

**FIRST EDITION**

## RESEARCHING THE STORY

Writing any novel necessitates some research, and so it was with this story. In an effort to try and encapsulate the true spirit of the characters in the novel, it was necessary for me to travel to New York and London; to read more tabloids and gossip than is sensible for any person; to drink reckless amounts of alcohol—expensive French wine and cheap beer in particular; to smoke thousands of Marlboro Lights; to spend more time on the internet studying the *Sun*'s Page 3 girls than is appropriate for a man in my position; to hang out with litigation lawyers at some of London's most powerful law firms; and to read more books and manuals on marital therapy than is advisable.

I hope you feel the research was worth it

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I'd also like to thank Scott Miller—for the MGM deal and *DTMM*. And a special thanks to Jennifer Klein for the MGM deal and her incredible support of *DTMM* and *First Edition*.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Richard Parker is thirty-eight years old and is married to Andrea. They have two daughters, Sophie and Harriet. For the first eleven years of his career, he worked as a litigation and corporate lawyer. He now works in employment law and human resources.

For further information about the author and *First Edition* you can go to [www.richardlparker.com](http://www.richardlparker.com)

# 1

## Naughty Schoolgirls

The information he was about to be told he would in due course use to destroy another man's life. And not just any man: the future Prime Minister of Britain. Did he have any qualms about what he was going to do? Not really. Such was the job of a tabloid editor in the city of London, the tabloid capital of the world. The job of entertaining the masses left little time for qualms about the consequences of what one did. It left little time for doubts about the rightness of what one did. The pressure to entertain was too relentless. And James Mason's job as editor of the *Globe* was all about entertainment. It was also about destroying lives. And it was about exposing those who needed to be exposed. And it was about publicly humiliating the more fortunate for the pleasure of the less fortunate. That's what readers wanted. That's what they liked. And if James Mason had learned nothing else in his nearly twenty-

year career on Fleet Street it was that nothing destroyed, nothing exposed, nothing humiliated, and nothing entertained quite like infidelity. Nothing sold like infidelity either. And the pressure to sell was relentless.

As he stood by the window of his corner office on the twenty-sixth floor of the glass tower in Canada Square, Canary Wharf, he pondered what his rival Claire Saunders of the *Daily Mirror* was up to, or what Mark Lewis at the *Tribune* was thinking. It was after 10 p.m. now. The first edition had gone off stone some two hours earlier. He would normally be in the back of his chauffeured car by now, on his way home to Chelsea. The night editor and the rest of the *Globe* team were busy working on the second edition and watching the news wires to see what stories might break overnight and would need to be urgently rushed into later editions. But a call from his political editor, Derek Cameron, shortly after 9 p.m. had put an end to any thought he might actually see his wife, Deborah, before she went to bed. The work of a newspaper editor was demanding at the best of times. In recent months it had seemed to become even more so. Leaving home at 7 a.m. and returning by 10 p.m. if he was lucky. The burn-out rate of editors was high. And it invariably came at a cost. He knew that only too well.

At 10:15 p.m. Derek and one of James's most trusted reporters, Rebecca Watkins, appeared in his doorway. As he caught their reflections in the window he turned to greet them.

"What have you got for me?" he asked. He knew whatever Derek and Rebecca had, it was good. Derek had insisted they meet James that night. And he had insisted that they talk in person. Whatever it was, it was too sensitive to be discussed over the phone.

“Charles Evans,” Derek replied, as a grin spread across his face. Mason looked to Rebecca to gauge her reaction.

“As in the Right Honourable Charles Evans, Conservative Party Leader, Leader of the Opposition, and by the reckoning of the *Times* and every other paper in London, the next Prime Minister of Britain?”

“Not so Right, nor Honourable, it appears,” quipped Rebecca, who, like Derek Cameron, appeared eager to please James.

“How big?” asked James.

“Huge,” said Derek.

“God, I can’t believe it. So what’s he done?”

“Who has he done would be a better way of putting it.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“I take it it’s not Mrs. Evans?”

“Fortunately for us, and unfortunately for Mrs. Evans, you would be correct.”

“Who is our source?” asked James.

“The woman he’s been shagging.”

“Who is she?”

“She’s a prostitute. A very expensive one I might add, too.”

