

The transit of Mars

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By Alp Mortal

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Chapter One – Sue's the honest one

Sue came over for a drink and bite being a Wednesday and I hate the mid-week lull; she's been my friend for more years than I can remember; I came out to her first; she wasn't surprised; disappointed but not surprised; we lived in each other's pockets then; we still do to a degree; putting the heart back together; hers or mine, as required, with red wine and chocolate. The thing I like about her the most is that she's honest; not horrible; just honest; I tell her she'd make a good cat; cats are honest; dogs lie to get treats;

"You're putting on weight" she said before the cork was out of the bottle

"Excuse me!"

"You're putting on weight sweetheart and at your age that ain't gonna be easy to shift"

I'm forty, hardly a decrepit pensioner;

"Sue; that's too honest, even for you"

"Sorry hon'; but you don't want to get fat; it's difficult enough at our age to pull; look at Seb', practically suicidal..."

"If I get too thin, like three years ago, I look much older"

"Yes, I know; that was Harry's fault, leaving you for an older woman...what about the gym?"

There are some words like "cunt" and "incest" and "rapist" you just don't want to hear in the same sentence as your name and "gym" is one of them;

"What about the gym; it's where fit guys go to look at each other and pose"

"And get fit and from what I hear, pull"

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“I’d be pulling something and it wouldn’t be the hottie on the bench press!”

“They’ve got a special running; free introductory lesson and half price for three months; you even get a trainer assigned to you and a diet plan...”

“And how do you know all this?”

“I picked you up a leaflet”

“Why do I detect an ambush?”

“Cos you’re putting on weight and I love you too much to see you go to seed”

“Thanks Sue...”

“Don’t mention it; now what pizza do you want; my treat!”

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Chapter Two – Fucking Hell

I promised to go along to the introductory session at least, seeing as it was free; but I didn't have anything to wear; I didn't even own a pair of trainers. Still, shopping; it wasn't all bad news. I went to town and went to town and the young guy in JB sorted me out the entire kit, steering me away from Lycra towards looser fitting jersey cotton;

“Do you work out?” I asked him, needlessly as he was as fit as flea

“Of course; fucking great place to pull”

“Where do you go?”

“Moscow Place”

“That's the one round the corner from me”

“See you there and if you reach your targets then I'll treat you”

“I don't believe you eat pizza for one minute...”

“I wasn't suggesting dinner” he smirked

“Oh; right; best I get along there then and get signed up; they've got this offer going”

“Yeah, I know; follow me”

He trailed me to the changing rooms, en route picking up a pair of jog pants; he led me to the furthest changing cubicle from the entrance and dragged me in yanking the curtain across;

“I've got an introductory offer for you too” he said quietly as he knelt in front of me and expertly undid the jeans and pulled out Bertie who was blinking madly at the bright lights; he sucked like his life depended on it;

“Jesus...”

He sucked and bobbed until I felt the cum literally boil in my sack;

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“I’m gonna cum” I yelled in a whisper and he bobbed and sucked harder until I went weak at the knees and shot my load into his throat which he gobbled up;

“That’s some fucking introductory offer” I managed between the panting

“There’s more but let’s see you make your target weight and get a bit of definition”

He scampered out and I was left damp and breathless, a feeling that was to become all too familiar.

I left fully loaded with my new kit and a bag and unloaded of a week’s juice. I popped into Boot’s to get the obligatory kit for the gym shower; I hate communal showers, at school I left and went straight home after PE; the teacher bollocked me every week and I did the same thing every week; no one was going to peer at my tiny willy and laugh at my lack of hair; I was a late developer; it left its scars.

I had the kit and the all-in-one shampoo and shower gel so all I needed to do now was sign up; I passed the place on the way home so there was absolutely no excuse and in any event Sue was coming over to check up on me. I went into the bright and cheerful reception and the girl on the desk was very sweet;

“The introduction and assessment are free if you sign up before the end of the month and gym membership is currently half price for the next three months; you’ll see a trainer every week but you can pop in whenever you want; it’s free admission to the pool and sauna too; so?”

“I’ll take it, when can I do the introductory session?”

“Tomorrow at six?”

“Oh; yeah, I’m free actually”

I signed up and paid for the first three months; but this required preparation; I wasn’t going in there with those guys until I’d spent an hour on

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the sunbed; I got the nails done, an eyebrow wax, shape and tint, haircut; back and chest wax, deep facial cleanse, a session with the hygienist, douched, showered and moisturised.

I got on the scales in the bathroom; 80kg; fucking Hell! I'm five feet ten inches or one metre seventy-eight and ideally I would be about 67kg; I feel very good at that weight if not a little scrawny; I never had good definition; good teeth and twinkly eyes had always won the day in the past; what kind of fucking monster was I going to turn myself into and I'm not taking any of these supplements they try to sell you; powdered shark fin and distilled cat piss or something; I'll go the natural route; just a little better defined and 13kg lighter. If Jason had sucked me off as his introductory offer then surely if I made the grade we were talking full penetrative sex, possibly with the lights on, shit, I'll demand the lights are left on!

Sue came over and I dressed up for her to show off the new kit;

“Gorgeous; you'll have them eating out of your hand in no time”

I didn't tell her about Jason; we'd had a biryani as my last carbohydrate intake for the next three months; I didn't think it was fair to spoil her dinner by seeing it re-appear.

“If I die I'm leaving you everything” I said

“Oh good; those cushions will look perfect on the new sofa...you aren't going to die; just be drop dead gorgeous; you never know where these things will take you; 28 percent of couples meet in the gym; I read that in Woman's Weekly”

“Don't be angry with me if I fail miserably; it'll be like pottery class last year”

“No it won't; you'll have goals and targets; we'll think of treats along the way; just think of the sexy new body you'll have”

I was thinking of the sexy new body I would have; Jason's!

“I could just have surgery”

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“Nip and tuck, suck it all out, you’ll be back to square one in six months; work for it and then you’ll keep it; and who ever met the man of their dreams on the operating theatre table?”

“I’ll do it; but don’t expect too much too soon; having said that I am looking forward to getting back to swimming and I get a discount on a massage”

“There you go”

“Thanks for pushing me to do this”

“You’re welcome; what are friends for and if you get there, and I’m sure you will, I’ll treat us to a long weekend in Nice or a day at Champney’s”

“Nice; the guys!”

I have to admit to being goal orientated; so all this could only help; I lack confidence; basically I hate myself; probably because when I came out everyone said what a disgusting and vile person I was, except Sue; she saved my life really and dragged me to London so I could see all the other vile and disgusting creatures masquerading as normal adjusted men having a great time and getting shagged whenever they wanted.

I hate getting fucking old.

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Chapter Three – The Introductory Session and Jason

At five-thirty, after all the pampering and preening I could take, I went round the corner to meet my trainer, Matthew, and to subject myself to the cruellest punishment I could think of; being weighed and measured in the presence of another person.

I went in to reception and picked up a locker key, there were a few people milling about but no one was paying me much attention and I managed to scuttle through to the changing room without making eye contact. The Changing Room; why didn't they call it the torture chamber, having to undress in front of other people who looked like they should be gracing the covers of magazines; still, I had a new bag and new kit; which just made it worse in fact because there isn't anything like a new bag and new kit to scream "NEEWBIE"; kit and bag envy; why didn't I think of that; relax and change and go find Matthew.

I focussed on that task and avoided eye contact with everyone else; they all seemed to know each other anyway; guys wandering about naked and semi-naked, having showers and comparing their progress with their neighbours; no one asked me anything and I headed off to reception where I had been informed I would meet Matthew; he wasn't hard to spot being the one in the uniform with a tape measure round his neck like a henchman waiting for the next head to chop off. I introduced myself and was escorted through to a "consulting room" of sorts for my assessment;

"Age?"

I hated him already;

"Smoker?"

I wanted to kill him;

"Shall we weigh you and take your blood pressure?"

I should have brought a knife to gut him.

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He wasn't that bad in reality, very pleasant and doing his job very professionally and I was pretty sure he'd seen worse; he of course was like the proverbial Action Man with a day-glow smile and the only fat on him was in his shorts; I secretly hoped he had a very small penis otherwise I knew there could be no God.

"Right; we'll aim to shed a kilo a week and reduce your blood pressure, please consider giving up smoking and reducing your alcohol intake; I'll give you the diet sheets before you leave; shall we go to the main room and I'll introduce you to the various pieces of equipment and we'll start with a warm up and stage one of the programme?"

He was very engaging; could it be all that bad, surely I wasn't the only one who needed to shed the pounds and drag their physique out of atrophy?

The Main Room; oh Jesus, this was the torture chamber and on first inspection I was the only one who actually needed to be there, still, I had instructions to follow and safety precautions to take on board and questions to ask so the withering gaze of my fellow users went over my weak and sloping shoulders;

"Do ten minutes on the exercise bike and ten minutes on the running machine and then we'll start with some light weight work and see how you feel" he said

"Thanks Matt" I replied, feeling like a lamb rather than a lion

I chose a bike furthest away from everything else and peddled steadily for ten minutes; that wasn't too bad until I noticed that I'd covered about one and half miles; Jesus, my grandmother could do better and she's dead; next the treadmill; I jogged for ten minutes and covered one mile; after which I was sweating profusely and as red as a beetroot, the breath was ragged and the pulse was probably over three hundred; Matt came back;

"How was that?" he asked like he didn't know

"Not too bad; the only way is up" I joked

We did some light weight work;

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“Good; here’s your programme sheet; don’t work out more than three times a week...”

“I was going to go swimming actually and work out twice”

“Good idea; build up some stamina and swimming is practically the best exercise you can do; have fun; see you next week at the same time for your progress assessment”

“Thank you” I smiled through the sweat and tears

I headed to the chill out area to grab some water and flick through a magazine;

“You made it then?” said the chirpy voice

“Jason!”

“First session is the worst; Matt is good though”

“I have a long way to go”

“Keep focussed; who do you want to look like?”

“Keanu Reeves”

“Tape his picture everywhere round the house”

“I would if it didn’t feel like sacrilege”

“Who dented your self-image?”

“Dented, written off more likely; just the usual shit”

“I’ve just finished my work out; I was heading to the sauna, you coming?”

“Yeah; that would be good actually, I might sweat off this week’s kilo!”

“You’re not that bad; I’ve seen plenty worse”

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“Thanks”

We headed to the sauna via the locker room to shed the kit and pick up towels; our chatter got me through the slight awkwardness of shedding the kit and grabbing a towel, still, he'd seen it already but the small crowd had not and he was drawing their attention which put me in the firing line; I blanked them out and fraternising with the cutest guy in the room did wonders for the ego. We headed to the sauna and it was reasonably busy but there were spaces on the middle level seating; major league checking out as we entered but I'd wrapped the towel very tight around my mid-drift so only the slightly sagging chest was on view; in reality no one was paying that much attention.

“What's your target weight?” asked Jason

“67kg by the end of the twelve weeks, a kilo a week”

“That's doable; more than doable; cut the carbs and the booze”

“Swim once a week and work out twice, sauna and a weekly massage...what are you aiming for?”

“The body I've always dreamed of and my photograph on the cover of “Definition”...”

“You've already got the body I've always dreamed off...”

He sniggered as did a few others;

“You know what I mean...”

“I wanna be the best I can be”

It seemed to be the mantra of almost everyone in the room if not the building.

I meditated for fifteen minutes and then decided I'd had enough;

“Okay; I'm outta of here, see you soon” I said

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“Sure, keep focussed”

“I will”

I headed back to the locker room feeling better actually; no one had laughed and pointed, generally no one looked much at all, everyone was focussed on themselves; which seemed a bit obsessional if not sad. I picked up my all-in-one shower gel and shampoo and headed for the shower, looking forward to washing the sweat off and feeling fresh. The showers were in a room with six showers down each side; two on one side were being used and none on the other; I chose the one in the middle on that side;

“Hey” said one of the guys

“Hey” I returned

“You’re new...”

“First session tonight...”

“What you doing after?”

“Crashing on the sofa with a vodka and a cigarette was the plan”

He and the other guy laughed;

“Sorry, was that politically incorrect?”

“Honest; we’re grabbing a smoothie at the bar; do you wanna join us?”

“Oh; sure, thanks...”

They were Greg and David, a couple, which seemed really sweet; working out together; minus the few seconds of surreptitious checking out of the tackle I got through the shower unscathed and got dressed without noticeable haste; as we were heading out to the lounge Jason came in;

“Don’t forget me” he said quietly

“As if; we’re going for a smoothie”

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He smiled and I'm pretty sure he wiggled his arse as he headed straight into the shower.

I enjoyed the drink with the guys; they were a couple of some ten years standing and very sweet if a little too much into each other, we left just as Jason was wandering through;

“Hey” I said

“Vodka and a cigarette now is it?” he jibed

“Most definitely; man cannot live by wheatgrass and guava alone; you wanna join me?”

He looked at his watch;

“Sure, I'll skip this bus and get the next in an hour”

“Where are you then?”

“Hounslow”

“Why the hell do you come all the way over here?”

“More chance of getting seen by the people who matter”

“Ah; the “Definition” people...” stated rather than questioned

“Uhm, yeah and the guys I like”

“Oh...”

“Where are you?”

“Literally round the corner in the Square”

“Perfect!”

“It never occurred to me before but it is rather handy now”

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This brief interchange had taken us to the door and we climbed the stairs to the flat and I let us in;

“Make yourself at home” I said, “Vodka?”

“Any beer?”

“No; wine or vodka”

“Vodka then; a small one”

I fetched drinks and came back in from the kitchen to hand him the glass;

“Cheers” I said

“Cheers”

As you enter my flat there is a short hallway and that opens out on your right into the lounge come dining room which is rectangular; there are French doors out on to a terrace; being the roof of the portico beneath; the furthest wall from you as you enter has the fireplace; a white marble original feature; I'd had the grate covered in white enamel and the gas fire which was housed in it was also white. Either side of the chimney breast was an alcove; books in one and my Wedgewood collection in the other; in front of the fire were two sofas, either side of a leather covered coffee table; all in white; the coffee table was the same height as the seat of the sofas so I habitually dragged the table over to put my feet up and stretch out, which was exactly how it was as we entered because I hadn't expected guests so I hadn't tidied up;

“So do you live with your parents or boyfriend?” I asked

“I live at home yeah”

“How old are you, if you don't mind me asking?”

“Nineteen; you?”

“Forty and feeling every one of those years right now”

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“What do you do?”

“I own a publishing house; very small, we publish gay erotica and once a month we publish a magazine on the web; six times a year we publish two novels; it’s very niche and a little bit quaint”

“That’s cool”

“So how are you going to meet these “Definition” people?”

“There’s a competition; it’s twelve weeks to the deadline for submissions; I’m practically working out every day”

“What’s the prize?”

“Picture on the front of the magazine and a feature spread plus a load of equipment and stuff; free holiday to Ibiza. Hopefully it opens up other work, modelling and stuff like that...”

“I might have some work for you; if you’re interested”

“In publishing?”

“In being the model for a photograph for the cover of one of the novels we’re publishing soon”

“Really?”

“Yeah; the story is set in a boxing club; you’d be perfect; what do you say?”

“Of course, does it pay?”

“Five hundred quid”

“You’re on”

“So what do your parents think of all this?”

He paused and sipped his vodka;

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“They’re dead” he said quietly

“I’m sorry; so...”

“I live at home with my eldest brother Michael; he’s like Dad; my eldest sister Yvonne; she’s like Mum; then there’s me, then Carl and then the twins, Charlotte and David and the youngest, Sarah”

“Seven siblings, wow”

“It’s okay; it gets too much at times; Michael is very strict”

“I guess he has to be; how old is he?”

“Twenty-nine and he works full time”

“Shit, and Yvonne?”

“Twenty-six; she’s part time at Tesco’s ‘cos Sarah needs a carer and Social will only pay for half days, Carl’s eighteen, the twins are sixteen and Sarah’s twelve”

“Why does Sarah need a carer?”

“Uhm, she was born premature and suffered brain damage...”

“Jesus...”

“It’s cool”

It sounded like Hell; two twenty-somethings looking after four teenagers and a disabled child.

I needed a cigarette;

“Sorry; I’m gonna have to light up; but I’ll use the terrace...”

“Don’t mind me; I’ve got some good weed if you want some”

“Uhm...”

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“What?”

“I never smoked a joint before”

“Seriously?”

“Seriously; I by-passed a lot of the normal growing up stuff”

He rummaged in his bag and brought forth a tin from which he plucked a pre-made joint of some generous proportions;

“More vodka?”

