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TeleVision

The Other Boys From Essex

by AJAY AHUJA

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This book is dedicated to my wife, Hana.

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Chapter 1

Emmet can feel the beat of the music pounding in his body, vibrating through his feet and muscles, beating with the timing of his heart. It is hot in here; bodies press against him everywhere. People are damp, some are sweating and he can feel his own sweat starting to pool on his top lip, the small of his back and under his pits. It does nothing to cool him off. The lights flash in time with the music, turning the display of male and female bodies into a writhing orgy of flesh, each form indistinguishable from the next. Then the pulse lights start working. People appear before him, looming up out of the darkness every time the light flashes. It's like stills from a film, quick images that are changed every time the light returns.

His head is spinning, his ears starting to hurt. He looks over at his friend Terry who is stood beside him. Terry isn't enjoying himself anymore. The wide smile that he was wearing earlier is gone. The hand on Emmet's shoulder squeezes tightly, grinding the bones together. The man that it is attached to, a bouncer in a cheap suit, glares at them when Emmet turns to say something. Emmet looks back ahead and lets himself be steered towards a door that is almost invisible in the wall. Just a small metal box beside it gives any hint that it's there. When the bouncer lets go of his shoulder to enter the code he considers running for a moment, just turning around and getting the hell out of there, disappearing into the crowd and climbing over the back wall to vanish into the night.

It's not a choice that he can make though. Before he even starts to turn around he sees another bouncer looming out of the crowd. The guy ignores the scantily clad girls that press themselves against him, the coy smiles through fluttering eyelashes. If it's possible he's even bigger than the first guy and he stands right behind Emmet and Terry with his thick arms crossed over his massive chest. Bright white light suddenly spills over them all, forcing Emmet to cover his eyes with his arm. The bouncer has got the door open, revealing the corridor beyond and the secret sanctum of the club. He heads inside and the second one shoves the pair of no-hopers through after him, herding them like cattle.

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The corridor they're in is brightly lit. It makes Emmet's eyes hurt after the dim light of the club itself. The door swings shut behind them and all of the noise is cut out. Emmet's ears are still ringing though and he can feel the beat of the bass through the soles of his shoes. That could just be the pounding of his heart though. The beer that he drank earlier isn't sitting so well now and his mouth is dry, like he hasn't drunk anything for hours and just woken up from a three-day bender. As he walks he tries to remember exactly why he thought this was a good idea and even more wonders why he let Terry talk him into doing something so God damned messed up.

"You two are in deep shit." The man growls out, as if he's reading Emmet's mind. "You're gonna wish you'd never set foot in here. Nah, scratch that. You're gonna wish you'd never even heard of the place."

"Save it Quasimodo." Terry spits out. Emmet's heart sinks. The guy always speaks before thinking things through. And he is still running his mouth off. "I ain't scared of your boss, no one is."

"Tough talk for a little guy." The bouncer says.

He stops walking and turns to face them. Terry doesn't notice in time and before Emmet has the chance to reach out and stop his friend he has walked in to the bouncer's chest, stopping short. He just stands there, staring up in to the beast's face. His mouth is hanging open and he looks like a terrified five-year-old.

"You won't be saying that soon," the bouncer growls, looming over Terry. "The boss is gonna make you pay."

He opens a door behind him and grabs Terry by the collar. He throws him through it. Emmet follows behind his friend quickly, before the bouncer has a chance to grab him and throw him through too. He glances nervously up at the bouncer as he passes. The bouncer smirks down at Emmet and follows them in, shutting the door behind them.

It's dark in the room they're in. Not as dark as the club of course but dimmer than the brightly lit corridor outside. It takes Emmet a second for his eyes to adjust to yet another change in light. Soon he can make out the shape of a desk, massive in the small room, cabinets along the walls, shelves and pictures plastering every free surface. There's a chair behind the desk and whoever's sitting in it is in shadow.

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Television screens flicker with images behind the chair, making it even harder to see who's there. The bouncer shoves Emmet in the back, forcing him to walk forwards.

"Watch it!" Terry snarls before coming up beside Emmet, "This is real Adidas you idiot."

Emmet rolls his eyes as Terry readjusts his track suit. Terry really has no idea of exactly how much shit they're both in. Either that or he doesn't care. Emmet really hopes that Terry is just being an idiot rather than having a death wish.

"You really are dumb fucks." The shadow in the chair says.

A light comes on and the chair shifts to block out the television screens. The lamp lights up the desk and reveals Chris, the club owner. He has a massive frown on his face.

Emmet stares at Chris, not saying a thing. He glances over at Terry and wants to groan when he sees Terry just glaring at Chris. He hears the bouncer behind them chuckling.

"You are serious dumb fucks," Chris says, "You actually thought that you could swan in here and sell your shit? In my house? To my punters?! Are you fucking mad?"

"It's good shit!" Terry says, "Like really good shit."

"I don't give a fuck!" Chris snarls at him, standing up now and putting both hands on the desk. "You don't come in to my house and then try to sell your shit, especially without asking me first."

"It's better stuff than all the other crap you sell here," Terry says, still not getting the hint.

Emmet is tempted to whisper at him to shut up but Chris carries on talking before he can. Hopefully Terry will shut up soon anyway.

"Maybe it is," Chris says with a shrug, "But it's my stuff that they're selling. I've heard you've been doing the rounds around town, trying to get your shit into places. And then when you couldn't get it in and you thought you could still sell it here without asking?"

Terry starts to say something but no words come out. His mouth just moves up and down and he looks like a fish gasping for air. Emmet winces and looks away from

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Terry, back at Chris and the bouncer who's standing beside his boss. Both are watching them with sadistic smiles on their face. Chris sits down and puts his hands on the desk in front of him, linking his fingers together.

"I'll show you what I do to people who try to sell shit without my permission."

He reaches for the phone and picks up the handset. He taps in a few buttons and there's a moment of silence. It's so quiet that Emmet can actually hear the ring tone.

"Walker please," Chris says when there's a quiet murmur on the other end. There's a series of clicks and then a bit more of a dial tone. A deep voice then grumbles on the other end.

"Jezzer, how you doing?" Chris says. "How's the wife? ...Glad to hear it ... How did little Ellie's dance show go? ... Really?! That's fantastic.... Yeah, everything's good with the missus."

Emmet tries really hard not to roll his eyes at this. Here's a guy who looked like he was about to beat the crap out of them both and now he's talking like a housewife. Doesn't make sense. And it definitely isn't scary. Somehow hearing the club boss asking after a little girl's dance show temporarily takes away the menace. Emmet tunes the sound of the one-sided conversation out and looks around.

"Yeah mate, I called you for a favour," Chris says, catching Emmet's attention again. "I've got two divs for you here.... Trying to sell in my place.... Yeah, 100 pills on them."

Chris presses a button on the phone and the Detective Constable's voice fills the room. It's deep and gravelly with sleep.

"Nice one mate." He says. "I'll be right over. I always like to get hoodrats off the street."

Chris smirks and puts the phone down. A wave of his hand and the two bags, each holding one hundred pills appears on the desk in front of him.

"Tut tut boys," Chris says, shaking his head at them. "You really should be more careful. Can't believe my boys found these on you so easily. You didn't even try to hide them. Here, catch."

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He tosses Emmet's bag at Terry who reaches out and grabs it automatically. He fumbles the catch though and his fingers end up covering every inch of the plastic bag.

"Now both of you have got prints on that thing," Chris says with a smirk. "Don't think you're going to get off a dealing charge now. Marky, get the scrawny shit to put the bag on the desk."

Chris reaches out for the other bag as the bouncer, Marky makes his way around the desk. Chris bounces the bag in his hand, staring at the contents. Then he opens a drawer and drops it in.

"Will test these out later lads," he says. "Since you rate them so highly. Might as well see what you risked it all for."

Marky shoves Terry, gets him to put the bag on the desk. Then the bouncer shoves Terry back towards Emmet. He towers over the pair of them. Emmet swallows deeply, tries to stop his knees from shaking. Another bouncer comes in and joins Chris, standing beside the desk with arms crossed over his chest. It's the big guy from before, the one who looks like a beast. Terry and Emmet are both seriously fucked and there's no way that they're getting out of this one.



Chapter Two

They've been waiting a good ten minutes so far. The entire time Chris has been taking shots at them for being bad dealers and general idiots, his smirk grows wider with each laugh he gets from the two bouncers that are still in the room with them.

"Look at them," Chris says, nodding his head towards the television screen showing images of his club. "So coked and pilled up that they don't even realise how much they're spending. Oi look at those two!"

He points at the screen where two people are getting off with each other, their arms wrapped around each other, desperately kissing and pawing at each other's body.

"Bet he's going to regret that in the morning," he says with a chuckle, "He's going to wake up and want to run as soon as he sees her face."

He looks at Emmet and Terry. Neither of them are smiling. Terry is looking around the office, trying to fake casual boredom. Chris' smile drops away and he frowns. He gets up and starts to walk towards Emmet.

"Come on lads," he says, getting in Emmet's face, "Give us a smile. Or have you finally realised how much of a complete fuck up you are? Thinking you can sell in my place, without asking me. I don't know how you do it in Afghanistan but here in England we actually ask permission before we do that shit."

"My family's from Turkey," Emmet spits out. "And I'm from Essex."

"Not with that tan you're not," Chris says, looking Emmet up and down. "We'd lose you in a dark room."

"I'd rather be brown than bright orange," Emmet says. He glances at one of the bouncers, the massive one, who is the unmistakable shade of orange associated with too much fake tan.

Chris follows his gaze and looks his bouncer up and down.

"True," he says with a grimace. "Larry what were you thinking?"

"The missus likes it," Larry the bouncer says shrugging. "Can't keep her off me when I'm tanned up."



“Fair enough,” Chris says with another grin. He looks at Terry. “You wouldn’t know anything about that would you, scrawny shit. Bet you don’t even know what a girl looks like naked.”

Terry glares at the club boss. The bouncers laugh again. Chris chuckles as well and walks back towards the chair behind his desk. He stops and stares at the TV screen again. There’s the image of brawling bodies on the screen, two blokes beating the crap out of each other and their friends egging them on. Chris groans.

“Larry, Marky, go and sort that out,” he commands. The two bouncers look at each other then at Chris. “Oh for God’s sake. What are these two divs gonna do to me? I can take them easily. Go on. Go sort it. Before the coppers get here will you.”

The bouncers nod and head out of the room. Terry and Emmet are left standing in the middle of the office.

Chris looks at Terry and Emmet and glares.

“It better not be your shit making them fight,” he says angrily. “If I find out they’ve been on your shit and it’s made them beat the crap out of each other you’re gonna be in serious shit. And I’ll make sure my copper mate sends you down.”

Emmet’s eyes widened. He’s not even given a thought to whether the pills would cause that crap again. Yet another fuck up on his part. Chris goes behind his desk and collapses into his chair with a heavy sigh. His fingers tap on the desk. Emmet can’t help but fidget at he stares at them both.

“Well,” Chris says, “Looks like it’s just the three of us lads. What shall we do?”

He stares at the fight on the screen, completely ignoring the other two. His bouncers have waded in and the flashing lights are bouncing off the guys’ bald heads. Emmet glances at Terry. Terry looks right back. Terry looks at the pills on the desk, nods his head a little and flicks his eyes towards Chris. Emmet knows exactly what Terry’s getting at doing, or at least he hopes he does. It’s not a good plan. If Terry does what Emmet thinks he’s going to do it’s not going to end well for either of them. Chris will hunt them down and never let them rest until he’s got his retribution. Emmet knows that he’d rather face prison than deal with anything that Chris can think

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up. He shakes his head slightly at Terry. His eyes widen and he shakes it more when a smile starts to break across Terry's face.

“Oi Chris,” Terry says.

Chris looks up. Terry darts forwards before Emmet can grab him. He reaches out, hand wrapping around the pill bag. With the other hand he grabs the edge of the desk and shoves it up and towards Chris.

“Catch!” Terry shouts.

There's a massive bang and Chris goes down, the desk on top of him. He starts to yell and shout, trying to get out from under the heavy chunk of wood. Things are falling everywhere and the filing cabinets are taking a beating. The fallen lamp is throwing strange shadows on the walls. The TV screens shake when Chris knocks against them.

“Come on,” Terry shouts. “Run!”

He turns and races out the door. Emmet is frozen for a moment, staring at Chris fighting to get free. Another yell from Terry gets him moving and he turns tail and races after his friend. Their feet pound as they run down the corridor. The door swings open ahead of them, two bouncers coming through. There's no time to stop, the bouncers' eyes are still trying to adjust to the change from dark to light. The two boys shove past the men, racing in to the heat and darkness and pounding sound of the club itself. They don't stop though, don't hang around or try to disappear into the crowd.

Emmet can see the brawl near the bar still going on. Bouncers are in the middle of it, trying to break it apart, the two groups of friends now joining in and beating the crap out of each other. The sprawling mess of fighters is in between him and the door. He takes his chance when he spots a gap in the melee and shoves through. A hand grabs at his top, trying to pull him into the fight. He shakes it off and darts for the door.

Then he's outside. The cold night air and quietness shock his senses for a moment and his body wants him to stop and figure out what's going on. He doesn't let that stop him. He can already hear the bouncers shouting behind him and he can see Terry up ahead. Everything's a blur as he runs after Terry, leaving the club and

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the clubland area of town behind him as he keeps running. All he focuses on is breathing, the thudding of his feet one in front of the other, Terry's back racing ahead of him. They both just keep running.

They finally stop on the edge of town, quiet houses all around them with no lights on. It's two in the morning, anyone who's smart is already in bed. They collapse near the wall of a park. Emmet leans against the wall, panting and gasping for breath. He's hot but he knows that he won't be for long. There's too much sweat on him, running wet down his back and sticking his shirt to his chest. Beside him Terry is coughing and gagging, fighting to get his breath back. They stand there, leaning on the wall for support as they gasp. Then Terry starts to laugh.

"Can you imagine his face?!" he says through his laughter. "The prick didn't know what hit him. I bet the fat fuck's still under there, trying to get out."

He keeps laughing. Emmet just stares at him. Slowly Terry stops laughing. Just when it seems like he's calmed down he starts to laugh again, uncontrollable, tears running down his face.

"He's gonna have so much to clean up," he cried, "He's going to be tidying for a week. I bet those pills spilled everywhere. Dumb shit."

"It's not funny Terry," Emmet says. His face is stony and his heart is still pounding too quickly in his chest. "We're in serious shit now."

"Oh lighten up mate," Terry says, "We've got away, we're in the clear. The cops aren't gonna be able to find us, Chris didn't even find out our full names."

"He's got our faces on his CCTV though!" Emmet cries out. "And we've made a fool of him. He's not going to let this lie, he's going to want revenge. He knows that we deal, it's not going to be hard for him to find us with that information."

"Give over," Terry said, still laughing. "He's the one who made a fool of himself. He told his lads he could take us on and now look, we're far away and he's stuck under that desk. What do you think they're going to think of their big bad boss man if he can't keep himself safe without them?"

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Emmet says nothing. He wraps his arms around himself and steps away from the wall. He looks up and down the street. There's no one around, not even a cat walking around searching for something to eat. Terry starts to laugh again.

"Can you imagine DC Walker's face?!" he says, gasping for his breath again, "He's gonna come in and see Chris with his office in a mess, desk upside down. And then Chris is gonna have to tell him we got away. He's such a div!"

"They're both going to be after us." Emmet says, rounding on Terry and getting in his face. "Chris is going to be after us for making an arse of him AND for trying to deal in his club. DC Walker's going to be after us for the pills and for embarrassing his mate. That copper's dirty, he's on the take and if Chris asks for a favour he's going to get it. We're fucked."

"We just need to lay low," Terry says, "They don't know who we are, not really. It'll take them ages to find out who we are and even longer to figure out where we're gonna be. They've got no hope."

"What if they're not as thick as you think?" Emmet says, shoving Terry, "What if they know who we are already, they just haven't let on? Did you think of that?! No I bet you didn't. For all we know they could already be waiting for us at home. What are we gonna do then?"

"We'll hide somewhere," Terry says with a shrug. "It's not like we've not got mates. I bet a ton of people will let us crash at theirs till we're good to go home."