“Can we trust her? Is she reliable?” asked James.

“I think so.”

“You think so? Come on Derek. I need better than that. This is Charles Evans we’re talking about. ‘I think so’ isn’t going to cut it.”

“She is. But I want you to meet her.”

“When?”

“Tomorrow. I’ve got us a suite at the Four Seasons. She’s meeting us there at 1 p.m.”

“This better not be Claire Saunders or Mark Lewis fucking with us.”

“The thought had crossed my mind but I think she’s legit. Call it a political editor’s intuition.”

“That’s what worries me, actually.”

“Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it,” replied James, laughing.

The thought that Claire Saunders or another tabloid might be trying to stitch them up was never far from their minds. Only two months before, a mole on the news desk employed by another tabloid had stolen a huge splash from the *Globe*. And a month before that another had deliberately fed a false story to a *Globe* journalist in the hope they’d report it. Although most tabloids didn’t officially condone such desperate and duplicitous behaviour, most acknowledged it did go on from time to time.

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Their executive suite at the Four Seasons was on the eighth floor and offered panoramic views of the River Thames. The meeting would be held in the living room, but only after the snapper Derek had hired had taken photos of Tina Wells on the king-size bed in various salacious poses and states of undress.

At a quarter past one, with Tina Wells still nowhere to be seen, James started to worry. He began to think that it was too good to be true. And he started to think rather unpleasant things about Claire Saunders.

“Where the fuck is she, Derek? You did say 1 p.m., didn’t you?”

“She’ll be here, don’t worry.”

“She better be, because if this is a stitch-up by Saunders, all bets are off.”

James fretted. That’s what tabloid editors did. They fretted about anything and everything. About their competitors breaking a huge story that they knew nothing about but should have. And they increasingly fretted about being stitched up. In an age of chequebook journalism, editors were only too aware that there was no shortage of mendacious scam artists willing to sell or do anything for a quick buck.

Determining the bona fides, the legitimacy of a source was one of the hardest things journalists and editors had to do. And in the end, all they really had to rely on was their instinct. Their natural journalistic intuition, honed over the years, to separate out fact from fiction. But they didn’t always get it right. And when they got it wrong, there was always a price to pay. Depending on the story, on the extent of the deception, that price could be very high.

At 1:20 p.m. Derek Cameron’s mobile rang.

“That was her. She’ll be here in a few minutes. She got tied up with a client,” he remarked casually.

“Literally or figuratively?” asked James, his curiosity suddenly piqued.

“Probably the former,” replied Derek.

“I wonder who the lucky bastard was?” asked James.

“Tell me about it. Bound to be another politician. Probably Balfour or Black.”

“You think? Bondage doesn’t strike me as their gig.”

“Oh, brother! Listen to the two of you, would you?” interrupted Rebecca.

At 1:25 p.m. there was a knock on the door. James looked at Derek, who in turn looked at Rebecca.

“Okay, here it goes,” whispered Derek under his breath as he headed for the door.

Tina Wells was everything they expected and hoped she would be. She was young. She was beautiful. Almost indescribably so. She was exquisite, really. She seemed confident and worldly, but not in a conniving way.

James knew instantly why the Right Honourable Charles Evans, leader of the Tories, had been shagging Tina Wells. Who wouldn't want to shag this woman? She was just so shaggable. In fact, if he had had the opportunity himself, he strongly suspected he wouldn't have behaved any differently. And that from a man who was married to a very beautiful and successful woman. But women like Tina Wells have a way of distorting the judgement of otherwise faithful and loving husbands. If men have foibles, it is women. Not just any woman, mind you. Just the exquisite ones like Tina Wells.

James, ever the journalist and editor, knew immediately that Tina Wells's beauty, her exquisiteness, served only to make this story bigger and even better than it already was. And he knew too that Charles Evans wouldn't be the only Tory shagging her. There would be others and even some Labour MPs no doubt.

“I'm James Mason, editor of the *Globe*,” said James, introducing himself.

“Tina Wells,” she replied.

“Tina Wells. Is that your real name?”

“For these purposes it is,” she replied confidently.

“Please have a seat,” offered James, directing Tina to a sofa in the living room.

