make coffee – as she always did on a Saturday morning. "Honey, it's time. I know you're going to say no, but please listen. I love you like a sister, we've been friends far too long for me to leave you like this. I've arranged for Steve to come over and talk to you..." Jackie cut her off. She shook her head and her tangled, blonde hair, reminded Debbie that her insistence was necessary. "I can't, you don't understand it. You don't know."

Debbie nodded and conceded that she didn't know; she couldn't know. But she did know that Jackie needed help.

When Steve arrived an hour later, Jackie was frosty and barely acknowledged him to begin with. Steve was accustomed to this; he'd seen it too many times in past years.

"I know exactly what you're going through Jackie, I've been there. I lost my partner – John – for similar reasons, though he was a little older. I miss him every day. The best way I can help myself is to help others to avoid the same fate. That's why I started 'Life-Line'. We save so many; it makes it easier to move forward. We still lose some, but in some ways, that adds to the healing process. Join us, we could use you."

Something in the way Steve, a 40-something and good looking man spoke to her heart, made her listen. After much discussion and what felt to her like an intervention, she finally agreed. She would join the group and try and save as many as she could.

Within months, Jackie realised that both Debbie and Steve had been right; the healing process was tenfold.

She could never forget Eric, but if she saved others, then she had a reason to live.

A Boy Called Q

It was frenzied – ambulances, police sirens and hundreds of excited voices all clamouring to be heard over each other which made the view much more difficult to appreciate.

As Q walked further away from the bridge, the tension eased from his shoulders and he could think again, though the view of Big Ben wasn't as good the further he walked. He toyed with the phone in his pocket and pulled it out to check for messages once more. As relieved as he was not to have to take his gloves off, he was also a little disappointed he hadn't received a text back. *Maybe I came across as too strong or too eager.* A light rain started then and he mentally commended himself for bringing out his rain jacket. He drew it in tighter and zipped it up, then pulled the jacket's hood over his beanie.

A vibration in his pocket alerted him to a message. *Boom.* His heart pounded. *Please be him.* He pulled the phone out excitedly. He had a message. The unsaved number finished with 773 and his heart beat faster. Thoughts of rejection suddenly entered his mind and he realised that the message might not be what he'd hoped for.

“When are you thinking?”

Wow.

He thought about responding back and decided he'd be best off waiting a little longer. *Play the game.* He re-read the message and smiled; this was a good turn of events. In a better mood and with a spring in his step, he walked further along the Thames – towards a pub he recognised, suddenly oblivious to the dreary weather around him.

As soon as he walked through the door, he shook all his layers off and left them on a small table by the window, while he walked to the bar and ordered a drink. The woman did a double-take when he asked for a pint of lager, then quickly went off to pour it. He tried not to look at her even though he could tell she was unapologetically staring at him. He glanced back towards where he'd left his coat and was pleased to see that no one had approached his table. When he looked back, the bar girl was whispering to a colleague in a not-so-subtle way. She also looked at him and smiled; a coy and very interested smile.

When the first bar girl returned with his beer, he paid the price and returned to his table. *Jesus, 5 pounds?!*

Even though they were still staring at him, he pretended not to notice and returned his attention to his phone. He opened up his messages and re-read the last message a few times, “When are you thinking?” He thought he detected a real interest in that question mark. Although aware he was reading far too much into the situation, he did it anyway. It made him feel better. After agonizing over what to respond back with, he decided on, “I'm still new here so it's really up to you.”

Within minutes, he received another response and his heart beat wildly.

“Got much on tonight?”

Boom.

“No plans, what are you thinking?”

Not even a minute later, “come to my place for a drink and...?”

In less than ten seconds, he responded with, “Ok, I’m free from now really. Say when.”

“How about now?”

Boom.

“Ok, address?”

Five seconds passed before he received the address. *Boom.* He got hard then too and was thankful to be sitting down. He grabbed his beanie and put it over his bulge which he figured might draw attention – especially with the bar girls – who were whispering to each other and looking his way. *I wish I could wear my glasses.* He knew his eyes were an unusual colour and he’d spent all of his life being told so. Some people thought he looked odd and many more thought he was adorable. He was sick of the attention because of it. Growing up, he’d always wanted to be more muscular and solid and tried many times to join the rugby team. Unfortunately, he was a combination of too slim and athletic and at 5’9, a little too short. He often thought his eye colour – just like his father’s – was partly to blame. Perhaps they alienated people because of their unusual pale blue mixed with grey. When he drank too much, they became a very light grey.

“How long will you be?”

Q looked up the address on his GPS and then checked out the route; *twenty minutes.*

“20 or so?”

“Great, see you soon.”

The bar-girls were still staring at him as he quickly left the pub.

The apartment block was fairly old; perhaps about a hundred years, though it looked well maintained. It was a standard white-plastered building which was common for Kensington; a wealthy area. He was excited and nervous as he approached the front door and saw the illuminated list of residents. *Number 5*, he pressed it and heard a chime followed by some feedback. He stepped back and put his gloved hands over his ears.

“Hello?”

“Hey, it’s Q,” even to him, his voice sounded timid.

“Just a minute,” then a loud buzz and an audible click and the door unlatched.

“First floor, first door to your right, take the stairs, elevator’s not working.”

He walked up slowly, feeling a little intimidated. This guy was really good looking and Q had thought that the guy might have been a tad drunk the other night when he’d given him his number.

He approached the first door and noticed it was slightly open. He took his gloves off, removed his beanie and unzipped his jacket; then knocked softly.

As the door swung open, he suddenly had the feeling he may have made a mistake. Maybe this wasn't what he needed. Just as he began to consider that he couldn't go through with it, the guy appeared and his last chance to escape vanished.

"Hey mate, nice to see you again," a hand extended, which Q shook. Compared to his own, the guy's hand was really warm and he also felt a jolt of static that caused him to nearly jump back. Instead, he composed himself and said, "oh hey, good to see you too," as the guy opened the door wider and stepped aside so he could enter. He'd gotten another glimpse of the guy in the brighter light and he definitely liked what he saw and hoped the guy felt the same way.

He was breathtakingly handsome, in a way that made him think of the underwear models that he used to wank over not too long ago.

"Can I get you a drink?" the guy was already walking towards the kitchen as Q stood inside the door, holding all his outer garments in one arm and trying to forcibly calm his nerves.

"Yes please, water would be good," his throat sounded hoarse; croaky. The guy walked into a freshly refurbished kitchen filled with tastefully decorated wooden cupboards that reached up to the white ceiling and immaculate floor with white tiles. He pulled out two glasses and set them down, then opened a new-looking fridge and pulled out a bottle of water and poured two glasses. With a fairly slim-fitting, white t-shirt – which showed off his well-defined muscles – the guy looked as though he might spend more time in a gym than anywhere else. As he turned away to return the water bottle to the fridge, Q checked out his ass and felt a familiar stirring. *Perfect, round ass.* Then the guy picked up the glasses and moved towards him with one arm outstretched. Q took the glass and was struck by his eyes, a warm and dark almond colour. These were features which Q thought were highly attractive.

"Thanks," and he took a big swallow, then followed the guy out of the kitchen into a narrow walkway. He saw a coat rack and dumped his outer layers onto a spare rung. The guy put his palm up and apologised, "sorry, I should have said, please..." pointing to the coat rack.

"It's ok, thanks," Q smiled and thought it was cute that he'd worry about such a small detail.

"Come in, don't mind the mess, I'm still renovating and haven't really had a great deal of time to put things away. It's easier you know? When you're working on home-projects; putting things away then getting them out again is half the hassle, so I leave them out," his eyes bored into Q's. He wondered what the guy was thinking but the smile put him at ease. Such a genuine smile.

"I can imagine; I mean...I've never had to. A home-project...I mean," he looked at his water then tried to feign interest in the large room. It was a little messy, some paint tins along the side sitting on top of a painter's blanket and an out of place screwdriver, a hammer and some nails on the floor in a pile, but nothing Q thought would need apologising for. He stood uncomfortably, wondering how this was going to go. The guy stood facing him, that same stare; a half-smirk on his full-red lips – red as though he'd been eating something that would leave a stain and a sharp contrast to such light coloured skin.