“Just a nip”

Armed with recharged drinks and a joint we chilled out, I was on one of the sofas and he was parked on the coffee table, sat crossed legged as only a nineteen year old can with no fear for their cartilage. He lit up and obviously it hit the spot; he handed me the spliff;

“Take it right down and hold it”

I did and for a first timer I didn’t do too badly;

“Fuck that’s good” I exhaled with tears running down my face

“I don’t do it too much; Michael would skin me if he found out”

“Not too good for the training regime either”

“Gotta chill at times”

Ain’t that the truth.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” he asked

“I can’t remember the last time I entertained a nineteen year old”

He grinned

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“Can’t miss the bus but I’d like to see you again” he said

“You’ll need to come in for the photograph; in fact we use a pal’s studio; I’ll treat you to dinner or something after”

“Okay, sounds nice...”

“You’d really like to see me again?” I said looking confused or quizzical or just dumbfounded

“Yeah; I like you”

“Me now or in twelve weeks minus the flab”

“You now; and it can only get better”

“I like you too; you’re nothing like other teenagers I know; not that I know very many”

“Since my parents died I guess we all had to grow up fast; no time for the usual shit; had to get a job”

“What would you have done if they were still alive?”

“Fitness trainer; but gotta study and I’m hopeless with tests and stuff”

I was going to say “I’ll help you” but that sounded way too forward for the moment;

“You have to leave soon”

“Yeah” said loosely maybe even a little sadly

“I’ll call you about the shoot; it will probably be next week”

“You mean it?”

“Of course; five hundred quid in your hand and I’ll make sure you get credit; it might help with other work if the “Definition” thing doesn’t pan out”

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He looked at me, intently; finishing his drink and putting out the cigarette he got up and moved the two or so paces to the sofa; he climbed on so that he was sitting astride me;

“I wish I could stay” he breathed as he bent over enveloping us in a cloud of vodka and dope fumes

I raised my head a little and he leant in slowly for a kiss.

Why did we not do this anymore; us dinosaurs, why did we not chill out and sit crossed legged on the coffee table and plant ourselves in the lap of the men we loved or lusted over and kiss their mouths forcing our tongues into that space to taste the vodka and the dope; why did we let it all go?

“I have to go” he said as he broke of

“Let me give you the fare for a cab”

“No it’s fine”

“Please; the bus takes an hour and you skipped the last one, you’ll be late”

“Uhm, yeah, Michael might get pissed; I was meant to clean up tonight; tell you what, put it on the account and deduct it from the five hundred”

“If you like”

We got up and I gave him thirty quid;

“I’ll call you and I’ll probably see you at the gym if you’re there every day”

He kissed rather than answered and then left;

“Jesus!”

The door went;

“Sue!”

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“Who was that on the stairs and why can I smell dope?”

“Let me get you a drink and I’ll tell you a story and I swear every word is true”

Somewhat later after she’d left I got a text from Jason;

“Goodnight...x” it said

How fucking sweet was that?

“Goodnight...x” I texted back

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Chapter Four – Progress

In the past I would have gone to the gym maybe three times and then canned it blaming work pressure or a bad back; I didn't do that this time and it wasn't because I had the added incentive of seeing Jason; I actually thought I might enjoy being fit and of course I was looking beyond Jason to the next potential partner; though I didn't consider Jason my partner or even a boyfriend; we hadn't exactly dated and one blowjob doesn't count, as good as it was. I was really looking forward to hitting on guys who looked like I would in three months; guys that, in the past, I would have avoided like the plague.

I went back for the swim session the following day, but I didn't see Jason. The day after I did another workout and had a massage; my bathroom scales said I'd lost two kilos; I still hadn't seen Jason so I sorted the photo shoot and texted him the proposed date and time;

“Excellent” came the reply

“See you at the gym?”

“Tomorrow at five”

“Okay”

The said “tomorrow” was Saturday; habitually the evening I dined with friends somewhere, I cancelled citing a work deadline, Sue texted me a question mark;

“Fortune favours the brave” I texted back

“Mind your back and that dodgy knee”

I texted her a smiley face.

I spent Saturday cleaning up and getting ready, ignorant of Jason's plans, but I had hopes that he might be able to stay longer; if he wanted to stay at all; suddenly all my confidence evaporated and doubts bombarded me from every corner of the room; I was at the point of getting the bread knife out when I got a text from him;

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“I can stay if you want; Michael has given me a night off, I think he wants to entertain a lady!”

“I would be delighted if you stayed over” I texted back feeling the balloon of my self-worth suddenly re-inflate. So fragile this hold we have, like leaves on the bough; one minute you’re up there, sunning your little face and the next you’re down there being turned into compost. If you’re lucky you get to be dug into the roses and if you’re not you just lay rotting or even burned.

I prepared and then went to the gym; I was used to the format now and was even on nod and “hi” terms with a few; I still waited for the locker room to clear before I changed. It was half past four on a Saturday and the place was heaving; I had to wait for a bike for ten minutes; Matt came over;

“How are you doing?” he asked

“I’m good; getting used to it and the scales tell me I’ve lost two kilos”

“Excellent; it’s good to get some progress right at the start; it’ll keep you motivated; you’re looking more comfortable”

I got on the bike and peddled like a crazed insect; legs going at it like I was a preying mantis on amphetamines or something; but I was determined to cover ten miles in ten minutes by the end of the three months; I managed five which felt good for the first week; the treadmill was dire; I hate running largely because it wobbles, all that loose stuff; grin and bear it; I’m going to get an iPod like everyone else then the dulcet tones of Sara Vidal can bring me some salve and blot out the constant clink of the weights as they were hoisted and then lowered; I fucking hate that noise.

I jogged two miles, just and had to sit for fifteen minutes, Jason came through looking like Apollo after a seriously good work out and a spliff and this was before he had started;

“Hey” he cried

I held up the bottle by way of a salute seeing as there was no spare breath for making a sound except for the wheezing. I watched him and saw a body that a Swiss watch maker could have made; everything was moving and

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oiled, the body of a Swiss watch and the face of an angel; “he is staying over” I said to myself and quickly got on the rowing machine to quell the feelings in my groin. I finished there and started using some weights and he came over;

“Okay?” he asked

“Yes, thank you, I rode five miles today and jogged for two and rowed five hundred metres...”

“Well done...you need to tuck your arms in to your side a little more as you lift that”

“You okay?”

“Oh yeah; Matt said one of the “Definition” people might be in tonight”

“Good luck, but I can’t believe you won’t win”

“Thanks” he said and he kissed me on the cheek as he loped off to punish a dumb bell; I dropped the handle bar like contraption I had hold of and the weights made an almighty clang as they fell; everyone looked over;

“Sorry” I said to no one in particular, “he’s staying over, he’s staying over, he’s staying over...” I chanted to myself as I hoisted ten kilos keeping my arms tucked in tight and I felt the muscle really work without the burn of the strain I had been risking.

I did my circuit and warmed down for ten minutes with a bottle of water, Jason was hoisting and pressing and pushing like a Spartan and only now breaking out into a sweat and Jesus it was so fucking horny watching those rivulets trickle down his body; he saw me ogling and grinned;

“Nice form” I said which seemed to be the compliment dished out by everyone to everyone else, except me.

He grinned more widely.

I headed for the sauna and it was packed but there was a space on the top row in the middle and I clambered up as elegantly as possibly, parking

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myself between two Gods who had bodies sculpted from marble and perfect teeth. I kept my towel wrapped round me the whole time I was in the sweat box but most guys sat on their towel so wherever you looked you got an eye full of groin; neatly trimmed pubic hair around deliciously fat shafts and balls that, in the heat, hung low; oh God! Someone would get up and then we were presented with a perfect peachy arse as it disappeared out to be replaced by a perfect groin slung beneath washboard abs and pecs bigger than Sue's breasts, all glowing and perfectly smooth and lightly tanned.

I use conversation to get myself through life; on the basis that if I talk and say something interesting then the guy, usually it's a guy, will be blinded to the rest;

"Is anyone else entering that "Definition" competition; apparently one of the editors is popping in tonight" I said to the hosts of Earthly delight; there was a moment or two of silence then someone said;

"I was thinking about it but ten thousand guys entered last year's...it's really tough"

"Are you?" some said to me

"Are you serious?"

"They have a section on the most improved; you should get photographs taken now and in three months"

"No; I don't think so; I just want to lose a bit of weight and tone up..."

It was enough to open the flood gates a little and the chatter was very pleasant; if 28 percent of couples meet at the gym then presumably it wasn't through sitting in complete silence in a steamy sauna with a towel wrapped around you like a death shroud. One of the guys beside me adjusted his position and out of the corner of my eye I saw that he was semi-hard; I sensed him looking out of the corner of his and his hand which had been stationery on his thigh started to travel up and down it very slowly. Jason came in which broke the spell; he headed up to the top deck;

"Shove up, there's room for a small one" he chirped

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He sat between me and the semi-hard one but I was still pressed up against him and the other God sat on the other side of me; flesh against flesh, heat, thoughts of what was coming later; I needed to distract myself from getting all unnecessary;

“How was your work out?” I asked inclining my head towards him very slightly

“Great; reached my goals for this stage...you?”

“Great too; thanks for the tip, it helped”

“I can have carbs tonight; you wanna eat out someplace?” he said

Seemingly everyone was going to be in on our blossoming relationship;

“Noodles at the place in Queensway if you like”

“Love noodles”

A few glances from some of the other guys were definitely of the “sick as a parrot” kind but one or two were of the “you sad rich fuck” kind; still; I tried to look disinterested but ego would not let go completely;

“Shall we get going then?” I asked

“Yeah; that guy might be here now”

We upped and left; he looking like Apollo dipped in lube and I like his rubbery and blotchy counterpart.

We showered on opposite sides of the room, for the most part I had my back to him; there was a chance if I doused myself in cold water I would put the fire out and send Bertie back to flaccid land;

“You okay?” he said

“Yeah; I’m fine”

“Why have you got your back to me?”

The transit of Mars

“Why do you think?”

“Ah; don’t worry; lots of guys get a hard on when they work out; increased blood flow, saturated with endorphins...”

“Surrounded by Gods with loins out of a Corbin Fisher flick”

“Yeah; that helps too; don’t be embarrassed; it’s a huge compliment”

“I wish it was”

“It’s big enough”

I changed tack and turned round;

“What will you say to this guy if you see him? You still have to submit an application right?”

“Oh yeah; I’ll ask him if he thinks I stand a chance and what I can do to increase the odds of getting picked”

Some other guy walked in;

“Hey” he said

“Hi” we said

“That guy’s here; he’s hanging out at the smoothie bar”

“Shit; I gotta go; see you in a minute babe” he said to me and rushed out; I carried on rinsing my hair

“You’re dating Jason?” the guy said in disbelief

“Apparently; don’t ask me how it happened; I think he might be very short-sighted or possibly going prematurely senile”

“Why would you say that?” he purred and he moved one shower closer

I just looked, doubtful that it needed to be spelled out;

The transit of Mars

“He’s hot and cute but very mature” the guy said, “give yourself some credit”

“Thanks; I might”

“If it doesn’t work out with him then let me know” he said as he lathered his groin

“I will” keeping the hysterical laughter in check; I stood up to the shower rose to give the face and hair a final rinse, closing my eyes tight, when I stepped back the guy was nearer than he had been;

“Pity you gotta run; I had no plans tonight” he said kind of seductively

“I’m sure Jason and I will last exactly one date; then I’ll be free”

“Don’t be so sure; but I’ll keep it warm for ya”

I left and in danger of breaking out into a sweat all over again.

I legged it out to the smoothie bar to see Jason talking to the guy; a youngish guy, say thirty-five, dressed very casually but looking uncomfortable, like I used to before Sue force fed me a Zara account card and made me watch every episode of “Upgrade” with that Gok fellow who I really like. I went over to order a juice;

“I’ll go and see him now” I heard Jason say and he hopped to it in the direction of Matt’s office;

“Love these keen guys” the man said

“Yeah; well, it’s a decent prize”

“Oh; you know about the competition?”

“Yeah; the guys have been talking about it, especially him”

The transit of Mars

I was keeping deliberately coy wondering if I would harm the lad's chances if the bloke realised that Jason was interested in mutton rather than lamb;

"I might even let his application go through..."

"Sorry?"

"If he wants it badly enough he'll do almost anything I'm sure; they always do"

"You're not serious?"

"Of course; how else would I get to fuck a guy like that; it happens all the time"

"Shouldn't it just be decided on merit?" I said innocently but I detected a little steam rising in my morality boiler;

"Merit? If he's the best then he'll win won't he?" the guy said, kind of smearing the words

"You'll shine him on that he has a chance, fuck him and dump his application in the bin"

"You're just jealous"

Those teeth marks are still visible on my tongue if you look closely;

I said nothing more and turned away; Jason re-appeared and the guy gave him a card, saying;

"Call me when you want to submit; I'll fast track the process for you; I think you've got a good chance"

He disappeared and Jason turned to me;

"Did you hear what he said?"

The transit of Mars

“I did and I’m really pleased; I said you’d win” trying to keep the voice buoyant but I was wrestling with the one question which was “do I tell him?”, “let’s get those noodles and I have something to celebrate”

“What?”

“I saw a guy who looked worse than me”

“I don’t believe you”

“Cheeky bastard”

I had seen a guy who looked worse than me and I was euphoric, no longer the newbie, no longer at the bottom of the food chain. My kit had been washed a few times now; my all-in-one shower gel and shampoo bottle was no longer full, my bag had a scuff mark and my trainers smelled like a dead animal; I had arrived!

We headed to the very nice noodle place and seeing as it was relatively early, about seven, not yet packed to the gunnels. We got a nice table at the back away from the door where everyone waiting has to mill about;

“So Michael is entertaining tonight; it must be difficult for him?”

“Yeah; he sent everyone out and Yvonne took Sarah over to see an aunt, he’s cooking for her so it must be serious...”

“Do the others have girlfriends and boyfriends?”

“Yvonne has a steady bloke, Dean; he works at the Tesco bakery; Carl shags anything with a pulse, the twins are dating twins”

“That sounds a bit odd”

“I thought that too”

We nattered and noodled and for the first time in such a long time I was relaxed and so not self-conscious, worrying about everything and if the guy opposite was having a good time or bored or whether he would come back

The transit of Mars

and if he would mind if I smoked and a hundred similar paralysing questions; we just ate and chatted like we had done it for years and years. It was possibly the first time I had actually spoken to a teenager at length, apparently they are normal and of the same species.

“Do you still want to stay over?” I asked not wishing to crash and burn

“You bet!”

“Good” and I must have perked up

“Did you think I was gonna bail on you after you fed me?”

“Gracious no; but I can’t believe you want to spend your Saturday evening with me”

“I like you, a lot, you’re actually very funny but you don’t know it and I’m dead proud of you for sticking at the regime; it’s really hard at times”

“Thanks...so do you want to stay here or go back to mine; I’ve got a freezer full of ice cream; an espresso machine and “Avatar 2” on Blue Ray...”

“Get your coat darlin’, you’ve pulled”

We laughed lavishly and I couldn’t remember the last time, with anyone, except maybe Sue.

We left and went up and demolished a carton of ice cream, albeit it was “lupinesse” and downed a few drinks with a decent coffee; Jason supplied the chill factor and we slouched on the sofa/coffee table ensemble together to watch the movie;

“That was nearly as good as the first” I concluded

“Fucking ace soundtrack”

“Do you want some music?”

“Dare I ask?”

The transit of Mars

“I do have Adele...”

“Cool...”

He rolled another joint as I poured a night cap and slipped the CD into the machine;

“Thank you” I said

“For what?”

“Coming out with me tonight, staying in with me tonight, everything really...”

“Relax sweetheart and suck on that” he said as he handed over the rollie

“When are you going to call that guy and submit your application?”

“I’ll be ready in about six weeks, maybe eight; deadline’s not for three months”

“What’s his name?”

“Craig Lester; do you know him?”

“I don’t think so; I know a lot of people in publishing but his name doesn’t ring a bell”

I parked that information and my quandary for later because I was feeling especially horny; I sat with my feet up on the coffee table and when Jason came back from using the loo he dived on the couch and put his head on my lap; I had one arm on the end of the sofa with my glass in my hand and one on his chest, we shared the joint and just let Adele fill our heads, such a beautiful voice she’s got.

“You did say I wasn’t going to get this treat until I reached my targets”

“I can’t wait that long” Jason said

“What do you like?”

The transit of Mars

“I want you to fuck me...”

I must have looked surprised; I was surprised;

“Did you think I was a top?”

“Uhm, yeah, to be honest”

“Are you?”

“Versatile, it depends on the guy and the mood”

“What kind of mood are you in?”

“The undressing kind, not that I haven’t already watched you get undressed, and I’ve seen you naked, for quite a lot of the time as I think of it; let me undress you but call me old-fashioned, I’d prefer it if we went to the bedroom; it’s more intimate and the massage oil is in the bedside drawer...”

“I love a massage” he said

“C’mon then”

He got up and pulled me up only to embrace me for a kiss first;

“I want you” he whispered in my ear and it was five minutes before we surfaced and moved in the direction of the bedroom. I held his hand and we wandered down the hall, once inside I dimmed the lights a little and held him again, it was just so good to hold another body against mine and to feel him hugging me. He had a tee shirt on so I pulled it up over his head;

“Jesus; you’re awesome up close”

He was; like a sculptor had created him, not out of cold marble; out of warm clay;

“It doesn’t put you off?” he asked, “Some guys don’t like it; they say it’s too hard or intimidating”

“Let me see...”