Although eager to believe Tina Wells, James remained somewhat sceptical. That was his job. When you ceased being sceptical, people stitched you up. And that wasn't going to happen to James Mason.

“Well, we're obviously very interested in what you have to tell us about Charles Evans. Why don't you start by telling us how you met him?”

“He was referred to me by another client.”

“Another client? Can you tell us the name of this client?”

“No.”

“I see,” mused James.

“When did you first meet him?”

“In April last year.”

“What day?”

“The nineteenth.”

“You're sure of the date?”

“Yes.”

“Where did you meet?”

“At an apartment in Holland Park.”

“Whose apartment?”

“He said it belonged to a friend of his.”

“What's the address?”

Tina Wells gave the address. James made a note for Rebecca to check it out.

“And what happened at the apartment?”

“What do you think happened, Mr. Mason?” responded Tina, salaciously.

James felt a lump in his throat as he contemplated the goings on at the Holland Park apartment.

“You had sex?”

“Yes,” replied Tina, smiling.

“How was it?”

“Not bad.”

“But not great?” asked James.

“I wouldn’t say that.”

“You’ve had better?” he said.

“I’ve had worse, Mr. Mason.”

“Please, it’s James. So what kind of sex are we talking about here?”

“What kind?”

“Yes. What did he like? I presume he wasn’t interested in your garden-variety-missionary-position-with-the-lights-off kind of sex? He had Mrs. Evans for that. I presume he wanted something a little more exciting from you.”

“That’s the case with most of my clients.”

“So, did he ask you to do anything perverse?”

“Perverse?”

“Yes, you know—deviant, sordid, dirty. I think you know what I mean.”

“Depends on what you consider perverse, I suppose.”

The deviancy or otherwise of the Right Honourable Charles Evan’s sexual practices was not an issue to be glossed over. Infidelity was one thing. An important thing that would help sell many more papers. But infidelity coupled with sexual deviancy—well, that’s the tabloid editor’s Holy Grail.

“Given the sexual preferences of most of my clients, I’m not sure I’d call it perverse, but he was rather partial to back-door action.”

“Really?” said James, struggling to contain his excitement. Now they had sodomy. The Right Honourable Charles Evans the infidel and sodomist. It wasn’t bad. But was it enough? Probably, but he still felt like he needed more. In this day and age, back-door action was not so much deviant as it was kinky. In the tabloid world deviant scored a lot more points than kinky. James was going to keep questioning Tina Wells until he got what he wanted. If all else failed, he might just make something up. Unethical perhaps, but what could he do? He had papers to sell.

“Did he talk about Mrs. Evans at all?”

“A little.” Tina didn’t offer anything more. Probably because there wasn’t much else to say. Talking about your wife when shagging a prostitute probably wasn’t the done thing.

“She wasn’t very adventurous in bed apparently,” she suddenly proffered unsolicited.

“Is that a common complaint of your clients?”

“Fairly common, yes. Actually, very common.”

“And what did you do that made you more adventurous in bed? Apart from the back-door action, that is. I assume that wasn’t part of Mrs. Evan’s less adventurous repertoire of bedroom antics?”

“I would dress up for him and we’d act out his fantasies.” James, Derek, and Rebecca all looked at each other, and waited for Tina to explain further. The word fantasy and deviancy were never too far apart.

“Who or what did you dress up as?”

“Anything he wanted—a nurse, secretary, schoolgirl. He wasn’t that original with his fantasies. Most of my clients aren’t, mind you. Men seem to have remarkably similar tastes in the fantasy department.”

“Tell me some more about the schoolgirl fantasy.”

“What would you like to know?”

“Everything. What you wore? What he asked you to do? How often you acted out this fantasy? How old you pretended to be?”

A predilection for shagging schoolgirls, even if the person in question was just pretending to be a schoolgirl, was just the angle James was looking for. Sex and schoolgirls were a politician’s kryptonite. As Tina Wells described in lurid detail her ponytails, the short tartan skirts, and knee-high socks she would wear for the Right Honourable Charles Evans, James started conjuring up headlines for his story. It was a story that had it all—politics, prostitution, infidelity, back-door action, and schoolgirl sex fantasies. If this wasn’t the Holy Grail he didn’t know what was. Charles Evans was finished. His political career was over. His aspirations to be the next Prime Minister of Britain destroyed. In due course, Evans would come to truly understand what James, as a seasoned and cynical tabloid editor, had known for a very long time: that nothing entertains the masses, the less fortunate, than the untimely and public demise of the more fortunate. And the Right Honourable Charles Evans was certainly regarded by James’s readers as much more fortunate than them. In the weeks that would follow the breaking of the story, few of James’s readers would show any empathy for Evans. Or for his poor wife and children. You reap what you sow, they would tell themselves. Evans had sown his own demise. He had no one to blame but himself. Not even James.

