

## **Prologue**

**2016**

Martin Lewis opened his eyes as he heard the letter box go. He groaned and looked at the clock, it was seven. Slowly, he swung his legs round and blinked as he tried to wake up. Heading downstairs, he picked up the letters, he looked through them; bill, bill, Decree Absolute no doubt with the solicitor's bill attached to it. Suddenly, he saw a letter that made him freeze - it was handwritten, slowly, he ripped it open as he headed into the kitchen; he read the letter and then found that he had to sit down. Slowly his thoughts began to drift...

## Chapter One

1998

St Ives looked intimidating with its big turrets and traditional iron gates. Martin Lewis looked up at it and felt a warm feeling; it was as if he had come home. At eighteen, it was his last year and then he could think about attending university.

'Hey Lewis!'

He smiled as he saw his two best friends, Robert and Gregory. 'Hey you two!'

'Have you heard the news?' Gregory asked as they headed inside.

'What news?'

'Mrs Hedging has finally left.'

'About time too, she looked like she was about to drop!'

'Robert!'

'Well it's true!'

Martin shook his head at his friend's uncouthness. 'Go on then brain-box, who do we have instead?'

'A Mrs Knight.'

Martin slammed his locker door shut. 'Right! Well let's not keep her waiting.'  
Suddenly a group of boys rushed past them giggling. 'Hey! *Walk!*' They slowed right down.

'Oh come on old sport, cut them some slack, you remember what it was like.'

'Yes! And you should be setting an example, we *are* prefects!'

'Alright! Alright!'

'Come on, we'll be late for what's her name.'

A few minutes later, they were sitting in the classroom, waiting, Martin felt a slight jolt of apprehension. Suddenly, the door opened.

'Brace yourself.' Gregory muttered.

'Good afternoon class, I'm Mrs Knight and I shall be your teacher and form tutor for the rest of the term.'

Martin stared at her, she was about late forties, tall and thin, she had eyes that seemed to sparkle.

'Martin Lewis?'

He was dimly aware of someone calling his name.

'Martin Lewis?'

He felt Gregory push him from behind. 'Oh, here Miss!' He ignored the giggles.

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'What were you thinking about?' it was half-past five and they were in the prep room.

Martin loosened his tie. 'Nothing - just tired that's all.'

Robert grinned. 'You were thinking of her weren't you?'

'Who?' Martin looked alarmed, was he really that transparent?

'Nancy! I told you, you should ask her out.'

'I told you, I'm not interested!'

'You must have your eye on *someone*!'

Suddenly Robert looked up. 'Hey! You're not..?'

'What? No!'

'Then what's the problem?'

'No problem, I just haven't met the right girl yet.'

'Well let us know when you do so that we can plan your wedding!'

'Ha! Ha! Oh sod off, both of you!'

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'How are you getting on with your class Eloise?'

Mrs Knight looked up and smiled. 'Very well, thank you George.'

The history teacher smiled. 'Good!'

'Yes, that boy, Martin Lewis, he's very bright.'

'Yes, his father has high hopes for him.'

She smiled. 'He seems a rather serious boy though, for his age.'

George laughed. 'I wouldn't complain too much about that if I were you, I mean, too often we're complaining that they're the opposite!'

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'Oh come ON Lewis! It'll be fun!'

'No it won't and no I'm not coming, I don't fancy standing around in the cold watching a ball being kicked around.'

'It might be a laugh!'

'Enjoy yourselves!'

The two boys looked at each other and shook their heads.

Martin sighed and stood up, 'I'll see you off the premises, how's that?' As they passed the classrooms, he suddenly noticed Mrs Knight. 'I'll catch you up' He said to the others and approached her. 'Mrs Knight?'

She looked up suddenly and gave him that winning smile. 'All set for to-morrow?'

'*You're* going?'

'Of course! Get some fresh air.'

He smiled. 'I admire your enthusiasm but I fear it's a lost cause, we haven't won in years.'

'Well let's hope we do this time. '

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That evening, in the common room, Martin glanced up and reflected on the day's

events, he couldn't seem to shake Mrs Knight from his mind, she was unlike anyone he had ever met, yet he knew these feelings were stupid and that there wasn't a hope in hell of her feeling the same way, maybe he *could* do with the fresh air.

Eloise smiled as she looked up from her work, despite her reservations, she had had a great day. Maybe she was settling in better than she thought.

'Lewis? Oi! LEWIS!! Wake up!!'

'What?'

'Bus leaves in two hours!'

'Okay! Okay!'

Robert suddenly turned round. 'You *still* haven't said what made you change your mind.'

Martin gave him a look. 'Let's just go shall we?'

He had been right. It was, indeed, boring! He suddenly saw Mrs Knight and slowly sidled up next to her.

'Enjoying it Miss?'

'Are you? That's the most important thing.'

'Not really.'

She laughed. 'Oh come on, it has to be better than being stuck indoors doing lessons.'

'Marginally I suppose, but then again, so is watching paint dry!'

This was greeted by laughter. 'You're far too cynical for your age.'

'You show me a right way to behave Miss and I'll happily concede!' Another cheer went up and he clapped sarcastically. 'Oh well done! He got the ball in the net - hooray!'

She laughed a little more. 'It won't be long.'

'How do you know?'

'My nephew is a football fanatic, he's forever keeping me up to date, whether I want to hear it or not.'

Martin grinned. 'How old is he? Your nephew?'

'Twelve.'

'Right.'

'I know! I know!'

'I suppose he's going to play for a major team.'

'Well you've got to have-'

'Goals?'

She turned to him and grinned. 'Very amusing. Many a true word spoken in jest though.'

'I know.' He looked around and saw a drinks stand and started to move.