"Come, have a seat," the guy said and moved to a cream-coloured sofa. He leaned forward and placed his own untouched glass of water on a wooden coffee table. Q noticed that the coffee table wood

matched the kitchen cupboards. He moved around the coffee table and sat at the other end of the sofa; a one-man gap between them. The guy surprised him by shifting forward and suddenly put his hand on Q's knee.

Shit! He could feel the heat rush to his face as his heart pounded harder.

The guy must have sensed this as he removed his hand and picked up his water and sipped it. Then he put the glass back down and said, "you haven't done this much have you?"

Q shook his head *no*, but didn't say anything; he gulped loudly.

The guy laughed but in a pleasant way; softly.

"It's ok buddy, take it easy! We can just talk. How about I get us a beer huh? Sound good?" Q quickly nodded and tried to force a smile.

"Cool, I've got some Australian beers my boss gave me," he said as he walked off to the kitchen.

Get a grip! Relax, you don't have to do anything, just take it easy. But try as he might, his leg began to shake. When the guy came back with two beers – with blue labels he'd never seen before – he was pressing down on the leg which had developed a mind of its own. He quickly grabbed the open beer and drained about half of it before realising the guy wanted to clink the bottles. He held it up and tapped the guy's bottle with his own as he said, "cheers."

"How old are you? If you don't mind me asking?" the guy asked him.

"22," he responded in a voice that didn't sound like his own.

"Wow, so, have you got a girlfriend?"

He took a little longer to respond this time, sipping more of the beer slowly this time, then placing it on the low table. The instant buzz made him relax slightly, though he was aware his leg was still lightly trembling.

"Not anymore, we broke up; about a year ago. What about you? I'm sorry, I forgot your name."

The guy laughed again then returned that look again, the half-smirk, perhaps half-knowing gaze as he regarded Q.

"Actually, I don't think I gave it to you. I'm Michael, Michael Annett. I'm 29."

Q didn't say anything and picked the beer up again.

"And you're Q right? Mind if I ask what it stands for?"

He nodded, then said – in a slightly stronger voice – thanks to the beer, "Quebec. My parents joked it's where they conceived me. I try not to think about that."

Michael's mouth turned up at the corners and his eyes sparkled a little. Q smiled too.

"So tell me, with an accent like yours, I'm guessing you're from Yorkshire somewhere." It had been more a statement than a question, but Q nodded anyway.

"Yeah, York actually. Been in London just a few months so I'm still finding my way around."

"It doesn't take long. Once you get a hang of the tube system, you'll quickly start to get a feel for the areas."

"Yeah, I should be ok."

“So where do you live then? Are you sharing?”

“Yeah, 3 others; it’s a little cramped but it’s ok. The worst part is sharing a bathroom. One of them is a girl and the other guys are always having a go at her. We’re in Hammersmith,” Michael nodded as Q finished.

“I had exactly the same situation a few years ago, I was living with two other guys and a girl; one bathroom – it was a nightmare, I’d never do that to myself again,” as though realising he might have offended Q, he quickly added, “but obviously it’s so much cheaper to share, especially while you’re still finding your way around. What do you do for work?”

“I’m an electrical engineer; I’m working on a new concept for a wind-turbine project. Pretty long hours and intense but the money’s good. What about you?”

“Ah, you must be pretty smart; an engineer, hey? I’m a lawyer, intellectual property...nothing too exciting I’m afraid.”

Q was unable to stop staring at the guy’s mouth; it was perfectly formed. The lips were so full, perhaps they were Botox filled. He wondered what it would be like to kiss those lips, then quickly looked away, as though Michael could read his thoughts. He picked up his beer and took a bigger mouthful. When he replaced it on the table, he realised he’d almost finished it. Michael looked at it and jumped up, tipped his head back and drained the remainder of his as he walked off and said, “well, if we’re going to slam the beers, I might as well try and keep up with you. I’m not working tomorrow so I’ll be ok. What about you?”

Q shook his head, then realised Michael couldn’t see him from the kitchen, “no, I don’t work on weekends usually. Well, not yet anyway,” Michael’s musical laugh echoed out of the kitchen. He watched him appear with two beers; both open, seconds later. As he walked, Q guessed that Michael would be about 6 foot tall. He returned to the sofa and passed a beer to Q, who immediately took a big sip.

“So you live alone here Michael?” the beer was kicking in.

Michael cocked his head, nodded then said, “Do you mind if I ask you a personal question?”

Q feared what it might be, but nodded.

“Is this your first time? You seem very nervous.”

He felt a little relief that the question wasn’t that difficult to answer, but at the same time, he was embarrassed that he was so easy to read.

“I haven’t. Well...I mean, I did once, back in high school with a mate. But not really, nothing proper,” he picked up the bottle and begged the cold beer to help him settle his nerves, he continued with, “but I’ve been watching a bit of...porn and...” he suddenly thought how that might sound so he quickly added – even as Michael’s smile calmed him, “just trying to get a...you know...feel for things.”

“It’s ok, I know what you mean. To be honest, it wasn’t that long ago that I was in a similar situation. We can just chat for today, if you want. I’m not a pushy kind of guy, you’re really...cute, actually. And your eyes, I’m sure you get this a lot, they’re the most unusual colour.”

Q was thankful to still have the beer in his hand; he drained the rest of it and looked away, wishing a TV could be on or something to minimize the awkwardness. He wished he could be as confident as Michael seemed to be.

"Thanks, though I don't see myself that way – cute, I mean."

"Well you are, from my perspective anyway. I guess it's subjective isn't it? Some people think I'm good looking and just as many don't. I don't care, I guess I focus on those who like me and try not to think about those who don't."

"That's a good way to look at it. I guess."

"Thanks, I hope so! Anyway, you should be relaxed..." Michael brushed his eyebrow and paused, then said, "what I mean by that...well, we have all been in that situation. Your first time should be fun and go easy."

Q didn't know what came over him. Perhaps the combination of the beer had finally given him courage – no, it was making him feel great – he guessed it was probably because the last comment had made Michael seem so much more relatable and less intimidating. He suddenly leapt over and put his face in front of Michael's, then put his lips against his and lightly caressed his small, thin nose with his own.

Michael looked startled; surprised. Though the way his eyes widened, it seemed as though – at least from Q's perspective – he was happy at the sudden turn of events.

The kiss was extremely awkward at first; a hard smack that almost pushed Michael back, but quickly softened and suddenly became a warm meeting of two lips. Michael slightly opened his mouth and put his free hand, such a beautiful alabaster colour, behind Q's and brought him in more. Their noses touched; lips fully immersed into each other's and a sudden raging hard-on developed that was uncomfortably pushing into his tight jeans. Michael's lips were passionate and hungry. He turned slightly and looked away, he leaned forward to place his beer on the table, then looked back at Q.

"I'm sorry, I just..." Q began, but Michael's mouth was back on his again before he could finish, this time, both hands were behind Q's head and he was aware of too many things at once. The warmth coming from him, the soft lips; tongue darting in and out of his mouth. One side of their shoulders touching and currents of electric lust rushing through his body.

Michael's hand gently caressed the back of Q's neck and pulled him in. His other hand had wandered down the front of Q's shirt – fingers pushing through the gaps between the buttons, to lightly stroke his chest. They slowly moved down, spending a few seconds between each gap, then pushing through the next gap. The combination of kisses, fingers travelling down his chest ensured that Q was very much lost in the moment. The fingers hooked into the belt on his jeans, then the hand pushed its way behind the belt, against his lower belly. Then suddenly, the tips of his fingers stroked the top of his dick. He almost came there and then.

Almost in a dreamy and quick move, Michael lifted him to his feet and moved his hands behind Q's back and continued to pull him in closer. He could feel Michael's hard-on pushing against his lower abdomen. At that very moment, Q wanted nothing more than to get naked and do everything.