"Where?!" Emmet cries out, swinging his arms out to his sides. "Where are we going to go? It's fucking nearly three in the morning. No one's going to be awake."

Terry's smile drops away and he frowns as he thinks. Emmet stares at his friend, pounding heart starting to slow down at last. He can still hear his pulse in his ears though.

"Bill's," Terry says. "We can go to Bills."

"Seriously?" Emmet asks. "You want to go to that dipshit's?"

"Can you think of somewhere else?" Terry asks.

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Emmet thinks for a moment. He runs through the names and faces of all of their friends, anyone who might be willing to let them crash for the night. None of them would. Emmet groans and shakes his head.

“Fine,” he says, feeling almost physical pain at the idea of Bill’s place. “We’ll go to Bill’s place.”

“Sweet,” Terry says with a grin.

He turns and starts to walk. Emmet trudges along behind him.



Chapter Three

They argue for the entire walk to Bill's. Terry keeps laughing about what he did to Chris and how much of an idiot he must look now. Emmet has been trying to remind him of exactly how much trouble they're going to be in now. Neither are getting through to the other. It's only been in the last ten minutes of the walk that Terry has finally shut up and Emmet has been left in silence as they walk. He keeps running through what's happened in his mind. They're in deep shit and it's finally beginning to seem like dealing is more trouble than it's worth. Finally, they're at Bill's and a knock on the door is quickly answered by Bill, the scruffy chav in tracksuit bottoms and no shirt. He looks wide awake, tweaked out on something.

"You alright lads?" he says, scratching his belly. "What's up?"

"Can we crash here?" Emmet asks. "We're in a bit of trouble."

"Sure," Bill says. He steps back so the two can pass him by. "What sorta trouble?"

"Oh mate it was brilliant," Terry gushes as they walk into the living room. "There we were in Club Cocos. We got caught dealing and we're sure we're gonna get fucked. He's called his copper mate you see, someone he's got on the take, and he's on his way. So me and Emmet are stood there, waiting to see what happens. And Emmet's bricking it. Me, I don't care. It's one of those things innit? If it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen. Anyway -"

Emmet tunes Terry out as he talks. He just watches them. Terry is delighted once more with what he's done, a smile and laughter breaking out across his face again. Bill's grin is growing with every word that Terry says and by the end of the story they're both laughing their heads off. There was no concern on their faces for what could have happened or for how much trouble they were and still are actually in. Bill is laughing his head off and slapping Terry on the back, congratulating himself for what he's done. A light bulb goes off in Emmet's head when he sees that, he practically hears the sound of a penny dropping on to a wooden floor, that sharp clink of metal.

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He needs out. The game's got too dangerous. It's messing with his life. He could go away to prison, get beaten up so bad he ends up in hospital, even get killed. They've been playing in the minor leagues so far, nothing too dangerous, just a deal here and there. Now they've taken a step into the big leagues, messed with the major players and they're fucked.

"Terry pack it in," Emmet snaps out eventually. "If we'd not got out of there we could have ended up doing a long stretch in prison for this. Hell we still could, you chucking that desk added an assault charge, not just dealing anymore."

"Mate, we're fine," Terry says, "We got out of there before the coppers appeared. Besides. All we would have got was a caution."

"No. We wouldn't have," Emmet says. "Chris and DC Walker are tight. You heard them on the phone. Chris wouldn't have reported us unless he wanted to make an example of us. We know how this works; we've both seen the films and we've heard the stories. Chris dobs us in to keep the heat off the club. He reports dealers that aren't his and gets them locked up so the plod doesn't look too closely at his club and he can keep selling his stuff. And it sends a message to other dealers, tells them to keep the hell out of his place with their shit."

"Bollocks!" Terry cries, "You've been watching too many films. It's nothing like that. He's just a racist twat who wanted to get you off the streets. You heard what he said to you, he called you fucking Afghani."

"So he's a racist twat, big deal," Emmet says. "I've had to put up with that shit all my life, doesn't mean anything. But he's going to use us to send a message. Before it would have just been a general one, 'back off dealers, this is my patch'. Now though you've fucked him over and made him look like a twat. It's going to be personal and he's going to beat the crap out of us."

"You're being a drama queen," Terry says with a groan. "Isn't he Bill?"

"Yeah, you are a bit mate," Bill agrees, nodding wisely. "Think you need to relax."

"We're in deep shit," Emmet says, ignoring Bill, "We're going to get the crap beaten out of us and then go to prison."

"We're gonna be fine," Terry says.

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Bill's nodding along with Terry's words. There's still a dumb grin on his face.

Emmet and Terry keep arguing. Terry keeps insisting they're going to be fine. Emmet keeps insisting they're going to be beaten up and that they're fucked. Every time Terry makes a point Bill agrees with it without hesitation. Whenever Emmet says something or asks for Bill's opinion the other man frowns for a moment and thinks about it before he disagrees and repeats one of Terry's points. Emmet shouldn't be surprised but he is a little. Then again Bill has always been obsessed with Terry, wants to be just like him. He's even wearing a pair of knock off tracksuit bottoms in the same style that Terry is.

"We should never have done that," Emmet finally cries, "Going to Baslow and messing with Chris was a stupid idea."

"It was your fucking plan!" Terry cries. Emmet stops and stares at him. "Yeah, remember? You had this big vision, not me. You said we had to go to the Baz club scene. You said we could build a good profit outlet through the clubs there. You suggested we try Chris' place. It was all you. Not me."

Emmet sits back on the sofa, stunned. It had been his idea and yet he'd forgotten that with all of the fear and terror. When they had been in the club and it had gone so wrong he had finally seen how stupid what they were doing was. And he'd blamed Terry. Those sorts of fuck ups were usually Terry's fault and it has become habit. But this time it had been his idea, not Terry's. He'd been the one to say they should be dealing in the clubs. But of course they couldn't deal in the clubs. There were already dealers based in those places. Territories had been divided and shared out. No one new would be welcome. It had been obvious once they were there and it should have been obvious as soon as he'd had the idea. Why had he ever thought it was even a possibility? Was he losing his edge?

Terry towers over Emmet with a proud smirk on his face.

"Yeah, figured you'd forgotten." Terry says. "So you just sit there and think things out. Me and Bill are gonna play on his Playstation. I'm gonna beat the crap out of him on Fifa."

Emmet nods blankly. He's just sitting there, staring at the wall. He can hear the other two already starting to shout and goad each other in the background. He'd

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gotten in to deep shit and in truth he only has himself to blame, no one else, not even Terry. Although the thing with the desk and Chris was Terry's fault it was Emmet's fault that they'd even been in the club in the first place. Everything leading up to that was Emmet's fault.

Once upon a time Emmet had been smarter than that. He'd been a fucking coke dealer for God's sake. He'd dealt Class A, the good shit and he'd made good money with it. The profits had been good, freakishly so, with an average profit of £80 per punter and double that if they wanted a lot. Even just seeing twenty customers a day had made a massive amount of profit for him.

But it had been a dangerous business. People were ruthless when it came to Class A's. People would either try to rob him of his money or his gear. He couldn't spend his money fast enough. Violence had been common and things had gotten even worse when dealers and addicts alike had replaced knives with guns. Emmet hadn't been prepared to carry a gun, the charges if he'd been caught would have been even worse than for dealing a Class A.

So he'd turned to the low margin happy pills. The profits weren't as good. He has to sell hundreds each week just to earn a living. Life has become a constant search for buyers and the money for his next batch to sell. He's always looking for the next big pill. People aren't desperate for the pills either, some try them once and want nothing else to do with them. It's hard to make the living wage he needs to afford the flash car, Prada clothes for him and his girl, champagne on ice at all times, a fancy flat in a good part of town. He could live on less but he doesn't want to. He loved the life he had when dealing coke and he doesn't want to give that up now.

So he deals every minute of the day, trying to sell each punter more than they think they want. He comes up with deals that improve his margins. But it's starting to grate. There's no guarantee that someone he deals to one day will want some more another. The happy pills are party drugs, used for good times and not overly addictive. There's not the drive there for repeat clients. True most people who try them want them again but there's no clear point for when. Each day's income varies and some days are bad, really bad, with no sales made at all. Until now though it has been safe.

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He looks at Terry and Bill, both laughing at the potential of going to prison, at the reality that they've seriously pissed off another dealer who has a lot of muscle on his side. It's not funny anymore, not fun. It's dangerous, more so than carrying a gun. Emmet's in deep shit and he doesn't want to be, now or ever again. Terry and Bill, so amused at the thought of going to prison and at pissing off Chris, are now liabilities to him. Emmet looks at Terry.

"I'm out," He says. "I'm not dealing anymore."



Chapter 4

“I’m out,” Emmet says again.

Terry and Bill stare at him for a moment. Then Terry bursts out laughing. He just laughs and laughs and laughs. Emmet gives a heavy sigh and rolls his eyes.

“Oh God,” Terry says through his tears and laughter, “Oh that’s a good one mate. Good on you. You finally found your sense of humour. First time tonight too!”

Emmet doesn’t say anything. He just keeps looking at Terry who’s now rolling around on the floor laughing his head off. Emmet glances at Bill who’s watching Terry. Then their eyes meet. Bill raises his eyebrows. Emmet nods. Bill nods gently.

“He’s not joking,” Bill says quietly.

Terry stops laughing suddenly and looks at Bill. Then he turns to stare at Emmet.

“Of course he’s joking,” Terry insists. “He’s a moron if he’s serious. You’re joking aren’t you mate?”

“No,” Emmet says with a shake of his head. “I’m not kidding around.”

“Alright mate,” Terry says, climbing to his feet, “You’ve had your laugh, now give over.”

“He’s serious.” Bill says. “I’ve known him since he was 5. I know when he’s joking and when he’s not. This time he’s being serious.”

“Give over!” Terry shouts, rounding on Bill. “You don’t know shit. You’re just having a laugh and mucking around. Stop taking the piss and tell me where we’re gonna get rid of these 100 we’ve got left.”

“Terry, I’m out,” Emmet says, “I’m not doing this anymore.”

“Oh god.” Terry says, his face falling and his mouth dropping open. “You’re actually serious aren’t you. You’re out.”

“Yeah,” Emmet says. “It’s getting too dangerous now. We’re just going to get in worse shit if we keep on going.”

“Well fine,” Terry says “I’ll keep the money from these 100 and you can pay me back for the 100 you lost. I forked out good money for these pills.”

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“No way mate,” Emmet says. “We split the loss, fifty-fifty.”

“Bullshit!” Terry cries. “It was you that lost the pills you had. It was your fault we got caught. Not mine! You’re the one that wanted us to sell in all the Baz clubs. Not me!”

“We split the loss,” Emmet says again, his face stony and firm, “It was my idea to sell in the Baz clubs but it was your idea to go to Chris’ club and sell without his permission. You wouldn’t even let me talk to the bouncer.”

“Cos we would have lost our money,” Terry shouts, “If we’d asked Chris we would have had to give over half our money. We both knew it. There’s no way I was gonna let us lose out on that much money!”

“We split the loss!” Emmet says loudly but firmly. He stays in his seat and locks eyes with Terry. “This is a joint enterprise. We both put in our money for the pills. We always split the profits. That means we split the losses too.”

“No mate!” Terry says firmly. His face contorts in anger. “You’re the one that fucked up, you’re the one that loses out on money.”

“Fuck off!” Emmet shouts, “We both fucked up. I wanted to sell in Baz, you wanted to sell in Chris’ club. You’re the one who got the bouncers looking at us. You’re the one that pissed off Chris with your loud mouth.”

“I’m not losing out on that money!” Terry says insistently. “No way am I gonna be out of pocket.”

“You’re not going to be out of pocket,” Emmet replies. “We can still make a profit from the stuff we’ve got left, we’ve just got to split it once it’s sold.”

“Thought you were out,” Terry snaps, “If you’re out why should you get the money at all?”

“Because I helped buy the pills,” Emmet snarls, “I put in just as much money as you did even though you seem to have forgotten that. I’m going to need it to go legit,”

“Bullshit,” Terry says, “You’re probably gonna go off and buy more gear.”

“No,” Emmet says firmly. “I want to do something new. I need money to do that. I want to make back the money I spent on those pills, with profit and then that’s it. I’m done.”



“Fine!” Terry snarls. He stops and freezes, like he’s just as surprised by what came out of his mouth as the others are. He frowns and continues. “We’ll split what we make from the pills. Then we go our separate ways, just like you want.”

“Good,” Emmet snaps. “You sell my fifty and give me seven quid a pill.”

“Why’ve I gotta sell your shit?!” Terry cries out. “Why can’t you sell it?”

“Because I want it gone and I want it gone fast,” Emmet says firmly. “You sell my half, give me the £350 and then I start some sort of business outside of drugs. It might be legitimate, it might be a bit dodge, but it’s going to be out of the drugs game. End of discussion.”

“And how am I gonna get rid of one hundred pills by myself?” Terry says plaintively. “I’ve never sold by myself before. I don’t even know where to start.”

“You can do it fine,” Emmet says. “You’ve got the gift of the gab. You can sell snow to an Eskimo.”

“Fine, fine,” Terry says with a heavy sigh. “Where’m I gonna get one hundred sold at once though?”

“Try Damian,” Emmet says, throwing up his hands in the air, “He’ll probably take them as a job lot for seven hundred. Guy’s always loaded.”

“Alright,” Terry says nodding. “So you gonna call him and sort the deal out?”

“Yeah,” Emmet says. He looks at the watch on his wrist. “But it’s going to have to be later. It’s 4 am, he’s never going to agree if I wake him up at this time.”

“Shiiit,” Terry says, drawing the word out. “I better get home.”

“Want a ride?” Emmet asks and climbs to his feet. “It’s probably calm back in town now. I think I can get my car.”

“Nah mate,” Terry says. He stretches. “I’m just gonna walk home, work off the adrenaline you know.”

“Alright,” Emmet says with a nod. “Bill, thanks for letting us crash. I’ll see you later mate.”

“Sure, no problem,” Bill says with a nod. He gets up and shows the pair to the door. “Be careful getting home Terry, I don’t wanna hear you’ve been found in a ditch tomorrow” he says sarcastically.



“No fear,” Terry says. Emmet walks past him and heads back to Baslow. He can hear Terry talking behind him, his voice slowly fading away. “I’ll be round later to finish that game. I’m — na —ck...”

Emmet shakes his head and keeps walking.

Chapter 5

It’s like a dead zone in Baslow when Emmet reaches his car. 4.50am on a Sunday morning, everyone’s in bed, sleeping off the night before or just having a lie in. Some people are still walking around but none of them give him a second look. A few nod hello to him though, people figuring that he’s another guy on his way to a sudden job. Emmet nods back, more out of habit than actually caring. His car is covered in dew when he gets to it, frost lightly coating the windscreen. He gives it a cursory scrape with his ID before he climbs in and turns on the heating.

When he presses the radio button to turn it on for some sort of noise to wake him up he’s surprised when his motivational CD starts up again. With all of the excitement from the club and their running from Chris, Emmet completely forgot about the CD that he’d been listening to before he went into the club. He sighs, letting the teacher’s voice wash over him. He leans his head against the headrest of the driver’s seat and closes his eyes.

“Now for one of the most important secrets of success,” the teacher says. His voice is calm and soothing but there’s passion in it too, encouraging and motivational. *“Goal setting. That’s the secret. Every successful person knows the importance of goal setting. It all starts with a plan. A vision. Something to aim for.”*

Emmet reaches out and jabs the pause button. The guy on the CD is right. He needs to set a goal, sort his life out and figure out his plan. And right now, part of his plan is calling Damian. He needs Damian to buy the pills, get the money to start something up, whatever that might be. Without the money he has nothing, he can’t do anything. Right now his vision is to have £350 from selling the pills. He needs to call Damian.



Emmet considers speeding home, his mind focused on calling Damian and making sure that the deal goes through. He wants to call him now. He glances at the clock on his dash, barely noticing that it's now 5am. That's a decent enough time he supposes. He wants to make the call now though. There's no phone nearby. Or at least that's what he thinks. Emmet looks around his car a bit more closely. That's when he sees the phone box on the corner. He doesn't even think about it, he just gets out of his car and heads over. He picks up the phone, punches in Damian's number and waits while it rings.