'Whoa, where are you going?'

'To get a drink.'

'Alright then.'

'Would you like one?'

'Um, I'll have a tea if it's possible.' She dug around in her pocket.

'Oh no, I'll get these.'

'No you won't! Here, that's for mine and I insist!' She smiled as she watched him go.

The football match soon came to an end (3-0) and they all started to head back.

When they reached the school, Mrs Knight couldn't resist turning to him. 'You survived then.'

'Yes! So it would seem.'

'See? Told you it wouldn't be so bad.'

'I suppose I should thank you.'

'No need I can assure you. I'm glad you enjoyed it.'

'You're not going to say "I told you so"?''

'Wouldn't dream of it.'

'Good night Miss.'

'Good night Martin.'

She watched him go and realised, with an awful feeling, that she had expected

something to happen between them, no, more than that, it was like an attraction of some kind. She groaned, no, she was mistaken, she HAD to be.

## Chapter Two

2016

Martin stared at the letter and then reached for the phone and dialled the number that was in the letter. He waited and waited until at last, a voice answered,

'Hello?'

'It's me.'

'Who's "me?"'

'Martin Lewis.'

'*Martin?! At last! The letter found you alright then?*'

'Yes, although I can't imagine why you'd think I'd be interested.'

'Oh come now Martin! Why so hostile?'

'You know why.'

There was a pause. 'Look, I-I understand this is hard for you.'

'Why are you writing to me about it?'

'It was in her will.'

'...What?'

'"When I depart from this world, tell Martin Lewis." That's what she said.'

Martin's head spun. 'She-she really said that?'

'Well, I *was* there.'

'What else?'

'Nothing - that's it.'

Martin sat down, unsure as to what to say next.

'What did you do after graduating?'

'Went straight to university and became an investor.'

'Not law then?'

'No, changed my mind – too many grey areas.'

'Fair enough -Which company?'

'Oh no - contracting.'

She laughed. 'All these fancy words! Why not just say "self-employed?"'

Despite himself, Martin couldn't help but smile. 'It's 2016 Miss!'

'I'm well aware of that you impertinent young whelp! All the same, it sounds risky.'

'Well, I took a gamble and haven't looked back.'



She laughed. 'She'd be so proud of you, you know.'

'Yes.'

'So, are you coming?'

'I don't know.'

'Well, think it over, I know she'd be pleased and grateful if you did.'

'Yes.'

'So...did you marry?'

'...And got divorced.'

'Oh no! That's a shame.'

'It wasn't meant to be.'

'Children?'

'No.'

' Oh...was it because...I-I'm sorry Martin but even after all these years I feel I must ask...'

Martin's mouth went dry. 'No Miss, no you don't.' He said firmly.

She laughed slightly. 'Still "Miss"', even after all these years.'

'Old habits die hard.'

'So...the funeral?'

' I'll think about it.'

## 1998

Following the 'moment' last week, Martin was doing his best to avoid Mrs Knight, he had to. He daren't share it with the others; they would just tease and mock him. Then, one day, he was in the library - it was a study period.

'Hello Martin!'

He froze and looked up to see the woman in question. 'Miss.' He acknowledged her coldly

'Homework?'

'Yes, Greek literature.'

She sat down next to him. 'One of my favourite subjects!'

He couldn't make out whether she was sincere or just trying to thaw the ice between them. 'What are you studying at the moment?'

'Oedipus.'

' Ah! The fatal attraction between mother and son!'

'The very same.'

' I used to like that one.'

'Right, good for you.'

'I used to love a forbidden romance!'

'Romance? Miss, it's incest!!'

' Yes but they didn't know that.'

'Gruesome ending though.'

'...But, I fear, inevitable.'

' As so many are.'

She laughed. 'How very true!'

'Don't you have some marking too do? I don't wish to keep you.'

'No, I've caught up.'

'Right.'

She laughed. ' You're very serious for a teenager!'

'So I've been told.'

'Don't you ever relax? You know, spend some time with your friends?'

' Yes but I find it hard when I have things to do.'

'Too preoccupied?'

' You could say that.'

' Any ideas what you'd like to do when you leave school?'

He put his pen down. ' I *have* given it some thought.' He confessed.

'Well...good...And?'

' I- well, I'd like to become an investor - help people but also get something out of it - have the best of both worlds.'

Her eyes had softened considerably and she was smiling. 'Do you know, I think that is a very sensible answer!'

'Really?'

' Yes! I bet there aren't many boys who have such sensible ideas.'

He felt his ego swell. 'Thanks Miss, that means a lot.'

**2016**

Martin cringed as he played that conversation over and over again in his head. At the time, he thought that she had merely been encouraging, and she probably had been, but now, looking back on what was said, he was starting to see things a little differently. He groaned, why did it have to be like that? Why could it not have been just a normal teacher-pupil relationship? He gave a wry smile - she had been anything but normal.

**1998**

'So what next in the romantic escapades of Martin Lewis?'

It was Saturday and they were in the common room. Martin was doing some homework and Robin was just lounging around.

'Just give it a rest Robin.'

'Oh? Trouble in paradise?'

'There'll be trouble with *yourself* in a minute!'

Robin sat up. 'Seriously though, what if your feelings were reciprocated?'

Martin smudged his ink and turned round to face him. 'I beg your pardon?'

'Well, it's not impossible is it?'

'What isn't?'

'Oh come on mate! Don't be obtuse, you know what I mean!'

'No I really, really don't!'

'What if she had feelings for you too?'

Martin stared at his friend. 'Are you sneaking alcohol in here without anyone noticing?'

'Seriously though, why is it such a bizarre concept?'