The transit of Mars

We both chuckled and then laughed; the joint was making us silly as well as amorous. I rubbed my hands over his upper body; it was perfect; more so because he was standing there in front of me; not some airbrushed picture in a magazine. He was firm; in places rock hard, but warm and smooth, naturally hairless and blemish free; he didn't have any tattoos, which was surprising;

“What?” he quizzed

“You don't have any tattoos”

“Not until after I've made it”

“Your skin is perfect...” and I kissed his chest just where his muscle started to bulge out from the collar bone

“Take your shirt off” he murmured

I put my hands on the first button;

“I've never done this before” he said very quietly

“You mean...”

“Yeah; just fooling around and sucking guys off, I've never fucked”

If that wasn't astounding enough the fact that he wanted his first time to be with me was mind blowing;

“You want to...”

“With you; yes...”

We pressed ourselves so hard to each other and I wanted to take him inside my body; to protect him somehow; and if I was honest, also to possess him, entirely. Things moved up a gear but I stalled because I wanted him to savour it and I wanted to savour it, for all kinds of reasons;

“I'll be gentle but it probably won't be pain free” I kissed into his ear

“I want to feel it; feel you invade that space, feel full of you”

The transit of Mars

I took the shirt off like he'd asked and he rubbed his hands over the less than perfect skin;

He looked into my eyes smiling, with his whole being, an innocent, virgin smile, expectant and excited. I knelt down and lifted each leg, tugging off his socks and then placed my hands on the belt buckle, looking up I said;

“Thank you for choosing me”

“I thought you'd think I was a slut for blowing you in the changing rooms; but I couldn't help it and I didn't want you to forget me”

Was it possible that we had swapped bodies in this process? No; nineteen or ninety, we all need to feel loved and wanted;

“I won't ever forget you”

I pulled the belt free and undid the top button, moving to the next, his bulge spasmed, I continued to undo the buttons then I pulled his jeans down helping him to step out of them, he was wearing trunks not briefs and his cock was pinned to his body by the tight fabric but it was straining like a wild mustang; I leant in and kissed it through the fabric, smelling his fabric conditioner and deodorant spray; I kissed it again; rather I kneaded it with my lips feeling the ridge; then I nuzzled his balls, they were hot and heavy. I looked up as I hooked my fingers over the waistband; his eyes were closed and he was biting his lip; his hands were on his chest and he was gently rubbing his nipples; I pulled down and his cock sprang out like an arm, he took a sharp little intake of breath, anticipating my next action which was to envelope him in my mouth; I did but I didn't suck, I licked, tasting his pre-cum, salty sweet like mixed up popcorn. He was big; actually not that much bigger than me, he was one of those guys whose dick stays relatively long and fat even when flaccid whereas mine grows to a respectable length and girth when hard but practically disappears when I'm soft.

I rested my hands on his waist; he had muscles where I didn't think we had muscles and bumps and grooves and, well, it was a landscape not a body, wind carved limestone, or formed of snow that had partially melted in the sun and then re-frozen, smooth and glistening, hard and polished like the hand rail at Victoria tube station; I sucked his head gently then licked the shaft and took

The transit of Mars

each heavy testicle in my mouth and rolled it around, I could taste his shower gel; his hands descended to my shoulders to steady himself and he rocked slightly back and forth emitting purr like groans.

“I want to cum inside you” he said with difficulty

“You want it both ways?”

“Yeah; so I know what I like best”

“Do you want to fuck me first?”

He looked shy;

“What?”

“I might not be any good at it”

He was worried about his performance; I'd have paid to have him wipe his sweat on my gym top;

“Take your time; do what you feel is right, what makes you feel, well, amazing; it's pretty simple really, I'll let you know how it feels for me...just use plenty of lube because you're pretty thick and I'm tight”

“Do we have to use a condom?”

I must have started;

“Uhm, it's usual practice between men who don't know each other's sexual history; I'm guessing I don't have to lecture you on safe sex?”

“No; we did that at school; but I'm a virgin”

“And I'm not, although it has been a while, quite a while, if we do it without a condom then we both get tested”

“Okay”

“Let's lay down and take this slow”

The transit of Mars

We lowered ourselves onto the bed and the foreplay commenced in earnest, I stopped when I ran out of saliva;

“Put some of the lube on your fingers and push them in gently; it’ll make it easier”

He spread some lube on his fingers and I turned over, lifting my arse slightly;

“Massage it in”

“Is it clean?” he said awkwardly

“Yes” I smiled, “I douched this afternoon”

“What’s that?”

“I cleaned up, you know, flushed it out”

“Ah; that’s what that means; cool!”

Oh to be innocent but it suggested he wasn’t going to be clean and I hate a shitty cock, let’s worry about that a bit later;

He rubbed gingerly at first and then more confidently, pushing in a little, first with one then two fingers; holy fuck it felt good, more than good;

“Go a little deeper and stretch your fingers to widen the passage”

He did and I had to hold my breath for a second because he had very strong fingers that effortlessly opened me up;

“Like that” he asked

“Perfectly...now lube yourself up and get into position”

Giving instructions was incredibly horny, try it next time!

I felt his weight shift and he lowered himself onto me using the opportunity to kiss my neck;

The transit of Mars

“This is awesome” he said

“Wait until you’re inside...probe until you find the spot then push very slowly until the head is in then pause whilst I relax a bit”

He probed and rubbed his cock up and down the crack a few times which seemingly gave him a lot of pleasure judging by the noises then he found the centre of the target and stopped for a second;

“Push gently but steadily” I coaxed

He did and the head parted me like a knife through butter, but then his groin was being propelled by 70kg of pure muscle with the added incentive of being its first time; I wish I could remember the first time; drunk and practically in a coma; the pain numbed by alcohol, an older man who just wanted to dump his load and get the hell out.

“I’m in” he said almost gleefully

“When I say, push until you feel the resistance then stop and pull back a little”

I breathed deeply and then breathed out and as I did I gave him the thumbs up;

“Push”

A hot knife through butter I should have said and Jesus he felt big;

“Stop” I yelped

“Sorry, did I hurt you?”

“No; just gotta relax...push now”

He went all the way;

“Holy shit” he said to himself

Yeah, well, it’s why we all do it!

The transit of Mars

“Thrust slowly at first until you feel it get easier then hammer away until you cum or either of us passes out”

He sniggered and adjusted his position to find that extra inch then he started, much like a steam engine, very slowly at first and then the wheels found their grip on the rails and the steam was building nicely so the piston drove faster and the wheels turned quicker and the huge mass of that engine moved forward like a giant beast waking up, then, like the driver of a beautiful Italian sports car, he found the gear shift and moved her up a notch, foot pressing down on the gas, revs building then the road opens out and the driver punches the accelerator and the car leaps forward and the engine is screaming and the exhaust is roaring and the rev counter hits the red sector and they are flying. He pumped so hard and fast there was a danger he'd set light to the sheets and he didn't flag even after his bucket sized load was pumped out which I felt as three dull thuds in my innards, eventually he collapsed, panting and moaning like he'd been shot; my arse was on fire; nerves that had lain dormant for years were awake and asking questions, soft tissue screamed for mercy, my prostate gave itself the last rites.

I couldn't move and he couldn't move, I had too many nerve to brain messages to process and he was in oblivion, infused with the ecstasy, somewhere above Heaven, floating on air and feeling like every single molecule in his body had had its own orgasm. I turned on my side to see the recovery and be the first to smile into his eyes;

“That was amazing” I said

He had an arm over his eyes but he was smiling;

“Time for a break?”

He just nodded so I headed out to grab the vodka and the cigarettes, returning he was back in the room and laying on his side facing the door;

“Oh my God” he said

“Pretty fucking great isn't it?”

“It was totally fucking awesomely amazing”

The transit of Mars

“Yes you were”

“I think you had something to do with it too”

“It was so fucking horny giving you instructions at the start”

“Will you still fuck me?”

“If you want me to”

“I do, I have to feel the other side of that”

We sipped and had a puff, regrouping for the second act, the only downer was that he hadn't douched and I was aching to get my tongue in as far as possible; maybe I should just suggest it and even show him how to do it; someone has to;

“Do you want to douche?” I asked matter of fact

He looked a little embarrassed;

“Really, it's okay; you need to know how to do it; it doesn't hurt and then we'll feel more comfortable getting intimate; I want to rim you”

“Rim?”

“Probe your anus with my tongue; it's the best feeling”

“Shit!”

“Exactly what we don't want; so take a dump”

“Did at the gym, always do after a workout”

“Good to know, so we're ready for stage two...let me show you what we use”

I grabbed the bulb and a clean nozzle from the bathroom;

The transit of Mars

“I fill this with warm water; screw on the nozzle; insert the nozzle into my anus, squeeze the bulb, remove the nozzle, the water and other “material” are flushed out; repeat until water runs clean, wash and dry, hey presto, ready for action”

“Can you help me?”

“Of course, I hated having to find all this out by myself”

We decamped to the bathroom; this was as intimate as it gets;

“Sit on the toilet and then lean forward”

He did;

“So perfect” I said as I wet wiped the area first, “okay; this won’t hurt, I’m inserting the nozzle now...there we go...squeezing now...nozzle out...sit back down and let it all flush out”

“Fucking Hell”

“I like doing it to be honest” I said, “I’m just going to flush because we don’t really want to see what came out”

I flushed;

“Try it yourself?”

“Yeah; it was pretty simple”

“You have a go and I’m gonna leave you to it but holler if you need any help”

“Can we shower together after?”

“Of course and you’re leaking out of me now so I wanna clean-up”

I wandered back into the bedroom to tidy up a bit and get ready for the next act; I heard laughter from the bathroom; no tears, not scared, not in pain;

The transit of Mars

I wished everyone's first time could be like his; fewer scars can only be a good thing;

“I think I'm done” he shouted

“Right you are; get the shower going...”

I stepped into the bathroom and he was already in the cubicle having a good wash;

“I'm just gonna let you come out, excuse the noise; it can be very loud and wet” I said as I squatted over the loo and his triple load of cum was ejected with a good quantity of air; he laughed but wasn't watching;

“It'll be the same for you”

“Maybe I'll keep it inside me forever”

“Maybe you will”

I eased into the shower and straightaway we were kissing. Two men in a confined space; heat, water, soap, an erection, a virgin arse; yeah, it was so going to happen that way. I fucked him in the shower; and he fucked me again but then he's nineteen and I'm sure we could have gone for a hat-trick but I demanded time out and we crashed into bed glowing and spent like meteorites that had landed in the Arctic, sinking into the ice, our sleep was dreamless for our dreams had come true.

The transit of Mars

Chapter Five – Lunch and with it a host of questions

“Good morning” said I being the one who is forty and sleeps less well especially when there is a strange man in the bed

“Hey; what time is it?” said he being the strange man, the nineteen year old assistant from JB with the body of Atlas, who’d just given me his virginity

“Eight...”

“I have to leave by ten”

“No worries”

“Sunday lunch; can’t miss it, we always have lunch together, it’s like a law and Michael and Yvonne cook; you could come with me, guests are allowed...”

“Uhm...”

“Too much too soon?”

“A little...”

I could see he wanted me to say “yes” and seeing as I’d dispensed with most of the normal rules perhaps it was the right thing; but it did kind of indicate that we were an item; were we an item?

“I know what you’re thinking” Jason said, “Older guy...”

“I was thinking that it says we’re an item and I wasn’t sure that we were yet”

“Do you want to be?”

There it was.

“I’m forty and old enough to be your father, it’s such a cliché, I don’t want to embarrass you is what I’m trying to say, yes of course I want you to be my boyfriend, all my friends will think I’ve gone mad and most of yours will

The transit of Mars

too, I think you're perfect and Michael will probably gut me and everyone will point at us and some may say cruel things and I love you..."

"You're so cool"

I sat defenceless just looking at him, the perfect specimen of manhood with a gorgeous hard manhood;

"Do you want me to move in?"

I choked; he looked a little crestfallen;

"Do you?" pushing the question back so I had time to think or try to remember what rational thought was

He looked so cute just sat there;

"I'd still have to do my share at home..."

"Of course and here"

"Can I move in?"

"Yes"

Which was the best and simplest answer under the circumstances, anything else would have telegraphed a million doubts and the voice of reason woke up and was about to say "excuse me; how long have you known him, he's a child"

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course; we'll bring some stuff back today"

"No; did you mean what you said before?"

"Yes" I said

"No one said that to me before"

The transit of Mars

“I never believed in love at first sight; lust at first sight, I have these huge feelings that I just want to protect you and see you shine like a star and hold you and kiss you and make love to you and take you to far flung places and look upon seas and deserts and mountains and mighty rivers and temples and sleep under the stars and trek through wildernesses and sail across oceans and make love to you and hold you and kiss your mouth and...”

“I love you too; I did from the second you said “excuse me do you have this is in a larger size”...”

I reached out because I needed to feel him; be sure I wasn't still asleep; he reached out too, meteors colliding in the atmosphere and in the intense heat welding themselves into a new and beautiful shape for scientists to ponder for decades; we kissed and just looked into each other's eyes and then kissed again and in the process we managed to fuck each other, it was both frantic and gentle, easy and intense, touching and sleazy, it was everything you could cram into that crucible and heat to 400 degrees. We lay spent, which was saying something for him;

“You should text Michael and let him know I'm joining you today...”

“Yeah, we should get ready soon”

“Do we tell them?”

“We won't need to say much about anything; it's not like you're meeting my mum and dad, it's more free and easy; Michael's only strict over keeping the place clean and tidy, he expects us to live our own lives and to respect each other”

“Does anyone have a problem with the fact that you're gay?”

“Carl did but that was because we always used to hang out together, the terrible twos Michael called us; I think he felt betrayed but he's cool about it now; no one cares about it”

How liberating!

The transit of Mars

“We should get going and I’ll drive us over if we need to bring back some stuff”

We got ready and headed out; I picked up wine as we left and stopped to buy flowers for Yvonne. I drove; a rarity in itself and as I didn’t know Hounslow Jason directed me; tell me why I thought we would be heading onto a grim little social housing estate to ascend to a sad dirty flat with ragged nets and overflowing bins? We didn’t; we headed to a relatively quiet street and a reasonably sized semi-detached house with a small neat front garden and sparkling clean windows; we parked up and I tried to park all my other assumptions. I must have been dawdling by the driver’s door fiddling with the key;

“It’ll be fine” Jason said

“We could lie about my age...”

“It won’t matter”

I straightened myself up and walked round to join him on the path; he kissed me; there in full daylight outside his home in a respectable neighbourhood;

“C’mon; or we’ll have to peel the spuds”

We went in and from the second we crossed the threshold my life changed forever.

“Is that you Jason?” someone hollered from the kitchen and I guessed it was Yvonne;

“Yeah and Chambers is with me”

She appeared in the hall; a very motherly looking twenty-six year old woman who looked a little harassed but beamed at the sight of him and held out her hand to me;

“I’m Yvonne; excuse the chaos, Sunday lunch for thirteen, maybe fourteen if Dean gets here”

The transit of Mars

“Hi; I’m Chambers, I’m very pleased to meet you; perhaps I can help”

“Where’s Michael?” Jason asked

“He’s taken Sarah to the park...”

Getting lunch ready for thirteen took care of the rest; introductions were impromptu and chaotic; I was pleased to be doing something useful; Jason and Charlotte laid the table, Carl quizzed me on my personal life; David only want to know if I’d met JK Rowling, Carl’s girlfriend of the moment, Natasha, was as quiet as a mouse, the twin’s dates were not yet there; Michael came back with Sarah; pandemonium as he wheeled her in for she was wheel chair bound but she’d espied Jason so was very excited; eventually it all calmed down and Michael, Yvonne and I were left in the kitchen finishing off the preparations whilst the rest were elsewhere; Jason was changing Sarah.

“Shall we open a bottle of wine?” I said, feeling the urge to cut to the quick and get the awkwardness out of the way

“Good idea” said Yvonne

“What is it you do Chambers?” said Michael

We spent the next fifteen minutes getting all the personal details out and aired;

“Jason’s told us about the photo shoot; he’s very excited about it actually; do you think he’ll get more work?” asked Yvonne

“I’m sure and I’m going to introduce him to the agency we use for models; but he really wants to be a fitness trainer doesn’t he?”

“Yeah; but he’s not so good on the academic side” said Michael

“I’ll help him with whatever he wants to do but I don’t think anything else will happen until after the “Definition” thing”

“He’s working hard enough for it” said Michael

The transit of Mars

There was a pause for a sip;

“I hope this doesn’t sound too condescending but you guys work incredibly hard; it can’t be easy; I think your parents would be very proud; he, they, are a credit to you”

“Thank you” said Yvonne but Michael was a little quiet

“It isn’t easy” he said, “But we manage somehow; there’s just never enough time for everyone”

“Or for yourself I bet, Jason said you were entertaining someone last night...”