"Yo," Damian says eventually. "What's up mate?"

"It's Emmet. I've got a deal for you," Emmet says calmly. "100 pills, £7 a pill. You interested?"

"Hell yeah," Damian says. He's a party guy, likes to throw big parties and invite everyone he knows. "I've got a rave coming up. Need something to keep the punters happy and mellow. I do not want another fight on my hands."

"Tell me about it," Emmet says with a roll of his eyes. Damian's just reminded him of another reason he wants out. The punters can be idiots. "I'm not going to be able to hand over though. It's going to be Terry. Is that still ok?"

"Course," Damian says. "Terry's an alright guy. Send him round later, say 7pm. I'll check your stuff and then hand over the money."

"Alright mate," Emmet says, "Sweet. I'll let him know."

He puts down the phone and heads back to his car. He turns on the radio again and plays the CD. The teacher's voice fills the car again.

"The goal you set has to be three things." He says. "It has to be specific. It has to be achievable. It has to be motivating. There is no point in setting a goal that cannot be all of these three things..."

Emmet starts his car's engine. He drives home, all the time listening to the CD and taking in the lessons it's trying to impart. When he gets home the flat is dark. Sam, his long term girlfriend hasn't waited up for him, he can hear her snoring in the bedroom. It's not surprising though. He moves around the kitchen, getting himself a cup of tea. She never waits for him, not anymore. They'd lived together for three months when Sam stopped waiting up for him. She'd gotten resigned to him coming

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home at odd hours, stinking of booze and perfume. She's used to him coming home whenever he wants. She knows that he always comes back to her.

He sneaks in to the dark bedroom, spotting Sam's form curled up on one side. He tries to strip off as quietly as he can and climbs beneath the warm sheets with a happy sigh. He wiggles closer to Sam, puts his arms around her and falls to sleep the moment that he closes his eyes.

When he wakes up late in the day, Sam has already left the bed. He can hear her moving around in the kitchen, clanking pots. She's cooking something, he can smell it slowly wafting in. That's probably what woke him up. He stretches, climbs out of bed and pulls on some tracksuit bottoms and a scruffy t-shirt. Then he pads into the kitchen, pausing in the doorway to watch Sam cooking for a while. She's pretty when she's not made up, her long blonde hair pulled up in a messy bun. He smiles and walks up behind her. He wraps his arms around her waist and squeezes her in a hug. She freezes up and goes tense immediately and Emmet tries not to notice.

"Good night?" she asks sarcastically.

"Not really," Emmet says, rubbing his nose against the side of her neck. "As nights go... it was a crap one."

"Aww poor Emmet," she says, no sincerity in her voice. "Weren't there enough teenage skanks in the clubs for you to impress with your pill serving wannabe gangster routine?"

"You know I don't go with that shit!" Emmet snaps, pulling away from her. "That's Terry's deal, not mine. I was trying to earn a living and keep you how you like to live."

"Bullshit," Sam snaps, turning on him. "You were trying to be a big man. Trying to be the Scarface of Baz. Playing the big man and trying to make a name for yourself weren't you. Didn't go to plan did it?!"

"No it fucking didn't," Emmet shouts. "Is that what you want to hear? It went to crap because Terry's a dumb fuck. You want to know what happened?"

"Not if it involves you fucking some cheap whore in the toilets," Sam snarls. She glances over her shoulder at him, eyes narrowed. "Yeah, remember that?!"



“For fuck’s sake,” Emmet say with a heavy sigh, throwing his hands up in the air. “How many times do I have to say sorry? For your information we got dragged up in front of the boss at Club Cocos, for dealing without his permission. He called the fucking police and we almost got arrested. It’s only cos Terry threw the fucking desk at the guy that we even got out of there. That’s what I was doing last night! Running from getting the crap beaten out of me.”

Sam looks at him for a moment. Then she starts to laugh, throwing her head back. She has to hold herself up on the counters as she laughs so hard.

“Oh my god,” she says through her laughter as tears fall down her face. “That’s priceless. You and Terry really are dumb and dumber.”

She keeps laughing. Emmet sits at the table and eats some of the toast that she cooked, not caring if it wasn’t cooked for him. He glares at her and keeps eating. She stops laughing for a moment.

“No, wait,” she says, gasping for breath. “You, Terry and Bill are Dumb, Dumber and Dumbest. And you’re the Dumbest!”

She laughs even harder. Emmet glares at her, chewing hard on his toast.

“Why the fuck am I the dumbest?!” he snarls. “What the hell?”

“You’re the dumbest...” she says through her giggles, “Because... you don’t even realise how dumb the other two are! You’re walking around like the big man, thinking you’re all smart and shit and you don’t even realise how thick Bill and Terry are! You’re the dumbest fuck out of the three of you.”

Emmet sneers at her.

“Well you’re the one that’s still with me,” he snaps, “What’s that say about you then? You’re still with the dumbest out of the three of us according to you.”

Sam glares at him and returns to her cleaning. Her entire body is tense, scrunched up and tight like she’s furious.

Emmet smirks with satisfaction and gets up. He puts his plate in the sink, letting it splash the dish water all over Sam. He chuckles as she flinches from the splash. He turns around and heads to the living room. Time for some TV.

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Chapter 6

He throws himself on to the sofa and grabs for the remote. Sam has seriously pissed him off. She's always doing that, taking the piss out of him and making him feel like an idiot. Normally he lets her get away with it, he loves her too much to stay mad at her. But today it's different. He knows what he wants to do now, who he wants to be and it no longer involves hanging out with Terry and Bill. Then there Sam is, taking the piss out of friends who he already knows are complete idiots. She wasn't even worried that he almost got arrested or got the crap beaten out of him. Some girlfriend she is.

He turns on the TV, slamming his finger down on the button harshly. He expects the screen to just come on and show him whatever channel Sam left it on last night. But it doesn't, instead it just shows a loading screen, something that he doesn't see, ever. He stares at the screen and then, when a channel guide comes up, he's even more surprised.

"Sam!" he shouts, "What's up with the TV?"

"What do you mean?" Sam shouts back, her voice harsh. "There's nothing wrong with it. It's been fine."

"What the fuck's up with the channel guide?" he shouts back. He scrolls through the list of channels, "Half these channels cost a shit load of money. How the hell have we got them? What the fuck did you buy now?"

"Nothing!" she shouts back.

Emmet stares at the TV some more. Then he spots something unusual on top of it. It's a small box, smaller than a shoe box. It's plain, black with a tiny flashing red light on the top.

"What the fuck is that?!" he shouts.

Sam sighs and comes into the room. She looks at him, waiting for a clue.

"What the fuck's what?" she asks when he just glares at her. "I'm not a fucking mind reader."

"What's that?!" he asks, pointing at the box, "Where the fuck did it come from?"

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“Oh a guy brought it round last night and hooked it up,” Sam says nonchalantly. “It’s a box that gets you all the channels without needing to buy a subscription or anything. Pretty cool. All the channels for free.”

“What’s it going to cost us?” he asks. “How much did you pay for this thing?”

“Nothing,” she says. “The guy brought it round last night, hooked it up and he said he’d come back in a few days. If we don’t want it then he’ll take it back. If we like it though we’ve only gotta pay him £50 for the thing and it’s ours for good. He said he’d even come and sort out any problems we might have with it at a later date.”

Emmet nods and turns back to stare at the box. Sam waits for a few minutes for him to say something else. When he doesn’t she huffs and heads back into the kitchen. Emmet barely notices her go. Instead he crawls across the floor and picks up the box. He sits with it, turning it around in his hands, examining each and every inch. It’s the real deal, well made and even though it’s clearly a bashed box it doesn’t look like it. He stares at it, feeling the weight of it in his hands. Has he just found the perfect opportunity to make a decent living? Has it fallen in his lap without him even trying?

He carefully pops the top on the box and looks at all of the wires inside. He wonders for a moment, examining it as closely as he can get. The more he looks, the more that he realises that he can knock these out, a large amount of them as well, for only £200. It would be no problem, easy to do. Even the supplies to make them would be cheap and easy to find.

“Hey Sam,” he shouts as he keeps looking at the box and puts it back together.

“What?!” she snaps, stomping back in to the living room. “You better not have broken that box.”

“No,” he says, eyes still locked on the box. “Did you get the details of the bloke who gave it to you?”

“Of course,” she says, like it should be obvious. “I’m not an idiot you know.” She disappears into the kitchen for a moment and then returns with a small white card in her hand. “Here, he left this so we could let him know what we think.”

Emmet reaches out and takes it. He carefully puts the box back on top of the TV and turns the card over and over in his hand. It’s pretty cheap looking, like the

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guy knocked it up in a few minutes and printed it at a photocopying shop or something. The name on it says Johnny Boy. It rings a bell in Emmet's mind. He knows a Johnny Boy, only vaguely of course. He's one of those guys always trying to make some quick and easy money. A real Del boy type. He'd never been interested in the drug dealing game though, despite the massive profit margins. He'd said time and again that it was a mug's game. And he was right too. Emmet had never really spoken to him about anything else.

Emmet doesn't think, he picks up the phone and dials the number on the card.

"Johnny Boy," the man on the other end says when he picks up. The phone barely rang. "What can I do for you?"

"Johnny Boy," Emmet says happily, "Great to hear you. Listen, my name's Emmet, you left a box with my girlfriend, Sam, last night. I was wondering if you could tell me some more about these boxes of yours. Think you can come around to fill me in?"

"Sure thing fellah," Johnny Boy says happily. "Is tonight alright? I'm free for a few hours."

"Yeah," Emmet says happily. "Yeah, tonight is fine."

"Cool," Johnny Boy says. "I'll see you then."

Johnny Boy hangs up without waiting for Emmet to respond. Emmet stares at the phone for a moment, startled. Then he puts the handset down and leans back against the sofa. A smile spreads across his face, only small at first but it quickly grows bigger and bigger. He's taken that step, acted on his instincts and he might actually be in luck. He chuckles to himself.

The words of the CD ring in his mind. He has his vision, now he just needs a plan.

Emmet sits at the kitchen table, a blank piece of paper in front of him and a pen in his hand. The ideas are swirling around in his mind, not giving him time to put them in order. One keeps coming back though, time and time again. It won't rest,

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won't leave him alone. Every time the words come in to his mind he gets an excited tingle in the pit of his stomach, a shiver of anticipation. It's one of those ideas that is motivating and all the other things that the CD said a goal should be. He shakes his hand, pulls the paper closer and quickly writes at the top.

EMMET'S TV EMPORIUM

He sits back and smiles. He's had a vision of owning his own business, doing something that he loves with machines and wiring. He's always loved that crap, loved fiddling with machines and seeing how they work. He used to love building machines when he was a kid, cobbling together different machines to get something that does more than just one thing.

Now he has the vision that he will sell enough of these boxes to do it. He needs enough capital to start his own, legitimate TV and DVD and VHS shop. He could make a lot of money with it and he will love it. He's always been interested in anything to do with TV, those were what he loved to pull apart and put back together the most out of all the electrical equipment he could get his hands on. More importantly, all of the people that Emmet has sold pills to are avid TV watchers. Most of them like to take the pills and then watch children's cartoons. They'd tell him that they liked the colours and that it made the jokes funnier somehow. Some like to watch the TV when they're coming down, saying it helps keep them calm and steady.

So he knows his customers and what they want and like, he knows where to sell the boxes and who to sell them to. It's really, when he thinks about it, a natural progression to go from pill dealer to TV retailer. After all, his customers from the pill game know him, trust him and they'd never expect him to be selling them dodgy crap. He'd be able to sell them the boxes straight out, a whole bunch of customers just ready and waiting for him to take their money in exchange for something awesome.

His vision is starting to become a plan. He does the calculations he needs; how much to get the boxes sold, how much to buy them, how much to buy the gear to make them, how much to sell them for and how many he will need to sell. Pretty soon there's a mass of numbers and sums on his piece of paper. His head hurts slightly but he feels accomplished. He's always been good at maths, putting things together and

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finding the number he needed at the end. He's been working so quickly though, so many numbers going through his head, he feels like he's on information overload.

But there's still one more thing he doesn't know, one more figure that he's missing. He doesn't know the premium that he needs to pay for a shop lease. He knows that will be the biggest cost, that will affect all of his other calculations. He's been working roughly so far, using an idea of how much he'd like to make to complete his calculations. He needs a more concrete number to make sure that he's going to be able to afford it.

There's a paper sitting on the table that wasn't there earlier. Sam must have brought it in and put it down without Emmet even noticing, he was so wrapped up in his calculations. He grabs the paper, flicks through the pages as quickly as he can to try and find the property pages. He scans each advert closely, looking at location and size of each potential retail space that's on offer. Some look right, but they're in the wrong place, too far from everything to make any decent profit. Others are in the perfect places for him to reach as many customers as he can but the floor space is tiny, the facilities nearby nowhere near what he needs.

That's when he sees it. The perfect shop. It's just outside of the shopping mall, close to one of his potential competitors but not so close that they'll ruin each other. It's the perfect size with store rooms included and two doors to get in and out of. He'd be easily able to secure the doors, keep his merchandise safe. It's for let immediately but there's no actual price on the advert. There's only a phone number to call for a company called AHJ Lettings. Emmet takes one last look through the paper, just in case there's anything else but there isn't. He comes back to the advert, staring at it and tapping his pen on the table as he reads it again and again. He circles it with his pen so that he can see it without scanning through all of the ads.

He gives a sigh, grumbles at himself. He needs the price and he really likes the shop, what little he can see from the pictures. Of course actually calling up makes it real and he's not sure if he wants to make his plan more real. He reads the title on the top of his paper again. *That* is his vision. *That* is his plan. *He's* the only one stopping it from coming through. He rushes to get the phone. He carefully taps in each number and waits.

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“AHJ Lettings,” a voice says, rough and casual. “What can we do for you?”

“I’ve seen an advert in the paper for a shop space,” Emmet says. “I was wondering if it’s still available.”

He reads out the reference number on the advert. He can hear a keyboard clacking in the background.

“Yes bruv,” the guy says, “We’ve still got it up for let. It’s earmarked for sale in two weeks though so if you want it you’re gonna have to be quick.”

“Can I come and view it?” Emmet asks quickly, his heart sinking a little.

“You got the funds bruv?” the guys asked.

“How much do I need?” Emmet asks. He holds his breath while he waits for the answer.

“£7,500 mate,” the guy says. Emmet’s heart sinks even further when he hears the number. “We need it within two weeks otherwise the boss man is going to sell it.”

“Yeah,” Emmet says, nodding even though the guy can’t see him. He starts to lie through his teeth, the desperation for the shop taking over. “I’ve got that much.”

“Come to the office then bruv,” the guy says happily. “Can you make it in today?”

“Yeah, no problem,” Emmet says. “I’ll see you in fifteen minutes.”

“Nice one bruv,” the guy says even happier. “See you in a few.”

Emmet hangs up the phone, sits back and smiles broadly. He gives a chuckle, gets up and heads to the bedroom. He can make this work; he’ll figure something out when he’s there. He always thinks better on his feet, not planning too much beforehand. If he’s going to blag this and get a good look at the shop, then he’s going to need to dress the part.



Chapter 7

When Emmet gets to the car park for the AHJ Lettings office he sees the most beautiful car he's ever seen. It's a Bentley Mulliner with a personalised registration plate. *RJ 1*. As he looks at the car he starts to feel out of his depth though. He begins to double think himself, wonders whether the choice of a shirt and smart jeans was a good idea, perhaps he would have been better off wearing a suit. Not that he actually owns one. He takes a deep breath though. He needs the shop, he wants the shop, he wants to fulfil the vision and plan he's made for himself.

He walks into the office and is immediately greeted by a fit receptionist. She's quite possibly the most beautiful woman he's ever seen. Her make up is flawless, not a hair is out of place from the elaborate style she's got it in and her clothes are perfectly tailored to show off her figure without being too tight or revealing. He has to stop himself shaking when she asks him who he's there to see.

"I spoke to a guy on the phone," he says, wiping his sweating palms on his jeans out of sight of her bright blue eyes. "He said he might be able to let me the shop on 212 Post Office Walk."

"Oh," the receptionist says with a nod and smile. "That'll be Ricky then. I'll just go and get him for you."