'Well, where do I start? Oh yes! By stating the slightly obscure point that she's our *teacher!*'

'Why should that stop you?'

'Look, Rob, what *is* this? Why the fixation?'

'Because I've finally started to work it out!'

'You've lost me completely!'

'Do I really have to spell it out?'

'After the last mark for your spelling test?'

'Funny! Not!'

'Spell out what?'

'You like cougars!'

Martin was so incredulous that he burst out laughing. ' Oh my god! I do *not* like cougars!'

' Oh please! I've seen the way you are with her.'

'...And what exactly is that?'

'Like a love sick puppy!'

'I most certainly am NOT like that!'

'I'll take a photo of your face next time and show you.'

## **2016**

Not for the first time that day did Martin wonder what was possessing him, he should have just ignored the letter and thrown it in the bin, but he still felt that there was unfinished business. His hands tightened on the steering wheel as he made his way down the road, finally, he found the address. I must be mad, he thought as he parked in front. For a moment, he just sat in his car and allowed himself to dream.

## **1998**

'Martin? Would you stay behind for a moment?'

Martin froze with dread, he slowly turned round and steeled himself. ' Yes Miss?'

'Come here!'

He hesitated and then approached the desk cautiously. 'Miss?'

'I was just looking over this piece of work, and I must say I am very, very impressed!' she looked up at him and smiled. ' Have you thought about what university you'd like to attend?'

He stared at her. 'Me?'

' Yes.'

'A-attend university?'

'I don't see why not! If you continue the way you are now!'

'I could get a scholarship?'

'Yes, if you knuckle down the way you have been doing.'

'Well! That's certainly given me something to think about.'

'Well, I'm glad.'

There it was again, that atmosphere. He had to walk away, this was dangerous territory.

'Well, run along then!'

He shook his head and realised he was being dismissed. 'Thank you Miss!' He had never felt so relieved.

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She would have to resign, there was nothing else for it, how on earth could she get another job with this hanging over her? Yet, she couldn't help it, every time she saw him, her heart fluttered and she had a feeling that he felt the same way, she groaned and put her head in her hands.

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Should he make the first move? No! It was unthinkable! He got up from the desk in his room and started pacing up and down, this was driving him mad!

It was prep time but he was struggling to concentrate. He threw down his pen - this was ridiculous! He had to think of a way to get rid of these feelings. He glanced at his watch and then went out. It was very quiet.

'Hello Martin!'

Why? WHY did she always have to be there? Cursing under his breath, he forced a smile on his face. 'Hello Miss!'

'Busy studying?'

'Oh yes!'

'Good! You'll go far!'

What on earth was she doing? She had to do something, anything! Heading back to the staff room, she grabbed her marking and tried to ignore the feelings that were

growing inside of her. The marking didn't last long enough, she bit her nails and, finally, unable to bear it a minute longer, she went to the prep room. It was a very relaxed atmosphere, boys were relaxing and talking. Suddenly, she spotted him, he was surrounded by books and was looking very studious. Suddenly he looked up.

'Miss!'

She paused, she had definitely not thought this through. 'Hello Martin.'

'What can I do for you Miss?'

'Oh come now? Why so hostile?'

He felt his back stiffen, the truth was, he didn't trust himself. Was it his imagination or was she coming closer?

'I'm sorry Miss, that was not my intention.'

She stopped. 'I wish to speak to you about your last assignment, could you come to my classroom now please?'

He looked at her and felt a shudder of excitement. 'Yes, alright.'

He reached her room and knocked politely, he looked at his watch, the time seemed to drag and it seemed ages before she beckoned him in.

'I shouldn't be here.'

'I know.'

'I thought you meant the classroom.'

'So did everyone else.'

He frowned, she was playing games, there was no doubt about that.

'I just want you to be absolutely clear about what could happen if either of us were caught.'

He swallowed. 'I've always known that.'

'Good' She stepped towards him and slowly loosened his tie.

'Not now.' He muttered.

She wasn't listening; very slowly she opened his shirt and slowly kissed his neck and smiled as she felt him harden. 'Better?'

He closed his eyes, it was unbearable. Slowly, he caught her lips with his and ran a hand down her left breast. 'No bra.' He muttered.

She grinned. 'No, it shows through this top, have-have you ever?'

He nodded and opened her shirt, slowly, very slowly, he bent his head and caught her brown, heavy nipple in his mouth. She moaned and put her head back. 'I want...'

'I know, but not now.'

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. At that very moment, all sense and reason was restored to him, he quickly did up his shirt. 'Thank you for the insight Miss!' He said curtly and promptly left, leaving her crestfallen and confused.

## 2016

'Thank you.' Martin sipped the tea that was in front of him and studied his ex-teacher.

I must confess, I am still a bit confused as to why you asked me here.'

His ex-teacher - Mrs Foster, settled into her chair. 'I just wanted us to catch up.'

'Oh? Do the same with all your ex-pupils do you?'

She smiled at him, wryly. 'You always were a bright boy.'

'The answer's no.'

'No to what?'

'I won't tell you.'

'Martin, she's dead, you can tell me. Just a yes or no if you would prefer.'

'Then what? You turn it into one of these historic child abuse cases?'

'She had a duty of care.'

'I knew what I was doing.'

'You were a pupil.'

'In my final year.'

'You admit it then?'

He put the cup back in the saucer. 'I'm admitting nothing.'

'So it's all wrong is it?'

'Why are you doing this? She's dead, I was eighteen so it was scarcely paedophilia.'

'You were still entrusted into our care.'

'Oh my God, are all teachers robots?'

'Just tell me, humour an old woman.'

'What good will it do you?'

'It'll stop me wondering.'

'Give you peace of mind?'