Michael slowly walked backwards, pulling Q towards him. He began unbuttoning Q's shirt; each stroke of his fingers against his chest creating fresh currents through his body. By the time they'd reached the bedroom, Q was bare-chested and Michael pulled his t-shirt off in a quick movement. His lips were back on his and his tongue softly pushed into his mouth. When Michael moved to kiss his chest and his smooth nipples, Q noticed how hairy Michael was. He moved his hands against it and heard Michael moan with pleasure. Then Michael was suddenly unbuckling Q's belt and undoing the top button. He felt the zipper loosen and hot breath down there. He could feel his pre-cum wetting his briefs.

Michael turned him and gently pushed him back, for a second, Q lost his balance but quickly realised the bed was behind him. He sat. Michael pushed his chest back and forced him to lay down. He looked up at the ceiling as Michael's mouth lightly bit his underwear. His mouth moved up towards the tip of his manhood and again, he felt more pre-cum. Then Michael's mouth was over the top of the underwear and he used his hand to lift it away. His mouth gently licked the tip of his foreskin and Q quickly tried to think of something else. He pressed his hand against his head as he lay there looking up at the ceiling. Then suddenly Michael's mouth opened and he could feel it being swallowed. The hot mouth was almost too much. For a few seconds, Michael pushed his mouth closed and held him inside without moving. Then he went deeper. Then a little more. He guessed it was in about half-way. Then further and further. Then he knew that he was all the way inside his mouth and he had to concentrate not to cum.

Michael stopped and appeared above him. He pulled Q's blue-jeans the remainder of the way down and took a moment to pull his shoes off, all the while he held a dirty, knowing smile. Q was naked and felt a little cold. Though within seconds, Michael had pulled his own chinos off and was suddenly naked on top of him. He kissed more vigorously this time, pressing his hard-on against Q's and his chest-hair almost tickled Q's bare chest. With Michael pressed down on him, cock to cock, chest against chest, he suddenly realised years of watching porn had come to this moment. He knew what to expect and was very excited to be the star this time.

He turned Michael over and took charge, seemingly experienced. He started with kissing Michael, then moving down to his chest. He licked his nipples and heard Michael moan. Then he followed the hairy-trail down and saw Michael's for the first time. It wasn't big exactly; average perhaps. Unlike his own, Michael was circumcised. He repaid the favour and put Michael's in his mouth and worked his way from the tip to the centre. Then tried his best to take it all in but felt his gag-reflexes object. He kept it at three quarters of the way and began to suck. While he'd never done this before, he'd been shown online many times. Michael's pleasure was obvious with each moan. He found that when he used his hand to slowly wank him, while he sucked lightly on the tip, Michael's moans became more vocal. He realised he himself enjoyed it too. He continued for a while longer and fell into a beautiful rhythm of sucking and lightly wanking. Then Michael's hand shot out and pushed his head away. Confused, he looked towards his face and saw Michael's face, it seemed he was almost in pain. Then he realised; he was too close. He stopped and moved back to kiss Michael and lay on top of him.

For a time, they moved like that, with Q on top and Michael underneath; gyrating and rubbing hard against each other. Then Michael would take charge and push his way on top and they'd repeat. Michael's head-job was amazing. Q didn't think he'd ever had one so good. Then he realised he was also close and copied Michael's original gesture by pushing his head away. He tried to think of something else; successfully.

Again, Michael was on top and kissing him. He realised they weren't having sex, but were making love. He kept his eyes open and watched Michael's beautiful face. Occasionally, Michael would open his eyes and they would stare at each other intimately. He saw more than lust there; a fondness for him, a searching for something more. Then he'd close them again and Q would follow his example. Then he would reopen them again as they kissed and tongues explored. Passionately tasting each other's mouths while Q wondered what else he could find in those dark eyes. Michael had this look on his face that Q couldn't place. It was more of a need. Then suddenly he rearranged himself to sit on Q's cock and leaned down and kissed him. When Michael next pulled away, he whispered, "I want it inside me."

Suddenly Michael leaned away from him and grabbed a condom packet and some lube. In a well-practiced motion, he ripped it open and pulled it out. Then he sucked on Q for a bit longer before sliding the condom on him. Then his lips were against his again and he saw him reach behind and add lube to his hole. Michael's hand slowly wanked Q's dick and slid lube all over it. Then he positioned it so the tip was pushing against him. He pushed down and kissed him again and Q could feel Michael lower himself. Then suddenly, as Michael gasped, he felt it enter too quickly. For a moment, Michael sat frozen and looked up, a faint light drifted into the room and illuminated his short-black hair. Then he settled and slowly pushed it in further.

Q thought he was going to cum again as the hot, warmth swallowed him, but he managed to hold it off. The feeling that came over him was euphoric; he was inside him and he hoped he wouldn't come too soon. Michael looked like he'd reached new levels of ecstasy and slowly moved up and down on his very hard member. Whenever Q felt too close, he slightly pushed into the bed and thought about something else. Then he'd get back into it. The rhythm was great – no, it was the best sex he thought he'd ever had.

Michael leaned down and kissed him, which only made him want to cum more but he kissed him back regardless. He kept his eyes open so he could savour the experience because he needed to memorise everything. Q suspected that for many weeks – perhaps even months – he would be drawing back on this and wanking over it. Michael had his eyes partially closed, but Q could clearly see that he was watching him with a satisfied grin.

Q slowly pushed him off, somehow managing to stay inside him, then manipulated Michael's face up while he held his legs up. He then fucked him harder and harder. Michael seemed to have no boundaries and with every thrust, seemed to enjoy it more and more. He leaned in and kissed Michael's full lips again, so thick and passionate and juicy – they were made for big long kisses. For a brief moment,

as the light caressed Michael's body, Q had a vision of them elsewhere. Perhaps in a log cabin in Switzerland or a sun lounger on a beach out in the sun, doing exactly what they were doing then.

Again, he needed to slow as he felt himself getting too close. He slowed down and slightly pulled out and looked down. He couldn't see the condom anymore. *Oh no!* He wondered what that meant, perhaps it had come off. Whether it was because he felt the bare flesh sliding in and out or not, it didn't matter. The sensation was too good. He was getting very close to cumming.

Michael quickly flipped him and sat on top again. As he sat down and took him all the way again, he was close yet again.

Then he knew he was going to. He wanted to apologise but it was too late. He was all the way inside as Michael sat straight and pushed down, then up again and down as Q's cum exploded inside him. Michael lifted up slightly and then hot cum spurted out of Michael, all over Q's chest, all over his face and down his neck, just as he himself continued to fill Michael. Michael moaned so loudly that Q suddenly thought about neighbours, even as he finished inside him. It seemed to go on for a long time; for them both. He could feel it run down his neck, his face and even down the sides of his body. More of it kept coming out; it looked like it was going everywhere.

Then suddenly Michael was on top of him, kissing him some more and Q began to tremble. The passion was gone. The feeling of being connected to him had vanished. All the feelings and all the urges, evaporated.

Suddenly, Q had a very clear picture of himself laying on the bed with another man on top of him and his own dick inside his ass. The revulsion was immense. The shame and disgust, was immediate. He closed his eyes and prayed Michael would get off him. Instead, Michael kissed him, his tongue desperate for a continuation of their previous passion. Q's lips froze and his body went stiff. He felt himself go soft and finally, it slipped out of Michael. He lay there and tried to think about any number of things that had nothing to do with where he was, and was relieved to see the condom hadn't come off completely, it was hanging off the end.

He turned his head and could feel Michael's confusion on top of him. Then Michael slid off and tried to hold him, but he was frosty and distant, so he asked him if he wanted a towel or a shower. He nodded but looked away, as Michael jumped up – briefly casting a worried glance in Q's direction – then walked away.

When Michael returned, he passed a large towel to him. Q used it to wipe as much of the semen as he could from his face and neck and body. He scrubbed a little too hard and felt raw skin being aggravated. He jumped up and began to pick up his clothes; hastily dressing as Michael asked him if he was ok. He could tell Michael was confused and he also felt bad that he was making him feel that way, but he couldn't help himself. He had to leave right then. He needed to be away from this scene as quickly as he could. He just knew that he couldn't think about this anymore. He drowned out any further words from Michael and concentrated on coming to terms with what he had just done.