She steers him towards the sofa where he takes a seat before turning and disappearing down the corridor. Emmet sits on the edge of the sofa, hands clasped in front of him as he looks around the office. It's all clean lines, metal and white paint. A very classy place and he thinks that he doesn't belong there, not at all.

"Emmet!" a guy says from the corridor. "Ricky, pleased to meet you."

Emmet stands and takes the hand that Ricky's holding out. He shakes it hard.

"Come this way," Ricky says, leading Emmet down the corridor that he just left. "Thanks for calling about the shop. We've been trying to let that place out for ages, it just keeps falling through though."

"Yeah," Emmet says. He takes a seat in a comfortable looking chair in Ricky's office. "About that..." Ricky looks at him sharply. "Is there any way we can negotiate the price a little? I mean, you're trying to let it out right? At the moment I

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bet it's just eating money, not making it for you. If you let it out at a slightly cheaper price surely that's better than nothing."

"No way man," Ricky says with an amused grin and a shake of his head. "It's £7,500, take it or leave it."

"I thought you guys were all about haggling," Emmet says, "You're not even going to budge a little?"

"Nope," Ricky says. "It's £7,500 or you don't get it. The boss man says either anyone interested pays the full £7,500 or he's going to sell it in two weeks because he can't let it. Let some other sucker deal with the costs. Besides, you said you had the money. Are you messing me about?"

Emmet sighs heavily and sits back. He rubs at his chin and thinks. It's clear that Ricky doesn't have any real power to change the price, he's just a guy doing as he's told. As much as that annoys Emmet he knows that there's nothing he can do about lowering the price if he keeps talking to Ricky. He takes a deep breath.

"Can I speak to the main man then?" he says, taking a chance. "See if we can come to some sort of arrangement. He's just trying to make money after all, just like me."

"You can if you want," Ricky says with a shrug. "It's your funeral. Talking to him ain't gonna change anything."

He gets up anyway and heads out of the office. Emmet is left alone, fiddling with a hang nail on his thumb and trying to come up with some sort of pitch that might change the boss's mind.

"He'll see you," Ricky says from the doorway, making Emmet jump. "RJ knows you won't change his mind but he respects you for trying. So he agreed to at least hear you out. Down the hall on the left."

Emmet smiles and shakes Ricky's hand. The guy took a chance actually asking his boss if Emmet can talk to him, he could just have easily turned around and told Emmet to fuck off. There's no hard feeling there. With one last smile Emmet walks towards the door Ricky pointed out. His heart starts to pound heavily, the closer that he gets to the door and it feels like he's walking through thick grabbing mud. He knocks on the door.

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“Enter,” a voice says.

Emmet walks in, carefully shutting the door behind him. He turns and sees a long haired Asian guy in a sharp suit sitting behind the desk.

“Take a seat,” the man says, waving at an armchair in front of the desk. “I’m RJ. What can I do for you?”

“Hi,” Emmet says. He desperately tries to remember the manners that his mother always hammered into him as a kid and the things that he’d seen on TV about business meetings. “Thanks for seeing me. I was... well I was wondering if you can do the let on the shop at Post Office Walk for cheaper than £7,500,”

“Can’t do it,” RJ says immediately, shaking his head.

“Why not?” Emmet blurts out, forgetting everything he had planned in his head.

He had thought that RJ would at least listen to what he had to say instead of outright refusing. RJ laughs.

“It’s £7,500,” RJ says firmly although there’s still a trace of amusement in his voice. “That’s it. If I can’t get that in the next 2 weeks... the shop is being sold. That’s what it says in the business plan, that’s what I’m sticking too.”

“Can’t you alter the business plan?” Emmet asks in disbelief, “I mean, you’ll be making some money that way at least.”

RJ laughs even louder, throwing his head back. The sounds of his chuckles fill the office.

“Buddy, I’d make twice as much as whatever you could offer, selling the place.” He says. “Did you see that Bentley out there?” Emmet nods, “I want that to be a Roller. A Rolls Royce, top of the range. You see this Rolex?” he holds up a wrist and points at the watch. Emmet nods. “I want it to be real. AND in 22ct gold. See this office,” he holds his hands up in the air and looks around the room. Emmet nods again. “I want it to be a skyscraper.” He leans forward and taps on the table. “If I alter the plan, I’m not going to get any of that. You understand?”

Emmet thinks for a minute. He looks at RJ. There’s no way that he’s going to budge, he can see it in the other man’s eyes. He has a plan and he’s sticking to it. He nods.

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“It’s £7,500 in the next two weeks,” RJ repeats. “No money and the shop goes to auction. Sorry my friend, I wish I could help you out.”

“No problem,” Emmet says. Inside he almost wants to cry and can feel everything slipping through his fingers. He reaches out to shake RJ’s hand. “Thanks for explaining and telling me in person.”

He turns and walks out of the office. His vision and his plan are crashing down around him.



Chapter 8

Emmet is still fuming when he gets to the car park. They're so strict, so rigid. They're not willing to adjust their policies even a little bit. That's why he went into dealing in the first place, no one else would bend the rules even a little to fit him in. He turns on the spot, intending to give the entire building two middle fingers and not caring who sees. But then he catches sight of the Bentley as it catches the afternoon sun. He stares at the shiny offices, smart, upmarket and clean with people hurrying around inside carrying official looking documents. Ricky strolls out of the building, his smart and clearly expensive suit fitting him perfectly. He's probably on the way to see a client, Emmet reckons. Everyone in there is dressed smartly, wearing expensive clothes and perfectly styled hair, even the men. AHJ is clearly a company that's doing well, even in the oversaturated housing market. They're making money, more than they need. They've expanded and they will be in the future as well, RJ made that clear. They're successful, everyone in there and the company as a whole. No one tries to hide their success or pretend that it isn't happening. They flaunt it, show it off, completely unembarrassed that they're doing better than a lot of other people. Emmet wants that, wants to be able to say he's earned his money, he wants to be able to show it off. He wants the life that these people all have.

Standing there in the car park he thinks back to what RJ said in the offices, about how he wouldn't be able to reach the visions that he has for AHJ Lettings if he ignores the plan that he has in place. Emmet realises, right then and there, that RJ is right. A light bulb goes off in his mind again. RJ and his people have a plan and they stick to it. They don't waver, no matter what. They've probably never wavered, never stepped away from the business plan that RJ's set up. It's why they've done so well. Doing exactly what the plan says, sticking to it, has served them well, got the business to the point where it is now. From the sounds of it as well it seems like AHJ is just getting bigger and bigger, rising higher and higher. Perhaps, Emmet thinks to himself, it's time to do the same.

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Back at the flat Sam has already gone out and Emmet is completely alone. He thinks briefly about turning on the TV and just relaxing. It's been a stressful few hours after all and his hopes have been almost completely squashed. But he catches sight of his piece of paper, EMMET'S TV EMPORIUM written across the top and he's filled with a rush of excitement, a drive to get things done. He searches out another pen, the one he was using seems to have gone missing, and he sits at the kitchen table with it. He's excited again, almost more excited than he was when the idea hit him last night. He wants to make this real, wants to see those words written on a real sign above a real shop. His vision is starting to come together.

But as he sits there he starts to realise that it's one thing to have the idea for his shop and be able to picture it in his mind. It's quite another to bring that idea to reality. He needs to figure out each step that he needs to take, he needs to know what things he has to do to get on that path to getting a real shop. And he's already taken a few. He knows that he's getting £350 from Terry later. He knows that he needs £7,500 before two weeks are up. He knows that Johnny Boy is charging £50 for a box and that he can sell them on for more than that. He knows where he can sell the boxes. Now he just needs to figure out how many boxes he needs to sell to make the money.

He scribbles away on his piece of paper, numbers flow through his mind. He imagines that he can hear the clock ticking away with music playing, like on Countdown. Some of the sums are tricky, he's got to work backwards and forwards. He was never much good at maths in school, he hated the class, the teacher and the other students. But since becoming a dealer he's gotten better at it, smarter and faster at working out wholesale and resale prices. He's pretty much done a degree in business without actually getting the degree. He's got real world experience and that's the best part. He knows how to work out prices that make a profit. By the time he's done his entire paper is covered in scribbled numbers and scrawled notes to himself. He does have a plan though, a list of things that he needs to do to change his dream from words on a page to an actual bricks and mortar business.

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1. *Get £350 from Terry.*
2. *Buy and then sell 7 TV boxes to raise £1,400.*
3. *Reinvest funds to buy and sell 50 boxes to raise £7,500*
4. *Get shop*
5. *Go legit*

He looks at his list and smiles. Written down like that it doesn't seem as confusing or terrifying. He has a plan of action; he knows what he needs to do. More importantly, step one is pretty much sorted already. Terry's going to go and sell on the drugs to Damian and Emmet's going to get his money. He can start putting step two in motion now while he waits.

He calls Johnny Boy. The guy picks up on the second ring.

"Hey Emmet pal!" he says happily. "What can I do for you."

"Hiya Johnny," Emmet says. He's smiling and practically vibrating with excitement although he tries to keep it out of his voice. "Listen I was wondering about ordering some more of those boxes. Can I do that?"

"You got mates who wanna try it?" Johnny Boy asks. "Cos, even if you order a load I'm still not gonna be able to lower the prices. It'd cut in to my profit margins you see. I can't end up out of pocket."

"Oh no worries about that," Emmet says. "I've got some friends who might be interested but I don't know for sure yet. I was hoping that I could get 7 of those boxes from you? As soon as possible?"

"Sure thing buddy!" Johnny Boy says. "Of course that's only if you've got the money though. Do you?"

"Of course," Emmet says. "I'll have it for you as soon as you arrive. When can you deliver?"

"I'll have to get back to you on that one." Johnny Boy says. He suddenly sounds quite distracted. "Listen pal, I gotta go. I'll give you a ring later and let you know details."

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“No problem,” Emmet says.

He hangs up and glances at the clock. It’s 3:30, almost that time. He heads to the kitchen drawer and starts digging through, looking for the box that holds the rent money. Sam keeps it there on the first of the month. She checks and counts it each week religiously. No matter what else has been going on, that rent money is always there by the first of the month, waiting for the landlord to come and get it.



Chapter 9

There's a knock at the door and Emmet rushes to open it. Just as he figured, it's Turguy, Emmet's friend and landlord.

They've always gotten along well, able to chat to each other about anything and everything. They connect in a way that Emmet can't with his other friends. It's probably because Turguy is Turkish too, or at least Middle Eastern. He knows what it's like to be insulted and mocked and to not be taken seriously because of the colour of his skin. Emmet gets it too and they can easily spend hours moaning and bitching to each other about the racist actions of some of the neighbours. When Emmet first moved in to the block, Turguy straight away took him under his wing and looked out for him. He says that Emmet reminds him of his son back in the country that he comes from and he can't help but want to look after Emmet. Emmet takes it of course and even though he would never admit it outwardly, he's actually kind of touched by Turguy's concern. Turguy's been on at him for quite a while to get a different job and get out of dealing. He's going to be a happy guy now.

Turguy greets Emmet with a massive hug against his bearlike chest and steps in to the apartment. He looks around for Sam briefly but when his shouts get no reply he falls quiet again.

"She's gone out," Emmet says from the kitchen hallway. "I don't know where. I got home from town and she was already off out."

"Oh that's a shame," Turguy says. His face falls a little and he looks sad. Then the frown is gone and he's smiling again. He follows Emmet in to the kitchen and his gazes falls on the piece of paper. "Hey, what's this?"

"Oh!" Emmet says, swirling in place quickly. "That's nothing, really, just a bit of silliness on my part."

"Doesn't look silly," Turguy says. He leans over and reads the words out loud. "Emmet's TV Emporium. Nice."

"Really?" Emmet asks excitedly. "You think it's a good plan?"

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“I think it could be very good.” Turguy says once he’s read through it. He watches Emmet closely. “But what’s it for?”

“It’s a new business idea that I’m working on, you know, just one for myself.” Emmet says. He takes a deep breath and spits it out. “It’s for a TV shop. I want to go legit, get out of dealing for good. Kind of stupid I know but it’s an idea I had.”

“A man with a plan!” Turguy cries. “I like it! And it doesn’t involve being a drug dealer any more. I like it even more!”

He claps Emmet on the back. Emmet grins at him, a little shy but still reassured.

“You remind me of me, Emmet.” Turguy says, steering them both to sit down on the sofa. “When I was younger, I was exactly the same. I wanted my furniture shop, I always did. When I was a little boy I dreamed of having a big store full of furniture that people all over would come to look at. And when I was old enough I started to work towards it. Everything that I did to make money, no matter what it was, I had that shop in my mind.

I grafted and grafted, did whatever jobs I could to get the money. Eventually I’d raised enough to buy a shop all of my own. But it was a tiny shop in the wrong part of town. I didn’t care though. I had my shop at last. And I knew that times change and the wrong parts become the right parts and the right parts become the wrong parts. I knew that, I’d seen it happen; my parents had seen it happen. So I stayed in that little shop in the wrong part of town and I kept working and working away at it. I expanded when I could, buying the shops on either side, moved when I finally had no choice and could definitely afford it and I kept going because I was doing what I’d dreamed of doing. The dream just got bigger as time went by.”

And now look at me,” Turguy cries, throwing his arms out. “I’ve got a massive shop in the right part of town. People work for me, they work hard and I look after them. I even have a small property portfolio to boot. Little right now but it can get bigger and bigger. And it all started with one little bit of paper, just like yours.”

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“Did you follow the paper?” Emmet asks nervously, excitement starting to bubble in his chest. “I mean, did you ever step away from the plan and do something else?”

“I thought about it,” Turguy says with a shrug. “Now and then, when it seemed like I was never going to make it, I’d think about doing something that I’d not listed in my plan or throwing it all away. But then I’d look at the plan, at my own little piece of paper and I’d remember all over again why I was working so hard and what the end goal was. I’d see how far I’d come already, how well my plan had served me. Every time I completed one of those tasks I’d tick them off. It was satisfying. Those ticks kept me going, looking at them all lined up like that. Sometimes I wonder though, would I have any of the things that I have now if I’d never followed through with the plan? Would I be one of those guys in the pubs on Thursday nights moaning about dreams that never came through?”

“I doubt it Turg,” Emmet says. “You don’t like beer.”

“Haha!” Turguy laughs, “Good point mate.”

“I think you’ve got a point though,” Emmet says after a moment of thought. “I mean, you’re the second guy I’ve seen today who has a plan and won’t move from it. And you’re both doing really well. Maybe there is something in all this ‘stick to the plan’ stuff. I guess if I want to make this stuff work, like really work and get successful like you, I need to stick to it all and see the plan through to the end.”

“Hey, if you never try, you never know,” Turguy says with a shrug. “I think trying and not managing it would be better than never trying at all and leaving it as a dream. But hey, don’t get too successful. Don’t want my best resident moving out because he’s bought a fancy mansion in Bas Hills.”

“Nah,” Emmet says. He gets to his feet and starts to lead Turguy out of the flat. “They wouldn’t have me in the posh part of Baslow, no matter how much money I had. Don’t worry about that. I’ll see you next month Turg.”

“See you next month buddy,” Turguy says. He gives Emmet a massive hug again and walks off smiling. “Look after yourself.”

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Emmet watches Turguy go, still grinning to himself.



Chapter 10

Terry and Bill wait outside Damian's house. The meet is at 7 and it's still a little too early to go in. Bill is smoking a cigarette, leaning against the wall of a neighbour's house. Terry is muttering about Emmet to Bill but he's not really listening, it's all just Terry talking to himself anyway. It's always like that when Emmet's done something to piss Terry off. Bill's worried about Emmet though, he seemed serious last night after all. But he's not overly worried. Emmet is Emmet and he'll come around sooner or later. Right now Bill's excited to be able to be a big drug dealer just like Terry is. Normally Emmet's with Terry for this sort of thing. Now it's Bill's turn.

"Oi, losers!" Damian shouts from his doorway. "You coming in or what?"

Terry grins at Bill and starts sauntering towards the house. Bill stomps out his cigarette, pocketing the small nub for a few drags later, and follows on in. Damian's house is nice, swish and fancy. It smells like perfume and girls, a few scented candles burning in places. Damian catches Bill looking and smirks.