'Well...Yes.'

Noticing the ash tray, he got out a cigarette. 'Every year I say I'm going to quit.'

She smiled and took one herself. 'Me too.'

They both lit up. 'Why do you want to know all this now?'

'Because I was looking through some school photos and I noticed the ones with you two in them - well- you looked particularly close.'

'May I see?'

She handed him one and he snorted. 'Her hand on my shoulder? You think we were having an affair because of her hand on my shoulder?'

'Well you must admit it does seem a bit irregular.'

'Well, it's a good thing you were a teacher Miss, because you would have made a lousy detective.'

'So it WAS just a rumour then.'

He stared at her.

### **1998**

She found him in the common room. 'Martin?'

He looked up. 'Yes Miss?'

She was surprised by how curt he was being. 'I was wondering if you could come by my classroom, I wish to talk to you about a particular assignment.'

'I'm busy Miss.'

'It wouldn't take very long.'

'No, I am sorry Miss, this has to be in to-morrow.'

She was crestfallen. 'Alright we'll do it some other time.'

He watched her leave and felt his resolve weakening. Sighing, he closed his book.

Once they were in the classroom, she closed the door behind him. 'Look I-I don't really know what to say.'

'You don't have to say anything Miss. I-I shouldn't have-'

'It's just that- I've never met anyone like you before - you're so mature.'

He snorted. 'I wouldn't go that far.'

'But you are.'

'Well, that's what this place does to you I suppose.'

She smiled. 'I went to a boarding school myself you know.'

'Did you enjoy it?'

'It had its ups and downs but I became independent. No doubt what your parents are expecting of you.'

He didn't reply.

'Anyway.'



'What exactly is happening between us?'

She lifted her head and looked at him intently. 'Nothing.'

'Nothing?'

'No, not if you don't wish it.'

Despite himself, Martin couldn't help but feel a little disconcerted. 'So...We are agreed, it was a mistake?'

'Absolutely! I am certainly not going to put my career on the line for a school boy - no offence.'

'None taken.'

'Good, so we're OK?'

'Absolutely.'

'Well then - great, then there is nothing more to say on the subject.'

'Nothing at all Miss.'

## **2016**

'Then what happened?'

Martin put the cup down in the saucer. 'Then nothing.'

'Oh come on young man! You're not leaving it like that.' Martin smiled, he could tell his ex-teacher was already on the edge of her seat.

'Why do you care so much anyway?'

'Because I'm intrigued as to this side of my colleague that I never knew.'

'This side? You make it sound so sordid!'

'Isn't it?'

'No, not at the time.'

'How did you find it?'

'Find what?'

'The transition from pupil to lover?'

Martin choked on his tea. 'That's a very clinical way of putting it!'

'Well?'

He shrugged. 'It was...I don't know really, it all happened so fast.'

'When was the first time she bedded you?'

'I can't remember.'

'Yes you can! When was it?'

'A week later. I was in my dormitory and fancied a walk...'

**1998**

*A few weeks later*

Martin sat back and stretched, he looked at his watch - nine , he still had an hour. He had finished his homework so that was good. What he really wanted to do at the moment was stretch his legs. Without wishing to disturb the others, he sneaked out and walked along the corridor, he noticed the moon that shone through the windows and smiled.

'Lovely night isn't it?'

He froze as he saw her walk towards him. ' Yes lovely.'

She smiled. ' I like to take a walk before bed. It's very relaxing.'

'Especially if you know one of your pupils is doing the same thing.'

'You do me an injustice! It's just a coincidence!'

He looked at his watch. 'I've only got an hour.'

'Homework?'

'No, I've finished.'

She suddenly turned to him. 'Did you say you still had an hour?'

He looked at her and felt his palms begin to sweat.

Mrs Knight groaned as he kissed her neck and then her shoulders, she hurriedly took his shirt out of his trousers and put her hands underneath. He gasped and kissed her more urgently, her shoulders and then undid her dress, it fell to the floor leaving her in her slip. He eyed her dark brown nipples hungrily and slowly took the straps off her shoulder, it fell to the ground, exposing her breasts. He massaged them and she moaned with pleasure, she lay down on the bed, it squeaked, he froze.

'It's alright.' She whispered.

'Th-the bed.'

'We'll be very, very quiet.'

' I don't...' He suddenly breathed in sharply as he felt her hands in his briefs. 'Wait, wait.' He got off the bed and went to his discarded clothes and took out a condom.

She laughed. ' You're very sensible aren't you?'

' I try to be.' He kissed her neck hungrily and she moaned and held him close.

A while later, their passion spent, they lay looking at each other. Martin slowly pushed a strand of hair from her face, she smiled and looked at him with those beautiful eyes. For a while, they did not say anything, they just lay there. Martin slowly pushed a hand through her hair.

'Why did you want to become a teacher?'

She laughed. 'That's a rather strange question.'

'Just wondering - trying to impart wisdom to some that aren't interested and others that are dutifully there, there's only a small proportion of those who generally want to learn you know.'

'Well thank you very much!

He laughed and kissed her hip. ' You know what I mean.'

She sighed and leaned back against the pillows. ' I was just bursting with knowledge and anxious to share it.'

'Even though it may not be wanted?'

'Why you impertinent-' He laughed as she hit him with a pillow. ' Yes, even then.'

He smiled and looked at his watch. ' I should be getting back.'

'Goodness! Is that the time? Yes, you should.' She smiled as she watched him get dressed and check that the coast was clear.

## **2016**

Martin watched the look on his ex-teacher's face and fought the urge to laugh. Finally she spoke.

'Well! That I was certainly not expecting.'

'I expect that you were waiting for me to say that it was all lies.'

