

**ALWAYS
LEAVE THEM
WANTING MORE**



**HANNAH
LOCKHARDT**



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Title Page

ALWAYS LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE

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Dedication

*For Zoë
Ready Always*

Screwing is Easy; Comedy is Hard

Part I

“And you can stick it up your arse!” Siobhan shrieked, hurling the microphone into the swell of the audience and stalking off the stage with leaden feet.

Gary rushed into her path, halfway to the packed green room.

She held up her hand. “Don’t. Just don’t. I know.”

“Did you hit anyone?” He squeaked.

“Might have done. Didn’t hear anyone go ‘ow’. Maybe they got lucky.”

“We’ll send someone out to check. You should probably leave by the emergency exit though, just to be on the safe side.”

She nodded, momentarily distracted by Ritchie brushing past her to bring the night to a swift close.

“He’ll sort them.” Gary nodded too, turning away from her and walking back to the box office. Confrontation was far from his remit.

Comforted by the spontaneous applause she prompted upon entering the green room, Siobhan gave them an exaggerated bow and allowed the other acts to thump her on the back and offer praise and commiserations.

“At least they’ll remember you.” Viv pointed out. “That girl who threw a mic at the cunts in the fourth row singing ‘Get your tits out’ in an atonal round. You can put it on your posters.”

“Better than it being the other way round; got glassed twice in my first year, look.” Brian proffered his lower back at an awkward angle and she nodded sympathetically on cue.

“We’ve all been there, Pet and we’ll all be there again, it’s the way. What doesn’t kill you gives you great material for your next set. Must shoot off now; Babysitter charges a quid for every five minutes past 12 I get back.” Viv kissed her on the cheek and rushed out of the door, followed by most of the others, the Tuesday night line up being semi-professionals with proper day jobs to turn up at come 9am. This meant the bar would be dead, save for students and the odd straggler. Hopefully the singers from earlier would be long gone. Only slightly spooked by the thought; Siobhan retrieved her bag from the top of the lockers and fished for her lippy and a dash of Dutch courage. Mid-application there was a knock at the door and trying to call out “S’open!”, she knocked the tube and streaked Man Trap red across her cheek.

“Fuck.” She muttered dejectedly as the door opened and Ritchie walked in.

“Hello Scrappy-Doo.” Then. “War paint for the bus ride home?”

“Funny. Did the close go alright?” She turned back to the mirror and tried to wipe the smudge away, but only making it look like she had a really bad case of heat rash.

“Fine. They were shocked, more than anything.”

“And did I manage to twat the cunt?”

He laughed. “Sorry, the mic’s pretty fucked though.”

“Shit. They’re not going to pay me tonight, are they?”

“Not my place to say, maybe you shouldn’t buy yourself a diamond car just yet.”

“Thanks for the heads up.” To avoid making eye contact she turned to the coat rack, hunting for her jacket.

“Going anywhere tonight?”

“Just home.”

“Right.”

“You?”

“Paperwork.”

“Serves you right being the compère and promoter of the only club in a thirty mile radius.”

“I’m a glutton for punishment.” He agreed. “Great set tonight, by the way - until the GBH.”

“You don’t have to be kind.”

“I’m not paid to be kind, I’m paid to hire acts that bring in crowds that help us break even. It was a tight ten minutes with maybe five towards the end that need a bit of trimming. And maybe anger management classes.”

“I’ll work on it.” She promised, secretly thrilled he was taking an interest.

“Do you have to shoot off now?”

She considered this. It was reading week. Apart from a scheduled session at the library, her days were wide open.

“I can give you a lift.” He added, “Buses do get a bit mental and stabby in the early hours. You’re only out past the station, aren’t you?”

“Yeah,” She replied, surprised he remembered. “Good memory.”

“Mr Memory, yours truly. Come up to the office, it’s warmer in there.”

The office was sacred territory - nestled at the back of the building with a comfy sofa and two desks where Gary and Ritchie sat opposite one another glowering and arguing over who should take top billing. Gary’s desk was almost empty; remnants of the week’s lunches in his waste paper basket. Ritchie’s was messier, but still neater than the one in Siobhan’s bedroom which was awash with essays, half-written ideas for acts and ‘inspirational’ newspaper clippings about people with funny names and current affairs.