“Now, Ms. Wells, Tina, I wouldn’t be doing my job, nor would Derek and Rebecca, if we didn’t ask you the next question. How do we know what you’re telling us is true? I understand from Rebecca that you have something that can corroborate your story.”

“That’s correct. Charles liked to videotape us having sex.” God bless Charles Evans, James thought to himself. Where would the world be without such stupid people?

“You have the footage with you?”

“Yes, it’s in my bag.”

Trying to maintain an air of detached professionalism and dignity while watching the man who would have been the future PM of Britain humping a very, very attractive prostitute dressed up like a schoolgirl wasn’t easy. But James pulled it off with remarkable aplomb. He could have been watching Sri Lanka playing England at Lords for all anyone knew, such was his focus. For the duration of the thirty-five-minute tape, James suppressed his own voyeuristic inclinations and tried to view the footage through the eyes of an editor, who was only too aware of the repercussions that would result from the tape—and with it, the responsibility. The responsibility that came with destroying another man’s career, his family, and his life.

Inevitably the conversation shifted to why Tina Wells was really sitting in the eighth-floor Executive Suite at the Four Seasons, Westbury Circus: money. Everything was about money. No one knew that more than a tabloid editor—or a prostitute, for that matter.

After watching the thirty-five-minute tape, James knew that he’d pay Tina Wells whatever she asked.

“How much?” James asked Tina.

“One million pounds.”

Derek snorted with laughter. Rebecca gasped. James didn’t react.

“I’ll need to speak to a few people. Can you give me half an hour?”

“Sure.”

As James made his way to the door, Derek clasped his arm and whispered to him.

“You’re not seriously considering paying her that much, are you?”

“What choice do I have? Someone will pay it, so it might as well be me.” And James was right. Any of the tabloids would have paid it. In time, the deal (which included the rights to the very valuable thirty-five-minute tape) would be seen by many as a bargain.

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The *Globe*'s morning conference usually took place at 10:30 a.m. at a large corner conference room on the twenty-sixth floor and lasted about forty-five minutes. Occasionally the meeting would get pushed out until 11 a.m. but today it was running on time. It was usually attended by about fifteen people. The *Globe*'s editors and department heads including Business Editor Toby Matthews, Features Editor Jane Davies, News Editor Jonathan Bennett, and Showbiz Editor Liz Archer would always attend, as would the Page 6 Editor and gossip columnist Rachel Goldwyn. In the five years that James had been at the helm of the *Globe* he had helped shape it into the paper it was. In the allotted forty-five minutes they discussed the morning's paper, and those of the *Tribune*, the *Daily Mirror*, and their other competitors. Then they would go through all the departments' lists of stories for the next day's paper. At times the morning conference could be tedious, but not often. James made sure of that.

No two editors were alike. Everyone had their own style. Their own quirks. Their likes and dislikes. James was no different. He knew what he liked and what he

didn't like. He liked showbiz. He liked gossip. And he liked scandal. It was his Showbiz Editor, his Page 6 Editor, and his gossip columnist Rachel Goldwyn who had helped propel the *Globe* to the UK's number-two spot. Rachel Goldwyn's Page 6 column was as popular and influential as the *New York Post's* Page 6, which it had shamelessly copied. If you wanted to know who was seeing whom, who was screwing whom, and who was divorcing whom, you read Rachel Goldwyn's Page 6. Page 6 tracked the rise and fall of London's social elite and "It" girls. "It" girls and their wannabes would do anything to get a mention.

