

TRANSACTION

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“The gift wrapped, special selection box of assorted tarts”

**by
Chris Graham**

Part one of the Transactions trilogy.

A Chris Graham, 'Lena's Friends 'novel.

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Preface.

This story takes place in 2009, centred in and around the cities of Bristol and Bath in England's West Country, as well as certain scenes relevant to the plot taking place further afield.

Those readers familiar with the region, and with those cities in particular, may notice things which differ from how they are today, but where the locations are real, and not fictitious, they are portrayed as they were at the time.

Likewise, there have been significant changes in policing during the intervening period of over a decade, in particular the availability of ANPR and other mobile technologies which were either in their infancy back then, or hadn't been widely rolled out across the country.

'Transactions' was my first book, and although accepted by a publisher as being worthy of inflicting on the reading world, I'm the first to accept that my writing and storytelling techniques have improved with experience. Because of this, the move of all the 'Lena's Friends' novels to a new publisher has been used as an opportunity to re-write that first book, along with its original sequel, into a trilogy with a lot of new material.

Each of the novels is a complete story, and can be read on its own, though as parts of a trilogy, those subsequent parts do give away endings of the previous book or books.

Following the Trilogy, later novels in the series are completely self contained and any references to incidents or characters in earlier books won't spoil their plots for readers who may not be reading them chronologically.

I hope you'll enjoy them all.

Chris.

Prologue.

A cottage in a village near Bath, England - 2009.

Lena Fox picked up her phone, and glanced at the caller ID.

“Hi, Ian... How’s it goin’?” From the other end, she heard a soft sigh.

“OK, I guess, but I need your help... well, your advice really, on a professional matter.”

“Hang on... I know nothing about church matters. You’re the vicar, an’ I’m pretty sure you’re not about to change the habits of a lifetime,” Lena laughed, “You’d better explain.”

“I’ve got a problem in my parish,” The vicar began.

The woman laughed again, “Only one?... I’d keep quiet about it if I were you. I’d have thought there were loads of problems on your patch. There always were... One’s getting an easy ride.”

“Fair point, girl,” He replied, “But as you’re the expert on the, shall we call it, ‘oldest profession’, it’s your advice I need.”

Lena’s interest was piqued, “Go on, Ian... Vicars and tarts is too much of a cliché for me to not be intrigued.”

Ian explained, “As you know, street prostitution is rife around this part of Bristol, and mostly they all work happily... or relatively so... alongside each other in some kind of harmony. As long as they earn enough to support habits, families, and keep their pimps and punters happy, everything’s hunky dory.”

“Yeah,” She agreed, “No one gets upset too much, the police leave them alone, and life goes on, right?” She chuckled, “And you even get the occasional soul to save... Even the big man in the sky’s happy too.”

“Yeah... Well that’s the problem, Lena... Everyone isn’t happy. In fact some of them are very unhappy and it’s causing friction on the street.”

Lena couldn’t resist it. “Friction?... Tell ’em to use more lube. The pound shops even sell KY these days.”

Ian laughed, “I walked into that one... But seriously... There’s a rumour on the street, and it’s started to get a little too much like a statement of facts. The story going round is that two girls, both of them very young, have started working the streets together, with no prior experience and in a manner less than conducive to their personal safety...”

“Can the big words, Ian...” She cut in, “You mean they’re taking chances, right?”

“Exactly that, my dear...” He agreed, “And it appears they’re very young, pretty, and well turned out, so they get the pickings of the best punters...”

Lena interrupted, “Which the other girls aren’t too impressed with, right?”

“Right,” He said, “And that means not far behind, their pimps will get upset, which is when it could get nasty... As in knives and even guns kind of nasty. They’re like big kids with nasty toys they like to show off with.”

“Yeah,” She replied, “An’ we can well do without that... You said the girls were young, Ian. So, how young?”

“It’s thought that one of ’em’s under eighteen.” He told her. “She apparently looks it, anyway... and the other’s certainly no old scrubber.”

“Hmm... So, probably below the legal age for working as a prostitute in any form.” Lena said.

“Absolutely,” He said, “That’s what the other girls are complaining about... One looks possibly even below the age of consent.” He paused, “At least, I’m told she looks underage anyway.”

“Underaged?” Lena shrugged, “And I guess the other girls are worried it’ll attract the perverts, which, if news gets around on the grapevine, it’ll get to the attention of the police, which’ll mean more patrols to frighten away their regular punters...”

This time it was Ian’s turn to interrupt, “Ah yes... The police... I was hoping we could keep them out of it... Otherwise it would be simple, wouldn’t it. Just call ’em in, to sort it out... but I’m accepted by the community ’round here... They come to me with their problems... I’m trusted, but that trust would be blown right out of the water if I brought in the police.”

“A dilemma,” Lena said, “Too many patrols would frighten away the kerb crawlers who are the regulars’ livelihood, which puts the two teenagers at risk of abuse from the other street girls, as well as from any dodgy punters.”

“Exactly my feelings.” Ian replied, “Most of these girls have a drug dependency, and an addict deprived of the means to feed their habit, is not a happy bunny.”

“OK... I’ll come over, and we can kick a few ideas around,” She thought for a moment, “Maybe even go and talk to a few of the girls later, when they’re out... Have you got plans for lunch?”

“Only a sarnie or something,” He replied, “Why?... Have I interrupted yours?”

Lena shook her head as she answered, “Not yet... but you would’ve done soon ’cos I was just about to sort myself something... Don’t worry... I’ll pick us up a takeaway, OK?... See yer soon.”

Chapter 1 - A Summons For Tony

Burnham on Sea - 2009

The hot water flowed over the girl's shoulders, running down the slope of her breasts and dropping from her nipples in streams like two strings of bright jeweled beads. She turned off the running water, stepped out of the shower, and wrapped herself in a large soft bath towel. She then proceeded to blot herself dry, taking care to get into those little intimate places she'd been so careful to ensure were perfectly fresh and clean.

Throwing the towel over the door to the shower cubicle, she looked at herself in the mirror covering most of one wall. She took off the plastic shower cap and shook her head from side to side to let her hair go loose.