The radio was playing softly from his ancient laptop, and the only illumination from there and one desk lamp set on the shelving unit. He was right though, it was a lot warmer.

“Drink? Got a cheeky bottle of rum around here, somewhere.”

“Snap.” She waved the miniature from her bag at him.

“Well, I’ve got glasses.”

“You win; let me have it.”

He passed the glass over and they sat on opposite sides of his desk, silent for a moment.

“You’re really good, Siobhan.” He said finally. “Really good, I can see you going far.”

“Thanks.” She said, floored.

“And Gary thinks so too.”

Gary’s opinion didn’t mean anything, though. Only Ritchie. Ritchie with his brown eyes and authority and knowledge of everything.

“We both fucking loved the line about castrating your grandmother. Beautiful.”

She blushed. “It’s stupid.”

“That’s why it works. Believable stupidity. You’ve got it, Siobhan all you need to do now is control it.”

“I’m definitely believably stupid.” She smiled, the fire in her throat making her a wee bit bolder. “So what do you want to teach me?”

It was a loaded question.

He looked at her thoughtfully.

“Do you like your last five minutes?”

“Honestly?”

“Honestly.”

“Not as much as I could. It’s rushed. I had a solid ten and when I got offered longer sets, it threw me a bit.”

He nodded.

“Happens to all of us. Definitely happened to me. I used to end my set with an audience Q&A. Had to tell a lot of lies about the size of my cock. Three or four times a night if we had stags and hens in. I wouldn’t recommend that strategy.”

“No. No one’s going to ask me how big my cock is, are they?”

“I don’t know, are they?”

Without thinking she pressed a hand to her crotch and pursed her lips.

“Definitely a pussy down there.” she nodded, downing the rest of the glass.

“I expect so.” He replied, his gaze lingering.

“Maybe I could get my tits out. I’ve already been asked once tonight so it’s clearly something at least some of the public want. When they say ‘get your tits out’” she continued, warming to the subject “When they say that, do they mean, like, all my tits, or just my tits in a bra or what? What’s the protocol there?”

“All your tits?”

Nipples on display and stuff. Is that what they want?”

“Probably, yeah.”

“Dirty bastards.” Even though as she was thinking it, she felt her skin start prickling, travelling down her arm, down over her stomach and through her legs and cunt, quite matter of factly.

“So, are you going to teach me how to do an ending then?”

He finished his drink and slammed the glass down.

“Yes, yes I am. Stand up.” She did so, and he walked round to her.

“Are you warm?”

“Yes.” Siobhan took off her coat. He was wearing a long sleeved t shirt. “And horny.” She added, unexpectedly.

“Oh.” He said, stumped.

“Only a bit. And a bit tired. But definitely more horny than tired.” He was very close and very handsome and she’d wanted to fuck him ever since she’d seen him at a gig during Fresher’s week and she hadn’t become a groupie like other girls; she watched him perform and found she wanted to do it to. He had an infectious passion you could absorb from the audience; had been gigging since she was in nappies and he was skipping school to charm reps and get his foot on the ladder. She made the final heats of Student Comedy Fest 2013 and got a commendation and Ritchie offered her

five minutes off the back of it.

Once she'd walked into the green room and he was dressing. She wondered if he remembered, or even knew at all.

"I think what you've got working for you, is the element of surprise. You work with it all through your set, so you can afford to do something shocking at the end, if you want to take the risk." And he kissed her squarely on the mouth; one of his large hands in the small of her back and the other gently fitted against her chin.

Shock, mostly. Drunken shock. He broke away as soon as they'd begun.

"Sorry, sorry. I shouldn't have done that. Crossed the line, way over the line. Past the line. I'm so sorry, Siobhan-

"Why?"

"How long have you got? Unprofessional mostly."

He still had his arms around her, she was reluctant to remind him in case he let go.

"I don't think so, not really."

She kissed his cheek.

"Is that unprofessional?"

"Depends."

"On what?"

"On what comes next."

Siobhan cocked her head, and raised her finger to his lower lip, tracing the fullness in silence.

"Kiss me again, properly this time."

"Are you sure?"

"Just do it."

He paused, leaned towards her, was as close as close can be when she came out with

"How many comics does it take to change a light bulb?"

"What?"

She pulled him to her, parting his lips with her own for her tongue to follow, her arms around his neck and curling in the hair that brushed his collar. Closer than before she could feel him - or what she thought, hoped was him - solid and pulsing against her belt, and her own body reacting.