"The missus," he says proudly. "She loves those things. Gotta admit, they do make the place smell nice. I like to light them sometimes, just for a change. When she's off on holiday or something it reminds me of her."

"Nice," Bill says with a wide grin.

"Enough pally-palling." Terry says gruffly. "Let's do business."

"Alright." Damian say, taking a seat on the sofa and stretching out. "Emmet said you had 50 for me, let's see them."

"Sure," Terry reaches in to his pocket and pulls out the entire bag of 100. Damian raises an eyebrow and Bill wishes that he could do that and look as cool. "That's my 50 as well. I'm wanting to sell you those too. Figured, why not give you more than expected?"

"I can do that." Damian says, reaching for the bag. "Same price as I told Emmet, £7 a pill. Gives you a tidy total of £700."

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“Nice.” Terry says with a wide grin. “Let’s see the money.”

He’s cocky, arrogant, doesn’t care what happens. Bill watches the conversation between the two. Excitement’s tingling in his belly. Damian reaches in to his pocket, pulls out a wad of cash. He counts out £700 in a collection of fives, tens and twenties. He holds it out to Terry. When Terry reaches for it though he pulls it back, out of reach.

“I think I better try the merchandise first,” Damian says sternly.

There’s something in his eyes that makes Bill shiver but Terry doesn’t seem to notice. He’s grinning and nodding and just plonking the bag of pills on the table. Maybe Emmet was right about Terry being too cocky. Damian could just grab those pills and beat the crap out of both of them after all, there’s nothing to stop him.

It doesn’t look like that’s in Damian’s plans though. He reaches his hand in to the bag, other hand still clasping the money. He pulls out a single pill and licks it. He grimaces, winces and gives it another lick. He seems to swirl the taste around in his mouth. Bill can see his tongue moving over his teeth and gums, shoving his lips outwards. Damian closes his eyes and shudders before he opens them again and grins.

“Nice,” he says happily.

He hands over the money and Terry practically snatches it out of his hand. Damian frowns but Terry doesn’t notice. He’s too busy counting the money out and checking that it’s all there. Bill notices though and for a moment wants to batter Terry himself. He’s being rude and Bill doesn’t like this side of him. He didn’t even say thank you. Bill glances at Damian. Damian sits back on the sofa, stretches his arms across the back. He uses his foot to draw the bag of pills closer to him.

“Say hi to Emmet for me,” he says as Terry keeps counting. “What’s he up to anyway?”

“No idea,” Terry says, looking up. “He did say something about an idea he’s had, about getting out of the drug game at last.”

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They both start to laugh. Bill laughs too, partially because they're laughing but also because the idea of Emmet not being a dealer is kind of ridiculous really. He's always been a dealer. It's who he is.

"He's always full of ideas that boy," Damian says. "Say hi to him from me. Now go have fun."

Terry shakes Damian's hand and leads the way out of the house. Bill nods and smiles at the guy nervously before he turns and follows Terry. He gives a shiver once he's outside. Something about the whole thing felt off but he doesn't know what.

"Mate!" Terry says, slinging his arm around Bill's shoulders. "Seven hundred big ones!" he pats the pocket where he put the money. "Mate, I feel like I've gotta spend it, you know! I wanna go out, get drunk, get high, get fucked by some girl with massive tits."

"Yeah!" Bill says. "That sounds mint mate. Let's get back to mine and sort it all out. I bet some of the others are up for a party."

"Didn't Eddy say something about being on the guest list at World Dance?" Terry asks as they walk along. "Hasn't he got a plus three or something. Bet he could get us in there. The girls are well fit in that place, they're all old and tired here. And you know what else?" he pulls Bill's head down and whispers in his ear, "I've got a few pills left. We can take those and get buzzed. I'm buying!"

"Hell yeah!" Bill says.

Something itches in the back of his mind. Something about the money not all being Terry's. But the prospect of going out with his best friend, going to a club that hardly anyone can get in to and having a banging night is more of a lure to Bill and he ignores that little voice and follows Terry wherever he leads.



Chapter 11

7pm has come and gone and Emmet still hasn't heard a word from Terry. He's been pacing the flat, moving through the rooms, growling to himself and muttering. It's getting closer to 9pm now, Terry should have called and said something by now. But still there's just silence. Emmet throws himself on to the sofa, grumbling. He snatches up the phone and calls Terry's number. It just rings out. He tries to text but there's still no response even after fifteen minutes. Out of desperation he does the same with Bill's phone. It rings out and his texts go unanswered.

Emmet throws the phone on to the sofa cushion and grumbles to himself some more. He turns the television on and flicks to the music channel. The picture is crystal clear, the sound perfect. The channel is club music, playing all the latest and upcoming dance club hits. Then it hits him. Terry and Bill are probably out. Too buzzed to take his calls or even notice their phones vibrating. What's worse is that they're probably spending his money as well, not just Terry's.

"Fucker!" Emmet snarls. It startles Sam as she comes to get a cup of tea. "Sorry babe."

"What's happened now?" Sam mutters.

"It's Terry," Emmet says with a sigh. "The fucker was supposed to bring me £350 from a deal I sorted out last night but there's no sign of him. He's probably out with Bill getting smashed on my money!"

"What did I say this morning?" Sam says. "You're the dumbest out of the lot of them. Why the hell did you let Terry have the money?! You know what he's like."

"I know, I know," Emmet says with a sigh. He leans forwards and buries his face in his hand. "I just thought he'd come through for me this time. I need that money! I've got to pay for some more of those boxes."

"Like I said," Sam snipes, "Dumb, Dumber and Dumbest."

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She turns and storms out of the kitchen and in to their bedroom. She slams the door behind herself, making her feelings very, very clear. Emmet groans. He's already fucked up his plan. He couldn't even get through step one! He needs that money; the money Terry was supposed to bring. He can't get on to step two without it. Sam may have been right actually, about relying on Terry of all people to come through. After all, he's never been the most reliable of people, especially where money is concerned.

He glances up at the clock, it's almost time for Johnny Boy to come around. But Emmet doesn't have the money to pay for the extra boxes. He wonders whether he should call, cancel and get him to come around another day. But those boxes are popular, they'll sell out quickly and he won't be able to get them. Perhaps he'll be able to get the boxes on tick from Johnny. It's possible after all. He'll never know until he asks.

"You alright mate?!" Johnny says as he comes in to the flat. "Here's those 7 boxes, just like you asked for. You got the cash?"

Emmet rubs the back of his neck and winces a little.

"Yeah... about that..." he says slowly. "Listen I've not got the cash like I thought I would have but –"

"You fucking time waster!" Johnny shouts. "What the fuck am I even doing here if you've not got the cash?!"

"I was supposed to have it! I swear!" Emmet cries. "I was supposed to be getting £350 today but it hasn't come yet!"

"Blah blah blah," Johnny snarls. "I've heard it all before. You can't say anything new to me."



“I’m serious though!” Emmet says desperately. “Look I want to do business and start one. If you give me these boxes on credit... I’ll... I’ll order another 21 boxes next time!”

Johnny stops for a moment, his anger draining away as he thinks through Emmet’s words. It’s a bigger order. A really big order. A big order means a big profit. He shakes his head quickly.

“How do I know you’re gonna pay me?!” Johnny demands, pointing his finger at Emmet. “How do I know you’re not just gonna come up with some lame arse excuse again and give me the run around?!”

“You have my word!” Emmet says.

“Fuck your word,” Johnny says. “I’m gonna ask you again, how do I know I’m going to get paid if you can’t even pay me this time?”

“Look,” Emmet says with a sigh. “I have an existing network that I can flog these boxes to. They’re all good to go, ready and waiting for the boxes. And I’ve got the £350 coming to me. I’m going to make sure I get it. Give me a chance?”

“Nah mate,” Johnny says. “I don’t do credit without some sort of guarantee.”

He looks around the room, scanning everything in his head and working out values as he goes.

“You got anything of value?” Johnny asks after looking around. “Anything you can give me as security?”

“Erm...” Emmet thinks for a moment, images of jewellery in Sam’s jewellery boxes spring up in his mind. “What about gold?”

“Yeah...” Johnny says after thinking for a moment. “Yeah, that’ll do.”

Emmet race to his bedroom and finds Sam sat on the bed drinking tea and eating popcorn. Her eyes were locked on the TV but she turns to look at him when he bursts in.

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“Where’s your jewellery?” he asks quickly. “I need to give it to Johnny Boy for security.”

“What?” she asks.

Emmet doesn’t answer. He’s already scrambling through their drawers and pulling out necklaces and bracelets. He tosses them on to the bed. Sam scrambles to her feet.

“What the hell are you doing?” she cries, “Those are mine!”

“I know, I know!” he says. He looks at her desperately, his eyes wide and pleading. “Please, it’s only for a little while, until I get the money off of Terry and sell the boxes Johnny’s brought for me. You’ll get them back.”

“What?!” Sam cries, “What the hell?! You can’t even come up with your own security things? You always do this, always rely on someone else. What are you gonna do if this doesn’t work out huh? I’m not gonna bail you out if this goes tits up.”

“It’s going to work,” Emmet says. “Turguy looked at the business plan earlier and said it’s a good one. He should know, he’s done it himself.”

“It’s a sheet of paper with some notes scribbled on it,” Sam says sharply. “That is not a business plan. And what does Turguy know? He’s an idiot who got lucky.”

“It’s all I have.” Emmet says. “Please Sam, please. I’ll make sure you get it back. I promise. I’ll do whatever it takes to get your stuff back. Please. I don’t want to be dealing any more. I don’t want to sell drugs. I want to be a legitimate businessman. Don’t you want that for me?”

He takes her hands in his and holds them close. He looks at her, right in the eyes. She looks back and then sighs.

“Fine,” she says. “Take them to the guy.”

He grabs her and kisses her hard. Then he gets all of the jewellery in his hands and heads out of the room. As he shuts the door he knows that he’s never going to hear the end of it, that Sam is always going to be bringing it up until she gets her bling back. She’ll probably keep bringing it up even after she’s got her jewellery back.

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Johnny is still waiting for him in the kitchen. Emmet plonks the heavy weight of chains and trinkets in to his hands.

“Will this do?” he asks worriedly. “I mean, I know it’s not much but that should cover the security, right?”

Johnny looks at the chains and bracelets. It’s all gold, all shining and new looking. It’s covered in jewels as well, what looks like real diamonds and emeralds. It’s fancy stuff even if it is tacky. More importantly to Johnny, it’s probably worth way more than the £350 security that he wanted. He nods, keeping his face calm.

“Yeah, it’ll do.” He says. Emmet smiles. “But if I don’t get my cash in 14 days... I’m keeping it.”

Emmet’s face drops.

“Gimme 21 days bruv?” he says, trying to be prudent and negotiate.

“Nah,” Johnny says. “14 or nothing.”

“Fine,” He says with a nod and a sigh.

“Pleasure doing business with you,” Johnny says.

They shake hands and Emmet shows Johnny out. There’s a wide smirk on his face, a satisfied look like a cat who caught a really fat bird and ate it all. Emmet shuts the door behind the man and leans against it, sighing heavily. Now he’s got to get the rest of step two finished. He needs to sell the seven boxes that are now sat on his kitchen table.



Chapter 12

Straight away the next morning Emmet is on the phone, calling the people he dealt to before and who he knows love TV. He chooses to focus on the seven most likely to actually buy the boxes from him, the ones who always had the television on when he came around to drop off the pills. Three of them are eager, saying yes as soon as he's explained what the boxes are and actually do. Even when he tells them the price they don't care.

"Not a problem mate!" one of them says, "I just wanna watch something that isn't Countdown while I enjoy the buzz. Do they get kids cartoon channels?"

Emmet quickly checks with his own box and is instantly assaulted by animated images and loud shouting.

"Yup," he says after muting the television, "At least three different kid's channels, if not more. I've just checked and found them in a few seconds."

"Mint!" the guy cries down the phone, "I love some cartoons. You're wanting cash right?"

"Yeah, £200 clear," Emmet says.

"Great, I'll have it for you," he says. "Drop it off at 7. If you set it up for me, I'll bung you an extra £50. Can't be arsed with all those wires."

"Not a problem," Emmet says, excitement racing through his veins. He doesn't even care that he has no clue how to set it up. "See you then."

Once he's hung up and before he makes the next call he realises that he should know. More people might want some help and he'll probably feel more legit if he can actually tell them how to set their boxes up. He quickly checks over the box, following the wires to see where they plug in. Each box came with a set of wires and he makes sure that he knows which ones go where, both in the box and in to the television.

Other potential buyers that he calls are a little more reluctant. Some are interested when he tells them what the boxes did but become more reluctant once they hear the price. Emmet has to blag it then, take a chance and work on their greed.

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“You sure you don’t want it?” he says. “I’ve only got seven and I’ve already sold three of them. People really want them; I don’t know when I’ll be able to get more in. Figured I’d call you first though and ask, you are one of my best customers.”

For some that is all it takes, the threat of not getting something that everyone wants. Others it is the compliment of being asked first, of being considered the best customers. One potential customer takes a lot more convincing though and Emmet figures out that it’s because the other guy is trying to make a clean start, just like Emmet is.

“Hey I get it mate,” Emmet says kindly. “I’m trying to do the same thing. It’s not just good for when you’re buzzing though. You can use it all the time. Snuggle up with the missus and watch some films on one of the movie channels, catch up on some porn when you can’t sleep, put the news channel on and look smart when you’ve got people around fixing shit. And you’ve got the kids channels for if you’ve ever got little kids around. It’s brilliant.”

“I still don’t know mate,” the guy says reluctantly. “It’s a lot of money and I don’t know if the missus will like it.”

“It gets American channels as well,” Emmet says, “MTV, Desperate Housewives, American Idol, Sex and the City. All sorts of shows I bet she reads about and wants to watch. She can watch them all.”

“Still...” the guy says. He doesn’t sound as reluctant now, there’s something in his voice that says he could be interested and he’s close to giving in. “It’s a lot of money...”

“Tell you what,” Emmet says, sensing a sale. “I’ll let you try it. No problem. You pay me up front and if you don’t like it in a week you can have your money back and keep the box anyway. If you like it though I keep the money and you keep the box. And I’ll set it all up for you. How’s that sound?”

The guy sits in silence for a little while, mulling things over.

“Yeah,” he says, “Yeah alright, I’ll give it a go.”

“Sweet,” Emmet says.

He arranges the drop off time and hangs up. He smiles, happy and pleased with the day’s work that he’s just done.



Damian tries another of the pills while he's sat at home and bored out of his mind. It doesn't taste right, just sugar and the tang of paracetamol. He winces and spits it out. That is not what he was expecting at all and it's definitely not what he's paid for. He reaches for another one but it tastes exactly the same. He spits that one out too. He grabs another. Exactly the same again. Another. Tastes right at last. He doesn't take it though. He puts it to one side, next to the ones that he spat out. There's a slight difference between the two types of pill. The ones that are actually the pills he wants are a little smaller, slightly fatter and they have a slight pink tinge. The others are flat and pale.

Damian grabs the bag and tips the pills out over the coffee table in front of him. He sorts through the pills, picking out the ones that look right and shoving the others to the side. It doesn't take him long to sort them; he gets better at seeing the differences between the two types the more that he looks at them. When they're all sorted he counts through the pills. It's a fifty/fifty split. Half of the pills are dud.

"That little fucker!" he snarls. "50% crap shot."

He grabs his phone and hammers on the numbers, angrily dialling Emmet. All he gets is the engaged tone though, Emmet is busy on the other end setting up his box sales. Damian hits the end call button angrily. The more time that passes, the more that he looks at the two piles of pill, one good and the other crappy, the more furious he gets.

He hammers in Terry's number.

"Lo," Terry says sleepily. "Who this?"

"Terry you little shit," he snarls, "What the fuck is going on?"

"Not so loud," Terry whines. "My head."

"Fuck your head!" Damian shouts. Terry whimpers on the other end. "You've sold me crap."

"What you on about?" Terry asks.

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“The pills!” Damian says, “Half the pills are crap, just sugar and paracetamol mixed up. What the fuck have you sold me?”

“They’re good man, really good,” Terry says, starting to slur. “They’re not duds.”