"Hmm... not bad girl... You'll do," she muttered to herself, as she twirled around in front of her own reflection. She cupped her nicely formed breasts in her hands, lifting them slightly as she continued to talk quietly to no one in particular, which was fortunate, as there was no one else in the room. "Yeah... Nice tits... and all real... None of that silicone stuff there... Not like some of the slappers who work here."

She misted herself lightly with an atomiser, then reached across for the pair of lace trimmed black knickers, hanging over the back of the chair. Lifting one slender leg at a time, she fed them over her small feet before drawing them upwards to wrap her neatly rounded behind and her smoothly shaved pubic area.

Taking a matching bra from the same chair, she wrapped it around her, joining the clasp at her front then rotating the garment to its correct orientation before pulling it up over the breasts she'd been admiring earlier and slipping the elastic straps over her shoulders. She adjusted the straps carefully to prevent one of them from obscuring the small red rose tattoo above her collar bone.

She then removed the lace suspender belt from the chair and stepped into it, before pulling it up to her waist. Taking a new pair of sheer black stockings from her handbag, she carefully rolled them onto her long legs, smoothing the thin material carefully before attaching them to the suspenders' fastenings.

After another twirl in front of the mirror to check that all was well, she brushed her hair, put on a classic 'little black dress' and slipped her feet into a pair of black stiletto heeled shoes. Following one more turn to check her reflection, she added a black velvet choker. It had a jewel at its centre which was a very close shade of red to that of the rose tattoo.

Taking a fresh towel from the cupboard, she spread it carefully over the massage couch before retrieving the wet one from over the shower door to take down to the laundry room.

After a quick glance around to check that all was as it should be, she left the room and headed downstairs to the reception area, where her next client would be waiting.

Tony Birdham sighed softly with pleasure as he felt the girl's delicate fingers running along the length of his spine. He thought to himself that had she been a trained 'qualified

masseuse', the appointment would undoubtedly have cost him considerably more money and would have provided him with none of those very pleasant 'extras' to follow.

Her hands ran down his back to caress and knead his somewhat flabby buttocks, pausing momentarily at their base to let her fingers stray down to tickle and stroke his scrotum very, very, gently.

He moaned softly, partly as a genuine reaction to her touch, and partly because he felt it was the required thing to do. He had definite perceptions as to the correct etiquette to be observed in these kinds of situations, the last thing he wanted was for her to think he wasn't appreciative.

At her bidding, he turned over onto his back, and studied her closely, his eyes drawn to the delicate artwork of a red rose tattoo between her shoulder and her left breast. She dusted talc onto his chest then proceeded to gently massage his front, taking great care to 'accidentally' stroke his nipples in a most pleasant way as her hands passed over them.

As she worked her way down from his chest and over his beer belly, he felt the first stirrings of the sap beginning to rise. He'd always thought it strange that it didn't begin to occur at an earlier point on these occasions, but he put it down to the professional nature of the acquaintance.

By the time her hands had reached the affected area, all reluctance to react had dissolved into the ether and as usual he wondered just how, simply by using her mouth, she managed to roll a condom on to his erection, without him noticing.

He gently stroked her slim body, as she knelt over him bobbing gently, letting his fingers wander across silky skin till they reached her more intimate regions.

She moaned gently, probably also as etiquette required, the sound of it being muffled somewhat by the task at hand.

Watching her, as she rearranged her position to one which allowed her to kneel astride him, he thought to himself that this girl was almost too pretty to be found working in a somewhat sleazy massage parlour in a scruffy, small, second rate coastal resort on the Bristol Channel.

These thoughts soon evaporated though, as she lowered herself carefully onto him, to open the third and final act of the afternoon's entertainment with a smile that looked as though she really meant it.

In fact, although Tony didn't realise, she really did mean it, as he would be her last punter of the afternoon. She'd got the whole evening off and was looking forward to a long hot bath, rather than the several quick showers she'd taken during her shift. This would be followed by an evening in the pub, socialising with her mates. Perfect. Just perfect.

Tony Birdham was that rare kind of man, a man with an unearned income that was enough for his needs but not so much as to place him in the company of those who are considered to be wealthy. As such this didn't make him feel obliged to portray himself as anything special, or superior to those who have to work for a living.

He liked to enjoy the finer things in life; good food, fine wines, good honest naturally made 'real ales' and ciders, good looking women and his particular passion, riding motorcycles.

All of these things though, he liked to enjoy in moderation. He isn't a greedy man. He's content, as long as he has his roof over his head when he wants it, his favoured foods in his fridge for him to cook, and his wines in the cellar, or those quality ales and ciders available in a welcoming pub within easy reach.

With enough money to be able to indulge in his taste for 'professional' women, or working girls as prostitutes are often known, and to run the bikes he kept in his garage, Tony's life came pretty close to his idea of perfect.

The only other really important things in Tony's life were his friends. Not just any friends, but his real friends, his close friends, and for them he would do anything within his power, in the same way that he knew that they'd do anything for him.

As Tony dressed, his mobile phone rang. It had been switched off during the encounter with the girl as something of a courtesy, another one of those small etiquettes he felt needed to be observed, but by the time he'd extracted it from the depths of his pocket, it had gone over to voicemail so he left it unanswered. He would deal with it later.

First though, he needed a coffee. There was a small Italian owned coffee bar that he knew, situated in a side street, just off the sea front, where they made the finest espresso he'd had. Tony was a connoisseur of good coffee.

Back at the car park, where he'd left his bike, he rolled himself a cigarette, lit it, and checked the phone message. It was from an old acquaintance of his. He'd bumped into him some while ago after not having seen him for about twenty five years.

Ian Motson hadn't been so much a friend, as 'friend' had a stronger meaning in Tony's vocabulary. He was just someone he'd known at college.

In truth, at the time, Tony had thought Motson a bit of a prat, but he was OK to have a pint with, and sang to the same hymn sheet as Tony himself when engaged in debate with one, or more usually two as they tended to work in pairs, of the student world's many proselytising zealots.

Some, who'd been brought up that way, had been indoctrinated from birth. Others were 'Born Again', beaming beatifically as they told the two cynical students that "All was not lost", "Jesus loves you" and that if they'd repent their 'sins', whatever sins they were, they'd be OK.

They'd always been onto a loser with Tony and Ian, as neither of them had a religious belief in their bodies.