“Vanessa; she and I have been seeing each other for a few months; I’m introducing her to everyone today; she’s picking up her lad Ronan from the ex as we speak...”

“How long have you and Dean been together Yvonne?”

“Seems like years; it is years, six I think; I wonder he puts up with it sometimes, I’m sure he’d like to settle and get married and have a child of his own”

“Maybe you will”

“Sarah is getting more difficult to manage; she’s as good as gold but of course she’s growing and getting heavier and I’m finding it harder to lift her; she won’t ever be any different”

“More time and more space” said Michael to himself as much as to us and Yvonne gave me a look which said “he’s a little depressed right now”

“Shall we muster the troops for lunch?” I said as a way of avoiding the doldrums

“Yeah; lunch is nearly ready and Dean won’t be long and Vanessa will be here shortly too” said Yvonne upbeat for Michael’s benefit; she left to whip up the laggards

The transit of Mars

“Is there anything I can do Michael?”

He looked into my eyes and there was a sadness there;

“Look after him”

“Don’t worry about that; is there anything I can do for you?”

“Wrap us all up and take us all off to the country for a holiday...”

“I imagine that would be a tonic; are you planning a getaway, you and Vanessa?”

“No; too much to do; too expensive and too much to organise with Sarah; an afternoon’s peace and quiet would be better for me”

I popped a few ideas in my think about later pigeon hole and topped up his wine which coincided with Vanessa’s arrival with her lad and Dean’s arrival with the week’s supply of bread and cakes, finally we were all sat down; fourteen of us;

“Would you say Grace please Chambers?” said Yvonne

“Willing...Father we thank Thee for this food, for health and strength and all things good. May others all these blessings share, and hearts be grateful everywhere...Amen...”

“Amen” came the collective response

“Thank you; now, guests firsts...” ordered Yvonne

We ate and it felt like Christmas for me, Jason fed Sarah and everyone was talking, except Ronan who was very shy. As you might expect the adults, defined by those over twenty, gravitated to one end of the table eventually and the rest to the other, Ronan cottoned on to Jason, and Natasha plated Sarah’s hair much to her delight it seemed. The adults took coffee in the conservatory;

“Thank you that was delicious” I said

The transit of Mars

“You’re welcome” said Michael

“Whilst we’re all here together, and I know I’m the newbie, but I have an idea, what do you think of renting a farmhouse for a few weeks in the summer and everyone being together; I’m thinking, was thinking, about my holiday just before I met Jason?”

“Would it be very expensive?” asked Vanessa, “we’d need so many bedrooms”

“I have friends with a farm they rent out in Evesham, beautiful and so peaceful and there’s always plenty to do for the youngsters on a farm when there are animals to feed and tractors to drive”

“What do you think Michael?” asked Yvonne

“Could we all get the time off together?”

“And it would have to be in the school holidays” said Vanessa

“What if I book it for say a month and then everyone tries to get down and I’m sure there would be a patch when we’d all be there but otherwise we could drop in and out, depending on work”

“And Sarah?”

“I’ll invite my friend Sue, she’s an occupational therapist, she’d love to help I’m sure”

“Let’s think about it” said Michael and I could see the wheels turning; the difficulty for him was; would always be, to let go and accept help, he was tired and depressed and in dire need of a break or I could see he would crack pretty soon if he didn’t get one.

“I’ll phone them and see if it’s free, from mid-August to mid-September, and that gives us time to plan for it if we decide to do it...does anyone else smoke, I need one” I said as I got up to go out into the garden; Michael followed, I guessed he would be a smoker, and Dean;

The transit of Mars

“It would cost a mint though, wouldn’t it?” said Dean

“It won’t cost you a penny; I’d have spent the same on my holiday abroad...”

“You can’t pay for it Chambers, not all of it” said Michael

“Everyone can chip in for food; but I’ll rent the farmhouse; the kids will love it being outside and doing farm things...”

“Teenagers, Chambers” said Michael

“There’s internet and a phone and a pub for the over eighteens”

“I’d give my right arm to get away; we haven’t for five years, not since mum and dad died”

Fucking five years!

“Then it’s long overdue”

“What if you and Jason aren’t together by then?” said Dean

“Ask me one on ancient Greek mythology...who knows Dean...everything has changed since we met...”

“Let’s decide by next Sunday and announce it to the hordes if we agree it’s a good idea”

“Great!”

Amazingly everyone leant a hand to clear up but seemingly that was the rule, thankfully there were two dishwashers; by four we were all spread out and chilling nicely; Jason collared me, who, up until then had been looking after Sarah and Ronan, in deep chinwag with Carl and Natasha and had been called into private conference with Michael and Yvonne; he was still smiling when he ambled over;

“Hey babe” he said, “Everything okay?”

The transit of Mars

“Perfectly; thank you for bringing me over, it was really great to meet everyone”

“Michael likes you, Yvonne loves you, Carl thinks you quite cool, and the twins think you’re too old for me... ”

“No one would ever be perfect in everyone’s eyes”

“I know; so, I can move over, Michael and Yvonne said I could but I still have to do my share”

“I know, but it will be easier with another pair of hands won’t it?”

“What do you mean?”

“If we’re a couple Jason then we do things for each other...”

“You mean...”

“Like Dean helps and brings over the bread and the cakes and I’m sure Vanessa will do something similar; we’ll take Sarah to the park on a Sunday so Michael can spend time with her and Ronan and whatever...”

“You’re gonna buy into all this?”

“Yes; it wouldn’t work any other way; I’m sure there are plenty of men my age that would love to have you all to themselves; Jason in a box, leave the family in Hounslow; too disruptive and too “real”; I like families; I don’t have one who cares about me the way yours cares about you”

“Enough or I’ll be in floods”

I was sat in one of the armchairs and he plopped himself in my lap; we kissed on the deal;

“Get a room” shouted Carl

Jason gave him the finger whilst still bonded to my lips. Ah; families!

The transit of Mars

He eventually went off to pack up the things he wanted to bring over and I helped Yvonne get some tea ready for though we couldn't eat anymore apparently teenagers could and it was a fucking life saver that Dean worked in the bakery, tea, crumpets, sandwiches and cake went out but no formality, Michael and Vanessa had taken off to the park with Ronan, Carl and Natasha disappeared for half an hour, the two sets of twins were playing something on the Xbox with someone else in Istanbul and another in Oslo; Sarah was asleep and Yvonne and Dean were now talking in the conservatory;

“Do you think he might win this competition?” asked Dean

“He has every chance and I haven't seen anyone else who comes close, but ten thousand guys enter the competition so it's gonna be tough...”

“He'll be very disappointed if he doesn't” said Yvonne

“That's why I've got him the modeling assignment, it might show him that there are other options but I'm still thinking about the sports and fitness trainer thing, I can help him with the written side but I don't think he thinks he can do it”

“He needs a career” said Dean

“For sure and modeling is short lived, but how do we convince him that he could to the course?”

“Michael needs to talk to him”

“I don't think Michael thinks he can do it either”

“You're right there” said Yvonne

“One step at a time, he's training hard and I don't want to break his concentration, he's moving over some stuff and we're just starting out; he's got the photo shoot next week and the intro to the agency...that's probably enough”

“I haven't seen him look quite so happy or Carl look quite so jealous!”

The transit of Mars

Things were winding up and once Michael got back with Vanessa and Ronan we kind of had a group get together so Michael being the one in charge could spell out what was happening during the week and who was doing what; Sarah woke up and got a bit restless so I just held her hand, she was mesmerized I think. Next came the sorting out of financial business; the twin's phone top ups seemingly the most important and largest expense! Jason was working and Carl was part time as he finished his A levels, so they took care of themselves but they also had to make a contribution; Yvonne went through the rota for cleaning and for Sarah and everyone had a chance to say what they were doing, special requests and the like; it was so unlike anything I had experienced before. Jason told everyone he was moving over to mine and about the photo shoot. Yvonne and Michael paid the household bills and the next birthday, which was Sarah's in two weeks' time, was discussed, she was going to be thirteen;

“Why don't you let me sort that for you?” I said, directed at Michael

“Could you?” tinged with fear and doubt but also an enormous cry of joy and relief

“Of course; let me sort something and I'll phone to firm up”

“Thanks, anyone else for anything else?” said Michael, “No; good, meeting closed; same time next week”

We said our goodbyes and Michael collared me just as Jason was loading the boot with his bags;

“It was very nice to meet you” he said and I detected more than just thanks for the wine and flowers, “he's kind of special as I'm sure you already know...”

“He is, and there isn't anything I won't do to make him happy”

“Don't give him all his own way!”

“I won't; so, think about the farm and I'll call to firm up on the birthday party, no doubt I'll see you next Sunday”

The transit of Mars

“For sure, any time”

“Goodbye Yvonne”

“Bye Chambers; thank you for helping out”

“My pleasure”

I went to the car so Jason could receive his dose of brotherly and sisterly advice”

We left.

“Do you drive?” I said

“No; love to, no money for lessons though”

“That was really great; everyone together”

“Can you really sort out Sarah’s party?”

“Of course; I’ll recruit the gang; gay men with too much disposable income and their best girlfriends; it’ll be wonderful, if a little camp, but I promise I won’t make you wear fairy wings”

“Are we really doing this?”

“Your stuff’s in the boot isn’t it?”

“I guess...”

“What?”

“Won’t your friends think I’m too young for you?”

“Some of them might like some of yours will think I’m too old for you; it’s up to us; be honest and respectful and make each other happy, it’s the way it works when you’re nineteen, twenty nine, forty and ninety nine”

“I love you; I can’t believe I’m saying those words to someone”

The transit of Mars

“I love you too and I can’t believe it either but apparently it’s true”

“Will you come to the photo shoot with me?”

“Damn right I’m going with you”

“Thanks!”

“What’s the most difficult thing you can think of right now?”

There was a pause whilst we both cogitated on that;

“Focusing too much on the gym and forgetting about everything else”

“You’re allowed a bit of that; it’s important and you’re working so hard; I have work too and that can be intense at times”

“What about you?”

“Being forty”

“You can’t help that”

“Acting forty”

“Don’t try and be nineteen, just be yourself”

“If you leave the toilet seat up then of course I’ll cut off your hands”

“Being tired and not wanting to fuck all night”

“I’ll pace myself”

“I meant me”

“I’ll massage you instead”

“Running between Hounslow, here, work and the gym”

The transit of Mars

“We’ll rotate; who’s to say you stay in that job; you might get another as a model and couples do move”

“Being scared I’ll fuck up and lose you”

“No that’s mine; you can’t have one”

“Meeting someone else”

“Happens all the time; we don’t choose to fall in love or fall out, so we make the most of the time we have; just listen to your heart, if we’re meant to be together we’ll be together”

“Don’t we have to work at it?”

“All the time; like breathing, it doesn’t have to be a chore; if you find it difficult to be happy then you have to speak up; it’s always about communication”

“Why did you leave your boyfriends in the past?”

“A whole host of reasons; mostly because we didn’t talk to each other and things went bad and we left it too late to sort them out and mostly they could have been sorted out; but by that stage you’re in your trench and no one budes, so you leave or are left and then it’s just pain and regret...”

“Do you think it will be different this time?”

“It’s already different, I can’t think of enough ways to make you happy or to tell you that I love you and that wasn’t the case before, my relationships in the past were more ritualistic, more formal, endless dating before we made a commitment, lots of assessment; highly competitive and mostly for the sake of not wanting to be alone”

“Are you with me because you don’t want to be alone?”

“No; I’m with you because I want to be; something is telling me that you’re an important part of my life, however bizarre that sounds; love is a gift from the Gods; what we do with it is up to us”

The transit of Mars

“Can we go to bed early tonight?”

“Naturally, stress fatigued?”

“Horny as fuck!”

“Jesus...”

We shifted the gear in and made temporary space before I had a good clear out;

“Borrow what you want; any shopping put on that pad, here’s a key, we’ll work the rest out as we go”

“What do you want to do now?”

“Smoke a cigarette, drink a glass of wine, listen to some music and phone Sue to start teeing everyone up for the party”

“I’m gonna take a shower”

“Cool; towels in the cupboard...”

He went for his shower and I called Sue;

“So?” she said

“What wouldn’t you believe?”

“You’ve fallen in love and planning to get married”

“Half right”

“Shit! Tell me everything!”

I gave her the one minute account of the weekend;

“He’s showering now and then it’s Ovaltine and Blanket Street”

“Aren’t they like as horny as fuck all the time?”

The transit of Mars

“Generally yes and there’s a real danger I might actually lose my kilo a week just by being in bed”

“When can I meet him?”

“If you promise not to dissect him on the kitchen counter, whenever you want, come with us to dinner after the photo shoot on Wednesday”

“Okay”

“Gotta go, someone needs their back scrubbing”

“You lucky bastard”

“He has a straight brother who’s only eighteen”

“Introduce me at the party”

“Bye honey”

We took the short cut to bed and the scenic route to sleep.

The transit of Mars

Chapter Six – Early to mid-week and the shoot on Wednesday

“Jason; it’s seven-thirty, you said you needed to be in by nine today”

“Thanks; what time are you getting up?”

“About eight; I don’t have any appointments this morning”

“Can I ask you a really personal question?”

“Of course...”

“Are you like, loaded?”

“What would be loaded?”

“Earning more than a hundred grand a year”

“Yes, I’m loaded”

“And you own this flat?”

“Yes; I own this flat and I have more than enough money to do all the things I could reasonably expect to be able to do at forty after working very hard for twenty five years”

“I still have to give Michael something each week”

“Yes...”

“So I can’t afford to give you anything”

“I’m not asking you for anything

“Don’t couples have to go in 50:50?”

“Yes; but it doesn’t have to be counted out like that, there are lots of ways; if we both had similar incomes it would be different, but we don’t; it’s a reality we just have to deal with; if your modelling career takes off you might be earning more than me...”

The transit of Mars

“I don’t want you to pay for everything all the time”

“I won’t; but we don’t have to worry because for the next three months we’ll be in the gym!”

“Are you going in today?”

“I have to; I’m sure I put those two kilos back on over lunch yesterday”

“Let’s work one of them off right now”

“Best we warm up then”

“Bending and stretching?”

“Licking and sucking...”

He left for work and I cleared out space for his stuff; things I should have gotten rid of years ago; the difference in our ages was never more apparent than when you saw our clothes hung up side by side, though I had better underwear; I had a moment of crushing panic and almost believed I’d made the worst mistake it was possible to make; deluding myself.

Did I want this?

If I believed my own bullshit then I didn’t have a choice, we’d fallen in love, I didn’t choose to do that, it felt a bit like being given a priceless work of art to look after, when you’re least expecting it and the least ready for the responsibility; but I loved him and I ached to have him near me; was I just lonely?

No; I didn’t suffer from that these days, I liked myself, 67kg of me, the other 13 could go to Hell, and I liked my life; strangely I was thinking about selling the company, just another symptom of the change that was upon me, that I should embrace or expect to be steamrollered by; embrace it all.

I worked until five and went to the gym at six for the swim and sauna; I saw Jason in the training room and waited for him in the bar;

The transit of Mars

“Hey babe” he said as he kissed me on the lips

“Hey gorgeous”

“Did you swim?”

“Yeah and re-booked my weekly assessment for Thursday as we’re out on Wednesday”

The couple I’d met came into the bar; David and Greg;

“Hi guys; do you know Jason?”

They didn’t and we made introductions, but when it was obvious that Jason and I were an item the atmosphere changed and they didn’t stay any longer than absolutely necessary to finish their drinks;

“That was odd” I said

“Not everyone is going to be overjoyed”

“Why does it matter to them; they’re a couple and they’ve been together for ten years”

“That won’t change who they basically are”

“Narrow-minded”

“You know what people think”

“I’m beginning to realise it; older rich guy with a younger guy, buying his affection and you’re no better than an escort”

“Is one version; a typical one”

“Sorry” I said as I looked away for a moment to blink away a stupid tear from somewhere

“What’s wrong?”

The transit of Mars

“I...I don't want anyone to think that of you”

“You can't stop it; I don't care if they think that, I know it's not true”

“I'm sorry; you're already so precious to me I can't think about anything that would hurt or upset you”

Matt came over;

“Jason, Chambers...you guys teamed up?”

“You could say that” I managed with a smile

“It's a good idea; supporting each other, pushing each other a little, good job...”

“There's another version” Jason said

“Does the truth matter anymore?”

“Only to us...”

“What do you want for dinner tonight?”

“Fruit!”

“There's a stack; I never eat it”

“You do now!”

“Oh hell”

“If you lose three kilos this week you can slow down”

“Early to bed then”

“Must get my beauty sleep, I'm being photographed on Wednesday; when will the book be published?”