'Something like that.'

'Well, I'm sorry, I can't do that.'

'She instigated it?'

'We *both* instigated it, it's just that we were very wary about putting our thoughts into actions.'

'It seems the affair began quite quickly.'

'Well- a few weeks after she had arrived, what can I say? The chemistry was electric.'

'Clearly! What happened next?'

'Our affair had officially begun. The weekends came and I accompanied her on every trip...'

'Indeed? I *wondered* what had triggered that change of heart! You never used to be really interested.'

He gave a wry smile. 'Well, now you know - she used to ask me to sit behind her. I didn't have my head in the clouds though, I knew what it was.'

'Yes, you always were a very sensible boy.'

'It's strange, but in those last few years, I enjoyed what we had, and I think she did too.'

'That's an understatement.'

'What do you mean?'

'Oh come now my boy, you seriously think that we, in the staff room didn't notice? She had colour in her cheeks and was full of the joys of spring.'

'She was?'

'Oh yes! Of course we all guessed that she must have been seeing a chap, indeed we all privately said to one another how happy we were for her.'

'Less so when you found out who it was.'

'Well...it does no good to dwell on the past'

'How bizarre! That's exactly what I thought we've been doing for the past hour.'

'Oh you know what I me-' She caught him grin and waved her hand irritably, 'You really are a tiresome boy. Go on, what happened next?'

'I still can't help but think that you're enjoying this.'

'Of course I am! It's like Mills & Boon.'

'A pity you didn't think like that when you found out.'

'How did you expect me to react? We had a duty of care, your parents entrusted your well-being to us.'

'Which begs the question - why do you want to know all of this now?'

'As I have already said; I admit to being a very curious person and I feel I cannot go to my grave without knowing the whole truth.'

'Why didn't you ask ages ago?'

'Because I wasn't as near to death then as I am now.'

'Oh I *see* and this is on your "bucket list" so to speak.'

'If you like.'

Despite himself, Martin couldn't help but smile at the old woman's mischievous glint in her eye. 'It wasn't all plain sailing you know.'

'My dear boy it should never have "set sail" in the first place!'

Martin laughed at her quick wit.

'But, just out of interest, what did you mean?'

'She was prone to jealousy'

'That doesn't surprise me at all.'

'What? Her or in general?'

'In general, we women can be a very jealous species.'

'As can men.'

'Indeed. So, come on, what made her jealous and disrupt your paradise?'

He frowned. 'If you are going to mock, I shall leave.'

'I'm sorry, my boy, do tell.'

'Well, do you remember the arrival of Cassandra Wright?'

'Ah yes! Bright young thing.'

'She's a lawyer now.'

'Indeed! How do you know?'

'Facebook.'

'Face-what?'

'I'll explain later.'

'Oh no dear! I'd rather you didn't! This world is getting far too technical as it is!'

He laughed. 'It's the twenty-first century Miss.'

'Yes and if this is how it's shaping up, I'm glad I don't have many years left to endure it.' Martin couldn't help but laugh at her stubbornness. 'Anyway, what has Cassandra Wright got to do with any of this?'

Martin sighed tiredly and looked out of the window. 'That was how it all started.'

## Chapter Three

1998

One day, they were working as usual when suddenly, the Head walked in and they all stood up. He had a girl with him who was chewing her bottom lip. They all looked up.

'Good morning class, I would like to introduce a new pupil, this is Cassandra Wright, she will be completing her year here and I would like you to make her very welcome.'

Martin looked at her and felt a pang of empathy - he remembered his first day.

Mrs Knight gave her a warm smile. 'Hello dear! Now let's find you a seat. I know, you can sit next to Martin - and that's quite enough of that.' She added; quailing the class as they started to wolf whistle. Martin smiled at her warmly as she sat down.

'Don't worry, they always get a bit excited with a new pupil, you can always come to me with any concerns if you want.'

She blushed. 'Thank you.'

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They both collapsed against the pillows, breathing heavily. Martin kissed her hip.

'I think you're getting good at this.' He panted.

'It's supposed to be the other way round you miserable boy!' Mrs Knight replied, playfully tapping him on the head.

'Thanks!'

She giggled as he kissed her chest. 'Why you little - oh I don't know!'

He looked at his watch. 'I'm going to have to go in a minute.'

Mrs Knight kissed his shoulder. 'Indeed or you'll get us both in trouble!'

'Touché.'

'She seemed very shy.'

'Who?'

'The new girl - whatever her name is - Cassandra.'

'Well, weren't *you* when you first started school?'

'Yes, true.'

'I think she likes you.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Well, the way she blushed.'

He raised an eyebrow. 'Not getting jealous are we Miss?'

'As if!' She rolled her eyes. 'I am hardly likely to be jealous of a school girl am I?'

'Well.' He kissed her neck, then her breasts and worked his way downwards.

~

'...Now I want you to work in pairs and try to put the conversation in modern day context - how would you say it in modern day language?'

Cassandra looked at Martin and smiled. 'Um, Martin would you like to..?'

'...I was just going to ask.'

'I always enjoy these types of exercises.'

'Oh! Me too.' He smiled at her, warmly. 'So how are you settling in?'

'Just fine thank you.'

'I bet you miss your other friends though don't you?'

'Well, yes but you just have to think that you'll meet new ones.'

He smiled. 'That's a very positive attitude!'

'Sometimes it's best.'

'Yes. I'll show you around if you like.'

'Thanks!'

That evening, Martin sat in the prep room, looking through his homework when Robert came sauntering in. He threw himself down in the chair opposite him.

'I'm in love.'

'Again?'

'No! It's for real this time!'

'Robert, it was "for real" the last time and the time before that!'