It therefore came as a surprise to Tony to have Ian introduced to him as "The Reverend Ian Motson" at a party a couple of years before. He was a guest of Tony's good friend and employee, Mike Taylor, himself a practising Christian, and he was introduced as the vicar from his church.

Motson used to joke that he might go on to read theology at university and become a vicar, he'd always been one for the easy life and fancied the idea of a secure job, with housing provided. He hadn't thought that his atheism would be a problem. He was, at the time, on a drama course and acting was, in effect, a permitted form of lying.

It had never occurred to Tony, that he'd actually go through with it.

Later, while on the patio having a smoke, Tony had cornered Ian to take the piss. You know the sort of thing, 'Rabid Atheist Gets God!', tabloid newspaper headline stuff. Tony

was just a bit bored really, he had no intention of causing any real offence, but Ian had told him straight. He hadn't had some kind of damascene conversion, he was still an atheist in private. He'd simply come to the conclusion that his 'joke' scheme might actually work and after a few beers one night, he went ahead and applied for a place on a theology course. After all, a degree is a degree, whatever its subject. The rest, as they so often say, is history.

Naturally, though, nothing's quite that simple, and he'd found that although busier than he'd expected, he actually enjoyed the role, finding that, as some of the dilemmas that were problematic to other clergymen didn't tear at his conscience in the same way, he could deal with them reasonably easily and effectively.

When, later, he was moved to an inner-city parish, with its problems of drugs, gangs, hookers and some of the other joys of urban decay, he found himself enjoying the challenge.

They mostly didn't want to hear about God, but right and wrong are the same whether you're a Christian or not, and somehow the old and poor seemed to be more honest than the people who had the vicar round to tea as a social trophy.

The two former students stayed in contact after that. Ian still managed to be a bit of a prat at times, but he was one who Tony, strangely, had a lot more respect for. Gradually, that respect grew and their friendship consolidated.

* * *

When Tony checked the voicemail, he was surprised to hear a different voice to the one he'd expected. It was a woman's voice. It was the one voice that was guaranteed to get his attention. It was Lena's voice.

Lena Fox was an enigma; she was a free spirit, and a self made woman. She was an attractive, thirty year old, well educated, motorcycle riding tart.

Tart, in fact, was the very word Lena used to describe herself, at least to her close friends, and Tony was probably the closest friend of all.

'Tart' was also the less than kind name for what Lena did to keep herself in the manner to which she had become accustomed. Her upmarket clientèle, may have preferred the terms 'escort', or even 'courtesan', if they were honest enough to describe their relationship with her at all, but in the real world, Miss Lena Fox, BA., was a prostitute: an expensive one mostly, but a prostitute none the less, and that's exactly how she liked it.

She was very good at it, she enjoyed it immensely, and she'd bought herself two properties outright on the proceeds of it.

Tony had first met Lena in her professional capacity, but not while she was working at the expensive end of the market. Lena liked, sometimes, to return to her roots, going back to the massage parlours of her younger days or even, very occasionally, back to the streets where she started as a teenage student, supplementing her meagre student loan.

Not having children or a drug habit to support, she did reasonably well working on the street, until she became old enough to start working in the much safer massage parlours and sauna clubs.

Their paths had crossed in a tawdry establishment in the 'Old Market' area of Bristol, where Tony was sometimes to be found indulging his liking for uncomplicated, anonymous sexual gratification.

He wasn't one to seek out the same girl for repeat performances, believing the old adage that variety is the spice of life, but in her case, seeing as she'd been available one afternoon, he'd made an exception. She was, after all, strikingly good looking.

Several weeks later, Tony had been at a motorcycle rally standing, tankard of cider in hand, watching and listening to five young lads giving a creditable rendering of Lowell George's song, 'Willin'.

A very beautiful girl caught his eye, she was standing next to the makeshift stage.

Something about her looked familiar, very familiar, but he wasn't sure what it was. A friend spoke to him and he turned to answer, when he turned back the girl had moved and he couldn't see her any more.

The following morning, he crawled out of his tent, soaking the knees of his jeans on the dew laden grass, before putting his old-fashioned percolator on the camping stove. Leaving it for the seemingly interminable time that it takes to boil, he opened his tobacco tin and rolled up his first smoke of the day. After lighting the cigarette, he made his way to the Portaloo across the field.

Coming out of the ladies was the girl from the night before. This time he remembered where he'd recognised her from. He raised a hand casually in greeting and began walking over to her.

Against her better judgement, she accepted his offer of a coffee. After he'd taken care of the reason he was visiting the toilet trailer, they returned to his pitch, pausing at her tent as they passed it, so she could put on her boots in place of the now sodden canvas shoes that she'd slipped onto her feet in her hurry to get to the loo.

He poured two large mugs of the extremely good smelling coffee, then refilled the old percolator and replaced it on the stove to brew again as they sat outside his tent sipping coffee and talking. They watched the site wake up as the mist that hung over the grass, burned off in the early morning sun.

It was agreed that perhaps it might not be a good idea to tell the rest of the world how they knew each other; some might judge, others may try to take advantage and, for Lena at least, this was her 'off duty' time. She just wanted to ride her bike: a stripped down, bobbed, early eighties BMW, and to enjoy the company of other like-minded people.

From this small beginning, a firm friendship grew. It wasn't a romance. Neither of them were that way inclined, but the discovery that they shared a lot of likes, dislikes, and opinions, led to the kind of bond that's as strong as it is rare in this day and age.

And it was Lena's voice, on Tony's voicemail. Tony returned the call, Motson answered, then passed the phone to Lena.

Lena had some kind of 'social worker', 'do-gooder' gene somewhere in her make-up. She was a sucker when it came to helping out if one of the street girls was in trouble, or at risk of it.

When Ian sought her out for advice about the street girls in his inner city parish: particularly if it was a young girl who was in jeopardy, she got particularly concerned. When it was two youngsters, her imagination went into overdrive.

This time, Lena was very worried, so with no signal available on her own phone, she had called Tony from Ian's.

There may have been nothing that could be done, short of involving the authorities, and that, as far as she was concerned, would be counterproductive, as any extra police activity on the streets, concentrating on street prostitution, would just add to the working girls' problems.