The only problem with a gossip column was that it involved gossip. Rumours, innuendo, casual chitchat—usually of the malicious variety. The problem with gossip and rumours were that sometimes they weren't true. And when the rumours and gossip weren't true you invariably ended up in a whole heap of shit. James and Rachel had ended up in deep shit a few times. A few times too many, as far as they were concerned. They had ultimately been saved by the brilliance of the *Globe's* defamation lawyer, Mark Torley. Torley had begun his career at Mischon de Reya, then moved to Clifford Chance before he settled at Cabot & Connelly, where he was now a senior litigation partner. James had a meeting with Torley later in the day before the afternoon conference. He had been working on some possible headlines for his big Charles Evans splash. And some of them, most of them actually, bordered on being defamatory. James wanted Torley's judicious view on whether they constituted libel.

"What have you got for me today, Rachel?" asked James. Rachel Goldwyn rarely disappointed. She could sniff out a story from a mile away. She lived and breathed gossip, rumour, and innuendo. And she was connected like nobody else. She knew everybody and they knew her. James didn't know how she got her stories, or for

that matter care. All he knew was that she delivered, day in and day out, week after week. Of the thousands of stories she had written or edited, they had only been threatened with libel proceedings a dozen times, with only two of those complainants actually filing proceedings, before both were eventually settled out of court. The fact of the matter was that Rachel Goldwyn was almost always right. That was why her upcoming revelations at morning conference would be so disconcerting to James.

After reeling off her list of stories about the Beckhams, Prince William, Rachel Stevens, Madonna, the Sugababes, Kylie Minogue, Stephen Fry, Nick Hornby, J.K. Rowling, and George Michael, to name but a few, she then turned her attention to the Barretts. Sienna Barrett, specifically.

“My sources tell me Sienna Barrett, daughter-in-law of Sir Richard, the proprietor of this paper,” she added for dramatic effect, given that everyone in the room knew very well who Sienna Barrett was, “is seeing someone.”

“You mean shagging someone,” yelled Jonathan Bennett, news editor.

“If you must use those words, Jonathan, yes.”

“More importantly, of course, it’s supposed to be someone who works for her father-in-law.” Gasps swept around the room at this shocking proclamation. If it had been anyone else making the statement, Rachel’s claim would probably have been dismissed. But those in the room knew that it in all likelihood it was true.

James was shocked too. Very shocked. But not for the same reason. He was shocked that Rachel Goldwyn knew that Sienna was seeing someone in her father-in-law’s company. How could she know? They had been so careful. They had been unusually careful for the very reason that James did work for her father-in-law.

“I wouldn’t want to be in his shoes when Sir Richard gets hold of him,” proffered Jonathan Bennett.

Me neither, thought James.

“How reliable is your source?” inquired James, somewhat snappishly.

“Very.”

“Who is it?”

“A friend of Sienna.”

“A close friend?”

“Yes.”

Some friend, James thought.

“Well, we’re obviously not going to do anything that would embarrass Sir Richard, so I suggest you drop it. And don’t mention it to anyone else, okay? That goes for all of you. If anyone breathes another word of this they can start looking for another job. Am I understood?” There were reluctant nods around the room.

“Rachel, we’ll pick this up afterwards, okay? What else have you got?”

For a man who loved gossip almost as much as she did, Rachel found her editor’s remarks and reaction to such titillating gossip to be perplexing to say the least.

“Well, if this story turns out to be true, it will be huge. But I have my doubts frankly. I’ve known Charles Evans a long time and he’s simply not the type. But he is purportedly seeing someone other than his lawfully married wife, Mrs. Evans.” James didn’t think he could feel any worse after hearing the Sienna Barrett rumour but he did now. How the hell could Rachel know about his Evans splash?

“Oh god, this cannot be happening,” he muttered to himself. But it was happening and he felt powerless to do anything about it. For a person who liked to control everything, a feeling of being able to control nothing was distinctly unpleasant.

“Who is Evans supposedly screwing?”

“I don’t know.”

“What *do* you know?” replied James gruffly. It was the tone of the question, as much as the question itself, that would set Rachel Goldwyn off. She’d tolerated his reaction to her Sienna Barrett story but this latest remark was too much. A not-insignificant part of the *Globe*’s success was due to Rachel Goldwyn and Page 6. Without her, without her Page 6, the *Globe* simply wouldn’t be the paper it was.