'I know but it *feels* different!'

'Good!' Martin rubbed his eyes, tiredly, he was exhausted. After gallantly offering to show Cassandra around, that meant that he had had to push everything back, which meant he ended up doing his homework later than usual.

'So? Do you think I should ask her out? Cassandra I mean, unless I'm stepping on anyone's toes...'

'Not at all mate! You go ahead!'

'Oh I forgot! You prefer them older!'

'Oh shut up!'

Robert laughed and patted his shoulder. 'I'm joking mate!'

'Yeah! Right!'

Suddenly, they were interrupted by a fellow pupil. 'Hey, Lewis! Mrs Knight's looking for you.'

'What? Now?'

'Yes.'

Oh no, not tonight! Martin thought desperately, it was then that he did the unthinkable.

'Listen, do you think you could possibly tell her that I must finish this homework?'

Robert raised an eyebrow. 'Rather poor sport, sending someone else into the lair!'

Martin sighed, tiredly. 'I will be eternally grateful.'

'Alright!'

At quarter to ten, he finally finished his homework and went straight to bed, falling asleep the moment his head hit the pillow.

~

'Martin? Could you come here for a moment?'

Martin grimaced and headed towards the desk. 'Yes Miss?'

'I was a bit surprised that you didn't come to my office to discuss your homework last night like I asked.'

He knew that was code. 'I'm very sorry Miss, I was busy finishing homework that had to be in by today.'

'Well...Alright, just as long as you know that I am doing these extra lessons for your sake.'

He narrowed his eyes slightly. 'Yes Miss, thank you Miss.'

'I don't suppose you could spare an hour tonight?'

There was a pause, he was completely at her mercy and he knew it. 'Yes, of course Miss.'

'Good! Usual time?'

'Usual time Miss.'

Martin stretched and looked at his watch - time to get going. He slowly, snuck out and headed down the corridor.



'Martin?'

He froze, turning round, he saw Cassandra.' Cassandra!'

She smiled slightly and bit her lip. 'Hey!'

'Hey! What are you doing?'

'Oh I just thought I would take a walk, you know, stretch my legs.'

'Good idea! Make use of the free time while you can that's what I say!'

'Maybe you liked to walk with me?'

He paused and looked at his watch. ' Ordinarily I'd love to but-'

'Oh yes, of course. Sorry.'

He looked at her and felt guilty. 'Well, maybe just quickly.'

'Oh no, you're busy.'

'It can wait.'

'You're sure?'

'Oh yes.'

'Well, thanks.'

'So, what can I help you with?'

'This passage here.'

'Ah yes!'

She smiled. 'So, how long have you been having extra tuition lessons with Mrs Knight?'

'Oh, a while now.'

'Wow! You must be her favourite pupil.'

He laughed. 'Well, I wouldn't exactly say that, she likes to nurture talent.'

'Don't they all?'

'So, how does this differ from your other school?'

'Well, they're all alike really aren't they? Just in different places with different backgrounds.'

'What were your teachers like?'

'Harsh but fair.'

He laughed. 'Much the same as here then.'

She smiled. 'Like I said, a school can be very much the same as another.'

'Well, I'm sure you'll love it here once you get used to it.'

'Thank you.'

They smiled at each other, she had a beautiful smile he noticed and she was attractive - just not to him.

'Anyway!'

'Oh yes, gosh! I've been keeping you.'

'That's alright.'

'Well, if you DO get into trouble - blame me.'

He laughed. 'I assure you I won't - but thanks.'

She practically pounced on him as he walked through the door. 'Where have you been? We only have an hour.'

'Sorry, I stopped to help-'

' Yes, never mind. 'She undid his tie and shirt and started kissing his neck.

He fondled her breasts.

'Martin!' She moaned and pushed his hand in between her thighs.

He gasped and, in that instant, he knew he could forgive her anything.

'You like her don't you?'

'Mmmm?'

'I said you like her.'

He groaned. 'Not this again!'

'I'm just saying.'

He pushed a hand through her hair. ' I like her as a friend. That's all.'

'Does *she* know that?'

'Look, I can't be responsible for the way that others think.'

She nestled her head on his shoulder. 'Poor girl.'

'If push comes to shove I shall set her straight.'

'Wouldn't it be better to set her straight now?'

'What? And embarrass her? Let her know how obvious she was being?'

'I guess you're right.'

'Look, it's all in hand alright?'

'Alright.'

He smiled and pushed a hand through her hair. ' It's all under control, I would never let things get that far.'

She returned the smile and kissed him.

~

'So, you're sweet on Martin?'

Cassandra blushed as she looked up to address her classmate, Sandra. 'I-I think he's a very nice boy.'

'Is that all?'

She blushed. 'Well, he IS rather good looking.'

'Don't we all think so? But I wouldn't pin your hopes on him.'

'Why not?'

'Well, the thing is...'

'Oh come now Sandra, stop that!' Lucy called out.

'What? She's got a right to know!'

'It's all malicious rumors!'

'What are?' Cassandra felt her stomach go over.

Lucy came over and hesitated before slumping her shoulders. 'There's a rumor, albeit not a serious one, going around that Martin is having an affair with Mrs Knight.'

'What?' Cassandra suddenly felt very cold. 'But-but she's a teacher!'

'I know, that's why it's only a rumor!'

'But-but why would people say such things?'

'Because it's true!' Sandra giggled.

'Oh shut up Sandra! How old are you for goodness sake?' She turned back to Cassandra with a smile. 'People are jealous of him because he is one of the brightest pupils at our school and Mrs Knight likes to nurture potential. That's all.'

~

She kissed up his back and neck as he put his shirt back on. 'Are you coming on this outing with us?'