She hoped that Tony, who was sympathetic to the 'cause' and had a somewhat lateral way of thinking, could add some creative input to the dilemma that Ian and herself were attempting to resolve. Besides, in any kind of crisis, she felt more able to cope with it when he was on her team.

Strangely enough, he felt exactly the same way about her. Holmes and Watson they may never be, but Birdham and Fox had a certain ring about it.

Chapter 2 - The Problem With Girls

Bristol.

Tony rode north towards Bristol. He wasn't really sure what he could do, but if Lena asked for him, then Lena got him. She seldom asked anyone for help but on the rare occasions that she did, it was invariably Tony, as he was one of the very few people she really trusted. His feelings were exactly the same about her.

Passing the airport, he started to wonder whether Lena was making something out of nothing. It was her only weakness, if weakness it was, to worry about those in her profession who weren't capable of handling awkward situations. She actually loved her work and cared about its image. She felt that girls getting harmed, physically or emotionally, did it no good at all. Nevertheless, her radar was particularly good normally, so the benefit of the doubt was to be the order of the day.

Heading into the city centre, he turned towards Saint Paul's, close to the area where the Reverend Motson plied his trade, riding quickly through the run-down streets with his exhausts echoing off of the high town houses. These were once grand residences, but were now looking increasingly shabby, containing flats and bedsits for students and the financially compromised. Poverty had always been significant around Saint Paul's. The infamous 1980 riot was more about poverty than the race issues the press of the time were so ready to assign the blame to.

Today's Saint Paul's is still very multicultural, with its significant Afro-Caribbean population, along with a growing Somali community who find some of the culture of drugs and prostitution that provide a living for some, both black and white, to be a little hard to accept with their predominantly Muslim traditions.

Tony always had a feeling that he was being watched when he rode through here. He didn't know why it was that he felt that way, but he was probably right.

Mounting the pavement, he pulled up outside Ian's home, chained the bike to the railings and went to the door. As he raised his hand to the old brass knocker, the door opened and Lena ushered him into the house.

They sat around the kitchen table drinking Red Stripe lager out of the cans, something that went against the grain as far as Tony was concerned. He wasn't a big fan of lager at the best of times, but drinking any beer out of a can was just plain wrong in his eyes.

Ian filled him in on the rumours while Lena supplied the questions. Tony wasn't sure what he was supposed to be doing, so he just listened carefully.

"It appears that the two teenagers have been seen at a couple of locations, standing separately, obviously soliciting. They've also been seen coming out of the railway station together so the word is that they're not local girls. They don't look like the normal street girls either, they were much too well turned out for a start."

When they could be bothered, the street girls tended to dress provocatively to attract trade, but the clothes they wore were cheap. These two had been seen wearing much more

expensive clothes and looking more like they were party girls, going off to enjoy a night out on the town.

“How do you tell the difference?” Tony asked.

“A woman would know,” Lena said, “And it was the other girls who’d started the rumours in the first place.”

Ian continued, “The two girls only seem to ply their trade in the early evenings,” He explained, “And they’ve been seen later getting into a cab together, usually at around nine or ten o’clock at the very latest.”

“The most worrying aspect though, to my mind,” Lena added, “And the one thing that all the reports contained, is how they looked very young.” She looked at Tony, “One of them apparently looks a lot more so than the other, looking like she was only about fourteen or fifteen.”

“Then it needs sorting out before the police get involved.” Tony said, “Apart from the dangers to the girls themselves, underage prostitution is bad news for the rest of the working women, attracting all manner of weirdo punters and causing police crackdowns.”

Reverend Motson made a suggestion. “My old Escort van is well known around these streets, especially to the local constabulary, and as such it won’t attract too much attention. If it gets spotted on the CCTV, or registered by those new ANPR cameras as a repeat visitor, the police’ll tend to ignore it, knowing that I’m both local, and likely to be driving around these areas as a part of my ministry.”

“Do they also know you’re gay, Ian?” Lena asked.

Ian nodded, “Yes, of course... I’m on the Pride committee.”

“Good,” She said, “So they’ll know you’re unlikely to be kerb crawling yourself...” She grinned, “Not for girls, anyway.”

Eventually a plan was hatched. The plan was for either Ian or Tony to drive the van around the girl’s reported pitches, as if they were prospective punters, and watch out for them. When, or if, they spotted one of them soliciting, they’d pull over and let the girl approach the van. If the girl offered ‘business’, they’d let her get into the van, then engage her in small talk whilst driving off. This, according to Lena, was the usual way of doing things and would allow them to move away.

The van had central locking fitted, unusual on a van of its age but it had been fitted by a mechanic, who was a parishioner of Ian’s, as a safety precaution. This wasn’t the most salubrious of neighbourhoods, after all. The central locking was thought to be a bonus as it might slow down any attempts to run before questions had been answered and points made.

The object of the exercise was to convince the girls of the risks they were taking before somebody else tried to get the same result by less gentle means.

Making life easier for the regular hookers, while maintaining the Reverend Motson’s integrity within his parish was just the icing on the cake.

Along with the two men trying to pick up the girls and warn them off, or at least get some information, Lena would go out onto the street, working at the same places that the youngsters had been seen. If she struck lucky, she might be able to engage them in conversation, finding out what they were up to and maybe pointing out the errors of their ways.

She also planned to let herself be picked up by any men cruising the same places. She knew that some men became chatty on the way to 'the quiet place to park', others seemed to like a post coital chat on the way back. Either way she hoped that one of them may have used the services of the two girls and perhaps be able to give her some insight into what they were up to.

Ian wasn't too keen on this strategy, but as Lena pointed out to him, in a somewhat forceful manner, "Ian... shut up... There's fuck all you can do about it!"

In the end, though, it was Ian who had the first break.

* * *

On Bristol's streets.

The first night, Tony went out looking for the girls but drew a blank. He had been very tempted by a long legged Goth girl he'd seen in Brunswick Square, but had managed to keep his mind on the task at hand. After a few hours of driving around he'd come to the conclusion that the girls in question were either not working that evening, or they were already busy working and not still standing around on street corners waiting for trade.