“In a month”

The transit of Mars

“Will it sell?”

“I’m expecting an initial run of ten thousand copies, he’s an established author and popular, it’s his best work so far, we could see fifty thousand eventually, depends on the Americans”

“My photograph will be on a book that will be for sale in America?”

“Oh yes, and Australia and Canada and we may have this one translated for Germany and Spain”

“Jesus!”

“You could be a global star overnight”

“Oh my God; I never even thought of that”

“There are endless possibilities”

“But...”

“But what?”

“You’re giving this chance to me”

“Of course; you’re perfect for it”

“I bet the agency has ten or fifty guys just as good”

“Maybe they do; I don’t love any of them, but you deserve the opportunity because you’ve worked so hard for it and I want you to have the chance”

There was a long pause;

“I don’t think I truly believed that you love me until you said that”

“Please believe me when I say that I do”

The transit of Mars

He kissed me and the guy from the shower came in who had offered himself to me;

“Hey guys”

“Hi” we said

“Everyone is talking about you”

“Really?” I said with some moderate degree of disbelief

“Oh yeah”

“Well bully for them” I said

“What are they saying” asked Jason

“You really want to know?”

“I can guess” I said not wishing to hear it

“What are they saying?” repeated Jason with an edge of steel

“That it’s sad and pathetic and a little bit sleazy”

“Why are you telling us this?”

“So you know why everyone is laughing behind your back”

He left;

“Can we go sweetheart please?” I asked

“Sure”

Silence until we got home;

“I sorted out space and your stuff that needed to be hung up Jason; there’s still a load for you to sort and put away where you want it”

The transit of Mars

“Thanks”

Test number one; how quickly the honeymoon is over these days;

“Fucking hell” I said loudly, no explanation was required

“I’m gonna prepare the fruit, pour us a drink”

I was fuming but there wasn’t any point, being gay was hard enough at times, when your brothers turn on you it’s fucking hard to take;

“Have you got any lychees?”

“In the larder, bottom shelf” I said absently

I was standing at the terrace door, chewing a nail and my feelings; Jason came over and slipped his arms around my waist;

“They’re all as jealous as fuck”

I turned and smiled weakly;

“Perhaps we’ll just train on separate days” I suggested with a little heaviness

“No we fucking won’t; we’ll train together and give them the finger; they’re the losers...”

“I don’t want to think about them; I want your ripe fruit”

“Follow me...”

The following day we trained together; from start to finish, it was the best training session I had done; I felt really motivated and Jason helped me so much with everything and he was so patient; we finished off in the sauna; there were three or four guys in there already;

“Guys” he said as we entered

Silence.

The transit of Mars

“Rebecca called today; you need to be at the studio by four-thirty if you can”

“I said to Brian I was finishing at four but I have to start at eight tomorrow”

“I’ll be there at five; I’m meeting the printer beforehand”

“When do I meet the agency?”

“I’ve invited Daryl along to the shoot; it seemed sensible; and Sue is joining us for dinner afterwards...”

“I can’t wait”

“What’s doing Jason?” said one of the guys

“First modelling assignment tomorrow”

“No shit!”

“What’s it for?” asked another

“The cover shot for a novel coming out next month”

“Way to go”

“Thanks”

Secretly I thought that they were just thinking I was bankrolling his career, leg over and leg up; oh what the fuck.

The guys drifted out slowly;

“Sarah’s party venue called and asked if we could limit the number of wheelchair users to four; apparently they have an access problem; I’m inclined to re-book somewhere else”

“It’s short notice though”

The transit of Mars

“We could have a marquee at Sion House and re-create Cinderella’s castle outside, then the whole group can come, I’m thinking paint ball games for the older able ones, if that doesn’t sound like a cop out or a cliché”

“It sounds like it’s going to cost a fortune”

“I don’t care how much it costs; I want her to remember it for the rest of the year until the next one, Victoria is making her the party dress of all party dresses and Siobhan is coming over on the day to dress her and do her makeup, Peter is making her a glass wheelchair, well it’s acrylic actually but I’m sure she won’t mind”

“Michael is so happy you took the job on; I think he’s struggling at the moment”

“Yvonne said he was a little depressed but Vanessa’s company will surely help”

“He’s gonna freak when he realises how much you’ve spent”

“The money isn’t important; what you do with it is the only thing that counts and making Sarah happy is the best reason to spend it”

“I just wish she knew what was going on”

“She does know what’s going on; she just can’t communicate with us effectively; it’s why I get so angry when someone says anything cruel behind her back; I know she hears it but she can’t stand up for herself”

“I hope she knows how much we love her”

“Of course she does, all the time” and I knew she did; “ready for dinner?”

“Yeah, two litres of green tea”

“You’re fucking having a laugh”

“You could have some peanuts”

The transit of Mars

“What about the tuna?”

“I don’t think tuna like peanuts”

We laughed so hard I was crying.

Wednesday was a little tense to start with because Jason was running late due to the fact he couldn’t decide what to pack to wear to the studio;

“It doesn’t matter; they’ll be dressing you anyway”

“I know but I want to impress Daryl”

“He’ll be impressed believe me”

“And I want to look smart for dinner after”

“Well make your mind up because you’re going to be late for work”

“Fuck it’s half passed seven!”

“Go with the first choice and get a cab!”

He left and peace reigned; his presence, his energy was like fresh air and sea water and cut grass and Springtime and sunshine and so many things; he texted;

“I forgot to say I love you, I love you, see you at five”

“I love you too, relax, everything will be fine, see you at five”

I was just as excited as he was actually; if Daryl was impressed then who knows where this one goes. I spent an hour finding out as much as I could about Craig Lester, the reptile from “Definition”; he did work for them; some kind of sub-editor; I decided some subterfuge was called for so I called them on the pretence of asking about the competition and how the selection process worked as part of a feature we planned to run in the monthly magazine; I spoke to an assistant, not Craig himself;

“How does the selection process work?”

The transit of Mars

“All applications are vetted by a panel of judges; it isn’t the decision of one person”

We chatted for a few minutes and then I asked;

“How’s Craig; is he involved in this?”

“He doesn’t work for us anymore”

“Oh really; where is he now then?”

“Braintree’s”

“Ah; your website still shows him listed as a sub-editor”

“Oh; thanks, we’ll get that changed...”

So the shitball wasn’t even working for them and still he was trawling the gyms looking for the hot cute desperate guys and working a nasty little number, getting his dick in as many as possible and casting them and their applications aside afterwards, what a cunt!

That was easy to sort; I’d just make sure that Jason submitted direct but what to do about Craig; that required some thought. I met with the book editor and then the printer and at five I was heading in to the studio to see the birth of both the novel’s front cover and my beautiful new model boyfriend.

Daryl was just ahead of me;

“Hey luscious” I said for he was and a screaming queen

“Chambers; you lucky bastard”

“You’ve either got it sweetheart or you haven’t”

“He looks adorable, but let’s see some flesh”

Jason was getting ready and part way through being made up; he caught sight of me and waved and grinned madly; I waved and smiled back; I didn’t want to disrupt anything so I held back. The cover was being shot by a new

The transit of Mars

and highly talented young photographer and we'd agreed on something a little "avant-garde" rather than just "hot cute guy stands by punch bag"; there was a punch bag and a pair of boxing gloves, patent black leather and studded with steel; I found the photographer, Paul, to confirm everything;

"S&M theme?"

"I read the synopsis you sent over and I just thought about "boxing" and all that aggression but bound by rules and how the trainer is in this terrible position of having to egg his fighter on, knowing he won't win and most likely he'll be hurt but deep down he loves him and wants to protect him"

"So what are you thinking?"

"We're going to start with the punch bag on the ground on its side and Jason stretched out on it like he's laying with his lover; which of course in a way he is; I think this one might develop as we go; it's his first time so I'm interested in how he reacts and I'm hoping to catch something unexpected"

"Daryl is here"

"Good for Jason"

"And good for you no doubt"

"Best we shine then"

Rebecca had finished the makeup and dressing and everyone had to adjust their crotch, Jason dressed in skin tight black patent leather trunks, matching boxing boots and gloves, hair slick and the eye makeup and lips were hard core gothic and screamed "sex"; well it sells everything, especially gay erotica!

I sidled up;

"You look fucking awesome if you don't mind me saying"

"Thanks; feels a bit weird, can we kiss?"

The transit of Mars

“Not unless you want Rebecca to stab you with an eyeliner pencil, after, go...”

“I need a thought to concentrate on...” he said

I whispered in his ear;

“Fucking each other tonight wearing that costume”

He went to work; Daryl came over;

“Magnificent; I’ve brought the underwear for the new campaign; let’s see what he looks like in it”

I stood behind Paul with Daryl and watched this masterpiece being created; Paul put him at ease immediately when he said;

“Imagine the punch bag is both your master and slave, you love it and hate it, you want to fuck it and kill it...”

The air conditioning kicked in!

“Can we lose the shorts please” said Paul

He had Jason draped over the punch bag, his arse was perfection, all carefully controlled lighting and shadows created a highly erotic and seductive image, lips slightly parted, eyes half-closed and one with a malicious smile playing out on the lips with eyes looking straight ahead and glinting, teasing, dangerously alluring;

“We’re done; Daryl...”

Jason took a break and Rebecca threw him a towel to wrap around himself;

“The last was the best” I said

“I need a drink!”

The transit of Mars

“We can have a break whilst Daryl sets up and talks to Paul; he’s brought the underwear for a new campaign for you try out”

“You’re joking?”

“Deadly serious; I’m expecting him to offer you a contract”

“Rebecca, can we have a break for a drink”

“No worries; I’ve gotta clean you up Jason; Daryl wants fresh and clean, not post coital”

We had a break for a drink and cigarette;

“I can’t believe this”

“I think you might have to get used to it”

“What about JB and everything”

“One step at a time; I called those “Definition” people, to ask a few questions about the process for a feature I’m planning; apparently Craig has left but I’ve got the name of the person you need to send the application form to; I’ll drop it in when I see their PR people about the magazine article”

“He was gonna fast track the process”

“Don’t worry about that; I’ll sort it...”

“Thank you!”

He didn’t know what he was thanking me for and part of me was tied in knots with the thought that if he had met Craig would he have let the weasel fuck him for the “chance” of getting picked, living up to his little whore label that everyone at the gym had branded him with; it didn’t matter now; but Craig needed to be dealt with and that required me to find my vicious streak; currently having a rest whilst I ogled my beau in his briefs;

“Jason, can you get showered and we’ll fix the face” shouted Rebecca

The transit of Mars

Clean and fresh he donned the new underwear but it lacked something, everyone was getting a little frustrated and Jason was suffering for it. I spied a chair, a barber's chair from the 50s in a corner of the studio, red leather and chrome;

"Paul; use that chair" I called out in desperation because I could see Daryl was getting impatient

"Perfect!"

Said chair was rolled into position and suddenly it worked; Jason lounging in the chair in the briefest briefs and occasionally not even wearing them; I particularly liked the one of him with a pair in his teeth with the boxing champion's belt we'd used during the book cover shoot barely covering his ample trophy;

"We're done!" Paul bellowed

Jason came over and Daryl shortly after;

"Well done; I need to talk to people but come in on Friday afternoon at three and we'll talk"

Rebecca came over;

"Hey Jason; good job; these are for you" she said as she handed him a smart bag; it was full of the underwear and the boxing outfit;

"Hey thanks"

"See you at Sarah's party; Siobhan wants to do makeup for all the kids so I'm lending her a hand"

"Jason; Paul's flagging you, I'll see you in five after I've spoken to Daryl"

Jason hopped over to see Paul to discuss his portfolio and I collared Daryl with the look in my eye which said "tell me the truth"

The transit of Mars

“He’s got it; exactly the look we want; on Friday we’ll offer a standard agency contract and sign him up for the campaign; you might want to help him clear the decks because we’re shooting in New York in two weeks’ time”

“Jesus Daryl”

“Don’t say too much; I want to see his face when we tell him on Friday; he’s gorgeous and very sweet and I hate you!”

“Hate you too darling; see you on Friday”

“Jas’ c’mon; Sue will be waiting and we’ve got reservations”

We made it out;

“What did he say?”

“He liked you, but he has to talk to people, it’s a major campaign; you might have to quit JB, are you prepared for that?”

“Fuck, do you think?”

“Let’s see on Friday; now, Sue, she’s my best friend and as blunt as a brick...”

We met up and dined, the raw food bar in Soho with two litres of green tea a piece and a bowl of nuts;

“Chambers you’ve lost weight”

“Sue; will you marry me?”

“I’m not surprised if you’re eating like this; hello Jason; I’m very pleased to meet you; how was the shoot?”

“Amazing!”

“Was Daryl there?”

The transit of Mars

“Yeah; I tried out the underwear for his new campaign; I have to see him on Friday”

“Good for you; so Sarah’s party; I’ve got the youth theatre coming dressed as the characters from Alice in Wonderland to host the tea party...”

And so our evening continued; but I detected that Jason was flagging so at an appropriate juncture we headed off;

“Tired?”

“Uhm, yeah, a bit, it’s...”

“Too gay?”

“Just too much; brain overload”

“Chill out time?”

“Yeah”

We chilled out on the sofa not talking exactly, not even thinking much, just coming down off the high which it had been, especially for Jason; I was just so proud of him and very horny but languid after the joint;

“I want to make love to you real slow” he said

“Like the punch bag?”

“That didn’t work in the end; it was too cold to be you”

“What did you think about then?”

“You fucking me as I lay on the punch bag; your dick slowly sliding in and out”

“Okay, we need to go to bed now”

The transit of Mars

He fucked me as we lay spoon fashion; excruciatingly slowly and all the while he massaged my cock but refused to bring me off, I cried with the pleasure in the end;

He came like a pan of milk boiling over, all at once;

“Lay on your back” he said

He rode me but not like in the movies where the guy on top is bouncing like a manic frog or looks like he’s on a pneumatic drill; Jason moved, and most of it was inside, he gripped me and massaged me, I yelped like a dog having a dream;

“Please let me cum; I can’t take anymore” I cried

He shifted slightly and rode up and down and I had to thrust, it was the best minute of my life so far;

“Those trunks have a zip down the back” he said into my ear

“God have mercy on my soul”

“Day off tomorrow...”

“Help; will someone please save me!”

The transit of Mars

Chapter Seven – Thursday and Friday

Yvonne hadn't put anything on the rota for Jason until Thursday knowing he had the shoot to get ready for. He went over early and I went later after meeting with Paul to sign off the cover and submit the book to the printer; he gave me a sheaf of photographs for Jason to put in his portfolio, which he didn't have so I went to Smithson's and bought him one; then headed over to meet up and finalise the party details with Yvonne seeing as it was only just over a week away.

Jason was out with Sarah in the park so I had Yvonne to myself;

"Do you want to take a look?" I asked as I saw she was itching to see the portfolio

"Can I? Maybe I should wait for Jason"

"They are shamelessly erotic, so you've been warned; you probably haven't seen your brother looking like this before"

I handed her the portfolio and went to make a cup of tea for us;

"Oh my God" came the expected exclamation; more than a few times

I re-joined her;

"He's amazing isn't he?" I said

"He's..."

"Going to get a contract and be whisked off to New York in two weeks; but he doesn't know that yet; it will mean a few changes..."

She just cried and I held her for a minute because even if Jason was dedicated and committed to making something of his life, his sister was more so; the sister who harboured dreams of touring the World singing in cabaret bars and night clubs, who had put all that aside to look after her brothers and sisters when her parents had died;

The transit of Mars

“He’ll find out tomorrow and we’ll tell everyone on Sunday; now, Sarah’s party, can we firm up on a few details...”

We sat talking for the next half an hour until Jason came back;

“I’ve told her all about the party” he said

“Here’s your portfolio from Paul” I said handing it to him, “Yvonne sneaked a peek...”

He sat and looked through it himself having not seen the photographs and “Oh my God”, “Jesus Christ” and “Fucking Hell” was all he could say for the time being; he looked up;

“Do I really look like that?”

“The camera never lies”

“Carl is going to be so jealous; Jesus, dare I show Michael?”

“He’ll see them soon enough probably, if Daryl gets you signed up”

“I’ll bring it back with me on Sunday; we have to get to the gym and you have your assessment tonight”

“All in good time; we have to clean the kitchen and bathroom first”

“I’ll do it” injected Yvonne

“No you won’t; it’s what we’re here for; put your feet up girl and tick the boxes on this list against the things you want in the party bags”

“Chambers!”

“Who went to a birthday party and came away without a party bag? Jason; get your rubber gloves on...”

We cleaned and he packed a few more things to take back; we were finishing up in the kitchen;

The transit of Mars

“Have you got a passport?”

“Oh yeah; applied for it when I started the “Definition” thing in case I won; there’s the holiday to Ibiza remember”

“Oh yeah; well, remember to take it with you; you might need it tomorrow if they want to sign you up”

“Why?”