In seconds, he was dressed and heading to the door as Michael asked him for the third time what was wrong. He didn't respond, he just went to the door and opened it; quickly realising it was latched. He undid the latch and stepped out, closing the door too forcefully behind him and stepping outside into the rain and the cold, which matched his mood.

Innocence Lost

His paranoia was great as he rushed towards the Underground station and tapped his card. He moved automatically towards his train line without thinking about it. He sat on the train and didn't care how he must look or smell. He wanted to be home as soon as he could.

The rest of the journey seemed to take forever; though he found himself at home within forty minutes.

As soon as he was inside, he undressed and was grateful that the bathroom was free. He turned the water on too hot and scolded himself as he began scrubbing. He used a scrubbing brush that didn't belong to him and was clearly designed for feet – on his body. He felt the sting of the shower as he scrubbed too hard and caused his skin to split. He showered for so long with the hot water on full, that it soon ran out. As it began to run cold, he started to realise he'd really scrubbed too hard. He spat several times in the shower and felt the need to be sick, but managed to hold it in; though he still gagged a few times.

He dried and went to his room and locked the door. He dressed because the thought of being naked disgusted him. He got under the covers and grabbed his laptop and tried to think of a program he could watch that would distract him but he couldn't think of anything, so he dug up an old program about Zombies. Try as he might, he couldn't shake his feelings. Nothing seemed to distract him. He heard his phone vibrate and read that he had several messages. All of them were from Michael. He didn't read them, he deleted them all then blocked Michael's number. He pulled the bed cover right up to his chin and lay in bed and tried to focus on the movie and let the bed swallow him. Even after his long shower, he could still smell lube; and Michael on his body.

Q barely slept and found himself crying a few times. At one point he heard one of his house-mates knocking on his door but he didn't respond. He muffled his tears with the blanket and forced himself to think about normal things.

Several times, he thought about his parents; his mother. He wanted to call her and tell her he loved her but he couldn't do it. She would ask too many questions. His dad – the thought of him finding out – would be too much. The very thought of his parents knowing what he'd done, terrified and shamed him. He thought about being the only child and their expectations. Their pride when he'd finished University and chosen to enter Engineering Sciences and the pride they'd felt when he first brought a beauty home to meet them. That they would receive beautiful children from him, was a given. Memories of his childhood threatened to completely break him. Visions of his ex-girlfriend – a girl he'd known since he'd been ten years old – forced fresh feelings of guilt through him. The last images of her, that day he'd said goodbye to her; that day he'd said, "no, I can't do this anymore, I need to find myself first. I'm sorry, I still love you and you will always be in my heart, but I need to go and explore." It was that day that he remembered well at that moment. Her smile, her tears, her beautiful face, shattered by his words. He had

never known another who had shown him such love and support and he knew without a doubt, that he never would again.

His parents filled his thoughts again, standing at the door and waving him off – filled with tears – as he left them to go to London, to build a new life, to show them what he was capable of. They'd stood there, full of tears and pride and hope, that their son – their only son – was going to return with broader shoulders and nicer suits and for certain, a sports car and a woman – whom he would intend to marry – standing by his side.

No, he couldn't destroy them and let them know what he'd done. It would have to be something he would put behind him and he'd bury it. Then he thought about Michael and the sex they had and how much he'd enjoyed it and gone along with it and done everything and he dry-retched; quickly sitting up in bed and feeling the shame pushing his limits. His heart was already broken, but he feared his mind was soon to follow.

He returned his attention to the programs on his laptop, and continually forced himself to concentrate on them and ignore his thoughts. For a long time, he lay there struggling with them.

The following morning, although he was hungry, he didn't want to get up. In fact, he stayed in bed that entire day. It wasn't just the shame, he felt disgusted and he thought that he wasn't going to be able to get past it. He was also very tired from lack of sleep. He'd drifted in and out of troubled sleep – occasionally he would dream of his parents, pointing fingers at him and asking him what he was doing – then he'd be awake for even longer. He'd dream of Lisa, that kind-hearted girl who had told him she'd wait for him, even though he'd said goodbye.

The Fight for His Life

Two days later, Q's hunger had caused his stomach to cramp and his thirst was making his mouth and throat very dry. Still, he couldn't get up.

On the Monday morning, he'd called in sick – something he had never done before. Then he got up, showered and felt the water and soap sting his skin again. The wounds he'd created still open on his body and sensitive to the mild soap.

He dressed and went out. He managed to eat a bagel – because he had to – then he went straight to the nearest Pharmacy and bought some sleeping tablets. Then he went to another Pharmacy and bought more of the same. Then to a third and did it again. Then he returned home, took a bunch of them and got into bed, still fully clothed. He thought about it and decided he'd take the remainder. He managed to swallow 48 sleeping tablets.

“Hello?”

Jackie pushed the receiver into her ear in case the caller was soft-spoken.

“Hello?” Still no response.

Before asking for the third time who the caller was, she changed tactic.

“It's ok. You can talk to me,” her voice was soothing and calm. She had been told a hundred times that it was an asset and one of the reasons – though not the main one – that she did this job. Her main reason had died a couple of years before. She missed him every single day.

But the caller still didn't say anything. She checked the LED and closed her eyes, whoever it was hadn't hung up. *Please talk to me.*

“Just let me know that you want me to talk. Or if you'd prefer I just listened. It's up to you.”

“Hi,” finally, a voice – that of a young man – she thought.

“Hi honey. Are you ok?”

A pause, then, “yeah, I will be.”

Definitely a boy. Late teens, maybe early 20's she figured; he sounded nice. Within seconds, a whole host of possibilities came to her as well as her gut instinct. Her training kicked in.

“Want to talk about it honey? Do you have a name? I'm Jacinta but my friends call me Jackie. You can call me Jackie if you want.”

“Ok. Thanks. I'm Q. My friends call me Q, but my parents...they...um, called me Quebec.”

“Hey Q, mind if I call you Q?”

“No, that's fine.”

“Q, where are your parents now?” establish the support network and where they are, that was the second most important thing she needed. The first she already had; his name. It was important to get their names.

When he didn't respond, she added, “you can tell me whatever you like. It's up to you. I'm not going to take any personal details down from you ok? Everything you tell me is strictly between you and me, ok?”

“Ok,” there was another long pause. She was about to say something but then he said, “they're both at home but I'm in London. By myself.”

Something wasn't sitting right with her. She couldn't shake what it was. There was something about his voice; something in the way in which he spoke. Maybe he was buzzed.

“Have you had a good day Q?”

“Actually no. To be honest, the last couple of days were...um, bad. But it doesn't really matter anymore. I thought I'd struggle to accept what I did. But I realised that it doesn't really matter actually. As soon as you realise that you don't have to live with it, then that's the only acceptance I need.”

“Q, do you mind telling me what it was that you did? And why doesn't it matter? Why don't you start from the beginning?”

“I found your number online. It's funny what comes up in Google when you search for something. But straight away, your number came up and I realised that I wanted to make one last call. I didn't want to be alone for...”

“Q, honey. Tell me everything? Please?” that dreaded feeling was starting to come up from her chest to her throat. She softly tried to clear her throat.

“It's ok, I don't mind telling you because it won't matter. I had sex with a guy. That's not the hard part. I liked it, that was the hard part. But it's ok Jackie, honestly. I don't have to live with it anymore. I won't be telling my parents or coming out to my friends because they won't like it. My father, he's definitely not going to like it. I can't imagine his face if he ever found out. Nor my mother's. But they won't find out, so it really is going to be ok. In fact, strangely enough...right now I do feel ok.”

His voice, definitely starting to slur his words. She'd thought initially that he might have been stoned, perhaps on something as simple as weed. Often it was alcohol and at other times, it was a lot worse. These kids turned to that when they were scared. But she didn't think that was the case with this one. She suspected something worse. Something a lot worse.

“Honey, can you tell me what you took?”

“Does it matter? I mean really? What I did, what I took. I think now, it matters a lot less,” his chuckle sounded eerie.

She knew then. It smacked her in the face. She decided to press the record button. He wasn't giving her much choice.