Wondering whether to call it a night, his decision was made for him when he rounded a corner to see flashing blue strobes reflecting off the buildings and police 'no entry, crime scene' tape cordoning off the street at a location particularly notorious for street girls soliciting for business.

He pulled the van into the kerb, then checked his mirror, hoping it would show a road clear enough to reverse, allowing him to back into a side street and turn around. He was out of luck.

There was a steady stream of traffic, all of it passing him and turning right at the cordon, where a police officer was directing them to do so. Tony had hoped not to get too close to the police activity for obvious reasons, but it seemed he had no option so he pulled out into the stream.

As he approached the cordon, the officer held him up, to allow an ambulance and another police car to enter the closed road. Neither seemed to be in too much of a hurry, as they stopped at the cordon with no sirens or flashing lights being used on them.

"So?... An ambulance." Tony thought to himself, "That means a casualty... and if they're in no hurry it means it's either a minor injury... or someone's dead so there's fuck all anyone can do for them now."

After around a minute, a PCSO appeared and released the tape to let the waiting vehicles in.

Tony wound down his window, "What's happened, Constable?... Will it be reopened soon?" He had no intention of going that way now, but was curious.

The PCSO smiled, clearly flattered by Tony promoting him to a fully fledged police officer.

"I'm sorry sir... There's been an incident. The road will remain closed for the foreseeable future. Are you a resident?"

Tony shook his head, “No mate... Looks like I’ll have to go the long way round... So what is it?... An accident?”

The PCSO shook his head, then realising he probably shouldn’t have, he instead replied with a question.

“Do you know anyone from along there, sir?” He didn’t wait for an answer, “I suggest you get along now... and leave us to do our job.” With that, he waved Tony on, followed by the traffic waiting behind him.

The next night, Ian went on his first ‘patrol’ with some trepidation. The local news had been full of reports of a young girl’s body being found, clearly not the victim of accidental death. The immediate concern of the three friends was whether the body was one of the girls they were hoping to make contact with. As yet, no name had been released, but the description, vague as it was, could easily be one of the youngsters.

After cruising around the area for about twenty minutes or so, Motson had seen a couple of the local girls who he thought he recognised, but nothing out of the ordinary had caught his eye other than the police notice boards asking for witnesses to the murder. It seems they were certain of that much at least.

There seemed to be very little actual police activity that evening, though this wasn’t too surprising as Bristol’s football teams, City and Rovers, were playing a charity benefit match. This kind of local derby can make heavy demands on police manpower.

As a seven and a half tonner in front of him turned right, it opened up his view of the road ahead. Ian let out a sigh of relief. Both teenagers were standing about twenty feet apart by a corner.

He pulled up next to the smaller one of the two. The stories had been right, she did look very young. He actually felt concerned that someone would see such a young girl getting into his van and dial 999. He almost lost his nerve and drove off but stuck to the plan and glanced over in her general direction.

She was watching him, and straight away walked over to the Escort. Opening the passenger door, she smiled sweetly at him.

“Looking for a little company dear?” she asked, in a well educated accent. The fact that he said nothing at all was taken as an affirmative and she got into the van and closed the door. Ian couldn’t help noticing that she entered the van like a lady, elegantly, placing her behind on the seat first, then swinging both legs in, with her knees together. This young lady had obviously had lessons in deportment. Somehow it looked strange, seeing this behaviour in one so young.

As he drove off, he managed get his mind back to the job, as she told him to take the next left towards a trading estate.

“I saw you standing there with that other blonde girl...” he said nervously, “spoil for choice wasn’t I?”

“Oh... you mean my kid sister...” she said, “We like to keep an eye on each other if possible... So what made you choose me?”

“You just looked cute... Y’know kind of petite like... I like petite girls.”

“I should have kept my school uniform on, shouldn’t I?”... But it makes me look too young... or is that what you like?” She glanced up, through the windscreen, “Oh sorry... next right... yeah... just here.”

He made the turn. “How old are you?” he asked, remembering that she’d referred to the other girl as her ‘kid’ sister.

“Eighteen... well nearly,” she answered.

“And you said the other girl’s your sister...”

The girl nodded, “Yeah... my younger sister... but, like, she’s the one who rarely gets asked her age in pubs and clubs... strange really.”

Motson was on a roll, “So?... How old is she then?” he asked.

“Emily?... Fifteen,” she obviously didn’t consider it to be an issue. “Pull over here, it’s quiet round here... what’s your name?”

“Ian,” he answered, without really thinking, then wondered whether he should have given her a false name. It was too late now, anyway, and she probably wouldn’t remember it afterwards. He realised then that he hadn’t tripped the central locking but the sound of it clicking in now might spook the girl, so he left it.

“I’m Charlotte.” she said without being asked, “What do you want...?” She placed an unusually delicate hand on his leg and gave him that same sweet smile as she’d given before, when she’d first got into the van.

This was crunch time, he had almost flinched when she’d put her hand on his thigh, it felt uncomfortable to him being in a potentially sexual situation with a female... he wasn’t a particularly active gay, but he was definitely gay.

“Er... this is a bit awkward,” he started to speak, She interrupted him,

“Relax... you’re allowed to be nervous... I don’t bite... unless you want me to...” She grinned. The girl’s cheery, matter of fact, professionalism wasn’t helping. He still felt way out of his depth.

“No... I mean... I just want to talk to you... about you... about what you’re doing.”

The merest hint of a puzzled look flashed across her face before she spoke.

“OK... but my time costs the same... If me giving you the juicy details is what turns you on, that’s fine... I’ve got tissues in my bag. It brings a new meaning to ‘oral sex’, I s’pose.” He was just about to protest that this wasn’t what he meant at all, when he realised that it could help provide him with some answers.

“You don’t sound like the other girls I’ve met round here... you’re more...” He paused thinking, “Oh, I don’t know... educated sounding... if you know what I mean?”

“I should hope so... the money daddy’s spent on my education ... ‘Posh totty’, that’s me... you sure you don’t want to change your mind about what we do?... This mouth may have had a silver spoon in it... but it gives really exquisite blowjobs.” She’d stretched out the words ‘really exquisite’ in such a way that any other man would have positively melted.