“Fuck you, James. If you’re not interested in the story, I’m sure Mark Lewis and the *Tribune* will be. That’s if the *Mirror* doesn’t break the story first. I hear Claire Saunders has a team of reporters working on the story.” Rachel stood up and walked towards the door.

“Rachel, sit down. I’m sorry. I am interested. Very interested in fact. Let’s pick this up after morning conference, okay?” Rachel was tempted to keep walking. But she didn’t. She turned around and eyed James. Something was up. He knew something. About Sienna Barrett. About Charles Evans. James made it his business to know things. Usually before others knew. It was what made him so successful as a tabloid editor.

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“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, but I haven’t told anyone. The only ones who know are Derek, Rebecca, and Robert Carson. And now you. I’m really sorry but I’ve been paranoid about this story. I can’t afford for it to leak before we’re ready to run with it. Do you forgive me?”

“Buy me another drink and I’ll think about it.”

James beckoned a waiter and ordered two more glasses of wine. They were at the bar of a small little restaurant off Cabot Square, not far from the *Globe*'s offices.

"I have to say, I'm shocked," said Rachel. "I've met him and his wife numerous times. I have never even gotten a hint that they might have been having trouble. They seemed the perfect couple." There was no doubt that it was the ones you least suspected that shocked you the most. At least initially. But with time, as you peeled away the veneer of perfection, you realised no one was perfect. No relationship was perfect. In fact, it was very often the relationships that appeared perfect that in reality were less than perfect.

"When are you breaking the story?"

"The next couple of days. I'm having the videotape authenticated. You can never be too paranoid these days, and I'm having Tina Wells meet him again, so I can confirm she does actually know him. And to get some photos of the two of them together."

"When's that happening?"

"Tomorrow afternoon at an apartment in Holland Park. It belongs to Thomas Curtis, a friend of his apparently. I've got one of my best snappers on the job. We'll install some hidden cameras and microphones to make sure we get it all. Just need to find a way to break into the apartment first."

"Isn't that illegal?"

"Only if you get caught."

What worried James, though, was that Claire Saunders at the *Daily Mirror* was onto the story. Nothing worried an editor more than a competitor sniffing around what would be your biggest splash in the last twelve months.

"What do you think they know?" asked James.

“All I know is that they know another woman is involved. They don’t know who, though. They certainly don’t know it’s Tina Wells. Not yet anyway. You know how people talk in this city.” James knew only too well. It was people’s inability to keep their mouths shut that kept papers like his in business.

James was faced with the dilemma editors have to face all too often. Did you go with a story that you hadn’t yet double-checked? With facts you hadn’t corroborated? No editor liked to do that. But there were times when you had to take a risk. If James sat on the story another day would the *Mirror* or the *Tribune* steal his splash? It was possible.

“Do you think I should wait?” asked James.

“Don’t ask me. I’m just the columnist. You’re the editor. That’s why you get paid the big bucks.”

“Thanks, Rachel. Can you at least ring your source at the *Mirror* and see what else you can find out?”

“Sure.”

“Thanks. I owe you one.” James glanced at his watch. “I’ve got to get back for afternoon conference in twenty minutes. Time for one more?”

“Why not?” she replied.

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Half an hour after Tuesday’s paper went off stone, James met Mark Torley for a drink. He should have taken the limo straight home and spent some time with Deborah, before she went off to New York for her book tour. But James was all consumed by The Right Honourable Charles Evans. Deborah could wait, he thought,

and then he immediately felt guilty. But only briefly. With the *Mirror* and the *Tribune* breathing down his neck, he knew he couldn't wait, and sorting out the front-page headline was paramount. He desperately wanted Torley's legal clearance. If the shit hit the fan and Evans brought a libel suit, James wanted a legal opinion from Cabot & Connelly to cover his arse.

At the bar at Canary Wharf, James ordered a Carlsberg beer (his current favourite—a small gesture of solidarity to his poor beleaguered Danish colleagues who had been forced to constantly be on the lookout for suicide bombers dressed up as newspaper cartoonists). Although James was extremely intolerant of the intolerant, he had, in an act of self-preservation, forbidden any of his cartoonists from drawing things that would upset people—suicide bombers in particular. Torley ordered a vodka.

It was 8:30 p.m. and the place was full of young professionals. Mark chatted to a few colleagues from Cabot & Connelly and some former colleagues at Clifford Chance who'd wandered down from their office at Upper Bank Street.