'I never bother with stuff like that.'

'Why not?'

'Because I find them painfully dull and tedious.'

'You did the last one.'

'Well...That's was because you...'

He stopped short. She grinned. 'Well, I think you should bother with this one.'

'Oh? Why's that?'

'Because I think this trip will be right up your alley.'

'And once you've finished speaking in riddles..?'

'We're going to a museum.'

Martin raised his eyebrows and did up his shirt. 'Sounds a bit too sophisticated for us doesn't it?'

'No it doesn't, cheeky! We're taking you there to soak up some culture.'

'Well, I admire the effort.'

' You will come won't you?'

' You do know that Cassandra will probably be coming as well, don't you?'

' I think I can cope with a little girl.'

## 2016

'Well I never!' Mrs Foster sat back in her chair. 'She really *was* jealous wasn't she?'

'Oh yes!'

'Fancy!'

Martin sat back in the chair. ' I remember being taken aback but then, I also remember feeling flattered that someone like that could actually feel jealousy over me - a schoolboy.'

'My dear boy, love makes fools of us all.'

'Yes! As I, myself have experienced!'

'Did you love her?'

'Who?'

'Your wife.'

He sat in silence for a while, contemplating the question. 'Define "Love?"'

'Someone who you can't stop worrying over and who you wish to grow old with and die by their side.'

'Well, in that case - no, no I didn't.'

' I had a feeling.'

'God, you must think me heartless.'

She laughed. 'My dear boy, half the population these days get divorced - falling out of love must be one of the reasons.'

'I wanted to and I kept trying...'

'...Until you couldn't try anymore?'

He nodded. ' As I have said, the only silver lining is that we didn't have any kids - they were spared their parents divorcing at least.'

'But on the other hand, thousands of kids go through it every day and they grow up just fine - in spite of the cold atmospheres and custody battles...'

'True!'

'Anyway! The story continues! What was life like living between a girl and a woman?'

Martin laughed. 'Demanding and hectic.'

'What a surprise!'

'I didn't plan any of this you know, it wasn't some stupid boy crush. Besides, It wasn't living between them, I never led her on...at least to begin with.'

'So you *did* lead her on?'

'I never meant - it wasn't supposed...' he sighed. 'Things just got out of hand.'

'How did this outing go?'

'Oh, you know, the usual.'

'The " usual" being?'

He laughed. 'She kept us apart the entire time. Although, I must say, it wasn't that that really bothered me.'

'Oh?'

'No, don't get me wrong, she was a nice girl, just not my type.'

'Indeed?' She raised her eyebrows sardonically.

'No.'

'Well, I must say that I'm surprised.'

'Why?'

'No particular reason just that she seemed such a nice girl.'

' And so she was, just not my type.'

' I see... Go on.'

'Go on what? There really isn't much left to say!'

' Oh I think there is! I cannot imagine that Mrs Knight just let her favourite be taken away from her so easily.'

He raised his eyebrows, amused. "'Favourite?'"

'Like I said; I'm an old woman and I really don't see why these words should change.'

'Well, as you said, she wasn't happy. In fact...'

'In fact what?'

'She became more and more controlling.' He looked at her, tiredly. 'She insisted I had " extra tuition" with her every night.'

'More practical biology?'

He laughed. ' Oh Miss, please!'

She grinned. 'Well, what would you call it?'

'Anyway, yes! More of that, she needn't have been afraid, I genuinely did not have eyes for anyone else.'

'And it seems, from the way that you describe things, that she genuinely cared for you, I remember what she was like, always tended to wear her heart on her sleeve.'

Martin looked away as he began to dream.

## 1998

'You're being ridiculous.'

'Am I?'

'You know you are!'

'I am neither blind nor a fool Martin, I've seen the way she looks at you.'

'So?'

'She wants you!'

'Again, so? I don't feel the same about her!'

'So why haven't you said anything?'

'The moment that it starts to get out of hand, I will.'

'Define "getting out of hand?"'

'Well...I don't know, say...If she asks me out on my own or if she tries to kiss me...'

'She did *what?*'?

'I said " if" He replied, wearily.

She appeared satisfied with this and stroked his hair before nestling her head on his chest. ' I'm sorry! You're right, of course you're right. Look at me! I'm an old woman, I should know better!'

'I wouldn't say that!'

'I *am* old.'

'No, I mean you shouldn't know better.'

'Why you!'

He giggled as she tickled him, he wrapped his arms around her and they lost themselves amongst the covers.

## 2016

Mrs Foster grinned. 'Did it work?'

'Sorry?'

'Did you manage to pacify her?'

He gave her a superior frown. ' You make it sound as if I was only with her to get an A or something!'

' Your feelings were genuine.'

'Of course they were! Yes, it did work, for a time, as I have already explained.'

'I hope she remained professional and did not treat her unfairly.'

'No, but she didn't seem to interact as well with her as with the others either.'

'And you?'

'She grew controlling.'

'What sort of thing?'

'Well, things like asking me to stay behind to talk about my homework or asking me to attend extra tuition which she knew full well I didn't need.'

'My word! She *was* attentive!'

'It may have seemed like that but, in reality I didn't get any time to myself.'

'How did all of this start?'

'It started after she had moved us.'

'Ah yes! The "re-arranging of the classroom"'

## 1998

'Why are we changing seats Miss?'

'Because your exams are approaching fast Yvonne and I want you all to concentrate and you can't do that if you are chatting and giggling with your best friend!'

Martin's eyes narrowed and he wondered if that was indirectly meant for him.

'So, Martin, if you could go and sit next to Joan. That's it, thank you. Sarah, if you could go and sit next to Cassandra, Richard, you sit next to Ollie and Steven you can sit next to Kiera.'