“Q honey, listen. It’s important to me, ok? Don’t you think you called this number for a reason? As I said earlier, I can’t tell anyone else about what you tell me so you can tell me everything. But please, tell me everything, ok? Now, please tell me what you took.”

For a long time, she waited. At one point, she thought he’d hung up. She opened her eyes – because she worked better when they were closed – and checked the LED. He was still on the line.

“Please honey? Q? Will you tell me what you took?”

When he finally spoke, she struggled to understand him. He’d gone from slightly slurry to completely wasted. Her eyes darted around the room; wild and panicked. She clicked her fingers loudly when she saw who she wanted. Her mentor came rushing over as soon as he saw the urgency in her eyes.

She put the phone on mute and said, “I’ve got one, he’s overdosing, I’m sure of it. Can we track it? Please? We need to get help there now!”

He didn’t ask her if she was sure, it was her job to be. He trusted her instinct and knew that she’d made the call. He leaned over and tapped his authorisation into her console and stood back.

They both watched the call tracing software begin. It would be quick. It was also alerting an ambulance at the same time. The clever software would narrow the county, then the area; updating the ambulance as it went. Within a minute or two, they should have an address.

“Q, can you say that again honey?”

Her mentor – Steve – stayed next to her. He knew that the next few minutes were going to be crucial. He put a hand on her shoulder and she looked up. Her eyes, filled with fear and compassion. He could see what this was already and he also dreaded what this could mean to her. She’d been so strong lately.

“Q? Honey, are you still with me?”

“Yeah,” his voice was so distant now. Groggy and despondent.

“Q, did you take something bad? Is that what this is honey?”

He didn’t respond but the software did. It silently flashed a message within a green container. It read, *Trace Sent. Medical Services Notified.*

She clicked the box and launched the tracking module and waited for it to refresh. Steve leaned in closer and squeezed her shoulder. They both knew she was going to need more than his support if she lost this one.

ETA 8 Minutes.

She hit the pause quickly and looked up at Steve, her eyes suddenly filled with tears, “I can’t lose this one too Steve! There’s no way he’s going to make it! 8 minutes is too long!”

“They’ll make it, they have to. Let’s be optimistic. Talk to him.”

She bent her head down and closed her eyes while pushing the headphones into her head so she could hear every word.

“Q honey, will you please talk to me? I want to ask you a couple of questions. I can hear your accent. You’re from the north, am I right?”

“Yeah.”

She opened her eyes briefly and felt comforted that Steve was with her still; his hand still sat reassuringly on her shoulder. The support network was extended.

“Can I guess that you’re from Yorkshire?”

Nothing.

“Q? Are you from Yorkshire?”

“Yeah.”

“Is that where your parents are?”

“Yeah.”

“Can you tell me honey; did you talk to them today? Do they know where you are?”

Silence.

“Hey Q, are you still with me?”

She opened her eyes, checked the LED and closed them again, while pushing the headphones – almost painfully – further into her ears.

“Q?”

“Yeah,” it had barely been a whisper, she was losing him. Her heart pounded and she looked up at Steve. He reassured her with his eyes, *he is going to make it*. He squeezed her shoulder once more and stayed beside her. He really hoped he was right. She stared up at Steve's big brown eyes, under full-eyebrows that furrowed slightly, then his face softened and his smile was reassuring. He was confident for the both of them.

“Q, listen to me. I need you to tell me what you took ok? Please, can you tell me?”

Just then, a window flashed up with a new message, *Medical Personnel Arriving*.

“Q? Listen honey, I’ve sent a couple of my friends to help you. You can trust them; they are my friends ok?”

Nothing.

She tried to imagine the front of the apartments and the ambulance drivers racing towards the door. The police may have got there at the same time too. She knew they would be pushing all the buttons asking for Q. Someone in the building would know which one he was in.

The next few minutes were going to be agonizing. She looked up at Steve and hit the silent button, “they’re so close! Did we make it? Will they be able to save him?”

Steve shook his head and tried his best to reassure her, “we can only hope Jackie.”

He watched her resume her position; in this line of volunteer work, it was their prayer position. He knew what she was doing again and he was hesitant to remind her.

“Jackie, this isn’t Eric ok?”

She didn’t look up.

“Q?” nothing.

She repeated his name several times and each time, she pressed the headset into her ears a little harder. She could hear nothing but silence. Then in the background, suddenly she heard knocking and a man's voice. Silence. Then more knocking. Agonizing moments ticked by as she called out to him and she waited. Then some murmured voices then a sudden, loud bang as she guessed that the door was being knocked down. Then lots of voices and activity. The line stayed open and she listened to every single sound, her heart beating too quickly. Small beads of sweat began to form above her thin brows.

Then there was silence again and she knew they'd taken him out. She prayed they'd taken him to the hospital in time. She hoped and she prayed. For now, her headset was useless. She took it off and put her face in her hands.

"Hey, Jackie. He's going to be ok. Let's go get a coffee ok? We can come back and get the results. Come on."

She didn't move; couldn't. Jackie knew what he was trying to do and she appreciated it but she needed to know. In just the last half an hour, she'd come to put a face and a personality to a boy called Q.

Then suddenly, what felt to her like hours later, the small window popped up and informed her. She swivelled away within a second. Steve grabbed her and pulled her up into a hug. She sobbed.

"Jackie, you did your best. You were amazing."

He looked down at the box and sighed while his arms tightened around her. *Oh boy*. He knew exactly how she felt at that moment.

"Come on Jackie, I'll take you home. I'll get someone else to take over your shift."

Steve led Jackie away from the workstation towards the staff area. Others, those she'd gotten to know over the many months she had worked there, looked up and saw instantly what had happened. Some stood and reached out to her and others simply nodded to her in reassurance. Others looked at Steve to let him know they would be there for him too. All of them knew that it was a statistic. They were going to win some and they were going to lose some. Every single loss, was a loss to all of them and they knew; they would all work harder to reach out to more of them because sometimes, they were the fine line between life and death.

The End.

A Note from the Author

Wow. I wonder if you want to kill me or thank me. Intense story...

Thanks for reading my short story about Q. Would you mind taking a moment to jump on whichever retailer you found this story from and write a few words about this book? These things help me, they help other readers and they ultimately help you. Every genuine review helps others to determine whether this book was worth the time.

It's a really sad story and one that I didn't really enjoy writing in parts. Especially the ending, I prefer those warm and fuzzy happy endings to be honest. But that's not real life and that's not the story of A Boy Called Q.

Men and women with sexual identity issues commit suicide all the time. What needs to change is society's acceptance that we are all people, regardless of gender or sexual preference. Whether someone is gay, straight, bisexual, curious, transgendered, we are all the same. Then and only then, we will never lose a young person to such a horrid act.

In the meantime, feel free to have a read of Toby, which is a novella that I wrote right before this one, which spurred my imagination enough to explore Q's experiences. They didn't fit within the context of Toby so I decided to create this book. I warn you though, Toby is a bisexual prostitute and heavy drug user. If you are offended by any of this, please do not read this book. Want a spoiler? It's not a sad ending...but it does contact sex – gay and straight.

You will find sample chapters to Toby after this page.

I've also included a chapter of Monique, which is my first ever book about a female north London prostitute. I warn you, it is shocking, gritty stuff and it's based on a real story. You have been warned. Want a spoiler about that one? Again, not a sad ending...

If you want to know what books I'm working on...please check my [website](#) as I also write short stories and other ramblings that occasionally can be entertaining.

And if you're on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#), [g+](#) etc. you can find me easy enough.

Regards,

Fox

London, April 2016

Toby – Sample

Dallas, Texas - Present Day

Pelting rain against the back of his neck caused him to flinch, while the sound of thunder—as if to provide a soundtrack—boomed loudly in his ears. A dog nearby barked in rhythm with the thunder and yelped when the lightning flashed across the dark sky. The smell of the rain itself was refreshing and comforting, inspiring visions of sitting in a log cabin —perhaps with a tin roof — enjoying a coffee and a cigarette with only forest surrounding this heavenly, mythical place. For just a brief moment, he was in that conjured image. He could almost smell the fresh air around him of the bushland and the large trees, singing as the rain sated them, as it ran down each of their trunks to the ground where it streamed from little rivers that joined into larger pools. Local wildlife drank from the water at the base of the trees, and for just a few moments, he was amongst it all. It didn't matter where *there* was, it could be in the Amazon or somewhere in Europe, perhaps even in Northern Queensland so long as the picture fit and the temperature was just right.