“Yes, they fucking are,” Damian says. “I know because I’ve tried them. Now. I want my money back. ALL OF IT!”

“Hey, that’s not fair,” Terry says. “The other half are still good, you can still sell those and make a profit.”

“Fuck off,” Damian says. “I want my money back, all of it and I’m gonna keep the pills. Bring it round now.”

“No can do mate,” Terry says around a yawn. “I’ll come and see you in a few days. We can talk it over and figure something out there. I’m out of town at the minute. Can’t do a thing until I’m back.”

“Get fucked!” Damian snarls. “I want my money back and I want it today.”

“I’m not in Baslow!” Terry whines. “And I don’t have your 700 on me at the moment.”

“I don’t give a fuck where you are or how much you have on you!” Damian snarls, sounding like a wild animal. “I want my £700 back. Today!”

He hangs up angrily, slamming the handset back in to place. He looks at the phone in his hand, considers throwing it across the room to let off some anger but decides against it. He wants his money and he’s going to get it, one way or another.



Chapter 13

Emmet sits on his sofa feeling proud and accomplished. He's looking at the boxes and double checking all of the wires. Everything seems ok. He even disconnects the box that he has and tries the others in his TV, just to make sure that they work and that he can get the connections right. Each and every one of them work fine. Just as he finishes unplugging the last one and reattaching his own his phone rings.

"Emmet we're fucked!" Terry squeals down the phone. "We're really, really fucked. He's gonna kill us if we don't give him his money back!"

"Woah, wait!" Emmet says calmly, "Who's going to kill us? Start from the beginning."

He can already feel the heaviness and dread sinking in to his stomach. He thinks that he knows where this is going and he doesn't really want to hear it. But he's going to, he needs to hear the words for himself.

"It's Damian mate," Terry says. "He's fuming. He called me up a little while ago and told me half the pills are duds. He wants all of his £700 back. Today."

"Well give it him back then." Emmet says, it's an obvious solution, he doesn't see what the problem is. "And where the hell have you been?! I needed that £350 yesterday and you never brought it round to me."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Terry says, whining hard. "Me and Bill went out and we got on it, like big time. One thing led to another and I guess I kind of lost track of time. You know how it is."

"I know how it is yeah," Emmet says coldly. "I know how it always is with you. Why do you think I want out? You royally fucked me over. Again! I've had enough mate! I'm not doing this again."

"Please Em," Terry says desperately. "I need your help. I've not got the £700 anymore. I spent most of it last night. You need to pay him back, like today and I'll sort you out once I've got the money."

"Fuck you!" Emmet roars. "You're the one who fucked up. You're the one who sold him dodgy pills and then spent all the money you got for it. Mine were

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good, they were fine. I know because I checked each one of them myself. You need to pay Damian back yourself.”

“I can’t,” Terry says. “I really don’t have the money and I can’t get back to Baslow yet. I’m still waiting for my lift.”

“Well, sort it out,” Emmet says. “I am not dealing with this. You fucked up so you have to come back and sort everything out with Damian for yourself.”

“But — I—” Terry says. The line is breaking up, crackling and hissing.

“Hello?” Emmet says. He can hear a faint echo on the other end and what sounds like Terry’s voice. “Terry? You there? Terry?”

The phone clicks off and Emmet is left listening to the end call tone. He pulls it from his ear and stares at the phone. The display is reading that his call is over. He growls and grumbles and hammers in Terry’s number.

“Hello,” Terry says, the line crystal clear.

“Terry,” Emmet says, “You’ve got to sort-”

“Ha!” Terry says. “Gotcha. This is the answerphone. Leave your message.”

Emmet listens to the menu lady speaking in a bland voice, frozen in surprise for a moment. He hangs up though before the beep sounds. He considers calling Terry back for a moment but he catches sight of the time. He has to go and sell some of his boxes. The Damian issue is going to have to wait. Terry should be sorting it, he’s the one who screwed up and Emmet’s made it quite clear that Damian is Terry’s problem. He might actually have to deal with it at some point but right now he needs to go and sell the television boxes to his waiting customers. He’ll deal with everything else once he gets back.

“Alright lads,” Damian says to the collection of thugs in front of him. “Thanks for coming out. Like I told your boss you’ll be well paid for helping me sort this out. I’m looking for a bloke called Emmet. He and his mate have ripped me off and I want my money back. It’s only £700 but that’s not the point. I need to send this guy, and any of his little mates the message. I am not to be fucked with.”



“No problem,” the leader of the guys says. “Any ideas where he might be?”

“No,” Damian says with a grumble. “But I know where he lives. If he’s not there someone else might know where he’s gone.”

“Sounds good,” the guy says. “We’ll follow you and wait to find out where he is. If he’s at home and you need a hand give us a shout. We’ll be out the car in a second.”

“Thanks,” Damian says.

He climbs in to his car and starts the engine. He watches in the rear view mirror as the guys that he’s hired to help him climb in to their own car. Its body lowers quite a distance as they climb in side, one by one. He wonders how it can even move with all of that weight in there. He shrugs. It’s not his problem. There’s a lot of muscle there and they’re all to help him. That’s all that matters. He pulls out of the car park and heads off towards Emmet’s house.

In the other car there’s a conversation going on.

“Aren’t we looking for an Emmet already?” one of the guys in the back seat asks.

“Yeah,” The leader says. He’s driving, watching Damian’s car carefully. “Apparently him and a buddy made Chris look like a twat. Chris wants him found and brought to him. Something about revenge.”

“Jeez,” another guy says, “I wouldn’t like to be that Emmet.”

“Hey, what if it’s the same one?” the first guy in the back asks. “That’d make our jobs so much easier.”

“We should be so lucky.” The leader mumbles. He pulls in behind Damian who heads to the door of a flat. “Keep an eye out, that guy might need us.”

Damian hammers a fist on the door to Emmet’s flat. Sam answers.

“Yeah?” she asks, looking him up and down. She cocks a hip flirtatiously. “Can I help you?”

“Emmet live here?” Damian asks brusquely.

“Yeah...” she says, a little wary now.

“Is he in?” Damian asks, looking Sam right in the eyes and smiling. She smiles right back. “I really need to see him and talk to him.”



“Is this about those television boxes?” Sam asks, “He’s not here and he’s taken them all with him.”

“Oh...” Damian says, disappointed. He looks at the floor. “I was really hoping to talk to him. Do you know where he’s gone?”

“I think he said Beanfield Estate,” she says. “One sec.”

She disappears in to the living room, leaving the front door wide open. Damian thinks about shoving his way in, forcing her to tell him for sure where Emmet is or call him to bring him back. But the girl’s clueless, blonde and stupid. She wouldn’t be lying for the guy; she wouldn’t even know that she should be. She reappears quickly, scrap of paper in hand and smiles at Damian.

“Yeah, he’s at Beanfield,” she says, glancing at the paper. “He’s off selling there.”

“Thanks a lot,” Damian says with a smile that shows too much teeth, “I really appreciate it. I’ll try to catch up with him there.”

“No problem,” Sam says. “Is there anything else I can help you with?”

She looks him up and down and licks her lips. She bites her lower lip and eyes up his crotch very obviously. Damian’s tempted, a tingle in his groin suggesting that he take her up on the blatant offer. But he catches sight of a picture of Emmet over her shoulder and his rage reignites. He wants to beat the crap out of that guy for trying to rip him off. He squashes down his anger though and smiles.

“Fraid not sweetheart,” he says with a shrug. “Got things to do and Emmets to try and catch up. Maybe another time.”

He eyes her up and down and turns to go. She smiles at him and only shuts the door when he clears the end of her pathway. One of the guys he’s with sticks his head out the car window.

“Any luck?” he asks.

“He’s not here,” Damian snaps, “The girl said he’s selling over at Beanfield. There’s only one way in or out by car. The car’s not here so he must be in it. You can wait near the exit and follow him if he gets by me.”

“Good plan,” the leader of the hired help says. He frowns up at his temporary employer. “What’s this Emmet guy look like anyway?”

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“Average height,” Damian says, “Kind of skinny, Turkish. Got a bit of a mouth on him but not too bad. Drives a nice silver Audi.”

“Cool,” the other guy says with a nod, “I’ll be on the lookout.”

They sit in the car and watch Damian return to his. One of the guys in the back leans forward and mutters in to the driver’s ear.

“Isn’t that the same guy Chris has got us looking for?” he asks.

“Sounds like it.” The driver admits. “And what’s more likely? Two guys with the same name who look the same or it’s the same guy.”

“Well our job just got a whole load easier,” another guy says. They all laugh. “Might actually finish early for a change this time.”

They all laugh harder as they follow Damian towards Beanfield Estate.



Chapter 14

Emmet counts the money in his hand when he climbs in to the car. All seven boxes are gone and according to his counting, if it's accurate which it usually is, then he's now got £1,400 in hard cash. He smiles to himself, the satisfaction of a job done well, and done legally at that, warming him from the inside out. It wasn't as hard as he'd thought to sell those people the boxes. Once they'd seen them, even those who had been more reluctant had happily handed over the money without reservation.

He's encouraged them all to spread the word and tell their friends about the boxes if they like them too. He's always happy to get more clients and the customers that he's just finished serving might know people who like television but don't do drugs so Emmet's never met them. He sighs, glances in the backseat and smiles widely when he sees it empty. £1,400 in one afternoon. Who knew it could be so easy.

He starts the car, the sounds of one of his CDs filling the small space. The words don't fade away like they do sometimes as he drives along. They are all as clear as day while he listens to them and he can completely agree with everything that is being said on the tape. He's following a plan, keeping his goal in mind as he keeps going and it's serving him well.

His attention is grabbed though while he drives off the estate. He passes a car and for a moment he's sure that it's Damian. He can't deal with the guy right now, he's in no mood and it's all Terry's fault anyway. Emmet has had enough of clearing up Terry's messes. He glances in the rear view mirror and he's sure that it is Damian's car. He pushes down harder on the accelerator. It's going to be a while before Damian can turn around safely, if he even saw Emmet at all that is.

Emmet isn't taking any chances though. He can't go straight home; Damian will just follow him there. He needs to go somewhere else, somewhere to wait for Damian to lose interest and go somewhere else. It's annoying that Damian's decided to look for him, Emmet thinks to himself as he keeps driving, but it's going to be easier to avoid him on this side of Baslow, not the other one where the flat is. At least here there are plenty of places where he can sit and wait.

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He sees a turn off for an industrial estate. It's perfect. This time of night no one will be there. He can pull in, wait and head home in a while. He takes the turn and heads slowly in to the industrial estate. He's almost convinced that he saw the flash of headlights behind him but that's impossible. Damian was alone and he got left far behind when Emmet sped up. Emmet shrugs and carries on in to the car park.

He stops his car and turns off the engine with a heavy sigh. That was a close one. He relaxes, listening to words on the CD again and really taking them in. It's soothing and encouraging. He loses himself in the words and almost forgets everything.

The screech of tires and brakes breaks him out of the trance that he was falling in to. Another car appears, racing through the car park and ignoring all of the signs and road markings. It screeches to a halt right in front of him. The bumper of the other car is pressed up against the bumper of his own. He scrambles for the keys, trying to turn them in the engine so he can get away. This doesn't look good at all. All he does is knock the keys out and he scrambles around on the floor for them, eyes locked on the car in front of him while he does.

Another car quickly appears behind the other one. It's driving slower and as it passes the window of Emmet's car, he looks inside and sees Damian. Damian pulls up behind Emmet's car, almost completely pressed up against the back bumper. Emmet sighs, sits up straight and relaxes back, trying to be casual. One sniff of fear and Damian's going to be all over him. He watches as Damian gets out and heads towards his car. A look ahead shows a bunch of massive guys, practically walking tanks, climbing out of the first car to surround him. Damian stops in front of the driver's side window and swirls his finger around.

Emmet sighs and rolls the window down. He leans out and attempts a cocky grin that comes out more like a grimace.

"All right Damian?" he says.

"Not really," Damian snaps. His arms are crossed over his chest and from this angle he looks freakishly tall. "Get out the car, I want to have a chat to you."

Emmet knows that it's a bad idea. He glances at the lads that Damian's brought with him. A couple of them crack their knuckles. One of them looks at him



and smirks. They're itching for a fight and they don't care who they beat the crap out of. They'd easily drag him out of the car if they wanted to. He sighs and climbs out the car, leaning on the door once he's shut it behind him.

"So what's the problem?" Emmet asks. "I was wondering what you were doing this side of down?"

"Oh you know what I'm doing here," Damian says. "Why else would you drive off like that? Trying to run away before I can catch up with you?"

"No," Emmet says with a shrug. "You were driving kind of quick though, thought you were going somewhere else in a hurry. You ok? You look kind of pissed."

"Oh you have no idea," Damian hisses. "You really have no idea."

"I think I might," Emmet says. He has to fight the urge to wipe his face clean of spit that Damian sprayed all over him. "I did hear you were pissed at Terry though, I thought I'd wait here to chat to you. Didn't want anyone sticking their nose in after all."

"Oh I'm pissed alright," Damian snarls, getting up in Emmet's face. "But not just at Terry. You're the one who sorted the deal out. You're the one who tried to screw me. Now you're trying to throw your little mate under the bus and let him take the fall."

"It was Terry's fault!" Emmet shouts back. "Besides! You said he was cool to come and sell to you."

Damian's eyes narrow and Emmet glances at his hands. They're clenching and unclenching, like Damian's getting ready to punch something. Probably Emmet.

"Doesn't matter," Emmet says quickly. "Anyway, I spoke to Terry. The dud's are all on him, I checked mine and they were all good. Besides, he's the one who had all the money you paid. I never saw a penny of it. He's still got it."

"I don't give a fuck," Damian snarls.

"Well you should," Emmet snaps back. "I spoke to Terry Damian, I didn't know he was going to sell his pills as well but either way all the money you gave him? Half of that was supposed to come to me but it never did. He said he was going

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to sort it out with you. I told him to contact you to sort it out. So why have you got a problem with me?”

“50% dud,” Damian says quietly, suddenly too still, too calm. “Almost 50% of those pills that you and your mate sold me are dud.”

“Not my half they weren’t,” Emmet says firmly. “I checked every single one, they were all the same. Not one was a dud. It must have come from Terry’s lot.”

“I don’t give a fuck whose they came from,” Damian snaps. He grabs Emmet by the front of his jacket and hauls him away from the car. “I don’t give a fuck what you think. You and Terry are partners, business partners. What one of you earns, the other one earns. What one of you owes, the other owes. It’s all fair and equal, right? Isn’t that how you two do things? So I want my £700 back, now!”

“Terry has it,” Emmet gasps out, struggling to breath.

His heart is racing and his bladder is tingling like he needs to take a piss. He really hopes he can hold it in. The last thing he needs is to piss all over the grand plus that he’s got in his pocket. And that realisation makes him want to get rid of Damian very, very quickly.

“Again...” Damian says. “I don’t give a fuck. One of you is going to give me my money back and seeing as you’re the one right in front of me, you’re the one who’s going to pay me.”

“I don’t have it.” Emmet says, “Terry had the £700, he was supposed to give me £350 but screwed me over as well.”

“Don’t. Give. A. Fuck.” Damian says slowly. He shoves Emmet away, sending him bashing against the side of his car. Emmet scrambles to keep his balance but manages it. “Besides, I know you’ve got money on you. I stopped by your place, had a little chat with the missus. Very fit girl, practically begged me to let her suck my dick.” He smirks as Emmet growls at him. “Anyway... she told me something interesting. That you were up on the estate. Selling. And if she’s right, which I think she is, then you’re going to have money on you.”

“I wasn’t selling that sort of stuff,” Emmet says. “She doesn’t know what I was doing.”

“Something about television boxes?” Damian asks, cutting Emmet off.

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He smirks when Emmet stops talking and his jaw goes up and down without making a sound. He's got the younger guy, caught him good and proper and there's no way that he can talk his way out of this one. He glances at the blokes that he's brought with him and nods his head toward Emmet.

Emmet stumbles back from the guys as they walk towards him. Their hands are reaching out to him and he steps back again and again trying to avoid their grasp. He bumps against the car though and realises he's trapped himself. He looks around quickly, trying to find a way to get out. He's surrounded.