With his mouth relocated to her ear, she heard him muttering,

"Are you sure?"

"About what? This? Yes."

"Ok,"

She moved one hand to his chest, briefly feeling his heartbeat under her fingertips before the hand shifted lower to his belt buckle where with impressive dexterity she unfastened it and unhooked the first two loops.

"Sure about this, too." she replied into his neck, falling to her knees in what felt like a surprisingly elegant fashion and finishing the job neatly. She heard his breath catching above her as she unzipped, slid her hands into the belt loops and pulled them away with her mouth pressed close to the widening gap, breathing into the fabric and making it damper, through the warmth against her lips.

"So," she murmured, "That joke you do about your genital topiary..."

"Don't take the piss, Siobhan."

"Sarcy." Down came the underwear with it's dark spots of excitement, and there he

was, just as she'd expected, only more real.

"And sarcy boys don't get nice blow jobs."

"Is that a fact?" he asked, placing his hand on the top of her head and very gently pulling her towards him.

"Mmf." She replied as the tip slid easily into her mouth.

"And is your mouth writing cheques that it can't cash, Siobhan?"

"She shook her head, concentrating on working her tongue around the sizeable erection in it, her hands rigid against his hips, and alarmed to find him swelling still as she worked.

"No, this won't do, get up." he said finally.

She stood up abruptly and wiped her mouth.

"I'm sorry, sometimes it's hard to gauge what someone wants - different strokes for different folks, right?"

He shook his head, and took her hand, leading her with some difficulty to the sofa and sitting her down.

"Less pressure on the knees?"

"Stop it! You're a good comic, Siobhan but do you always treat fucks like works in progress gigs?"

"Sorry."

With his hands on his hips, and his erection still prominent, he shook his head.

"Stop apologising!" he added, sitting down next to her, and kissing her, slipping one hand inside the neck of her t shirt and feeling her through a stupidly bolstered bra. Immediately calmed, with her free hand she took hold of his cock and stroked it firmly as he felt her up.

"Do you want to take it off?"

She nodded, loosening her grip only to peel the t shirt from her shoulders and taking her bra with it for ease before returning to her job. Sometimes the other acts would make gags about her 'overinflated chest', the Barbie doll comparison came up quite a lot, as she was very blonde, only Barbies don't have short legs or wear glasses. Siobhan noticed Ritchie was motionless, almost assessing them in his palm and for one split second she wondered if he'd ever seen a woman topless before, and if he hadn't, did it bother her enough to stop? (It didn't). She felt him grasp her nipple between his fingers and pinch it sharply.

"Ow!" She shrieked, a little too loudly.

"It can't have hurt that much." He countered.

"It did. Kiss it better." She pouted.

Grinning, he took her hand from his privates and lowered his head, kissing the swell of her breast which made her giggle when his stubble tickled the flesh, and nudged her backwards so she was lying more comfortably. As he kissed his way back up her body, she knotted her fingers in his hair and pondered aloud.

"Do you think this will ruin our working relationship?"

"Hmm? It shouldn't do."

"Harder." She called, feeling his teeth. "No, but it might. If someone finds out, or thinks I'm getting better slots or more offers or something. Or that you only told me I was good to get into my knickers."

"No one's turned on by self-deprecating shit, Siobhan. You're good at what you do.

Quite separately, you're hot, and intelligent and you give as good as you get."

"So what if they do find out?"

Now face to face, he folded his arms and rested them across her chest.

"Then they find out. We can keep it a secret, if you like."

She considered him.

"Are we going to do it again?"

"We haven't done it once! Shouldn't we at least have a test run to see if we like it at all?"

"Sweet-talker. Let's have at it then."

Off came his t shirt, revealing the chest that had been part-bared during many gigs for a quick laugh. He stood to pull his jeans and boxes off entirely, and Siobhan did the same, shuffling out of her skinnies and annoyingly utilitarian underwear. Then in a sudden fit of nerves, clamped both hands over her pubic triangle and waited.

"You've made access very difficult, there, Siobhan."

He pointed out, reaching into his desk drawer.

"What are you doing?"

She countered.

"Looking for 'protection'. Like an armed guard..." He replied absent mindedly, coming back wielding the packet.

"How many girls have you had in here?"

"Not enough to keep score, but it's always good to be prepared."