'What was all that in aid of?'

It was the evening and Martin was pretending not to listen, instead choosing to focus on the math's equation in hand.

'Am I talking to myself?'

'No but I'm pretending not to hear you.'

'What do *you* think it was all about?'

'Teachers re-arrange things all the time.'

'Yes but not like this! I mean being told where to sit?! I-' Suddenly, a look of realisation came over Robert's face. ' Oh I get it!'

He looked at him, exasperated. 'What?'

'She's jealous isn't she?'

'Being jealous would imply that there was something going on between us which I have expressly told you - there isn't.'

'Of course not.'

~

'We're going to have to be more careful.'

'Mmm?'

'I said we - or rather you- are going to have to be more careful.'

'What on earth do you mean?'

'You know full well!'

She rested her breasts on the pillow and stroked his hair. 'I genuinely have no idea what you are on about.'

He gave an exasperated sigh. 'Please don't play games.'

'I'm not!'

'Right so you really don't think it's obvious? The way you're indifferent towards her?

That C+? I saw that piece of homework myself, it was worth at least an A-!'

'Oh I see! So you're telling me how to do my job now?'

'No! I'm just asking you to be more discreet!'

She bit her lip and fell back against the pillows. 'I'm glad that you've worked out what to do after graduation.'

'What?'

'I said, I'm glad that you've worked out what to do after graduation.'

'What's that got to do with anything?'

'Just saying.'

'I don't know alright?'

'Don't know what?'

'I don't know if we'll see each other after graduation.'

'How far away is it - a couple of months?'

'Yes.'

She bit her lip and then smiled, tears glistening in her eyes, she pushed a hand through his hair. 'My favourite, best boy - let's not spoil things by talking about goodbyes - let's just make the most of what we've got now.'



'You never did see her again of course.'

'No, we tried to keep in touch but that didn't seem to last.'

'Why not?'

Martin looked at the empty glass in his hand. 'I don't know really - I think life just got in the way. I mean, after I graduated I went to university, I found a job, bought a house and got married. You know, you don't think of keeping in touch with the past with so much happening in the present.'

'That's very true!'

'I did think about her though, I thought of her often.'

'Journey's end at lover's meeting.'

His eyes narrowed. 'Shakespeare?'

Mrs Foster clapped her hands in delight. 'Whatever was happening in your personal life, you still managed to pay attention to your lessons I see!'

He gave her a wry smile. 'School fees not *entirely* wasted then!'

'Far from it! You parents must be proud.'

'Well, Mum can't stop talking about me and Dad keeps looking like a conceited peacock so I'd say they're satisfied with what I'm doing.'

'Do they ever talk about-'

'No, in their eyes, she'll always be the fraud that abused their trust...and worse.'

'Well, we were responsible for your care.'

'I wasn't a kid.'

'In their eyes you probably were. They're probably still used to the "twenty-one era."

Martin laughed. 'Do you know I've never thought about it like that before.'

'One of the jobs as a teacher; trying to get you to see things from a different perspective.'

'To make us see that we have more choice?'

'It never hurts to keep your options open.'

'No. Well, it's been great, catching up.'

'Hey!'

'I'd best be off, it's getting late.'

'It's quarter to five!'

'Yes, exactly! I mustn't keep you, it's been great catching up!'

'Martin Lewis you sit back down this instant!'

'There's nothing else to talk about!'

'On the contrary, we've only just scratched the surface!'

He folded his arms. 'You're a tenacious old bird aren't you?'

'Were we really back at school I'd box your ears for that!' She was smiling though.

'Well, I- I really don't know what else to tell you!

'I know what happened from the outset - it's the inset I'm interested in.'

Martin felt an emotional wave sweep over him. 'You mean how did it end?'

'Yes.'

'In two words: painfully and humiliatingly.'

'Oh my dear boy! We were to blame for that weren't we?'

'You were only doing what you thought was right at the time.'

'We *knew* it was right! She was in a position of authority!'

'Yes, yes I know.' Martin rubbed his right eye.

'Did you never...?'

'No, we never spoke or saw each other again.'

'Not even letters?'

'I think we both found it too painful.'

'She spoke of you often.'

Martin felt his heart lift slightly. 'What did she say?'

'Just how bright you were and that she knew that you were doing well somewhere.'

'Did she know I got married?'

'We saw the announcement in the paper.'

He rolled his eyes. 'My father-in-law's insistence.'

'What about your parents?'

'They didn't come, I think they knew it was a sham from the off!'

'Even so...'

'How-how did she react?'

'There were tears in her eyes, but she was happy for you.'

Martin looked down, feeling tears of his own begin to well up. 'How did she die?'

'Pneumonia. It happens, especially at our time of life, we're not moving around so much.'

'Did-did she suffer?'

'It was over in a couple of weeks.'

Martin placed his hands over his nose and tried to stop the tears from falling.

'Don't do that dear, it's not good for you.'

Grateful, Martin started to cry, he cried like he hadn't cried in years. His ex-teacher took him in her arms and laid his head on her shoulder. 'Let it out darling. It's alright.'

'Oh God!' He blew his nose. 'I never intended it to get this far.'

'I know.'

'Just after all these years. I didn't speak to her again - not because I didn't want to but because I thought it would be-'

'- Easier?'

'Well...yes.'

'I think she understood that.'

'I mean, we both knew we didn't have a future together; it was just what it was.'

She bit her lip. 'My dear boy, we don't have to talk about this anymore.'

'No, it's fine.'

'Not if it causes you distress.'

'I'm fine.' He smiled. 'After all, it's the information leading up to The Big Reveal that you're missing.'