He smiled, “No... actually I’m gay.” He watched her expression change to one of surprise, “I searched you out deliberately, for your own good. There’s been some concern about two very young looking girls working the street.” He went on, “Any suggestions of under aged girls selling sex on these streets will bring a massive increase in police activity... Not so good for the regular girls.” She opened her mouth to speak, but he was in full flow, “Added to that, young girls attract all kinds of the less savoury type of clientèle, if that’s not too good a name

for them? The word soon gets around and I wouldn't want to bet on your safety." She just looked at him, so he continued. "You'd be in the middle, with danger on both sides, the perverts on the left... the other girls on the right." He shook his head, "Jesus, Charlotte... A young girl was murdered on these streets last night. It could've been you."

As he paused to draw breath, she got her chance to speak.

"Don't you worry about us," she said, "We're OK, we know what we're doing, we only work the early evening, so we don't get the pub chucking out brigade."

"But..." He began, "There are other risks... The pimps... The dealers..."

She interrupted him, "Look... We don't do drugs. We don't get involved with pimps... We've so got it all sussed."

Ian looked at her, she looked so young, so vulnerable, like a child in a very grown-up world. He said just one word.

"Sussed?... " he paused. Then he repeated it, "Sussed?... What do you mean, sussed?"

"It's all part of a plan," she said, "We, like, plan our evening. It's all worked out, we pick up a couple of paying punters each and that pays for our night out. Early evenings, it's the office types, nice and safe, nice and clean. Then we go out clubbing, with enough money left for us to get a cab back home. That is, if we don't get offered a lift." She was obviously proud of their scheme, she was bragging, "We change out of our school gear in the station toilets, then come down here and it's so easy. Guys'll so much rather have us than any of those other slappers, so we don't have to stand around for long... It so beats a part time job in McDonald's."

He looked aghast, hearing these details spoken so frankly, and in the teen vernacular, it didn't seem at all right.

"But your age... I mean you're both so young, especially your sister... It's just so wrong... so very wrong..."

She obviously misunderstood him, or just wasn't listening.

"Not a problem... like, we've both got very good fake IDs, they get us in anywhere, besides, they don't care too much, they want their clubs heaving with good looking girls... It brings in the fellas and they're the ones who spend the money... and if a punter's worried we're too young, then we flash them the ID too..." She smiled, "It keeps them happy."

Ian was getting nowhere, for all her expensive schooling this girl didn't appear to understand the real world she was living in.

"Charlotte... Charlotte... Charlotte," he said shaking his head in disbelief. "You just don't get it, do you?... It's just not right... you're both too young for this kind of activity... even if we ignore the small matter of the law... you..."

She interrupted him, "I'm over sixteen... I'm not a kid!"

"But that's exactly what you are... a kid... a schoolgirl... sure, you're over sixteen... but the minimum age for prostitution is eighteen," he went on, "soliciting on the streets is illegal at any age... and then there's your sister... Emily, is it?... She's only fifteen, for Christ's sake... I know she looks older than you, but if one of these poor, sad, inadequates who patronise the street walkers is caught shagging her," he was choosing his words carefully, "Then he's even deeper in the shit than he'd normally be... she's fifteen!... it classes as rape! ... It puts him in jail... and labels him as a paedophile... a combination that doesn't exactly guarantee his safety... and all for a cheap bunk up in the back of his car... I know that the

slap on the wrist these guys usually get, when they're caught kerb crawling, is often criticised as inadequate... but... but..." he ran out of words. He'd surprised himself with the line he was taking, he wasn't normally one to side with the kerb crawlers, but somehow the immorality of what these girls were doing seemed to be multi-faceted.

"I so don't care about that!", she retorted like the petulant schoolgirl she obviously was. "We're, like, taking our chances... so are they. If our school found out what we're doing we'd be expelled... our parents would find out, we'd be so, as you so eloquently put it, in the shit ourselves." She continued, "We want some fun before the heavy stuff of careers cuts in. We want the clubbing, the good times... and, yes, the sex... doing this, we can afford that fun, oh... I know you'll think of us as poor little rich girls... but, like... can you really see our parents paying for those sort of things?... Doh!... I don't think so."

Somehow her perception of risks seemed to be totally one dimensional. It was all about the implications back in her nice clean middle-class life. She wasn't thinking about the immediate dangers, the dodgy customers, the drug dealers, these were a couple goodtime girls after all, and of course there were those other street girls, worried about the delicate balances affecting their ability to make money, whether it's to support their habits or feed their kids.

Motson realised that none of this had even crossed her mind, she suffered, if that's the right word, with the invincibility of youth, she thought they were untouchable.

"Take me back", she demanded, "You're obviously not in the market for anything I'm offering, you've paid me no money so my time is being wasted here, I need to get back to where my sister was, so I can earn some readies".

Motson sighed with resignation, he hadn't been able to convince her, he couldn't abduct her, that would mean crossing a line that he wasn't prepared to cross, and he was far too much of a gentleman to leave her there, alone, in the middle of a deserted industrial estate.

He turned the key, the starter groaned, making hard work of turning the engine, he'd forgotten that he'd had the lights on all this time, and his battery, like the rest of the van, had seen better days. Turning off the lights, he tried again. The engine fired, he turned the lights back on and pulled away.

He noticed that his hands were shaking. He was a vicar, for God's sake. Despite all the 'tarts and vicars' jokes, this wasn't in the job description.

* * *

Lena handed the man a tissue out of her bag. While she tucked her breasts back into her bra and buttoned up her blouse, he wrapped the used condom in the tissue and dropped it into a plastic bag that was half full of crisp wrappers and empty cigarette packs that he had hanging on the car's ashtray. She handed him another, to clean himself up with, and took one for herself to wipe the greasy residue from the condom's lubricant from her fingers, before dropping it into the bag with the others. She was quite impressed that he hadn't simply dropped the used prophylactic out of the car window into the gutter: something which was all too commonly done and was guaranteed to have people up in arms about the presence of working girls on their streets.

He started his engine. “Do you want me to drop you back where I picked you up?” he asked, “or is there somewhere else I can take you?”

She smiled at him, he looked as nervous now that she’d finished as he had when he’d first spoken to her. She figured that he wasn’t a regular user of street prostitutes, the regulars got talking straight away, as if to convince themselves they were actually seducing the girl and that it wasn’t really a dead cert that in a very short while she’d be performing some sort of sexual act with them.