"Many groupies?"

"Comedians don't have groupies; we have direction-less girls with low self-esteem and nowhere to go."

"Sounds like a groupie to me."

He sighed. "I'm thirty six, Siobhan. Did you expect me to be a virgin?"

"No..."

"I'm single, you're single. Those are really the only facts that matter. Unless you've been lying about your age. You really are twenty two, aren't you?"

She took a deep breath and removed her cupped hands.

"This and the tits are usually a dead giveaway."

"Very vintage, 1970's chic. I like it."

"Pubes are a feminist issue, Ritchie. A bold statement. They were probably all the rage when you were young and virile."

"Ooh, how deep she cuts me. Maybe you should ease up on the age gags unless you want me to bring in a fluffer."

"I'm very sorry. You are lovely and only old in a distinguished, sexy way like Bruce Willis's only with more hair."

"That's better."

He knelt down in front of her, and suddenly it all felt very very real. She could feel the blood pounding in her ears, was sure she could hear her heart beating louder than the radio and the noise as he slipped the condom on was almost deafening.

"Are you sure? Sure sure sure?"

She thought about it. It would make a good basis for a set, if nothing else.

"Get on with it, then."

When he leant down to kiss her again, she felt him brushing against her; then there

he was, inside her. Simple as that. All that fuss over nothing.

“This has got to be the weirdest shag I have ever had.” she said after a moment, filled beautifully but static.

“You try getting purchase on a threadbare sofa from British Heart Foundation! It’s tricky.”

“Wuss.” She put her hands on his waist and pulled him closer, crossing her ankles behind his legs and bucking, taking the initiative for once which made him match her, push for push, their breathing thick and noisy, the radio all but drowned out by bodies and furniture and friction making independent rackets feeding into a glorious wall of sound. It felt perfect even when it wasn’t, he was big but not the biggest and the way he worked his way in and out with each stroke felt wonderful. Better than at least her last two boyfriends and that one night stand in Cardiff.

They were so caught up in the thrashing and pounding that by the time they were falling off the sofa it was too late; first Siobhan felt her shoulders slipping and the next thing she knew they were collapsed on the floor. Luckily the sofa was low and the piles of discarded clothing beneath them broke their fall; the jolt sending him into her so abruptly that it shocked Siobhan into climaxing. Her tender skin throbbing and aching with pleasure. He felt her clenching and pulsing; watched her eyes close and her chest redden and the final confirmation of her voice rising above it all, howling his name with her head flung back into the leg of his jeans and it would have been hilarious if anyone could have seen them.

Ritchie kissed her tilted neck and drove himself into her with the renewed force gained from the confidence of knowing she was satisfied, and when he came some moments later, held her tightly so that she could feel it too, though it was not her name he called. To Siobhan’s untrained ear, it sounded suspiciously like that Welsh station with the world’s longest name, though later he was assure her it was nothing of the sort.

Silence reigned in the aftermath as he sat up on his knees, extracting himself from her and rising to get rid of the debris. Siobhan rolled over onto her stomach, watching.

“Should we be giving critique?”

“Not so soon after - have the night to think it over at least. Drink?”

“Please - two fingers.”

He looked up with raised eyebrows “After all that?”

“Ha. I’m insatiable.”

“That’s not something a man wants to hear.” He grouched, handing her a glass. he sat down on the clothes pile next to her. “Cheers.”

She sipped, and felt the alcohol warm her belly. There was a neat scar on his abdomen and she stroked it lightly with a fingertip.

“War wound?”

“Appendix, nothing so exciting.” Then “It’s gone two. I should be getting you back.”

“So soon?”

“Did you have something else in mind?”

Siobhan carefully turned over onto her back; displaying herself with the abandonment of the truly contented. her breasts replete with pillow creases from the shirts beneath her which only seemed to accentuate their fullness, and much deeper,

redder than the skin on her stomach below.

He stared at her for a long time, admiring these things and more as she stood and retrieved her knickers from the tangle; then her shoes from beneath the desk.

“Perhaps you’re right. Perhaps not tonight.” She slipped them back on, then bra-less buttoned her shirt over her chest. “You should get dressed though, imagine being stopped by the police in the nuddy. That would never do.”

“No...”

“How about Thursday night? I’m free all day Friday for you to completely get to grips with my finer points.”

He stared.