“Because you don’t have a driver’s licence to prove who you are, yet!”

“I can’t afford driving lessons”

“Yet!”

“What are you cooking?”

“Absolutely nothing; so, give me your honest opinion; will Matt be happy with my progress?”

“You’ve definitely lost weight and I can see some definition coming, he’ll be happy and now he’ll make you work twice as hard”

“Good; I’m enjoying it”

We said goodbye and headed to the gym; I knew I’d lost weight but I wanted praise, actually I wanted a body like Jason’s so that everyone thought we were together for mutual muscle worship and not buying and selling sex;

“See you later, I have to see Matt now” I said as we wandered in

“You’ve lost three kilos”

“Great!”

“Three kilos is a lot for one week; try to pace yourself; I’ve seen you working out alongside Jason; just be sensible, if you get an injury you’ll be back to square one”

The transit of Mars

“Okay; so is there anything I need to improve or start now”

We went through the programme and he upped my targets, just a little;

“Next week on Wednesday and don’t overdo it, swim more, you need some stamina and stop smoking!”

“Yes boss...”

I found Jason;

“I lost three kilos and he’s upped my targets but I have to take it easy and swim more; he thinks I’m risking an injury by working out so hard with you”

“He’s right; I’ll come swimming with you, then we’ll sauna and I have some unpacking to do”

“And I have some packing to do...”

“Where for?”

“Zipper up the back...”

“Oh, yeah...shit I’m getting hard...”

We went home and dined on fresh air and water with a squeeze of lemon juice;

“Will you be okay getting to Daryl’s by three tomorrow?”

“I’ll be there no matter what”

“Yvonne was very proud of you; shocked but very proud”

“Which picture did you finally use for the book cover?”

“The last, typically, it was more engaging; I’m expecting to sell out; we may have to think about using the picture elsewhere”

The transit of Mars

“Who owns it?”

“I do!”

“If Daryl offers me a contract I’m just gonna scream”

“Rest your voice then because I’m sure he will”

“I’m gonna unpack and sort out that stuff”

“I have to email everyone now that I’ve agreed everything with Yvonne, re-convene in an hour?”

“I’ll be wearing them”

“I want you to wank me off wearing the gloves”

“Shit I’m getting hard again”

“The kitchen worktops need wiping down and the dishwasher needs unloading”

“So romantic!”

I emailed the troops to finalise everything for the party and took the liberty of phoning Michael to make sure he was okay; I didn’t want him to think I had just taken over, which of course I had. I needn’t have worried, Yvonne was on his case and he was just pleased the party was being taken care of, scared to death but pleased;

“Can’t have a princess without the castle and the glass coach”

“Chambers you’ve spent a fortune”

“You only become a teenager once Michael and I know you agree with me that she’ll know exactly what is going on and for that reason it has to be perfect”

“Thank you”

The transit of Mars

“How’s Vanessa and Ronan; have you discussed the farm holiday with her yet?”

“Yes I have and she’s all for the idea, I think we all need a break; did you check to see if it was free?”

“It’s free whenever we want it, I’ve booked out August and the first two weeks of September, let’s try to get everyone down there for the last week of August at least”

“See you on Sunday?”

“You bet; we’ll have news by then but I’m sure Yvonne will have told you”

“She said they were amazing”

“They are but we might have to restrict circulation; having said that the ones of him in the underwear will, hopefully, be published Worldwide and everyone will see them then”

“It’s all going to change isn’t it?”

“Most likely yes, so we have to be prepared, but everything will be okay; just expect a few Sundays with one less around the table and Michael; there are lots of ways I can help you, but I’m old enough to know that it’s not my place to muscle in; please just call me if you need to, I’ll always be here”

“Thank you; I mean it; it feels, felt, like it was getting too much; I can see a light now”

“Excellent; so, as it will probably turn out that we have some celebrating to do on Sunday I suggest we all go out for lunch and take a well-earned break from the kitchen, if you agree, would you allow me to book something?”

“As long as you let me contribute something towards the cost”

“That’s fine; I’ll let you know where and when and what time the transport will pick you all up”

The transit of Mars

“Chambers!”

“See you Sunday, bye”

Jason came through;

“Who was that?”

“Michael”

“Did Yvonne tell him I look like a porn star?”

“No; she said you looked amazing and you don’t look like a porn star, but you did look like a star, erotica is not porn”

“Say that with the zipper undone”

“Can you put them on please?”

“Do you want to watch?”

“Yes...”

He shed the street clothes and stood naked in the bedroom, stretching and flexing, sporting a semi-hard penis; he delved in the bag and brought forth the trunks, he slipped them on until he reached the critical mass of his groin and then there just didn’t seem to be any room left;

“I’ll pull up and you shove it in” he said

“Who did this at the studio may I ask?”

“Rebecca of course; Paul was too squeamish”

“Afraid of me more like”

He pulled and I pushed and between us the package was squeezed in and we just got the front zip done up without garrotting anything;

“Jesus they’re tight” I said

The transit of Mars

“They feel amazing when you’ve got them on; like a second skin”

He turned round to show me the zipper that when undone exposed his arse like a mouth opening; in fact I was reminded of a killer whale smiling at a show in Orlando. He slipped the boots on and the gloves and then lay face down in the bed;

“Unzip me and fuck me”

I quickly undressed and knelt between his legs, placing my hands on the glorious mounds encased in their skin of black shiny leather, I unzipped the back and practically shot my load at the sight of the two halves peeling away from each other to reveal the crevice; he moved his legs very wide apart and thrust his arse up; I had no choice but to rim him for the next five minutes until my tongue ached. I lubed up and pushed in, watching my cock disappear between the two shiny black mounds. He levered his upper body up and he rested on his hands encased in the padded gloves, arching back to display every muscle; now that was porn!

He sent waves of muscle contractions through his arse to double the effect of the thrust; my load was squeezed out like toothpaste, huge dollops of toothpaste, this diet is doing wonders for my volume!

I didn’t want there to be such a long interval between our respective orgasms so I turned him over as I withdrew and took the gloves off his hands, lubricating one up, I donned it and wanked him off using the padded clenched fist part of the glove like a fleshlight; I took his load in my mouth, swallowing with some difficulty as our cum was so strong these days and then I allowed myself to collapse, still with the glove on;

“That was porn” I said

“That was art”

There are cats on hot tin roofs and then there was Jason on Friday;

“What do you think he’ll say?” he asked for the twentieth time

“Let’s wait until three; I’m sure it will be a yes...now go to work!”

The transit of Mars

“I can’t settle...”

“Whatever he says I’ve booked you a massage tonight and I insist on eating something I can chew...”

“Perhaps we should call him...”

“The sooner you get going the sooner three will come round”

“I can’t believe this is happening”

I just had to throw him out in the end;

“Call me immediately if he calls you”

“I will, I promise, see you at three”

“I love you” he said as he raced down the stairs

“I love you too; oh, is that the phone?”

He raced back up;

“Kidding!”

“You bastard”

“Bye Jas”

I already knew the answer, well 99 percent sure, Daryl wouldn’t have said anything if there had been any doubt; a contract and a campaign, money and a shoot in New York; it felt like Cinderella’s story was coming true and it also felt like some tests were looming, not least of which a separation for several weeks probably.

I worked to organise a certain little girl’s party and a certain author’s book launch; my secret desire, to see an erotic novel scale the heights and top the New York Time’s Bestseller list, which would be something.

The transit of Mars

I lunched with the author of the book in question and updated him on the likely outcome; he couldn't be more pleased when I showed him the cover;

"100,000 copies I reckon" he said

"Let's hope everyone reads it"

"Yeah..." but that didn't sound too convincing

I left the lunch table and headed to Daryl's office; Jason was outside waiting for me puffing on a cigarette nervously;

"At last" he said

"It's ten to three, what are you talking about"

"I mean, at last!"

"Oh, yeah, shall we then?"

"I don't think I want to hear what he has to say"

"Let's go home then"

"No; yes, shit!"

"Jason, are you always going to be like this at life changing events?"

"Are there going to be any more?"

"I can think of at least one"

"What?"

"When you pass your driving test and get your first car" I lied, because I was thinking about something quite different

"Oh yeah; I can afford to do it, now that you've given me the five hundred quid"

The transit of Mars

“It’s five to three!”

“SHIT!”

“TAXI”

“Let’s go in, oh my God!”

Daryl was waiting in reception;

“What were you doing outside?”

“He was having a panic attack” I said dryly

“Shall we go up to the office; there are some other people I’d like you to meet Jason”

We went up and the chatter in the lift was about nothing in particular, we were escorted through to a small conference room and I recognised the campaign manager, Chris and the PR, Addy.

Everyone was introduced;

“Jason, without torturing you any more, we are extremely pleased to offer you a contract”

“Oh my God, thank you so much” he blurted out, smiling and bouncing in his seat all the while clasping my hand like a five year old

“It’s a standard agency contract, it doesn’t guarantee you any work, but...we are also very pleased to inform you that our client wants you to be the model for the underwear campaign”

He looked at me in disbelief;

“I don’t believe it”

“Oh; it’s true and you’re going to New York in exactly two weeks for the shoot” added Daryl

The transit of Mars

“I don’t know what to say, thank you...” he blubbed and he hugged me

“You’ll be gone for a month”

“A month!” I said almost shouting

“There is some promotional work and some other people we want Jason to meet”

“A whole month” I repeated

“Jason, are you okay with that?” Daryl asked

“It’ll mean giving up my job at JB’s and I’ll miss Carl’s birthday but...ABSOLUTE-FREAKING-LUTELY”

“Right, then all you need to do is sign on the dotted line and we’ll take care of everything”

“How much will Jason get paid?” I asked getting a grip on this new reality

“Twenty-five thousand pounds plus all expenses”

“Chambers; that’s more than I earn at JB’s in a whole year”

“What are Jason’s chances of getting more work on the back of this; you know why I’m asking Daryl, one gig is fantastic but if that is it then he’ll be looking for another job when he gets back and there are three million unemployed and twenty five thousand before tax ain’t gonna last too long”

“Chambers!” injected Jason

“No Jason, he’s right to ask the question; we believe your prospects of getting more work are “excellent” so it’s really up to you but I don’t believe you’ll struggle to find modelling work after this, on the contrary, I think you’ll be in demand, for a certain type of campaign; your height is your only disadvantage, being under six feet is a little tricky but we all think this is just

The transit of Mars

the beginning, take time to think about it but not too much, we have to sign by Monday at the latest...”

“Chambers?” and Jason looked at me and his current and future happiness rested on the very next word I said, with a big love comes a big responsibility

“Sign up today and do it Jason” I said without any trace of doubt

The mental coin had come up heads.

We celebrated and Jason signed;

“Do you have your passport with you Jason?” asked Daryl

He looked at me;

“You knew”

“I did not, but I do have 100 percent belief in you and your talents”

“I love you so fucking much” he blubbed again

“Two weeks today Jason; Rebecca is going out as is Chris, so you won’t be alone and once you get there the NYC people will take care of you”

“Thank you so much, you don’t know what this means to me”

“Well done; the client was over joyed with the pictures from the other day and Anna is taking the pictures in New York”

“Anna!” I interjected

“It’s a major campaign Chambers”

Jason, Chris and Addy headed out and I was left with Daryl momentarily;

“Twenty-five thousand sounds cheap if Anna is working...”

The transit of Mars

“It’s his first time out Chambers”

“He’s perfect, so it doesn’t matter if it’s the first or the hundred and first; if you mark the goods down Daryl no one will want them”

“Okay; we’ll pay the day rate for the promotional work and do something creative about the rest; are you his manager now?”

“No; his lover, so I only have his interests at heart”

“I wish you were mine; his lordship thinks I exist only to serve his interests”

“We were once as I recall, back in the Stone Age...”

“I dumped you for Randall didn’t I?”

“Yes you did you slut and he gave you pubic lice”

“You never wanted to try again?”

“Once maybe; not now”

“Jason is the one?”

“Maybe; even if he wasn’t it wouldn’t work between us; you’re too competitive”

“I’m mellowing”

“You’d try and beat me into the next life if you thought you’d get to Heaven first”

“We’re going to the other place sweetheart”

“Why?”

“Good point, look after Jason’s interests; the agency will take care of him but there are plenty of other cunts who will be trying to earn a buck off his back”

The transit of Mars

“Ah; that reminds me; can you do me a favour?” and I shut the door so Jason couldn’t hear not that he was exactly waiting for me; feted over by the receptionist and half the guys in the back office

I told Daryl about Craig and that I wanted to do something to put a stop to his antics and expose him for being a complete cunt;

“Leave that one with me for a few days” he said, “Why do I have an invitation to this girl Sarah’s party?”

“She’s Jason’s sister and you, like me and everyone we know, are idle and rich and in need of a conscience check; I’ve got you penned in to look after a lad called “Mark” his twelve and blind; he goes to the same respite centre as Sarah; we’re all looking after one of the guests so their worn out and stressed parents can enjoy a few hours peace and quiet”

“Please tell me why I care?”

“Because someone like Mark has never seen anything with his own two eyes, just think about that for a moment, we are so fucking lucky Daryl”

“Uhm; whatever; just tell me where and when”

I re-joined Jason and we left to go home and change; he was quiet;

“What’s wrong babe; I thought you said you’d be screaming?”

“I am, but a whole month Chambers”

“It’s not that long and if you’re working the time will fly; my schedule is pretty heavy too”

“I’m gonna miss you so much”

“We’ll have the welcome home to look forward to”

“And the goodbye”

“Perhaps we should start now”

The transit of Mars

“My thoughts exactly!”

We dined on each other; and much later after Jason had crashed I sat in the lounge and smoked a cigarette, just thinking about everything. How easy it is to get used to the idea of being alone and just dating from time to time; the idea of living alone, the idea that you alone control this World and nothing changes in it unless you say, how dangerous to think that you like your life and you want nothing to change; when that's the case you may as well be dead.

I had a young and gorgeous lover who was on the brink of some kind of adventure to God knows where, he loves me and I love him; so why do I have this nagging doubt that as soon as he lands in New York he'll see the World for what it truly is and realise he sold out for second best with me and look for someone his own age and waist size? Am I that insecure or am I just being honest? All my previous relationships have failed, almost of all my friends' relationships have failed; I don't know one couple who has been together for more than three years, except those guys at the gym. Is there something wrong with me, something wrong with all of us?

I know that if I think it will fail then it surely will; this is not the time to sow seeds of doubt, a month in doubt will be purgatory; how strong are we then? As strong as a couple can be after about a week, no; I was weaker with guys I lived with for months, even years; time has nothing to do with it; you either commit or you don't; would committing less make the break less painful; what am I protecting myself from, pain? Plenty of that in the past, you cannot have a relationship and remain numb like you've been anaesthetised against the possible pain ahead, you have to accept the whole package and risk getting hurt. Nineteen and forty; it's a fucking joke isn't it? Many think so; I don't know that it is; he's a man, a young man with a glorious future ahead of him; I'm not dead yet; I can have another career, I am only forty; can I give him what he will always need; can he give me what I will always need; some couples do it, so why not us?

He wandered in;

“Hey sugar, what's up?” he said rubbing his eyes

“I couldn't sleep”

The transit of Mars

“Come back to bed and I’ll rub your back with that oil that helps”

Some couples do it.

The transit of Mars

Chapter Eight – The eagerly anticipated party

Organising the Dunkirk evacuation had probably been easier; the party was almost upon us and I was very excited and much stressed;

“You do it to yourself” said Sue

“I know; I always go over the top when it comes to these things; it’ll all work out”

“Don’t forget whose party it is!”

“No; you’re right, Sarah is the party princess; I’m just sounding like one, slap me a couple of times across the face”

“Where’s Jason?”

“Working”

“Is he okay?”

“Eagerly anticipating his departure and the shoot but not looking forward to a month apart”

“Time will fly”

“It does at our age; not quite so fast at nineteen”

“Are you guys talking the next step?”

“Partnership?”

“Yeah”

“No; it hasn’t been mentioned; I’ve thought, no, dreamed about it, but it’s way too soon”

“Do you mean; he’s too young?”

I smiled;

The transit of Mars

“Let’s see how we fare over the next couple of months; his gig and the book launch allow no time for anything else. I’m thinking about something else though”

“What?”

“Selling the business and taking on the farm; Margaret and William want to retire; it’s getting too much”

“And you think Jason will help you to run it?”

“No; not yet; but Michael probably would and there’s so much space that everyone can have a home there”

“Jesus; that’s quite a change”

“Jennings have offered some silly money for the company; I should take it; in this climate I’d be a fool to turn them down”

“Rather you than me; all that mud and guts and huge beasts trying to shag each other and mud and more mud and milking things and shit...”

“And no congestion charges or pollution or noise or crime or delays on the Central Line...”

“No Soho”

“I don’t care about London anymore”

“Jason may feel differently”

“I’ll keep a pad up here for business and stop overs”

“It was me telling you that you were fat wasn’t it; it started a chain reaction?”