“No...” she replied, “back to the square will be fine... thanks... Feeling better now?” she added. He smiled at her, a little sheepishly.

He pulled the car out from between the two empty industrial units and headed back towards the city centre.

As they rounded the square Lena tapped his arm.

“OK... here will do nicely... there’s a friend I want to talk to...” Lena had seen a tallish blonde girl in a well cut lilac coloured dress. She matched the description of one of the two young girls they’d been looking for.

As soon as the car stopped, she got out quickly, said goodbye as she shut the car door, and ran across the road to the side of the street where the blonde girl was standing before walking briskly along the pavement towards her. As she did, she was passed by a large silver coloured car. In front of her, a little way along on the other side, a white Ford Escort van had pulled up and a small blonde girl got out.

* * *

Brunswick Square, Bristol.

A silver-coloured Lexus saloon car turned left into the corner where the willowy blonde girl was standing. She watched it as it passed, looking straight at the driver, hoping that she could make eye contact.

The car disappeared round the next corner. Less than a minute later, it returned and stopped at the kerb opposite the girl. The driver looked straight ahead as if he was consciously avoiding looking at her, despite the fact that she was most definitely worth looking at. She crossed the road to the car and tapped lightly on the window, it slid down silently and the driver turned to face her.

“Are you looking for business?” she asked.

He mumbled something inaudible with a slight nod and the girl walked quickly around to the passenger side and got in. Out of the corner of her eye she noticed that a smaller girl, with the same coloured hair as hers, was getting out of an old Ford Escort van. She knew the smaller girl would be taking note of the Lexus’s number plate. She didn’t know that the driver of the Escort was doing the same. She, herself, had the little van’s registration number written on a small notepad in her bag.

The silver car slid silently away from the kerbside, then turned left out of the square towards the main road before becoming lost in the mêlée of the early evening traffic.

* * *

Reverend Motson pulled away from the kerb, turned the corner, then pulled in and stopped the van about fifty yards further on. Feeling the need for some fresh air, he wound down the window. He was mulling over in his mind the conversation he'd recently had with the small blonde girl, Charlotte.

Deeply engrossed in his thoughts, he didn't notice a strikingly beautiful redheaded woman approaching the van. He nearly jumped out of his skin when he heard a voice.

"Fancy a good time, darlin'?" Without waiting for an answer, its owner went around the van, opened the door, and got into the passenger seat.

Ian could have throttled Lena, "You scared the crap out of me, you daft cow!" he told her, as if she didn't know. "Where the hell did you spring from?"

"I'd just been dropped off by a bloke I'd done a hand job on. I'd spotted the older girl standing around. I started to walk towards her, but she got into that silver car, just as you dropped off the other kid opposite," she carried on, "I went to go over to her, but she got picked up straight away... busy little bunnies, aren't they?... It's no wonder the other girls are getting pissed off."

"Well, you're wrong on one important detail," he told her, "The little one's the eldest... seventeen... she says nearly eighteen... but that's still seventeen by my reckoning..." He went on to explain, "They're sisters, the younger one's only fifteen... and they really don't give a shit." He continued to fill her in with the details of his encounter with Charlotte. She sat, open mouthed, as he told her what had been revealed.

Lena had come across young underage teens far too many times before. Some were as young as thirteen, working as street prostitutes. They were usually crack and heroin addicts, or runaways. They were often both, being pushed onto the streets by the pimps that these poor, lost and vulnerable kids who were looking for love, believed were looking after them.

These, often quite young men, were the lowest of the low. They'd got the girls addicted in the first place.

However, these two girls were something else entirely. It took a lot to shock Lena, but she was shaken by Ian's revelations.

"At risk of stating the blindingly obvious, these two teenagers are a pair of shameless tarts. They've not got habits to support... they've not got kids to feed... nobody's forcing them... They're just selling their pretty little fannies to pay for a lifestyle..." Ian resisted the temptation to say that it reminded him of someone, but she was already one step ahead of him. "At least I was nineteen when I started," she smiled, "Well, nearly."

* * *

The silver car headed toward the city centre, its driver, Adam Pearson, knew where he was going. He'd decided on a whim to look for a girl, having been in a business meeting all afternoon, looking at a very trim, very leggy, young secretary who was taking notes.

She'd had one of those faces that seemed to be designed to give a man an erection without even trying. He wasn't sure whether it was her eyes or her lips that were the secret but combined with her athletic but not too muscular body, they'd worked their magic.

Under normal circumstances, he'd have asked her out for the evening and tried his hand at seduction. The usual routine for seducing lesser employees of the company seemed to work reasonably well for him, so he'd never seen any reason to change it.

He'd start out with an expensive meal at an elegant and upmarket restaurant, which would, of course, be charged to expenses. He would make sure that he threw in frequent, but subtle, reminders of how much money he earned and how much influence he had within the organisation. All the time he'd lubricate the whole process with expensive alcohol, then take her back to the company's hotel suite for a night cap... and if it wasn't looking like a dead cert... then roll out the Rohypnol, or possibly Ambien, he wasn't sure which one was in his wallet but they both did the trick.

But tonight there wasn't going to be the time, he was booked on an evening flight so he'd have to deal with his needs in some other way.

He'd thought he was going to have to slum it, to go to one of the local knocking shops, euphemistically called 'massage parlours', but it occurred to him that he'd have a look around some of Bristol's infamous streetwalker areas.

He had, after all, still got the use of the suite and you never know what kind of sweet young thing you might find offering herself up for business.

Then he'd seen her... slim... leggy... blonde... and dressed far better than he'd ever have expected to find on the streets.

When he'd driven past her, she'd looked in his direction and her face didn't have that resigned look that afflicted so many of these kinds of women. And she was pretty; very, very, pretty indeed.

He turned the car around and headed back to where she was standing. Pulling up to the kerb opposite her, he made a point of not looking towards her in case he was mistaken and she wasn't on the game. He knew if she was touting for business, then she'd approach him. Besides, he had a golden rule in these situations, never ask a girl if she's working, as she may be a policewoman, set up as bait to catch kerb crawlers. Always let them offer you their services first. Police plants, with recording equipment attached, always let you do the asking. That's their evidence. If they do the propositioning, then it could be construed as entrapment. Any half reasonable lawyer would have a field day.