“You’re a remarkable woman, Siobhan.”

“I know. Now put your pants on.”

Crowd-Pleaser

Part II

“We are never going to make this work, you know.” Siobhan said matter-of-factly as they walked home in the wee small hours some weeks later. It was Spring and with the days getting longer and slightly warmer, Ritchie had taken to parking the car at Siobhan’s (Student-lite area - less crime), and walking her back afterwards. They stopped at the lights.

“No one’s going to stab you, Shiv.” He said, out of habit.

“No, I mean this. Us.” The Green man appeared and they crossed.

“Why not?”

“Dunno. Just seemed like the right thing to say.”

“Gary,” He added, slowing down a little “Doesn’t know what he’s talking about. Even his wife says he does most of his talking out of his arse.”

“He said it was nepotism. Or cronyism. Or whatever it is, only with shagging.” she said, glumly, worrying at the fluff in the pockets of her coat.

“You got gigs before we got together, correct?”

“Yes, but,”

“Then there is no but, there is only talent, and audiences to satisfy. We’re here.” He walked her to the door. “Now, none of your nonsense. We’ve had this conversation every week for the past month. Enough is enough, ok?”

“Ok.” she agreed, as he kissed her, slipping his hands into her pockets, which was a tight fit with hers in there too.

“And repeat after me. ‘Gary is a wang.’”

“Gary is a wang.”

“With a micro-cock.”

She screwed up her face in disgust. “I’m not saying that!”

“Trust me, it’ll make you feel better.”

She sighed. “With a micro-cock.” then “Hey, that does feel better!”

“Works every time.”

It wasn’t just that her career appeared to be taking off, ever so slowly. It was the sex. She felt guilty that his company and friendship were coming second, but she had honestly never known the like in her five years of practice. Siobhan had always considered herself open and fairly kinky, like most people born in the 1990s and growing up in the era of provocative lingerie ads and mild sadomasochism everywhere you looked. She’d been tied up. She’d been told she was a bad girl, and spanked. She’d even taken decent photographs of herself in a state of partial undress to a warm reception. What she had never done was sustained pleasure for so long she felt certain she’d soon reach her life quota and live the rest of her days with no further access to her lower body.

When Ritchie touched her, he made sure he was paying attention to everything,

every single reaction of her body. He knew that quickies had their place in the grand scheme of things, but given the time and opportunity, preferred to take an afternoon, lock the door behind them and not reappear until one of them needed to stretch their legs. One morning she lay on top of the duvet, naked, watching the light from the window dapple over her legs and stomach, as Ritchie followed the tiny spotlights with the lightest yet most perfect touch she had ever encountered.

His flat was outside of town, in the attic of a Victorian villa, or The Pleb's quarters as he'd affectionately described it when he invited her round for the first time, and cluttered with sporting memorabilia and musical instruments and puppets. Shitloads of puppets.

"I like puppets." He said simply, when she pointed out that a man approaching his forties with an original Gordon the Gopher guarding his loo roll might be a tad odd.

"I like puppets too, but there's a limit, isn't there? I don't like the way he eyeballs me when I'm changing my tampons."

Ritchie never pulled faces if she casually mentioned her periods and the next time she visited, Gordon had a white hanky tied around his eyes, court-martial style.

In the bedroom, all she had to contend with was Batman ephemera. Batman she could handle, he was just a man in a mask and a suit.

"What about dressing up?" She asked once, tangled in the bedclothes with her fingers in his chest hair and Bruce Wayne gazing moodily at her from the corner of the room.

"No." He said simply.

"Batman does it."

"We can't all be Batman."

"Really, why not?"

He smacked her across the arse by way of a response.

"I'd do it if you asked me to, it's just not something that I really understand, or like. I liked naked. Naked is good. I like the way you walk, like watching you lumber towards me after you've gone for a piss in the middle of the night. Full of sleep, disorientated. Naked."

"I lumber?"

"Maybe not lumber. It's a sexy walk, though. And then you come back to me."

"... Because you are a fanny-magnet."

"Because I am a fanny-magnet, yes."

He pulled her on top of him and kissed the sweet spot where her neck met her décolletage and kissed it until she went pink. Then his hand slunk low until he could two fingers into her, and when she came over his hand, gripping the bed rail, he put his arms around her.