He waited patiently for the last car to pass by him, so that he could put his athletic legs into good use and sprint across the road. The water dribbling down his back no longer bothered him, nor did the squelching of water inside his sneakers. His thoughts were too focused elsewhere, between the place he'd rather be and the place he was about to enter. He was not with the present moment. Apprehension and resignation were the two conflicting emotions because he knew he had to do this.

He realised he no longer wanted to go through with this. Halfway across the wet road, he questioned his motives for this visit. By the time Toby reached the other side of the road and stood almost directly outside his recently-passed mother's apartment, he had changed his mind several times. Luckily, no other cars had passed or he would have found himself indecisive and flat - in the centre of the road.

At least I wouldn't care about being wet and cold.

He looked up and recognised the apartment and shivered, but not from the cold. Toby had lived there from the day his mother brought him home from the Dallas Hospital until the day he'd left— it seemed so long ago. The years had been harsh on the exterior; he figured that would more than likely be the case on the inside too. He wondered if the years had also weathered his mother. He wouldn't know. He would never find out because it was too late.

Where once a dark-green railing encased a small balcony with well-kept plants, a barren and rusted eye-sore now stood in its place. If any plants were there, he couldn't see them. There wasn't any evidence that an attempt to tidy the exterior had taken place. Would the inside be as ravaged as the outside? As ravaged as he felt at that very moment?

A futile succession of arguments for and against began, as he soaked up every single rain drop that landed where he stood. The lightning briefly illuminated the inside of the apartment on the first floor,

just a flicker and only for a brief moment. But it was enough for him to have seen her. She had looked as though she'd been staring right at him – smiling, almost happy to see him return perhaps. Emotions pulled him back to a time when he had cared about her. A memory shot through him, he was a boy and she had held him against her bosom and sang to him. His heart ached at the memory and guilt permeated every fibre of his body.

Toby began to question the information he'd been given. *Had there been some mistake?* She had died, they had been sure. A heart-attack, they said. Her dental records only confirmed what her purse identification had told them—she was Andrea Peccone, and she was very much dead.

He looked up again, hoping another lightning bolt would illuminate the inside again. He knew it would, and if there was one thing he had learned, it was patience.

The argument about whether he was going to enter the apartment or not was over; the new one on whether or not he had seen a brief glimpse of his dead mother began. He waited, ignoring his body's plea for shelter and warmth. Luckily for him, nobody else was mad enough to be walking the streets or they might consider Toby to be a little crazy if they were to see him standing in the rain, looking up at the apartments, expressionless and dripping wet.

By the time the next flash of lightning speared through the sky, he'd concluded it had only been his imagination. The next flicker of light - oh so quick he almost blinked and missed it - proved that nothing stood there.

He made up his mind, even as he walked to the door facing him - equally as neglected as the apartments to which it led – that he was going to enter. He pulled out the key with the red tag, the name of his mother and the address someone had thoughtfully written on it; as if he could ever forget where he had come from. Without giving himself another opportunity to second-guess his own decision, he opened the rusty lock - which groaned and scraped - but eventually gave way and allowed him passage.

He was assaulted by ghosts from his past. The smells, the memories, the flashbacks, the voices he recalled all too well and a flood of emotions. The stairs creaked as they always had, yet this time, they also threatened to crack - perhaps break - and finally swallow him into their depths. The long-awaited son finally welcomed into the deepest reaches of the house's shadows to end things where they'd all began.

The steps spoke of years of use as he walked up the central staircase. He thought it was a miracle that he had convinced himself to continue to the apartment door. He wasn't surprised to see the once-varnished brown door looking forlorn and forgotten. The lock resisted, he shook it several times and remembered that he needed to pull it out slightly, before it finally accepted defeat and let him inside. How time had not let him forget an action he'd performed a thousand times, perhaps a thousand years ago. He was very different. Taller for sure, much more muscled too—he could break the door with his strong arms if he wanted to. Perhaps the door sensed this and knew it would be a futile exercise and gave up its feeble fight. But he knew he was delaying the inevitable. *Go in.*

She had died here - he could smell it right away. The air was rotten and decayed. From the corner of his eye, he saw movements in the shadows which quickly disappeared when he tried to focus on them.

He impulsively flicked a switch by the door and wasn't surprised that the power was out. He'd been forewarned that his mother had been bankrupt. She'd been cut-off weeks earlier by the power company before she'd died. There would be no light to guide him. The sudden quiet inside the dank-smelling apartment was almost too much for him.

He pulled out his phone and used the flashlight app to show him that which he didn't really want to see; the home where his life had started and in some sense, where his former life had ended. A home he'd tried desperately to forget, full of ghosts he didn't want to re-visit and a past that would never fully release its grip on him.

He wasn't expecting a tidy apartment, and he was surprised to find one. He wasn't expecting to remember everything either, but he did— every single detail in the dark room was exactly the same. He also wasn't expecting to find his dead mother sitting on the large couch looking up at him, but he did.

In that moment, Toby decided he no longer wanted to be back at home.

Just Another Working Day

Barcelona – The Time Before

They shared another two lines of coke, more for the excuse to stop and to talk and take a breather than for any real need to get any higher. Toby was already pretty stoned and had been thinking a lot about getting back to reality lately. In fact, he knew he would have to. He'd built such a tolerance to everything that he needed almost four times as much as his clients to get even a light buzz. He thought that he could stop as soon as he was ready. He knew he'd been saying that for over a year but continued saying it anyway, because he desperately wanted to. The reality was that he was very much addicted to it all, and he knew it. *Wasn't acceptance the first step towards recovery?*

She laughed and stroked her tits and licked her lips, Smokey, light-green eyes smiling naughtily at him, then her hand trailed down to her pussy and she inserted a finger inside it, wiggled a little bit, then brought it out, put it to her mouth and sucked on it. She laid her head back onto expensive soft-looking pillows, finger sliding in and out of her mouth as she continued to moan with sounds of pleasure.

“Mmmmmm...” Her eyes closed and she moved her face towards the heavens; she was excited by her own juices. Her hand once again travelled down to her pleasure centre, and her finger paused for a very brief moment before sliding back inside.

Toby knew that he could end it, he could make her cum just a few more times and exhaust her, but he looked at his phone while her eyes were closed and noted he still had another 15 minutes to use up. He forced a smile and began to stroke his dick, accentuating the length with long strokes, slowly wanking from the very tip and back to the base. He played with his balls and feigned excitement. He looked at her the whole time; it was what she wanted, he knew. Her hands went from her clitoris, which she kept opening with two fingers, to her average sized breasts - which she'd started circling again with her fingertips.

Her dyed-blond hair – with a touch of yellow – splayed neatly around her long face. She lay back on the bed and spread her legs further. He could see everything. He leaned over and thrust his tongue deep inside her, glad that she'd waxed it all off. He pushed it in as deep as he could and began to feel muscle ache, then protracted his tongue and rested a few seconds, then pushed it in again even as his jaw ached. Her response was orgasmic and her legs pressed against his ears a little too hard, causing him to struggle to free himself and breathe. She almost screamed before she gushed again and released her death-grip on his head. He pulled away quickly, pretending he wanted to watch her cum, but more so because he didn't want to taste it. She shivered, then looked at him, like an innocent child discovering she'd done something wrong. Toby moved up and lay on top of her; he kissed her, and she moaned. Then he pushed his dick inside her again. She was so moist it went straight in— all 9 inches of it. He thrust in and out, very slowly - watching her face - only kissing her when she opened her eyes. He watched her the whole time, he knew she liked that, it made her feel connected to him, it made her feel

that this was something more. Time was ticking and he controlled it. He pulled out of her and turned her over, then moved to the edge of the bed and pulled her with him. From her behind, which is how she loved her finale, he inserted it again and moaned loudly. She threw her head back and closed her eyes, so he quickly grabbed his phone while she wasn't looking. *Seven minutes.* He could get away with it now.