“Yes it did; I found Jason; I already had the offer from Jennings before that”

“This needs some very careful thought”

The transit of Mars

“I have the whole month on my own to think”

His departure was just over a week away, we had a princess to inaugurate into her teenage years first.

Okay, here's the scene, powdered wigged footman welcoming everyone into the marquee palace; lights, opalescent balloons, each one lit by a single LED bulb inside, sparklers, glass and mirrors, a tiny alcohol free punch fountain; a fucking huge champagne one; the Mad Hatter's tea party, the entire cast of the theatre in costume to host it, magicians and balloon artists, makeup artists, macaroons in every pastel shade, every gay friend and their best girlfriend to look after the guests; Sarah and her gang from the centre; chill out room for the mums and dads, showers of glitter, a glass wheelchair, music and dancers dressed as mice dressed as Prince Charming and Cinderella; a cake that looked like a pumpkin coach, the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade, three of my friends are surgeons however, storytelling and magical games and coloured smoke and fanfares and a golden apple tree for the gifts to be placed under and party bags and wizards and wands and just about everything else you could think of at a princess's birthday party.

In order to keep the teenagers from getting bored there were tickets to a concert later for Carl, Natasha, the twins, their twin dates and Ronan, supervised by Yvonne who was a closet fan of this teen pop idol I had never heard of. Sarah was dressed as a princess and wore a tiara and demanded, in her way, to be wheeled around in the glass wheelchair; Paul took the photographs and it was fabulous.

I sneaked outside to have a puff and found Michael;

“Chambers; you're amazing; how can I begin to thank you”

“You don't need to; it was my pleasure”

“You spent a fortune...”

“It was worth it, every penny. Now; whilst we're out here and alone; I have a question for you but it is absolutely essential that you don't mention this to anyone yet...”

The transit of Mars

“Okay” he replied, eyeing me very suspiciously

“I am thinking of selling the company and moving out of London, Jason knows nothing yet; I have a farm...”

“The farm you’re ‘renting’ for the holiday?”

“Yes; that one; it’s mine; left to me by my parents, it’s run by a lovely couple but they want to retire; I’m thinking of taking it on; but I need a manager and I wondered if you would consider it”

“Me?”

“Yes; you and Vanessa and Ronan; well, everyone in fact; there’s room for everyone to have a home there...”

“What about Sarah?”

“The Gloucester Institute is only thirty miles away”

“You’ve thought about this”

“I’m thinking about everything”

“I somehow don’t see Carl and Natasha living the good life”

“They can stay at the flat in Bayswater until they decide where they want to go; the twins are less easy, but there’s time to sort all that out; will you think about it; by the time Jason gets back I want to have made a decision, at least as far as selling the company goes”

“What about Jason?”

“If he’s globetrotting it doesn’t matter, we’ll keep a base in London...”

“You’re serious; you’re offering us all a home”

“Yes; didn’t you say you would love to leave London; grow things; have space; have time?”

The transit of Mars

“Yes I did but I didn’t imagine it would ever happen”

“It can, so you need to think hard as do I; I think we could make a go of it, you and I; I trust you first and foremost and I like you”

“I like you too; you’re genuine and way too generous, but neither of us knows anything about farming”

“That’s the beauty of it; it doesn’t need to pay its way and we can afford to learn as we go; do it the organic way; whatever we decide”

“I need to think and talk it through with Yvonne, Dean and Vanessa”

“I know; but not a word to the others yet, especially Jason, he needs to focus”

“On what?” he said as he came out of the marque

“Getting your driving licence”

“As soon as I get back I’m gonna do one of those intensive courses”

“Excellent idea and then it won’t be such a drag getting to and fro the flat and Hounslow”

“The party is winding down and the kids need to go back; we’re just about to sing “happy birthday” and blow out the nine million candles”

“Best we get out arses in there then and I need champagne!”

Jason went back in first;

“Thank you” Michael said

“For the offer?”

“For everything; I hope Jason appreciates what you’ve done for him”

“Of course he does; but it’s what couples do”

The transit of Mars

“And if things don’t work out between you?”

“I still have a farm that needs to be managed”

We went in to assist Sarah with the monumental task of blowing out her candles and making her wish; not long after everyone started to leave and pretty soon it was just Jason and I left to supervise the clear down;

“That was one hell of a kid’s party” he said taking a breather before we got cracking

“I think Carl’s will be a little more low key”

“Are you seriously going to give him a ticket to come out to New York to see me?”

“Yes; I know he’s going to miss you a lot”

“I wish you could come out”

“So do I; but two books to launch will eat up every waking minute, especially the one with you on the cover; it’s published whilst you’re over there; I hope you see it”

“And by the time I get back it’s only four weeks to the deadline for the competition!”

“Working out won’t be the same but I promise I’ll keep it up; I want to be near my goal by the time you get back”

“I might not recognise the skinny thing standing in Arrivals”

“I’ll be the one waving and shouting and throwing myself into your arms”

“How will I know that it’s you and not just another fan?”

“You have fans now; I didn’t realise; will you still love me when you’re rich and famous” I jested, expecting a red hot quip by way of a reply

The transit of Mars

“I’ll always love you no matter what” he said sincerely

“Shit I think I’ve got glitter in my eye” I had to add quickly because that reply caught me completely unawares and defenceless

“Don’t cry; you’ll ruin your makeup”

“I thought Rebecca did an excellent job turning me into one of the ugly step sisters, it couldn’t have been easy”

“She said it was the easiest job she’d ever had”

“Fuck you!”

“How do I look as Prince Charming?”

“I refuse to answer that on the basis that you’ll get too full of yourself”

“Can we get this shit cleared up so I can get too full of you?”

“You look beautiful and you take my breath away in answer to your question”

“Do you want me to wear the shorts?”

“No; keep that lot on”

“It’s hired!”

“I’ll pay the damages”

“Can we get this shit cleared up like now please?” he shouted to the absent crowd of helpers

The transit of Mars

Chapter Nine – Departure

A few days remained before the off and we were checking and packing everything;

“Why did Daryl buy me these bags, they’re really smart”

“You’re an important asset for the agency; you need to make an impact”

“Shit; that sounded way too serious”

“Sorry; you should just have fun; Daryl can worry about the rest and I’ll be making sure he looks after your interests”

“Can you look after everyone whilst I’m away?”

“Need you ask; Michael, Yvonne and I are getting on much better than I ever hoped and we see things in very similar ways; they are so proud of you, you know that?”

“Yeah; I hope I don’t let anyone down”

“You won’t; relax, you’ve got what they want; just be you”

“I’ll be thinking of you the whole time”

“Fucking you slowly; my cock sliding in and out...”

“Shit; that gets me hard every time!”

“Good to know; now get your arse into another gear; it’s my assessment tonight and our last chance to work out together before you go”

We had been working out together as much as possible despite Matt’s advice but then he wasn’t anticipating being away from the man or woman he loves for a month.

“You’ve dropped another three kilos, that’s six in total and half way to your target but it’s only the end of week three...”

The transit of Mars

Jesus! I've known Jason for just over three weeks; it feels like months;

"Jason's away for a month now so I'll slow down and I'm busy as Hell at work so it isn't going to be so easy to get in"

"Where's he going?"

"New York; it's his first modelling assignment; it's why he's been in here so much and why I have"

"You guys are great together"

"Thanks; I wish everyone thought so"

"They're just jealous"

"Yeah; it doesn't make it any easier though; still, once he's back things will be different and the competition will then only be four weeks away"

"Definition?"

"Yeah"

"Ouch; sorry to tell you but if he's a professional model he won't be able to enter the competition"

"Oh no; please don't say that"

"It's the rules; strictly amateurs"

"Jesus! Please don't say anything; he leaves the day after tomorrow; this will just screw everything up"

"If he's already modelling surely winning the competition doesn't matter now?"

"You know his dream is to be on the front cover of the magazine; it's what all this training has been about, the modelling in New York came out of the blue, in fact it's my fault because I got him a job posing for a photograph"

The transit of Mars

to be used on a book cover and knowing he wants to model eventually I introduced him to the agency we usually use and they love him”

“Well, apart from missing out on the Definition’s cover it looks like he’ll have everything he wants anyway; chances are he’ll get on their cover in any event; I won’t say anything”

“Please don’t; we’ll sort it out when he gets back”

They say the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

We worked hard and crashed into the sauna for the last time; the following day, the last, was set aside for goodbyes with the family, albeit Yvonne had arranged an early dinner so we could get back and straight to bed; he was leaving at eight on the Friday.

The sauna was the usual for a Wednesday, six or so guys hanging out, to my mind using it as an excuse to ogle everyone else because they didn’t seem to work out much;

“When are you giving Carl his ticket?”

“Tomorrow, so he can arrange his time off work and clear it with his tutor”

“When does the book come out?”

“Three weeks Friday, a week before you get back”

One of the guys asked the obvious question and Jason told them all about the underwear campaign and I just prayed so hard that none of them knew about the clause in the competition rules, seemingly they didn’t but I sweated a bit more;

“So are you guys going to tie the knot?” said one, not very seriously and I guess hoping to cause a reaction or embarrass one or both of us, Jason was first up;

The transit of Mars

“We haven’t talked about it yet” was all he said but his hand made its way into mine for reassurance

“I can’t get married until I’ve lost another six kilos” I joked squeezing Jason’s hand for my own dose of it

One of the guys left and as he went out he said, in an appropriately evil little tone;

“Be good in New York Jas’...”

Everyone knew what he meant by that and silence descended and I could have cheerfully rammed a dumb bell up his arse;

“We should get going Jas’, there’s more packing to do”

We headed out and he wasn’t saying anything and didn’t until we got home;

“You don’t think I’ll play around while I’m there do you?”

I knew that was coming;

“Of course I don’t; no more than you know I’ll be playing around here”

“Why do people assume that?”

“Because you’re young and they can’t believe you’ve made your choice”

“But I have and if there wasn’t so much else going on, then I would have discussed the idea of getting married with you; you’d consider it wouldn’t you?”

Thanks guys for this;

“I do consider it but we have too much else going on, as you say, but once things are quieter I’d like to talk about that seriously”

“Good!”

The transit of Mars

Will it always feel like we're walking the tightrope?

We started to chill and I'd successfully pushed the Definition's thing to the back of my mind and I needed to because Jason wanted to make love; we did, the whole night; in the end I had to beg for him to stop because my arse was on fire, my balls ached like Hell and my tongue had suffered a sprain; we crashed at four, heaving and sweating;

"You're getting some good definition my man" he said as he traced a line along a developing contour

"Imagine what it'll be like after another four weeks..."

"Best you book a hotel at the airport"

"Why?"

"You're not allowed to fuck in the Arrivals Hall!"

"Always assuming I can get through the crowds of fans and the Paparazzi"

"In my dreams"

"You will be, every night"

Thursday was muted until we arrived in Hounslow and the gang said "goodbye" which was very emotional and Carl was crying until I put him out of his misery and gave him the ticket then the champagne got uncorked and the newest meteor in the Cosmos was sent on his way. I collared Michael for a puff in the garden;

"I've been thinking about what you said Chambers" he said

"And?"

"Vanessa and Ronan are all for the idea, I'm so tired of this; Yvonne is discussing it with Dean, they won't say a word yet..."

The transit of Mars

“When Jason gets back I’m making a decision about the company and we should go down and see the farm beforehand; you might not like it once you see the muck in the yard...”

“Shit happens!”

“Oh yes it does, daily!”

We left and headed home for the last night; it actually felt like something was going to change; while he was there and once he got back; I was worried I wouldn’t recognise him and more worried that he would recognise me; for exactly what I was;

“I still can’t believe this is happening...”

“When that car picks you up in the morning you’d better believe it”

“What if they don’t like me or think I’m wrong or I mess up?”

“They won’t, you aren’t and you’ll be perfect; Chris is the campaign manager; I think he’d know if you were wrong and you’re working with one of the best photographers in the business; she’ll make you look out of this world if that is more possible; have fun, no frowns and don’t worry about a thing; do all the cool stuff and live it; it’s your moment...”

“Why do you love me so much; it’s scary at times?”

“I can’t help it; I do love you very much; and I’m just as scared; scared because you chose me”

“I’m gonna so fucking miss you” he said and we hugged and the tears flowed freely, their departure made space for even more love to enter my heart; it was the single most important and beautiful moment of my life so far.

We had sushi; a treat apparently, as it was a green tea night; I gave him a package wrapped in gold paper which I had been hiding for a about a week;

“What’s this?”

The transit of Mars

“A going away present”

“Chambers!”

“Open it” I urged

He ripped the paper off to reveal the latest iPhone, all set up for him;

“Jesus! This is great!”

“I’m glad you like it; now you don’t have an excuse not to keep in touch”

“I’ll call you every day; thank you so much” he hugged

“Call me when you can...”

“I have a present for you...”

“Why?”

“Close your eyes...close your eyes and don’t open them until I say”

I closed my eyes and I could hear rustling and the familiar sounds of clothing being removed

“Open them...”

I did and he was stood there naked;

“Okay, where’s my present” I said

“Right before your eyes; what, don’t you like it?”

“I love it; can I try it on?”

He laughed and propelled me so that I was thrown back in the sofa and he dived on me; that was our first fuck, rode like a rodeo bull; I was none too sedate either and much fitter these days!

The transit of Mars

We fucked slow and deep and quick and hard and everywhere, in the hall and in the kitchen and in the shower and finally in bed;

“Enough!” I pleaded

“Fuck me slowly, just sliding your cock in and out”

It always gets me hard too!

We got up at six after four hours sleep;

“Sleep on the plane; you’ll look like a ghost”

“Please tell me you’ll be here when I get back” with real desperation and fear in his voice

“I’m not going anywhere...what do you mean?”

“Don’t fall out of love with me”

“That is the last thing you need to worry about; the very last thing”

“Okay, shower and then you can dress me”

“Did you forget how to do it?”

“No; it’s an excuse for you to touch me and I need to feel your hands on my skin”

We showered and he fucked me, I wanted it so badly, to feel him inside me; I tried to memorise the feeling; so I could recall it whenever I wanted to feel him close. I dressed him, taking my time, smoothing the different fabrics over his body; lingering over the buttons and zips; but inevitably it came to an end and we just held each other until the doorbell went that signalled that the car was downstairs;

“Okay, you need to go; have the best time; enjoy yourself and knock ‘em dead”

“I love you”

The transit of Mars

“I love you too”

“Good luck with the book”

“Thank you”

He went to leave and I almost said “be good” but just stopped myself; those teeth marks are definitely still visible;

“What?” he asked sensing I had been about to say something

“Take care” I said and a tear made its way out

“Don’t start ‘cos I’ll never stop”

“Go then, call me”

He left and I rushed to the terrace to wave him off; he looked up and waved as he got in the back of the car; he closed the door but opened the window, thrusting his head out he shouted;

“Fuck me slowly; just slid your cock in and out...”

He drove away.

The transit of Mars

Chapter Ten – Interregnum

I had work to do, lots of work to get two books launched and I went to the gym every day, sometimes just to sauna or to have a swim, I worked steadily, adding a kilo to the weights, riding another half mile, adding a rep', I watched my diet and stopped drinking; but giving up the fags was not an option. I went over to Hounslow twice a week, always on Sunday and mostly Tuesday night; Sue still had first call on Wednesday after I'd had my assessment.

He called; regularly and at length; of course he was having the best time and they loved him; he took Carl to Miami for a few days to celebrate his birthday and once used the video phone to call me in the London office whilst I was there to get an update from Daryl; he looked amazing; lightly tanned and looking relaxed; this was after two weeks; half way there;

“He’s a natural in front of the camera; they love him...”

“Any more work?”

“Once this campaign is posted I’m expecting a deluge; but it won’t last; I can’t get him signed up by the major labels because he’s not tall enough; underwear, sportswear and swimwear; height matters less but it’s highly competitive and there’s always a more buff cuter guy standing in the wings; he’ll work, but he needs to think about the future; how are you doing?”

“Okay; busy as Hell and that helps”

“His picture on the book cover can only help to stimulate interest, excuse the pun”

“Can you get him on the cover of “Definition”?”

“I thought he was a dead cert’ to win the competition”

“He won’t be able to enter; not now he’s a professional model”

“I thought he’d been training for like a year for this”

The transit of Mars

“He has, he doesn’t know he won’t be able to enter”

“You didn’t tell him?”

“I only found out myself the Wednesday before he left”

“But you didn’t tell him?”

“No...”

“I hope you’re ready for the backlash”

“He’s modelling; the competition was the ticket; we by-passed that”

“He won’t be the winner though will he?”

“Do you think it will matter in the end?”

“It would to me”

“SHIT!”

“Too late now; in a week he’s going to be plastered all over London, New York, Paris and Rome”

“Maybe he won’t care after he sees that”

“For your sake I hope he doesn’t; can’t you deny that you knew anything?”