Big meaty hands grab him, pulling at his arms. There's a moment of weightlessness as he's tossed up in the air, a sick lurch as he starts to go down again and the pain of the ground slamming in to him as he hits it. He groans and tries to roll over but the guys are too quick. One of them grabs his arms, pins them to the tarmac. The other grabs his legs and pins those down as well, crushing the bones against the cold ground and making him cry out in pain. He twists and turns in place, trying to break free but those meaty hands are too strong.

Another set of hands runs over his entire body. They slide inside his clothes, searching each and every opening. He gives a surprised yelp as they slide up his leg and shove against his dick. They all laugh at him. He gives another yelp when the hands dive in to the pockets of his jeans and grab him through the pocket lining. He can see Damian laughing his head off over the guy's shoulder, watching it all with a kind of sick enjoyment.

"Aha!" the guy searching his body says. He holds up the wad of cash. "Found it."

The guys laugh and let him go. The other guy stands and hands the money over to Damian who counts through it. His eyes widen as he keeps flicking through the notes. Emmet tries to get to his feet but one of the guys puts a foot on his shoulder and shoves him back down.

"Tut, tut, tut Emmet," Damian says, walking over and crouching in front of him. He shakes his head in mockery. "Why on earth did you say you haven't got my £700 when we both know now that you had way more than that?"

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Emmet doesn't say anything. He looks at the ground, blinking his eyes fast which are burning hot with anger and shame.

"What am I going to do with you?" Damian says. He gets to his feet and walks away. "First you sell me shit. Then you lie and say you've not got the money to pay me back. Do you know what that makes you?"

Emmet doesn't say anything still. He just stares sullenly at Damian, not even trying to get up any more. He knows where this is going. Damian whirls around.

"It makes you scum." He snarls. His face is distorted, like a vicious animal. "And I hate scum. I think you need to be taught a lesson. Boys... sort him out."

Emmet doesn't have time to blink. Suddenly there's legs all around him, swinging feet and flying fist. His entire body is in pain, swarms of blows landing everywhere. He tries to curl up, tries to crawl away. A boot to the stomach lifts him off the ground, sends him falling on to his side. A boot in the elbow hits his arms away from his head and sends it falling to the earth, leaving his face unprotected. They kick him and punch him everywhere. In the stomach, on the back, on the arms, on the legs. They stamp on his feet and hands, tear at his clothes and hair. They slap him around the face and Emmet decides that's the worst. It doesn't hurt as much but it's worse. Slapping is what girls do; it's what girls do to each other because they don't think the other girl can take it. It's the easy way of hurting someone, the lazy way.

Then the boots and fists are gone. He's left lying on the ground gasping for breath and barely able to move. His entire body aches, he can feel blood running down his face and other parts of his body. His hands sting where they scraped on the ground, taking off the top layer of skin.

"Mind if I call my boss?" one of the big guys asks Damian. "He's looking for this guy too."

"Not a problem," Damian says, waving a hand as he counts through the money again.

They stand around in silence while Emmet lies on the ground and one guy dials on the phone. Emmet spits blood on to the ground and wiggles one of his teeth with his tongue. It's come loose from the beating. The phone appears beside him.

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“I’ve been looking for you,” a voice says over the loudspeaker.

It sends a jolt of shock running through Emmet, making him jump. He groans as more pain runs through him at the sudden movement.

“Chris?” he groans out.

“Ah Emmet,” Chris says smugly. “Pleasure to talk to you again. Do me a favour will you? Tell your good friend Terry that I’m looking for him will you? There’s a good chap. Knowing my boys I’d say you and me are even. But I still want to talk to Terry. So pass on that message.”

The phone is taken away and put back in to a pocket. Emmet lays on the ground and watches Damian pocket the whole £1,400. He tries to argue but he’s too weak and defeated. He tries to reach up and grab the money but he’s in too much pain. His hand just falls back to the ground.

“Ah, ah, ah,” Damian scolds. “Fair’s fair. You owed me £700 and I took it. The extra £700 is a debt collection fee. After all ...” he stops and holds his hands out at the guys he’s brought with him. “Muscle doesn’t come for free does it Emmet?”

They all laugh.

“Come along boys,” Damian says, turning and walking away. “Let’s leave him to think about what he’s done. I’ll get you all a drink for your hard work.”

Emmet watches them walk away and climb in to their cars. He listens as the engines start up, the wheels crunch on the loose tarmac and the cars peel away and drive out of the car park. Damian narrowly misses running over one of Emmet’s legs as he drives past.

Emmet is left alone, no money and only pain to show for all the trouble that he’s gone through. He doesn’t know how he’s going to sort this all out now. That £1,400 was his only chance. And Sam’s jewellery is at stake too. He groans and lays there for a while longer, letting the pain wash over him.



Chapter 15

Emmet doesn't know how he manages to drive home. One of his eyes is already swelling and he can barely see out of it. His wrists are so painful, sending jolts of hot pain through his body every time he shifts gears, move the wheels or flicks the indicators. He can't really feel his feet either and there are several times when he wants to throw up from the pain in his stomach and ribs. He gets home though and staggers through the door. Sam is waiting in the kitchen and rushes to him, catching him as his strength finally begins to give out.

"Oh my god, Em!" she cries as she drags him to a chair. "What happened to you?"

"I got beaten up," he says. It's obvious what happened, why does he even need to tell her? "Can you help me get my shirt off?"

He winces and groans as she helps taking his top off and shuffles enough so that she can get the rest of his clothes off, stripping him down to his boxers. She rushes to get ice and kitchen roll and starts to tend to his injuries.

"Who did this to you?" she asks as she hands him an ice pack wrapped in a tea towel for his eye.

"Just a bunch of kids," he says quickly, not wanting to tell her who it really was. He doesn't want her to know that he was jumped for people he's pissed off. She already moans at him enough for dealing in the first place. "They took everything I made though, all £1,400 of the money."

"Shit," she says, sitting back on the floor. "That was the security money. My jewellery."

"I know babe," he says softly. "I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have stayed out so long."

"You're sorry?" she cries, "You're fucking sorry?! That stuff is worth a fortune and you gave it to some dodgy bloke you barely know. Do you even know what you gave him? One of them was my grandma's necklace, she gave it to me before she died. We're never getting it back."

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“We will!” Emmet insists, “I’ll make sure that we get it back, I promise. I just need a little more time.”

“You always need a little more time,” she snarls. “When will you pack it in and grow up? You’re always coming up with these stupid ideas to make money and you never follow through with them. You just end up fucking things up and having nothing to show for it.”

“I got the money didn’t I?” Emmet snaps, “I managed to sell all of those boxes and I bet people are going to want more. I just lost it all when I got jumped. That’s not my fault.”

“You shouldn’t have even been there at that time of night,” Sam says, “What were you thinking? You know how rough that area is and you just wander around with a wad of cash in your pocket like no one can touch you.”

“Well I learnt my lesson now haven’t I?” Emmet snarls, “I know not to do it again. But I also know that I can make money with those boxes and that I can go legit. We’ll be sorted for ages once I get this stuff going properly.”

“Bullshit!” Sam shouts. “You’ve fucked up again, lost my jewellery and you’re not going to be able to get any more boxes because Johnny won’t take your crap.”

“Give it a rest,” Emmet groans, “Don’t you ever stop talking?!”

Sam stares at him, her mouth flaps open and closed. He’s never spoken to her like that. Ever. He feels a sting of regret and guilt in his stomach as soon as the words leave his mouth and he sees the wounded look on her face. It’s gone within seconds though when she glares at him and storms from the room. He sighs heavily and continues mopping up his injuries from where she stopped.

His phone rings, breaking the silence in the kitchen. Emmet hobbles over but whoever was calling has stopped, tired of waiting for him to pick up. He takes the phone back to the table and returns to cleaning himself up. He glances at the screen though and sees that it’s Johnny Boy. He’s called seven or eight times. Emmet thinks he knows what he wants. He wonders how he didn’t hear the calls or feel the phone vibrating in his pocket. Then again he was in a lot of pain and wasn’t really paying much attention to anyone else.

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When the phone rings again he answers it this time.

“Hey,” he says quickly, “This is a really bad time mate.”

“Don’t mate me,” Johnny snaps. “You got my money for the boxes? And for the 21 you want in your next order?”

“I’ll have it,” Emmet says quickly, not wanting to tell the guy the truth. The last thing he wants is Johnny thinking that he’s playing him and is full of shit, just like Johnny said. “I’ll call you when I’m ready, just need to sort out some stuff in my personal life first, usual bullshit’s come up.”

“Don’t leave me waiting too long,” Johnny warns. “I wait too long and I sell the jewellery, don’t care how important it is to you.”

The phone goes dead and Emmet puts it on the table with a sigh.

“Johnny Boy again?” Sam says from behind him, making him jump in surprise, “I notice you didn’t tell him you got robbed.”

“I tell him that and I lose your jewellery,” Emmet says tonelessly, “Did you want that to happen?”

“It wouldn’t even be happening if you hadn’t given it to him,” Sam says quickly. “You just chucked it at him like it was yours to give and didn’t even care. Now you’re lying to him, or you’re lying to him and fucking up everything, just like usual.”

Emmet gets dressed while Sam continues to moan at him, wincing as the movement pulls out his injuries. He goes to the door and lets himself out. He smirks a little when he hears Sam’s indignant shriek. He’s had enough of her shouting at him, insulting him all of the time. It feels more and more lately like the only time that she actually talks to him is to moan at him and to pick fault in everything that he does. There’s no support, no nothing from her. She wasn’t even worried that he’d been beaten up once she knew that he’d had the money taken. She’d been completely focused on herself. Emmet grumbles in the back of his throat and steps away from the door.

“Penny for your thoughts?” a voice says from behind him.



Chapter 16

Emmet looks up. It's Roger, the guy who lives next door. He's an older guy, easily in his seventies, but he looks and acts a lot younger. Emmet smiles tiredly.

"Just another little fight with the missus," he says, "You know how it goes."

"Thankfully I don't," Roger says, looking Emmet up and down, "And if that's a little fight I'd hate to see what she looks like. Or what you call a big fight."

"Oh this," Emmet says with a pained grin. "This is something else entirely. It's what caused the fight actually."

"Young man," Roger says. "You look like a man with the weight of the world on your shoulders and a troubled mind. Why don't you come in and share a bottle of brandy? I've found just talking about it can make all of the difference sometimes."

Emmet looks at the old man then up and down the corridor. The flat is close by. He'll still be away from Sam but he'll be close enough to come running if anyone else tries to hassle the flat. He's always wanted to hear what Roger has to say about his life. There isn't really anything else that he wants to do either, Emmet realises, he just wants to be away from Sam. He shrugs and nods.

"Yeah," he says. "Yeah, why not? Not got anywhere else to go anyway,"

"Good lad," Roger says happily.

He steps to one side and leads Emmet inside. The flat is the exact mirror of Emmet's but decorated in a completely different way. Everything is small and cosy, the space is clearly designed for just one. Pictures and photographs in frames line the walls. Roger leads him in to the kitchen and searches for the brandy.

"So Emmet," Roger says, "What's bothering you?"

"Nothing," Emmet says quickly. Roger just looks at him. He sighs. "Everything. I'm trying to make some money, start a business all of my very own. I managed to make a bunch of money tonight but then I got jumped and it got stolen. Now all I've got to show for a night's work is a bunch of bruises and a black eye."

"Oh dear oh dear," Roger says, pouring them a shot of the brandy. Emmet starts to sip it slowly. "I know that feeling, all too well. Back in my day you were

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even more likely to get the crap beat out of you if you go on someone else's turf. I think you got off lightly."

"Doesn't feel that way," Emmet says as he sips the brandy. He enjoys the slow warm burn of it as it goes down his throat. "I never even had to deal with this crap when I was just dealing. I try and go legit and the crap gets beaten out of me."

"Emmet you remind me of me," Roger says. He chuckles, "I know it's hard to believe now but once upon a time I was a dealer too. In fact, I was a proper gangster. Imported heroin for most of the west coast of England."

"What happened?" Emmet asks, a little surprised by the revelation. "Why did you stop?"

"I had a wake-up call," Roger says. "A rude one at that. I got caught doing the importing. I ended up doing 20 years in prison. I had a lot of time to think in there, more than I'd ever had before. That was when I realised that I needed to get out of the dealing gig. I'd lost everything, hit rock bottom and there was nowhere else to go. I was wondering what would life have been like if I'd not become a gangster? Who would I be?"

"And?" Emmet asks, on the edge of his seat. "Who would you have been?"

"I'd still be me I reckon," Roger says with a shrug. "I just started to think about what I'd do once I got out after that. I didn't want to live my life the way I had been doing, going from day to day. I didn't want to live life the way I was. I didn't want to spend each day worrying about whether I'd be arrested again, injured or even killed. It just wasn't right for me to do that anymore."

"So what did you do?" Emmet asks.

"Nothing," Roger says with a sly grin. "I decided to do absolutely nothing. And I don't mean that I didn't change. I decided to have no business, no work, nothing like that. I wanted to live my life without the worry and the fear and the stress. And that's exactly what I did, what I'm still doing. I was sat there, in that cell, trying to work out where it had all gone wrong, what I was doing wrong and I decided that it was everything. So when I got out I stopped importing, stopped dealing. I moved away, cut everyone off and left it behind. I followed my plan. And do you know what?"

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“What?” Emmet asks with a smile.

“I couldn’t be happier,” Roger says with a chuckle. “I wake up every morning with a smile on my face. Do whatever I want to do with my day and then I go to bed each night happy and content because I’ve done what I wanted to do. I sleep like a baby my boy. And all because I made a plan of nothing and I stick to it. Hell, getting the paper and doing the crossword is an accomplishment for me.”

“Oh,” Emmet says.

He sits there, drinking his brandy and listening to Roger rambling on about his life now compared to then. The guy has a plan, each and every day he sticks to the plan and he’s living the life that he wanted. Just like the Lettings Office, just like the CD said. Emmet settles back to listen to more stories and drink more brandy.

When Emmet finally lets himself back in to the flat, Sam is still in the bedroom, sulking or possibly even asleep. He doesn’t care. He’s got an idea and he knows that he needs to make a better plan. His last one was too vague after all, just a few notes. He needs a better one, a more detailed one that he can use as a step by step. He glances at the sofa, considers settling down to sleep there for a few hours. But the thoughts are racing through his brain, he’s all fired up and ready to get shaping his plan even though he doesn’t know what it is yet. So instead he gets a piece of paper and sits at the kitchen table.

He stares at the paper, trying to come up with something. He needs the money he owes, all £1,400 that he lost so that he can pay Johnny Boy back. But he wants to make money too, he doesn’t want to end up out of pocket. He needs to make sure that he doesn’t lose too much money at once and that he doesn’t get boxes that he can’t sell. Each box that he gets from Johnny Boy needs to be already headed to someone else, the money needs to be assured. Just like that it all comes together. He needs to set up a deposit system, to make sure that he’s selling boxes that will be paid for, that he’s getting the right number of boxes.

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He starts scribbling on the paper, trying to come up with the best deposit amount to set right now so he can raise the £1,400. He decides on £50 deposits. He needs to know how many customers he should be selling to. It's a simple enough sum, it's one he knows he needs to work out instantly. After all, he has the amount he wants to get, the deposit amount decided on. He divides the one by the other. His figures tell him that he needs to pre-sell to 28 customers before he gets the boxes. He needs 28 people to hand over the £50 deposit before he goes any further. Finally, he's actually getting somewhere. Even if time is running out.



Chapter 17

He sleeps for 12 hours. Even Sam banging around the house doesn't wake him. When he finally does wake up though he's in agony, every single one of his muscles has seized up and stiffened. His ankle has swollen and his eye has gone down. His jaw still aches a little and his wrists twinge. But he feels better when he finally gets up and takes a shower, more energised and whole than he has in ages. He sees the sheet of paper on the kitchen table as he goes to make a cup of tea and some breakfast.

"You look like shit," Sam says.

"I know," he says mindlessly, his eyes running over the figures and his mind running through them one more time to make sure they're right.

"I noticed more notes and plans of yours," Sam continues, "Trying to lose even more money? Maybe this time you'll even get killed."