"It's a gimmick. And I don't do gimmicks in my working life or my private life. Seems pretty reasonable to me."

"Me too."

In Siobhan's opinion, however, this wasn't strictly true. His fucking skills were certainly embedded in skill and stamina rather than bells and whistles, and she was experiencing the benefits. But he had quirks, the way everyone does.

Once an established couple, the other regular acts had taken it upon themselves to

celebrate this with a night of non-stop drinking and regaling Siobhan with lurid tales of her predecessors.

“Fee - now she was a piece of work. Marketing bod, power-dresser. Red lips and had his balls in a vice from day one.” Adi offered on his turn, earning nods of agreement as a third round of shots arrived on the table. “She hated his job, hated us, hated his mum, hated Gordon. With for for two years. Why?”

“Because there was more to her than what you saw for two hours a week? Pass the peanuts.”

“If all of you girlfriends - and every one so far has done - if we all hate Gordon leering at us when we’re in the bathroom, why haven’t you done the decent thing and moved him somewhere he won’t be perving on us?”

“Because a) it’s my flat. And b), I tried moving him to the wardrobe but you said his eyes followed you around the room when I went down on you and gave you the willies. There isn’t space for him anywhere else. Besides, he’s blindfolded now.”

Nodding, Siobhan turned to the room.

“Yeah, now he just looks like a doomed army deserter. So much better.”

This went on til last orders, around 1am. Then they went to an all-night Pizzeria for Hawaiians and unlimited salad bar, and for Siobhan to hear more stories, this time about Daniel, Ritchie’s comedy partner who’d moved to Belfast a couple of years ago. No bad blood, just in need of a change of scenery and some space. Apparently he lived in a hut on the beach, surfing for ten hours a day.

“That’s what he puts in his texts. Possibly lying.”

“I remember him - he was on The Apollo when I was in Primary school.”

Everyone snorted.

“I’ll tell him you said that!” Brian shouted from the other end of the table.

“Yep, that was him. He was an infant prodigy - cheap laughs and braces. But I made him the man he is today. He said he might even come and visit this year. Not seen him for ages.”

Ritchie was quiet, lost in thought and Siobhan took this time to study him a little more carefully. He didn’t look his age, the double figures that were between them in years seemed to decrease every time she caught his childish grin when she undressed in front of him, or brought up his favourite film clips from childhood for her to enjoy. He was a bigger kid than she was.

Post-pizza, the sun was finally rising and they were both knackered.

“Come back to mine, it’s closer.” said Ritchie, hailing a cab.

It was still dusky by the time they got upstairs, stood in front of the bedroom window she could see the Milkman three streets away, trundling down the dead centre of the road, daring other cars to challenge him. She thought Ritchie was in the kitchen fixing hot chocolates, but half-asleep and mesmerised by the little electric cart, she hadn’t noticed him setting the mugs down and coming up behind her. He put his hands on her stomach, under her t shirt. And asked, as if it were the most normal thing in the world, “Have you ever flashed anyone?”

She thought about it. “No.”

“Have you ever thought about it?”

“Why, have you got a football match you want ruining?”

“You could never ruin anything. It can give some people a buzz.”

“Some people like you?”

“Yeah. When the time’s right.”

“Isn’t that indecent exposure, whether the time is right or not?”

“You do it somewhere you’ll never get caught. Up here, for example, no one would ever be able to see you. None of the neighbours’ windows overlook ours.” His voice was getting quieter and quieter, his hands moving slowly upwards. “You get all of the rush and none of the aftermath.”

“And no one can see?”

“No one can see. Scout’s honour.”

“Ok then.”

And so he very carefully continued moving his hands upwards, over her abdomen and up, pushing up her bra wholesale so all her clothing bunched just below her chin. It only lasted seconds before he covered her again, first with his hands feeling her nipples stiff against his palms, then pulling down her tee so she was covered back up again and kissed her ear.

“See? How does it feel?” He retrieved the mugs and they sat down on the bed.

“I’m falling out of this bra.”

“Not that.”

“It felt strange. But the tingly sort of strange.”

“Good.”

“But I might go so far to call this a gimmick...” She added slyly, glancing over at him.

“Maybe. It’s not just standing in front of windows, though.”

“I thought not. You can tell me all about it, later.”

It took a little while for her to pry everything out of him. But it wasn’t just windows. Nights passing through bus shelters with girlfriends wearing no knickers. Gardens. The balcony at dusk. Buses, trains, trams. And cars.