“No; Matt at the gym told me; if he quizzes Matt, he will tell him that I knew already...can’t you cancel the contract when he gets back; he won’t be applying for four more weeks”

“Sure; and he’ll lose all the money booked against all these other campaigns”

“He’ll see sense”

The transit of Mars

“Maybe he will, but I hope he’s a forgiving sort because basically you lied to him”

“FUCK!”

This had all the ingredients of a fucking disaster but I had so much work to do that I still was able to blot it out and hoped it would go away, and maybe I could deny I knew anything about it but he was sure to speak to Matt when he made his application. Not only did it have disaster written all over it I was fretting all the time and in danger of jeopardising the book launches; I drafted in Sue and told her everything;

“Firstly; he may have changed his mind about the competition especially when he’s seen the amount of work he’s got, secondly, you could say you found out after he left and by then it was too late and it’s true you didn’t know when he signed, so technically you’re in the clear but you’re balls are on a skewer; I suggest, once he gets back, you tell him yourself and be prepared to deal with it...”

It felt like a volcano was about to erupt and all I could do to keep my composure was work out and Matt had to caution me;

“Working too hard Chambers; you gonna get an injury if you push yourself like that”

“I’m stressed out; it’s the only thing that helps”

“I could give you a massage”

“Is Terry off then?”

“No, but I specialise in aromatherapy massages and I use hot stones; I don’t work much here because most guys seem to feel the need to be pummelled to death whereas I soothe the body and the mind”

“When?”

“Whenever you want”

The transit of Mars

“Tomorrow; it’s the day before the book launches and I’m just about to expire”

“Six o’clock”

“Thanks”

Perhaps I should tell Matt and get him to help by playing ignorant, at least deny we ever had that conversation; lies and deceit; it was stacking up.

I went the following day, being the Thursday of the third week and the day before the launch; to say I was a wreck was putting it mildly; but I worked out because only when I didn’t have anything else left to give the machine did I feel I could cope;

“Chambers; take a fifteen minute sauna and a shower then come find me in the therapy suite, room three”

“Okay” I puffed and panted, running with sweat and glowing like an irradiated beetroot

In the sauna I just ignored everyone and I had been making in-roads, it felt that soon enough, it wasn’t going to matter. I went along to the therapy suite and found Matt warming the stones and laying out his oils;

“Come in and relax; how is he?”

“Doing great”

“How are you, need I ask?”

“It’ll be better after tomorrow’s launch and then I have just a week left to wait”

“Ease up; you’ve lost ten kilos and we’re only in week five, the weight is not really that important but you’re risking injury and that could be serious; now, get undressed and lay on there; any preference for music”

“Mellow; jazz...”

The transit of Mars

“Nina Simone”, that’ll do for the next hour; tell me if anywhere hurts or feels very tender; do you have any allergies to essential oils that you know of?”

“None that I know of”

“Okay, relax, arms by your side, palm up and let it all just run out”

He started, smoothing the warm oils over my body, strategically avoiding my arse over which he had placed a towel; but to be honest I just descended into the oblivion accompanied by Nina;

“Turn over for me please” came the voice out of the dark, “Chambers, are you still with us?”

I roused myself;

“Sorry; I kind of left the building...”

Only then did I realise, as I turned, that I had a raging hard on;

“Uhm...”

“Don’t worry; I’ve seen one before; it’ll go down soon enough”

“Sorry...”

“Don’t be”

He massaged my legs and feet and work his way up to my thighs; still it wouldn’t go and I seemed to have absolutely no control over it;

“Would you feel more comfortable if we stopped?”

“Perhaps that would be best” and I started to raise myself up so I could get off the massage table, “I guess he’s missing his best friend” I added trying to make a joke and keep the atmosphere light

“Do you want to make a new friend?”

I smiled;

The transit of Mars

“No thanks; but I appreciate the offer”

“No problem”

I got dressed;

“He’s lucky; most guys wouldn’t have exercised that kind of restraint”

“I guess it has to be love then”

“Contrary to what everyone else thinks, I have to agree”

“I have a favour to ask”

“What?”

“When Jason finds out that he can’t enter the competition he’ll ask me if I knew, and of course I did, because you told me, two days before he left for New York; technically he was already signed up by then so the fact that I knew wouldn’t, necessarily, have made a difference, but; I didn’t tell him because I didn’t want him to screw up New York and the future, but I should have told him as soon as I found out so that he could have made the decision...”

“So what do you want me to say?”

“Chances are he’ll come to you with his application and you’ll tell him he can’t enter and then he’ll come home and ask me if I knew and I will say...”

“No”

“Because if I say “Yes”, he will leave me, but if he asks you if I knew”

“I will say “No”, because if I say “Yes”; he’ll leave you and most likely damage his career and Definition will almost certainly want him for a cover anyway”

“But he worked so hard for the chance to win”

“He got the underwear campaign didn’t he?”

The transit of Mars

“Yes, on his merits, I merely introduced him to Daryl at the shoot for the book cover”

“So if we lie we’ll be protecting his future”

“Yes; probably, but we’ll be damned for it”

“Doesn’t love mean protecting someone, sometimes from themselves?”

“I guess so”

“He may change his mind about entering although that is unlikely; or, when I tell him that he can’t enter he may not care”

“That’s possible and the best outcome”

“But you will have lied regardless and you’ll always be worried that the truth will out and the longer it goes on the worse it will be”

“Exactly”

“Then you have to tell him and deal with it”

“And if he leaves?”

“You’re not right for each other, but I think you need to give him a chance to forgive you”

“Thank you”

“Percy seems to have subsided, do you want to continue or leave it?”

“I think I need to go home and think very hard; and tomorrow the book is launched and his picture will be gracing the cover from here to Adelaide”

“Have faith in your love, else quit”

Chapter Eleven – The launch and the return

I'd overseen about a hundred book launches, some dived like lead balloons, some flew for a short distance and crashed into a tree, some succeeded and made us all very happy and rich; this particular launch was very special. It was, without question, the author's best work and he was popular, so this launch was eagerly anticipated. The cover was also, without question, the best we had ever designed, an eagerly anticipated publication with a cover that, everyone who had seen it agreed, was the most beautiful and erotic picture they had seen for a very long time.

Ten thousand copies would usually be considered a good result, twenty thousand, excellent, fifty thousand, outstanding, one hundred thousand, unprecedented for a novel of this type. A "Front Runner" it was not, at least not between the covers; I hoped for fifty thousand and that would also allow me to bump up the asking price for the company.

Most of the sales would be "E" sales, perhaps ten thousand on paper; tomorrow it hit the shelves.

There was a party, a bit of a fanfare, organised for the evening, self-congratulatory bullshit and palm pressing, the only upside for me was that it was a chance to see a lot of my friends and dress up for a change.

I woke up and got ready for work and by the time I hit the office it was nine-thirty; there was a buzz, but that was expected, two books out and it was payday. The buzz did not subside and it increased in volume then the phone started to ring and the in box of the company email account started to flag red that it was getting full. I went into the main office;

"Guys, why is the email account screaming at me and why is that phone ringing incessantly?"

"Everyone wants a copy of "The Boxer"..."

"Well, there are ten thousand copies out there, surely that's enough for today, it's barely ten o'clock!"

"Amazon is predicting it will have sold out by this evening"

The transit of Mars

“That can’t be right, we never sell out”

“Best you order another ten or even twenty thousand Chambers” said Frank the office manager who’d been around since “The Front Runner” had been published

“The fucking story isn’t even that good”

“That don’t want to read it, they want to wank over the picture”

Mayhem ensued and five copies the author had signed for me got locked in the safe;

“Someone has just sold a copy on eBay for three hundred quid”

“That’s ludicrous”

Similar tales were reported throughout the day and when the time in New York approached nine o’clock in the morning I had a call from Daryl to say that Jason had been mobbed on his way to the studio; I called him;

“Sweetheart it’s me, are you okay?”

“They went crazy. Chris is talking about getting me on some chat show tonight”

“Oh my God, the posters come out today don’t they?”

“Yeah; and he’s talking about Tokyo, Berlin and Sydney”

“This is going to be unreal”

“Call you later, I have to get ready, I’m due at Macey’s at noon, personal appearance”

“Have fun; I love you”

“I love you too, see you in a week”

“Yes, I know, I can’t wait”

The transit of Mars

As soon as the posters were unveiled then the dam wall burst and everyone wanted to know who Jason was and everyone wanted to buy his underpants and everyone wanted the book and the more we printed the more we sold and the more underpants were sold and so it went on for a week. He appeared on every major cable chat show and news channel and then he flew home to London and my joke about fighting my way through the crowds and Paparazzi wasn't a joke after all.

Somehow, finally, battling through like swashbuckling musketeers we made it home;

“I'm so happy to see you” I said for the hundredth time

“Me too; you've lost more weight and I can see some very nice definition”

“I've been working out every day; it was the only thing that kept me from going crazy”

“I missed you more than I thought possible”

“Jesus, I missed you; but we have to get used to it for a while if what Daryl says is true and you're jetting off to promote the label from here to Rio and Sydney”

“I don't want to think about leaving the second I walk through the door; can we go to bed?”

“Jet lagged?”

“Fuck deprived!”

The thought that Jason had been playing whilst he had been away from home was a very small one kept alive by a hard core contingent at the gym which regularly reminded me that Jason was young, cute and in New York. I did not believe he had strayed from the path;

“Best we sort that before your balls drop off or explode then” I jested

The transit of Mars

“I had plenty of offers” he said

“I’d have been very disappointed if you hadn’t; I had a my fair share too, though mine were offers to carry my shopping home or help me cross the street...”

“I didn’t accept any of them”

“Neither did I”

I wasn’t sure what he wanted me to say; “well done”?

“I trust you Jason; I expected you to get offers and I knew you would turn them down” it sounded suitably mature and reassuring

“Despite what everyone was saying?”

“Despite that; I don’t listen to that crap I hear at the gym; they’re just jealous”

I moved closer and held out my arms because I needed to feel his warm body within them and his lips pressed against mine;

“I love you” I said

“I love you too; I’d never lie to you”

FUCK!

We floated to the bedroom and landed like two feathers blown in by the wind; then we became a sea of fluid movements, slow undressing and gentle kisses, fingers tracing lines across our respective landscapes; then the storm approached and the limbs were like the branches of the trees caught up in the gale bent this way and that and the bodies were like waves driven by the swell of the sea and the crests were caught by the wind and the water was boiling and the crests turned into wild horses and screamed in the face of the wind and the waves arched and broke upon the shore crashing and seething and then there was only quiet, limbs like driftwood cast on the beach, jumbled and piled up, wet and salty, drying in the sun.

The transit of Mars

I knew I had to say something; our love making had released a huge build-up of pressure but the subject remained; I waited until we were chilling out;

“Jason; I have something to tell you”

“What?” and I heard the concern and the panic and I supposed he thought I might say I was ill or something

“You can’t enter the Definition’s competition now that you’re a professional model”

“Who told you?”

“Matt”

“Shit!”

“I’m really sorry; the second you signed the contract at Daryl’s you disqualified yourself”

“I don’t believe it...”

“But Daryl reckons you’ll get an invitation in any event”

“I could have won”

“Thing is; I found out two days before you left for New York”

There was a pause whilst that was processed;

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I didn’t want you to back out of the campaign and ruin the future you were dreaming of”

“If I had backed out then and Daryl had cancelled the contract I could still have entered right?”

“I don’t know that for sure but probably”

The transit of Mars

“So you decided what was best for me?”

“In a way yes” I said quietly, “I’m really sorry; I didn’t think at the time, I kind of panicked...”

He got up and started to get dressed;

“I’m sorry; I should have told you but it felt like it was too late and it wouldn’t have matter in the end...”

He said nothing and didn’t look at me until he was dressed;

“I’m going over to see Michael”

He left and the door slammed and that was the last time he set foot in the flat whilst I lived there. On the Sunday, at around nine, Carl came to collect his bags which he hadn’t even unpacked;

“What is he doing Carl?”

“He says he’s going on the promotional tour, starting tomorrow, and he doesn’t know exactly when he’ll be back”

“Shit!”

“Personally I think he’s an idiot for reacting this way but what can I say?”

“It’s okay; he’s right; I lied and took the decision out of his hands; that was wrong”

“Michael says he would prefer it if you didn’t come to lunch today but he would like to see you on Monday night”

“Yes of course; thanks Carl”

He hugged me and left.

Sue called and before I could say anything she was asking questions and telling me about the reports on the TV and then she said;

The transit of Mars

“So; how is he; I bet it’s great to have him back, no?”

“I told him and he left”

Silence;

“Fucking hell sweetheart; do you want me to come over?”

“No; thanks; I’d rather be by myself just now”

“Call me if you need anything”

“I will; bye hon’...”

The transit of Mars

Chapter Twelve – We move on somewhat

Three months passed and if it hadn't been for Michael I would have killed myself. I sold the company when the sales of the book peaked at one hundred and fifty thousand. I'd taken Michael down to the farm and he'd agreed to become the manager; almost partner really and we'd spent three months making all the arrangements.

I kept the flat for Carl and everyone else to use but the rest of us went off to Evesham and took over the farm from Margaret and William who retired to Weston-Super-Mer.

No one spoke of Jason whilst I was in the room; of course I knew what he was doing; he was doing what all meteors do, but just as Daryl had said, the work eventually evaporated and he began to drop into obscurity; I also knew he was staying in London with Carl at the flat.

My life changed again the second we took over the farm; I had a large family to co-look after with Michael, Vanessa, Yvonne and Dean; a large farm to manage and we decided to go totally organic and to stock rare breeds; everyday was different and challenging; neither Michael or I had a clue but we had the best time learning from our mistakes.

Somewhere in month five after Jason's departure my heart began to feel like it was no longer held in a vice and being squeezed to death, the atmosphere changed in the house, it lightened up, I hadn't realised what a downer I had cast on things and it was only the adventure and the hard work that had stopped the brood from packing themselves off and heading back to London. Michael and I were in the yard;

"We're gonna need help" he said

"Yes, I know; a few pairs of strong willing hands would make all the difference; perhaps we'll advertise or ask around"

"I've got a couple of lads interested; they want to come over to have a chat at the weekend, on Sunday"

"Oh great and Sue and Daryl are coming for lunch"

The transit of Mars

“I’m glad you’re getting back to normal; I’ve kept my own counsel over the whole thing but I think he’s made you suffer a lot more than you deserved to; if I can say that?”

“Thanks; but he was right; I lied and I paid for it”

“Let’s try and milk those goats again shall we?”

“If that little bitch kicks the bucket over again I’m going to fucking slit her throat and we’ll eat her on Sunday...”

Sunday approached;

“Is Carl coming down for lunch on Sunday?” I asked at breakfast on Saturday

“He’s coming down with Sue and Daryl”

“What about these two chaps?”

“Not sure; I’ll call them later if I haven’t heard” replied Michael and I suppose it was the fumes from the huge stinking pile of manure that had slowly started to rot my brain that I didn’t detect any hint of subterfuge; nor did I see the conspiratorial looks pass between the older members of the family

Sunday dawned and it was a cracker!

Everyone was busy getting ready for lunch and Michael sent me out to collect the eggs, which meant hunting high and low throughout the yard and the garden because they were free range of course; I was delving in the barn so I didn’t hear the car draw up.

“I’m sure those bitches lay them right at the back so I have to crawl through this shit to get them” I said to myself

“Excuse me” I heard and it wasn’t a voice I instantly recognised, “I’ll be with you in a minute...”

The transit of Mars

I crawled back out still with my back to the man who had spoken. I turned and said;

“Right...”

Jason was stood there in the door;

“I hear you’re looking for help and my brother and I were wondering if you’d give us a trial.”

I saw the look and a smile that was being half-heartedly suppressed;

“Well, I don’t know; you look fit enough, done anything like this before?”

“No; not really, but we’re fast learners and hard-working”

“I’m sure you are” I said as I approached him

“I could hump a few bales of straw around...”

“Could you forgive a stupid cunt for making the worst mistake of his life and give him a second chance?”

“That sounds easy enough, I’ve done that already”

“Oh, when?”

“About four months ago but my stupid pride wouldn’t let me admit to it”

“That’s something we’ll both have to watch then, making these stupid mistakes and not owning up to them”

“I’ll try if you will”

“When can you start?”

“Straightaway...”

The transit of Mars

“Oh good, we’re just about to have lunch; you can meet everyone else, there’s a room free for the hired help, if you don’t mind sharing”

“I don’t mind...”

“What were you doing before?”

“Modelling”

“Oh really, that sounds terrific”

“It was great, but I’m not really tall enough; I did get on the cover of “Definition” magazine this month though”

“Wow; come to think of it your face is familiar, weren’t you the guy that was on all those posters and that book?”

“Yeah; a very special man helped me to get my start and I never really thanked him for that”

“I’m sure he’s just happy that you got the chance to do something you were good at”

“Chambers; will you fucking kiss me?”

“Jason; only if you fucking kiss me”