Emmet glares at her but says nothing. He doesn't care really. She can say what she likes but he's doing something, he's got a system and he can make it work. She grumbles at his lack of response and storms out of the house, probably heading to a friends or something to bitch about him there.

Emmet settles on the sofa with his phone and a bunch of paper.

12 days later Emmet's pre-sold the 28 boxes that he needs. It took a lot of phone calls to get them. He visited each potential customer with his own box, plugged it in and showed them. He let them fiddle with it themselves. Each of the people that he visited handed over the £50 there and then, excited about the prospect of having their own box. Some even called him a few days later wanting a box or two for friends who are interested once they've explained what they are. Some, when he's there, actually mention holding parties and having people around to watch their new television channels. He knows that could lead to other people wanting the boxes for

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themselves. He knows that he needs the business cards now. It's another thing that he needs to add to his plan.

Emmet sits in his house, counting through the money that he's collected. It's enough. He calls Johnny.

"I've got your money," he says.

"I'll see you in five minutes then," Johnny says happily.

"Wait!" Emmet cries before he can stop himself.

"What?" Johnny asks harshly.

"I want another 29 boxes," he says, doing the math in his head. "Another 29 boxes... on tick."

"If you've got the cash you owe me then yeah, no problem." Johnny says, "Otherwise it's no deal."

"I've got your cash," Emmet says confidently, "I've got your cash, no worries."

"Fine," Johnny says. "I'll be there soon, with your boxes. You better be ready."

The knock on the door really is only a few minutes later, Emmet barely has time to gather together the money. Johnny Boy greets him with a stony face when the door is opened but he soon smiles when Emmet hands over the £1,400 he is owed.

"Nice," Johnny Boy says, counting through, "Very nice. Well, follow me."

Emmet obediently follows Johnny Boy out to the car and stands near the boot. Slowly it rises and reveals the 50 boxes, all waiting to go to new homes.

"That's the 21 you asked for this time and the 29 you wanted on tick." Johnny Boy says. "Let's get these inside."

"Actually let's get them in my car," Emmet says quickly. He's got to go and deliver these straight away once Johnny is gone. "It's just here."

They load up his car, shoving box after box in to the boot and back seat. They stand back, wiping their hands and stretching.

"Remember," Johnny says, turning to Emmet, "I want £1,450 for those in the next 2 days or you're not getting any more from me on credit."

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“No worries there,” Emmet says confidently. “I know exactly where they’re going to.”

He hesitates, looking at Johnny. Johnny can tell he wants something.

“Oh for the love of god!” he cries, “What?!”

“Can I... “ Emmet starts to say. He hesitates. “Can I have my jewellery back? My girlfriend’s really pissed at me for giving it to me.”

“No way mate.” Johnny says. “You wanted another 29 boxes on tick, I needed security. You know how it is.”

“But she’s really, really pissed off at me,” Emmet says. “You know I’m good for the money now, just give me back the jewellery.”

“No way,” Johnny says with a firm shake of his head. “This is business and I don’t hand over anything this valuable without having something to make sure I don’t end up out of pocket. No matter how good you are for the money I don’t give anything away for free.”

Emmet goes to argue again but one look at Johnny Boy’s face and he knows that the guy is serious. He won’t be budging on this point.

“Ok, fine,” he says with a heavy sigh.

“Remember though!” Johnny says as he gets in to his now empty car. “You’ve got two days to get me that £1,450 or I keep the jewellery. Just like we were agreed.”

Emmet nods but doesn’t say anything. There’s nothing to say. He needs the money anyway or he won’t get the shop. He’s going to sell them regardless of whether he needed the money to get the jewellery back. He watches the car drive off.



Chapter 18

The news of the boxes has spread. People are wanting to buy them after seeing them at a friend's house. They don't even balk at the price. Emmet's phone keeps ringing at all hours.

"Seriously!" Sam screeches one night when the phone rings at one in the morning. "Don't they ever stop?! It's not like you're going to run out."

"They think I will," Emmet says after he's answered the call and taken the details. "It's not that bad."

"Yes it fucking is," Sam mutters. She turns the light on and looks at him. "I'm getting sick and tired of this shit Emmet. All you're doing is selling these boxes."

"You say that like it's a bad thing," Emmet says. "You were bitching the other day that I never follow through my ideas, that I just fuck them up. Well guess what? This time it's actually working and I'm going legit."

"Are you calling me a bitch?" Sam shrieks. "I don't know how you dare."

"I didn't say you were a bitch," Emmet says with a heavy sigh. "I said you were bitching. Moaning. Having a go. Don't be so touchy."

"Well if I'm touchy it's your fault," she says snottily. "I'm barely getting any sleep with all of those phone calls."

"Well you know where the sofa is," Emmet says, rolling over and going to sleep, "If you want to sleep go there. I'm going to keep getting these calls and I'm going to keep taking them. I'm making money, real actual money that doesn't come from selling drugs. I'm doing what you always wanted me to do."

"Bastard," Sam snarls.

Emmet smirks but doesn't say anything. She sits there in silence for a while, he can tell that she's fuming without saying a word. He doesn't say anything though; he lets himself drift off to sleep. When she sighs heavily, irritation obvious and throws herself back in to bed he smirks wider.

"Don't forget the light dear." He says.

She turns it off with a loud slam. He snuggles down deeper in to the covers.

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The original 21 boxes are sold. Everyone wants them. Emmet has dropped them all off to their new owners and collected the cash. He always goes home between drop offs, even if they're close together. He puts the money away somewhere safe and goes back out again. There's no way that he's leaving that money on himself. Damian and his thugs might come back. Or Chris with the same thugs. He's not giving them the satisfaction of taking more money off him again. Not even Sam knows where the money is hidden. She keeps dropping hints of course, asking when they're going to celebrate with a posh meal or something but he brushes the questions off and tells her to wait. She ends up shouting at him again when he says those things.

With each of the boxes that he drops off Emmet leaves a small piece of card with his number on for the customers to pass on to someone else. It's how he's managing to sell the other boxes. He drops off a box and goes to collect a deposit from someone else. It keeps going like that for the next two days. Box dropped off, money collected, deposit collected, box dropped off. Soon he has more than enough for everything, the money he owes Johnny and the shop rent. He calls Johnny to come and collect.

"You seriously got it all?" he asks in surprise over the phone, "The entire £1,450?"

"Yup," Emmet says proudly. "I told you that I was good for it didn't I?"

"Well... yeah..." Johnny says. "I just wasn't expecting you to sell them this quickly."

"What can I say?" Emmet says. "I'm just that good."

"Cool," Johnny says. "You want to order anymore?"

Emmet thinks for a moment.

"Nah," he finds himself says. "It's not my thing. Just come and get your money and bring the jewellery."

"Seriously?" Johnny asks, "You don't want any more? You're selling them so well. I can cut you a deal."

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“Nah mate,” Emmet says. “I’ve got plans of my own. Just come get your money.”

“Alright, alright,” Johnny says with a laugh, “I’ll be there.”

When Johnny pulls up he’s grinning. He shakes his head and shakes Emmet’s hand.

“Can’t believe you sold all 50 in 2 days,” he says, following Emmet in to the house. “Well... here’s the jewellery.”

He puts the jewellery on to the kitchen table and looks at Emmet sternly, all trace of amusement gone.

“Now where’s my money?” he asks.

“Right here,” Emmet says, smiling.

He waves the notes around and then puts them in to Johnny’s outstretched hand. Johnny quickly counts through them and checks that they’re all real.

“Nice doing business with you,” he says once he’s done. “Now, are you sure I can’t hook you up with anymore?”

“No, I’m good,” Emmet says. “But I can tell you you’re undercharging for those things. I was selling them at £200 and people didn’t care. They still paid up.”

“£200 ay?” Johnny says in surprise. He rubs his chin, “I didn’t think they’d pay that much for them.”

“You just got to know your market.” Emmet says with a shrug and a smile. “I’ll put you in touch with a couple of people who wanted a box but I’d sold them all. You can see how that goes.”

“Thanks!” Johnny cries out. He reaches out and shakes Emmet’s hand. “Good luck mate. Good luck. If you ever need anything or want to sell some more let me know.”

“Will do,” Emmet says.

He sees Johnny out and collapses on to the sofa with a happy sigh. He’s done it. He’s really done it. Or at least he almost has. He just needs to get the shop now. It’s almost 5 and he needs to get to AHJ Lettings.

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He wants to make a good impression this time though so he digs out the nicest suit he owns and puts it on. He goes to the door but when he opens it there's someone already there.

“Terry?!” Emmet cries. “Where the fuck’ve you been?”



Chapter 19

Terry is stood on the doorstep with a shit eating grin on his face, a few faded bruises on his jaw and the faint hint of booze coming off him.

“You alright mate?” he says happily. He shoves past Emmet, in to the flat and glances at his friend’s outfit. “Jeez, who died?”

“No one,” Emmet says, shutting the door and following his friend. “Where the hell have you been? I’ve not heard from you since Damian beat the crap out of me.”

“Yeah, I heard about that,” Terry says with a wince, “Seriously, sorry about all that mate. I was out of town and only just managed to get back.”

“Doing what?!” Emmet cries. “Actually no, I don’t care. Where’s my £350?”

“I’ve got it, I’ve got it,” Terry says. “But listen. I’ve got this ace deal. We can multiply whatever we put in to it by like 100%.”

“What deal...?” Emmet asks, curious and wary at the same time. Something doesn’t feel right here.

“It’s brilliant, I’m telling you!” Terry says. “It’s this cheap source of quality pills. And I mean proper quality. The guy selling them doesn’t even know the value of them, proper dumb shit. He only wants 10p a pill. They’re easily worth a tenner. We can sell them for that much and make a killing.”

Emmet raises an eyebrow, not really believing what Terry is saying.

“Seriously!” Terry says, nodding his head. “They’re proper pukka! The real deal. Best shit I ever tried.”

“Aah...” Emmet says, it all clicking together. “So that’s where you’ve been for the last fortnight. Off your face on some cheap shit.”

“No!” Terry shouts. “Well... yeah. But it’s not cheap shit. Mate! These are brilliant. Best high I’ve ever had.”

“Are you still high now?” Emmet asks carefully.

“Maybe a little,” Terry admits with a shrug, “But it’s good. We need to get on this while we can. Who knows when someone else is gonna find out about this and snap them up.”

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“Ok...” Emmet says. “Let’s say I’m considering this. Exactly how many does this guy have?”

“A whole fucking oil drum full of them!” Terry cries out, “Easily 100,000. We wouldn’t even need to buy that many and if we bought them all we’d be rolling in it for months.”

Emmet turns away from Terry whose eyes are shining and unfocused. The stupid smile hasn’t gone from his face either. He’s still out of it. But the story seems real. If it is then Emmet could put all the money he’s made in to buying 75,000 of the pills. He could sell them on and make £750,000. He’s be loaded, able to get any shop, anywhere. Hell he wouldn’t even need to do anything for ages. He’s be sorted for at least six months if not more. He glances at the clock. It’s 4:55pm. AHJ Lettings closes at 5pm. The shop could slip through his fingers.

He thinks. He could follow his original plan, get the shop, sell televisions and other electrical stuff. He could slave away like Turguy did for the next ten years and build up an empire like Turguy. Or he could deviate, put all the money in to the drugs and sell them all for a lot of money. It’s tempting. Quick money for not much input. He’d sell the pills and go back to his old life.

On the other hand, Emmet really hates his old life. True, selling the boxes hasn’t been that much different, he’s still been driving around in dodgy areas and selling something not quite legal. But he’s not been at risk of getting arrested, knifed or beaten up by another dealer. He gets left alone. No one chases him and tries to beat the crap out of him because of what he’s carrying.

And then there’s the plan. He’s done so much hard work to stick to it, slaved away at it. It’s actually come through as well, for a change. He’s got a dozen ideas, unfinished plans in the making that can only happen once he gets the shop. He has the first chance he’s ever had to actually see something all the way through. He’ll be able to make something of himself that will actually make his family proud, even if it is hard work.

“Come on mate,” Terry says from his seat on the sofa. He’s grinding his teeth like crazy and swallowing like he’s got something stuck in his throat. “It’s not that hard. It’s easy money! When have you ever said no to easier money?”

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Emmet doesn't say a word.

“Think about it,” Terry goes on. “We buy them all, keep them somewhere safe. We can pass them on to other dealers too, become proper distributors and raise the price so we make good profits. Don't you always say we need to raise the profits. I'm thinking big here!”

Emmet watches the second hand tick closer and closer to 5pm. The minute hand shifts. It's just gone 5pm.

He wants the shop! He needs the shop. It's almost out of his fingers but there might still be time. Perhaps Terry's deal is a good one, perhaps it will pay out. Emmet doesn't care though. For all he knows Terry's making up some new bullshit to cover the fact that he's not actually got Emmet's £350. Perhaps he does have it and wants to do another partnership. Perhaps he feels bad for leaving Emmet to deal with Damian all by himself.

Emmet doesn't care anymore. He doesn't give a shit about any of it. He's had it with people who cross him, who only want him when it's good for them and just bitch at him otherwise. It's all he ever deals with in the drugs business, the only kind of people that seem to surround him. He wants to do something new, start a new era for himself. He's going to follow through for once, complete a plan and go legit, just like he said to Turguy and to Roger.

He looks at the clock. It's 5:05pm.

He scrambles for his phone, ignoring Terry's comments and shoving him out of the way. He dials AHJ Lettings and sighs in relief when it gets picked up. His eyes widen when he realises that it's RJ answering.

“Hello?” RJ says.

“RJ, it's Emmet,” he says quickly. He's met by silence, “I was interested in 212 Post Office Walk?”

“Oh right,” RJ says, “Yeah I remember. Everyone's gone home, it's past 5.”

“I know, I know,” Emmet says quickly, stumbling over his words. “I've got the money. I want to take the place.”

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“I’m sorry buddy,” RJ says slowly. He sounds genuinely sympathetic. “It’s too late. I needed cleared funds to have hit my bank by the end of today. The banks are all closed. The property is going to auction tomorrow.”

“But I’ve got the money,” Emmet says quietly.

“It won’t transfer in time,” RJ says. “Seriously, I’m sorry.”

“It’s in cash!” Emmet blurts out. “The money’s in cash.”

“Cash?! All of it?!” RJ asks.

“Yeah,” he says.

“You have £7,500 in cash?” RJ asks slowly, “On you. Right now?”

“Yeah,” Emmet says. He’s starting to smile.

“Nice one buddy!” RJ cries. “I thought you’d be able to do it. I’ll be here until 5:30. I’ll buzz you in.”

Emmet hangs up the phone with a wide smile on his face. He’s actually doing it. He’s actually got the shop he wanted.

“Oh for fucks sake,” Sam snarls, “What’s that shit bag doing here? He better not be taking your money again. You need that to get my jewellery back.”

“Your jewellery is on the kitchen table,” Emmet says. He heads in to the bedroom and starts to pack up his belongings. “I got it back for you today.”

“Thanks baby,” Sam says. She leans against the door frame seductively. “Shall we go out to celebrate with all of that money you’ve made.”

“I can’t,” Emmet says, shoving his things in to a bunch of bags. “I’ve got to go and sign for the shop. The money’s all going in to that.”

“Oh for-! Why?!” Sam cries out. “Why can’t we ever do anything that I want to do? Why can’t we spend the money on things I want? Shove your shop and treat me!”

Emmet looks at her.

“No way mate,” Terry says. “We’re doing a deal aren’t we? We’re going to make a mint on some pills a dumb shit is selling dirt cheap”

Emmet lets the two argue, the sounds of their voices fading in to the background. He smiles to himself and just keeps packing. He shoves past them and stops in the living room. He digs through his pockets and pulls out his keyring. It

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takes a couple of minutes to wrench the house keys off the ring. Sam and Terry stand in silence, staring at him. He drops the keys on to the table, looks at them and smiles.

“Terry,” he says. “The deal’s full of bullshit and so are you. I want that £350 and that’s it. No more deals, no more dealing.”

Terry opens and closes his mouth, looking like a fish.

“Sam...” Emmet says. “Thanks for all of your kind and loving support. I will not miss it.”

He turns away and heads to the doorway. He stops and looks back.

“I’m out.”

THE END