“But then we’re moving onto confined spaces and illegality which is a whole ‘nother kettle of fish.” he said finally. It was Sunday, they’d been eating breakfast in bed - soldiers and soft boiled eggs in complementing Caped Crusader and Boy Wonder egg cups. As Siobhan was scooping out the tastiest, runniest bit of yolk he’d suddenly said ‘It’s probably because I lost my virginity in a car, like some kind of fucking cliché.’, as if they’d been in the middle of the discussion all this time.

“Isn’t sex in a car really uncomfortable, though?” she asked through a mouthful of protein. Swallowing, she went on “Steering wheel up your bum and getting your hand caught in the glove box?”

Ritchie took the plate from her and set it on the bedside table.

“You do it in the back unless you’re a fucking idiot. That way you don’t end up impaled on the gear lever. Haven’t you ever done anything outside of the confines of the bedroom?”

“No... No. Very boring, apparently.”

“You’re only young. Plenty of time for you to get un-boring.”

“So when do we start doing that stuff then? I’ve got a reading week coming up, then Finals not long after that. I could pencil you in for some time in early March.”

“It’s generally a bit more spontaneous than that. The element of surprise, you

know.”

She frowned.

“I don’t like that. I might not be wearing my good knickers. Couldn’t we have a codeword so I know that impulsiveness is on its way?”

“No. Just don’t worry about it. If it happens, it happens. It might. It might not. Might get shit on by a pigeon tomorrow, you just never know. Besides,” he added, indicating down the bed. “Since when have I ever been bothered by what knickers you’re wearing? I’d shag you if you were wearing my threadbare boxers. And you are, which is handy.”

“They look better on me than they do on you, right?” She retorted, standing up in a wobbly fashion. They were grey and baggy, and gaped at the front where the buttons had long since been lost in the washing machine; through the slit Ritchie could see a beauty mark he’d never noticed before. He was about to mention it, perhaps reach out his hand and grab her to get a closer look, but she suddenly flinched and nearly fell off the bed.

“What?” He asked with concern as she raced about the room digging out her dress and tights and the emergency knickers she was allowed to keep in his sock drawer.

“Visiting Day. Fucking Visiting Day and I forgot. Shit shit shit. Can you drive me back to mine?”

“Visiting Day?”

“Parents are driving up. Due in - An hour. My room is a tip and I bet Carrie didn’t even try to do the washing up even though most of it’s hers. I never eat risotto during the week. Well?”

Now she was dressed and standing impatiently by the bedroom door, powdering her face with a tube of mascara clamped under her arm to make it easier to apply.

“Of course, just let me get in the shower-”

“No, there isn’t time.”

“But what about-”

“THERE ISN’T TIME!” She yelled, almost in tears. Which was how Ritchie met her parents so early on in their relationship, naked apart from a leather jacket and a pair of sunglasses.

Mrs Fraser hadn’t known her youngest child was courting, though when she thought about it, there had been a suspiciously lengthy dissection of a gig this Ritchie person had performed at which she’d had to listen to. She’d only called to check that Siobhan was doing her washing. Still, the young man in the long leather coat seemed very nice. He didn’t get out of the car which was a little peculiar, but he did shake her hands through the open window. And Bob’s, who dashed off to a cricket match as soon as he was happy that his daughter wasn’t wasting away or overly pierced. It was all over in under an hour and later that night, Ritchie had a great opener for his Mc-ing gig.

“Mum thought you were very sweet.” Siobhan said later, on the phone. He’d already sent her a rough draft of the story as he intended to tell it, and she’d called to say all was fine, but he hadn’t mentioned how much he’d looked like a badly-equipped member of the Gestapo.

“Are you sure? And she didn’t see anything?”

“Not that I know of. She could be sitting on that information for when I least expect it. I’ll keep you posted.”

It was 7.30, he wouldn’t be needed til 8pm.

“Who’s on tonight?”

“Viv opening, two new spots I can’t remember the names of - nice kids - and Chip headlining.”

“I forgot you’d managed to convince him to do it. Are you nervous?”

“Nah, he’s a nice bloke, just had a case of right time right place all those years ago. He agrees to take peanuts for these gigs, likes surprising people.” He yawned. “Still, I wish you were on the bill.”