All was well, and with the girl safely sat beside him in the car, he started to head back to the city centre hotel where the company kept a suite. His gear was still there anyway.

Looking at the girl whilst waiting at the lights, he thought he'd struck gold.

She was a babe, and how. Her face was blemish free, with simple make up and fresh looking skin, quite a young face, he guessed about nineteen, maybe twenty. He decided he wouldn't ask, he'd assume. He didn't want to find out that she was older, that would spoil his fantasy.

If only he knew.

When he'd pulled up, Emily was quite pleased that it was a nice car.

She always preferred the comfort of something like this Lexus with its reclining leather seats, to a bit of old carpet on the floor of a builder's van. It somehow seemed more like a date with a nice middle-class boyfriend than a screw for hard cash, although some of those builders were undoubtedly fit.

She thought to herself that the driver looked OK, in a well dressed, well groomed, middle aged sort of way, and when he told her that he had a suite to use, she smiled inwardly. This could be fun, and probably very lucrative.

She would pamper this guy, he looked like he could afford it, this could be a hundred pound car ride.

As they exchanged names and engaged in small talk during the short journey, Pearson suddenly realised that he hadn't been surprised by the way the girl spoke. Her speech matched her look. He'd been with escorts before who dressed well and looked classy, but their accents gave them away. Sometimes they sounded downright common, or sometimes sounding false, 'practised'; trying too hard to sound well brought up. But Emily's educated accent was real, and he found it remarkably arousing.

The next hour or so was going to be very pleasant indeed.

Driving into the hotel's underground car park, Emily noticed that the automatic barrier was broken off, so vehicles were able to enter without having to swipe a keycard or use the intercom. She memorised this for future reference, there were plenty of secluded empty spaces down there, it might be a good place to bring her clients.

They parked the car in a private bay and entered the guests' lift, taking it all the way up to the hotel's top floor. On the way up she put her arm around his waist, he seemed to like this and squeezed her hand gently with his right hand whilst wrapping his left arm around her tiny waist.

He let his hand drop to her lovely little bottom and gently caressed it through the short, smoky lilac, silk dress. She turned to him and smiled, making eye contact. He realised that in her heels, she was only very slightly shorter than him. Just the way that he liked it.

They entered the suite hand in hand, she was milking this for all it was worth. She wanted him to want her so much that he'd agree to, and pay for, all the 'extras' she could dream up. She excused herself and went through into the bathroom.

When she returned, she saw that he'd got a bottle of Lanson out of the refrigerator.

"Hmm..." she thought, *"that'll help things move along"*.

He poured them both glasses of the Champagne. As he handed one to her, she reached over with her spare hand and deftly undid his tie. They sat on edge of the bed. She rested a well-manicured hand gently on his leg. As she did so, she turned to face him, with a smile that would melt quartz.

"Well, Adam..." she began, "Perhaps we ought to get the sordid part out of the way first. What's your pleasure?... You tell me what you want me to do for you, and I'll tell you how much it'll cost you... I've got a very, very, open mind." As she said this, she moved her hand ever so slightly. She could feel him squirm with pleasure.

His mind was working overtime, but other parts of his anatomy were having no trouble at all in keeping up with it.

She gave him that smile again, "... or would you rather just pay for my time and we'll see what we can do to keep you entertained?" She pointed to the bathroom "I see there's a nice big bathtub in there. It'd be a nice place to start, wouldn't it?... We could have a lot of fun in that."

He turned to her, "I've only got about an hour... maybe an hour and a half, if I send you back in a Taxi... Would a hundred and fifty cover it?" The deal was done.

“*Result!*” She thought.

He thought, “*Bargain!*” Everyone was happy.

Standing again, she slipped his jacket over his shoulders. He let his hands fall away from where they were resting on her slim hips. The jacket slid off and dropped silently to the floor. She smiled that smile again.

Why, in the name of all that he held dear, did he have to catch that flight?

* * *

As Emily rode back, in the taxi Pearson had ordered on his company’s account, she phoned her sister.

Charlotte answered the call straight away; she wasn’t with a client and was wondering where Emily had got to. Emily arranged a point where she’d pick her up and they’d carry on in the cab to ‘Oceana’: tonight’s club of choice. Ending the call, she sat back and recalled the last couple of hours.

It had been fun, a lot of fun. He’d been a considerate and accomplished lover. She’d almost been able to forget it was a business arrangement, and she felt sure she’d made him feel that way too. He’d shown her a few new experiences, though she hadn’t let him know it, some of which she might add to her repertoire. Others were more reliant on the fact that he was a gentle and careful partner in the proceedings. It was probably best for them not to be offered to the average punter.

She certainly had no problems going with men almost old enough to be her grandfather, most of them were far more enjoyable than a quick inexperienced thrash around with boys nearer to her own age, and this one had treated her like a lady, supplied a very comfortable setting for the evening, given her good Champagne, arranged this taxi on his account, and more than paid for the rest of the night’s entertainment. That’ll do nicely, thank you very much. She’d given him her number.

The taxi pulled over and stopped, Charlotte got in, it made a U turn and drove off, back in the direction of the city centre. The night was still young. Emily and Charlotte had some boogying to do.

* * *

As the aircraft turned to head South, the man in the expensive suit looked out of the window to his left at the lights of the city in the distance. They looked clean and bright, somehow appropriately so, as this evening’s activities had left him feeling that way.

He was thinking how, at other times, those sorts of arrangements would leave him feeling very slightly sordid: not enough, to prevent him carrying out similar transactions in the future, but a little grubby none the less.

After they’d showered together quickly, prior to her taxi’s arrival, Adam had wished for a moment that he’d not washed her smell from his body. It might have been nice for it to have lingered for a while, as a memory of an evening that had ended far too soon. In the past, he would have cleansed himself thoroughly, as soon as was practicable, after casual sexual activities. It was almost a kind of ritual.

The dark Somerset countryside, speckled with scattered lights, fell away below.

He reclined his seat and closed his eyes, tomorrow could be a very busy day and he doubted it would end as today had. He would be in a ‘dry’ Muslim country.

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