He rammed it all the way in and she pulled away from him, gasping loudly. It had hurt, he could tell. He pulled it out and did it again, as though he hadn't noticed. A few more thrusts and she came again, then again, then he fucked her so hard, she moaned like she was in pain. He made her cum one last time, then flipped her over and threw himself on top of her. He put it inside one more time and he made love to her for an entire minute. His well-practiced rhythm now underway, to show her how excited he was that he was cumming, he was going to do it really deep. Just as she looked like she couldn't take much more, he slowed down and faked his finale. He moaned out loud as he mimicked an explosion inside her and tensed his body, giving her a believable performance. He lifted his head and let out a loud, deep "Ohhhhh."

Fucking academy award for Toby Peccone, world's best orgasm faker.

She smiled at him, exhausted. He smiled back as he collapsed next to her, allowing her to use his arm as her pillow. Quickly pulling the condom off and masterfully scrunching it in his hand, he didn't want her to see that his seed wasn't inside it.

"Each time, I feel closer and closer to you. Can you come tomorrow? Same time? Please?"

Like a little girl, her eyes – which had lost their urgency and were sated— begged him to say yes.

"I'm booked out, but I can skip school again and get a tutor tomorrow night to help me make up what I've lost. Though he's expensive... He probably wants about €200."

She quickly reached over and grabbed her purse. It was hot-pink and had a design and a logo which Toby thought he recognised. Out came a thick stack of Euros.

"Oh, I don't know what I'd do without you. Sometimes I think you're paying for my education." He looked down craftily, mimicking a look of discomfort. Almost ready to tell her that she shouldn't, if it was needed.

She leaned forward and lifted his head—her kind and nurturing look. One that said, *I will look after you... my purse is open just for you.*

Which is exactly how Toby liked his clients to feel.

"Shit, I better check the time, baby. I'm supposed to get to school." He pulled out of their embrace and checked his phone... four minutes.

"Oh yeah, you are a naughty girl, you made me late." He said it to chide her, but did it with a cheeky smile. She wanted to believe she'd made him late for school and he encouraged it. It was more profitable that way.

"I'm sorry, boy...I don't want you late for school. Mummy got carried away. Can you forgive your mummy?" She was coy, a little sweet and innocent and clearly not able to keep track of time.

Toby might have found her attractive and perhaps even fun to be with, but she was too old for him. Besides, his lifestyle didn't allow for a lover.

"You're forgiven, Mummy. Your boy's gotta get away now. Same time tomorrow then? Can you wait that long for me?" He added a small sad smile as though he truly would miss her, then hurriedly dressed.

"Mummy will try and wait son. Mummy will miss her boy." Her body, looking lithe and sinewy was toned. Toby was amazed that a 62-year-old woman could look so good. *The best body money can buy*, he guessed.

"Bye, Mummy, I'm off to school now." He blew her a kiss, grabbed his phone and keys and rushed out of the door.

He checked his phone and was pleased... a minute to go. *Good work, boy*. He rushed to the stairs, walked down one level and pressed the elevator button. He worried that she would come out to wave him off and there would be an uncomfortable moment as he waited for the lift; so he waited on the next floor. Walking wasn't an option; he had another two clients backed up and no break until after, then he would have his time for other things. He needed all the energy he could conserve.

As soon as he stepped outside, the bus he needed coasted along slowly. *Excellent timing, thank you*.

*** End of Sample ***

Monique - Sample

Foreword

Although this book took a year to write and edit, it took a lifetime to create.

I've been asked many times by friends and reviewers whether the story is real, and whether the central character exists, because some of the content is quite hard to believe. My answer is a resounding yes. She is quite real, and this is the resulting story. As much as all the other characters are real and all the events are also quite real, some of the names and places have been changed to protect the identities of the people involved for a number of reasons.

The young woman depicted in this book was the victim of many men and women who abused an innocent teenage girl, and for the most part, ruined her adolescent life.

The woman who recounts the story today is quite proud of her daughter and has a very different and happy life. This is a testament to the strength within herself to come away from her past with optimism and courage to brave the future by realizing that her life could change for the better.

“Monique” is the story of one woman’s life, but it represents many women around the world who live an alternate and distorted reality that many of us know little or nothing about.

I warn the reader that some of the content in this book is graphic, vile and perverted, and to remember that these events remain integral to Monique and her story because they actually happened.

The raid

1995

Cookie slept on the settee while Cherie slept soundlessly in her bedroom. If I hadn't had so much weed and coke, I highly likely would've been more aware of the silence in the flat. I'd already spent two hours cutting up brown, which is heroin, in the kitchen. I looked at the clock and realised the time — 1am. Surely several hours hadn't passed since Cookie had laid down to take a nap at 8.

Exhaustion overwhelmed me as I realised that I hadn't slept for over 40 hours. Considering whether I should try to wake up Cookie, hoping that he might take over, I continued regardless. "Sleep would be good now," I said aloud and even briefly considered sneaking in some zzz's myself, but rejected the idea after glancing at the clock again. I looked over at where he lay softly snoring and decided that I'd continue for a while longer. There would still be many more batches to cut before morning, so I quickened my pace and returned to my daydream about my would-be life.

Visions of all the money coming my way entered my thoughts as I cut, weighed, then bagged up quality heroin. Thousands of pounds awaited us after this last batch would be finished and distributed. In my mind, I'd pretty much already spent the money. I'd been daydreaming about the next few days many times. I visualised myself paying off my debts and loans, paying out the balance on my car, and buying a few necessary items I desperately needed, such as a new cooker.

Cherie popped into my mind, and I smiled. She is the most important person in my life. My darling would soon enough turn 8. No longer a baby, she really needed a new bed for her quickly growing body. She would be tall; the signs were already showing, like how she outgrew her clothes far too fast. Like me, her mum, she should reach at least 5'10.

That day I'd been dreaming a fair bit about Cookie and me possibly buying a house together. Cherie would have a larger room... she would even have a dog, maybe a Golden Retriever. We'd have dinner parties filled with laughter and fine wine. Cookie and I would sit on our veranda late at night and talk about having a baby together. I'd hold my head high as I walked Cherie to school, pregnant again with Cookie's child. We'd be expecting a boy perhaps, a chocolate-coloured beauty just like Cherie. Cookie would legally adopt Cherie, and she might start calling him 'Dad'.

I continued cutting and weighing and daydreaming. Occasionally, I'd gaze at the sleeping figure on my couch and a familiar warmth would envelope me. To say that I loved that man a great deal would be an understatement. Every time I either thought about him or heard his name, I reminded myself how much I loved him. In his presence, I felt loved—away from him, I was missed. When he slept, I would watch him and envision a picture-postcard life; one that, to me, had only ever existed on television.

He was such a handsome man, kind, considerate and thoughtful. When I looked into his dark eyes, they went from hazel to dark brown, depending on his mood. I liked that about him, they reflected so much of his personality. His skin was soft and dark and clear of any imperfections, like most of the

Cypriot men I've met. It was easy to get distracted and stare at him while he snoozed on the lounge, his tall form just slightly longer than the length of it—so his feet were over the edge. This made me smile to myself.

From the corner of my eye, lights outside the window showed cars driving by, which was not unusual for this part of London. All sorts went on and at all hours of the day and night, so I kept my mind on the current task. Even with little sleep, I expertly weighed the bags and measured the exact quantities. I did this while I continued to daydream and plan my life and wondered if Cookie did the same... and if his daydreams included me. Cookie's phone rang and woke him, but I could tell by his tone that someone was coming to pick up the drugs. I frantically weighed and sealed up the last couple of bags, I realised he was close, probably outside the door. Cookie got up and stretched, which I watched out of the corner of my eye, he then wiped sleep from his eyes as he looked at me with a blank expression. It filled me with love.

Moments later, a knock on the door startled us, Cookie opened it and a man I'd seen a few times before came inside.