“So we could have a quickie before you go on? Calm your nerves?”

“Perish the thought.”

She pouted even though he couldn’t see her and moved to a quieter bit of the house.

“Wouldn’t you like to have me there so I can relieve all your.. stresses?” she murmured. “I’m very good at that.”

“Bonnie...”

“In fact, it would be my pleasure to make sure you’re not all worked up when you go out on stage. Wouldn’t want you exploding from all that pent up... emotion, would we? In fact just the thought of it makes me...” She let the echo of her moan linger before hanging up. Back in her bedroom she lay on the quilt with her ankles resting against the wall, unbuttoned her dress and taking a snap in the half-light of her breasts peeking through it, sending it on to him with a good luck note.

“You’re making it worse!” He replied.

Against her better judgement, Siobhan found herself thinking about cars far more often than she would do of an average week. She got a lift home from uni with Simon and nearly drove him up the wall with questions like

“How far do the seats go back?” and “Have you ever had a little sleep in here?” and finally “Do air fresheners inhibit erections?”

“What?”

“I’m asking for a friend.”

When she turned to wave at him from her front door, he was inspecting the passenger area with suspicion.

Ritchie’s car was tiny, she couldn’t imagine anyone climaxing satisfactorily inside it, even with the seats pushed all the way down. And having sex in a taxi was out of the question - the cabbie was sure to notice. Renting a car just to fuck in it seemed to be an extravagance, but the idea had her interested and she spent spare minutes googling car rentals and working on the logistics. What she eventually hit upon, she believed was genius.

“Where are we going?”

“Present.”

“It’s not a present if I have to drive us.”

“Left, then... Second right” She tilted her phone to read the directions more clearly.

“No, straight on to the roundabout.”

“Is... is this Blue Fountain Park? Why are we on an industrial estate? Should I be

worrying?”

“No, we’re nearly there, next right!”

As he drove up, a fluorescent pink sign above the gates was briefly illuminated.

‘The Palms Drive-in Movie Theater’

“What’s this?”

“Look at what’s playing.” Siobhan pointed towards the screen. “Attack of the Killer Tomatoes.”

“How did you find out about this?”

“I google. I google a lot. And I’m a good listener.” She passed the tickets to the assistant, who directed them to a spot.

“Just like the Flintstones.” They both said with glee as the speakers were presented to them and placed neatly inside the car so they could hear every single moment of tomato-y goodness.

“Popcorn, sir? Cold beverage?”

“No thank you,” Siobhan cut in before Ritchie could launch into his popcorn manifesto and how he insisted on equal parts salt and sweet in one-and-one-and-one-and-one formation. “We won’t be needing them.”

“Why not? Are you hiding secret sweets, are you packing fudge?” He laughed so hard she joined him in sympathy more than anything else, and when they’d finished spluttering he tried again. “So I don’t get popcorn?”

“You don’t need popcorn, darling.”

The lights in the park dimmed signalling trailers, and she undid her seatbelt.

“I wish we were in a proper 1950’s car, without seatbelts. We could make out like the adults-posing-awkwardly-as-kids from Grease and have ourselves a pregnancy scare.”

“That’s the dream. Why don’t we get in the back? It’ll make watching the film a bit tricky, I suppose.”

“That doesn’t matter.” She replied, crawling in between the front seats and praying she wouldn’t get wedged between them. He gave her a helpful push on the bum. “It’s a film about Killer Tomatoes, it’s pretty self-explanatory.”

Ritchie took the more refined route and stepped out of the driving seat and into the back like a grown up. The big screen was lit with an advert for Orange Wednesdays.

“Seen this one.” He whispered as they lay down along the narrow back seat, individually thanking God for making them small enough to fit in confined spaces with a degree of comfort.

It was cold outside which made the air in the car and Ritchie’s body and in particular his mouth feel so much hotter than they usually did. He kissed her as though his life depended on it, all the while with his hands under her skirt, feeling, not trying to remove anything. She could hear the production company fanfares in her ears as he jammed his elbow against the back of the seat so he could raise himself and see her properly.

“Do you always look this beautiful?”

“I had my colours done at Boots. Slow day.”

“Nice. I especially like this.” He leant down and kissed her again, his tongue parting her lips unexpectedly even though she’d been kissed before, and was aware of how it worked. She held his face in her fingertips, the feel of the stubble under them making