“Hi, Kelly-Anne, you ok?”

“Hey, Red, I'm good thank you. How are you?”

Because I understood that Cookie's mate, Red, would have such little time, I quickly packed up all the bags in a container for him. We weren't close enough for us to hug; he was a business associate of Cookie's. There was something about him that Cookie didn't know, but that could come later. It was a small thing.

After Red left, Cookie gave me a kiss, patted my behind and said he was going back to sleep. Before he did, I grabbed him and gave him a long kiss. He looked surprised as though this was out of character for me. His eyes changed colour again; warm brown. This tiny little scar on the side of his left eye always drew my attention.

“You've got that naughty smile Bebe,” and his characteristic cheeky smile appeared, the sides of his mouth lifting slightly and making him appear even more handsome than ever.

“Well I am cutting up a whole heap of drugs, so yes I'm being naughty.”

“I'm a lucky man to have the woman doing the work while I sleep. The envy of all my friends.”

“You are lucky and don't you forget it.”

He kissed me again, slightly longer this time and for a few moments, we both got lost in each other's love. He opened his eyes and moved back as though he was appraising me one more time. With a smile, he finally turned and went back to the couch.

I thought I'd join him on the couch for a snooze myself, so I went back into the kitchen and slowly began the process of cleaning up. I eyed off the last bag of coke— that one destined to be for us. It would wait.

Call it instinct, call it the smell of bacon, something in my gut made me stop, and suddenly my ears tuned in to sounds outside the apartment. Something didn't seem right, so I turned off the kitchen

light and walked through the now-dark front room. It didn't take long for my eyes to adjust so that I was able to move over to peek out the window. Interior lights in a car parked across the street made it easy to spot the two guys in the front and what looked like a third in the back. The sensation that they were monitoring me made me uneasy. Fear became reality when he moved slightly. I realised that both the men within view were looking up at me.

I stepped back and caught my breath. What the... Am I imagining this? I looked again. There was no mistake, they were looking up at me.

My coordination was non-existent as I tried to decide what to do, I was about to call out to Cookie when a car suddenly appeared from the left and screeched to a stop out the front of the house, shattering the silence. Another car quickly followed. Suddenly, another appeared from the right, parking nose to nose with the first.

Everything happened so quickly that recalling the exact events and in the right order would be difficult. All at once, the men in the original unmarked car, along with several cops in the new cars, got out and ran across the street to where Cookie's car sat in shadow. Some of them were looking up at me, and I instinctively knew this was it.

"Cookie!" I screamed, as my legs quickly raced me to the kitchen as fast as I could make them. As if on auto-pilot, I wiped the counters clean and took the only bag of coke I had left and flushed it down the sink. I cried. My heart broke to view this as though from a distance, almost like an 'out of body' experience. "Cookie!" I yelled again.

"What!?" he grumbled sleepily from the couch. I wasn't sure if he'd rolled over and gone back to sleep so I was about to call out again but stopped when I realised he'd got up.

I looked towards him and made sure he was wide awake and yelled, "The cops are out front and they'll be here any minute!"

He materialised in the kitchen beside me, flustered, and glaring at me while I sponged the leftover Charlie off the counter. He was confused and still half-asleep. "What the fuck are you doing, Kelly-Anne?!" he shouted, and moved to stop me.

My reflexes pushed him away, and then I turned to stare at him. I could see his dark eyes wide, now freaked out. "I'm not going to fucking jail for this baby!"

I could see the enormity of our situation hit him and his face registered that this was it. We'd feared this moment but never thought it would actually happen. It had lain beneath our optimism, always threatening it. As much as I knew I'd regret yelling at him, I had needed to shock him awake. Right then I needed him alert and thinking straight because I couldn't do this without him.

I was wiping the scales clean where just minutes earlier I'd carefully weighed the brown when Cookie, who was now wide awake and rushing around yelled, "The fucking cutting agent! Where did you put it?"

I continued brushing the leftover Charlie we'd snorted earlier onto the floor and shouted back, "In the laundry basket!" Then added, "Fuck, don't forget the cash is under the bed."

“Which bed?” he called, as he raced out of the kitchen to which I yelled back “mine!” as he disappeared around the corner. The door opened, and I realised he’d rushed out of the flat.

My mind was all over the place at this point, and I could no longer focus or form coherent thoughts. What else needed to be dealt with?

I ran to the window again and saw Cookie was heading right to the cops. They suddenly lunged at him and put his hands behind his back and began to walk him towards the apartment. Without knowing what I was going to do with it, I bolted the door closed and then went to retrieve the cutting agent from the laundry basket.

It was too late as all hell burst through my door with unbelievable force.

First the front door smashed open, with wooden splinters flying and a portion of the main lock landing near the television. I stood there, frozen. Then a torrent of men, both uniformed and plain-clothed came racing in. Whatever peace I’d sensed minutes earlier, along with any dreams of being debt-free, disintegrated along with my front door. Someone yelled “Police! Don’t move!” I couldn’t move anyway; fear gripped me and ensured I’d become an unwilling participant in this surreal movie.

A heavysset cop raced towards me and shoved me hard against the fridge while another appeared alongside him and pinned me up by the shoulders. Instantly, pain screamed through my body as yet another cop muscled in, his face mere inches away from mine as he yelled questions at me. His breath was rancid and smelled of garlic as he competed with the other cops, all asking me a lot of questions and all of them at the same time. I had no chance as I couldn’t make out what they said. Deep down I understood what they were asking me.

Across the room, I saw Cookie being dragged with arms handcuffed behind him. He fell once, and a cop roughly picked him up, yanking his arms up high behind him. I winced as I could see the pain in his face and could see that it would hurt, even if Cookie would try not to show it. Cookie would rather die than show these pigs they’d hurt him, I appreciated that. The cops wouldn’t though. They dragged him backwards, and I heard them yelling at him with deep, strong and authoritative voices.

I was walked across the flat by five of the cops to my bedroom, and one of them kept firing questions at me. They couldn’t comprehend that I’d been through a lot worse than this. Give me your best shot, I thought.

I heard Cookie calling out in a gruff voice filled with pain, “Leave her alone! She hasn’t got anything to do with this, you bastards, leave her alone. She knows nothing! She’s just my girlfriend, she’s innocent!”

They closed the door and interrogated me. The same questions, over and over again. I tried to listen to what had happened to Cookie in the other room, but they kept on talking and asking their questions. They became just noises to me, so I tuned them out and tried to focus on what was happening in the other room.

One of the cops, a serious-looking woman said, “This will go a lot easier on you if you co-operate with us. We don’t want you, we just want your boyfriend. We know your involvement and if you help us, we’ll help you.”

It became all too much for me. I had this moment, this clarity whereby the predicament I was in overpowered me and I felt terror. Realisation that I might go to jail hit me, and it hit me hard. My mind had been all over the place before then, and I had been vaguely aware that I couldn’t focus on a single thought for too long. Until that moment, as I sat on the end of my bed surrounded by police, I hadn’t understood. Reality can be brutal, which would explain why being high, drunk, or zoning out is so alluring. At this moment I was no longer any of those; I was alert, and my heart beat faster— like a cold hammer desperate to escape from my chest in any way that it could.

Whether it was an equally combined mix of exhaustion or a lack of drugs, I wasn’t sure. Maybe it was the realisation that my life had quickly ended because halfway through the interrogation my body shut down and I zoned out. I could still hear them, but I simply stopped caring. They continued to ask me things, and I retreated further and further into myself.

They eventually left me sitting and staring at the wall. The last thing they’d told me before carting Cookie away was that I shouldn’t go anywhere, and they were going to come back with more questions. I didn’t doubt that they’d been watching us but decided I’d worry about that later. In the back of my mind, I was aware that I had a lot to worry about.

I walked through the suddenly eerie house and went to Cherie’s room. She was asleep, but I needed her then. I lifted the cover, and she sleepily rolled over onto her side. Her dark form beside me providing some comfort as I lay down next to her and held her close to me and wondered how I’d ever be able to sleep. But somehow, I did.

The End