James and Mark had first met in New York. James had been studying at Columbia and Mark at NYU. A mutual friend introduced them and they'd been friends ever since. They had much in common. Both were fiercely driven to succeed and both, in their own different ways, had become very successful.

“What have you got for me this time? What great lies are you intending to print?”

“Future PM likes shagging schoolgirls.”

“Tell me you're joking.”

“I'm not.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“Jesus. And which future PM are we talking about here?”

“The Right Honourable Charles Evans.”

Mark threw back the rest of his vodka and quickly ordered another one. He always gave his best advice after a few drinks. That’s what James said, anyway.

“Well, I’m okay with the ‘Future PM’ bit. And ‘likes’ I can live with. It’s the ‘shagging schoolgirls’ bit I’m not quite so sure about.”

“I thought you might say that,” replied James mischievously. Over the next half hour James went through the evidence against Charles Evans in all its sordid detail. Every fetish, every predilection, was traversed by James in a way only he could traverse. By the end of it, he had almost convinced Mark that his headline wasn’t defamatory. Almost, but not quite. Even after three vodkas, Mark wasn’t quite ready to sign off the headline. The problem with mentioning schoolgirls was that some readers might come to the not unreasonable conclusion that Charles Evans liked shagging underage girls and that therefore he liked indulging in criminal behaviour. The fact that not all schoolgirls were underage, that many in fact were of a legal age, would not in itself necessarily protect James and the *Globe*.

“But he does like shagging schoolgirls. It’s the goddamn truth!” protested James.

Mark talked about the difference between immoral behaviour, of which Evans was clearly guilty, and illegal activity, of which he wasn’t.

“Unless you have evidence he’s shagging a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl, I would advise against running with that headline. That is my considered legal opinion. I’m sure you can come up with something else equally catchy.”

“But I liked that one,” James pleaded.

“I’m sorry. You wanted my advice and I’m giving it to you.”

“What are the chances he’d sue? He’d be a fool. What would his case be?

‘Your Honour, Mr. Evans does not like shagging schoolgirls. He likes shagging prostitutes who dress up and pretend to be schoolgirls. An importance difference, Your Honour.’ Yeah, right!”

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If James Mason was in the relationship destruction business, then his American wife, Dr. Deborah Sacks, was in the relationship salvation business. Over the space of fifteen years, Deborah had established herself as one of the world’s preminent marital and relationship therapists. With marriages failing at record rates, her skills had never been in such demand. Salvaging relationships wasn’t an easy business, though. Especially when infidelity was involved. And over a quarter of the couples who presented to her in her Harley Street offices in London did so out of marital infidelity. More often than not, though, infidelity was a symptom rather than the cause of marital problems. The real cause was usually a lack of love. Helping her clients recapture that love was one of the hardest things she had to do. Compared to that, helping her clients cope with infidelity was relatively simple. Or so she thought. Her own husband’s infidelity would sorely test that belief.

More worrying for Deborah was that she had begun to question James’s love for her, and even her own for him. That wasn’t something she was prepared for. As a therapist, she thought she should have all the answers. She thought she’d know what to do. She did, in a way, but following your own advice wasn’t always as easy as it seemed.

Before she could dwell on her problems any further, it was time to talk to Mark and Victoria Archer. Today would be the first of four sessions Deborah would have with the couple to assess the state of their marriage. The first two sessions she would have with the couple together, with the final two sessions being run separately. Speaking to each member of the couple separately invariably led them to disclose things they wouldn't raise in each other's presence that might help explain the current problems in the relationship. This would prove to be the case with the Archers. Although Mrs. Archer had made her issues with Mr. Archer abundantly clear, Mr. Archer's issues with his wife would come as somewhat as a surprise to her. An unpleasant surprise.

What forewarned Deborah to the challenge that lay ahead with the Archers, even before they had met, was their candid responses to the questionnaires she had sent them in advance of their first counselling session. The first questionnaire, based on the Gottman questionnaire, asked the Archers to state the extent of their agreement or disagreement with thirty-five statements. Five represented "strongly agreed" and one represented "strongly disagreed." Mrs. Archer rated the following as **One**, **Strongly Disagree**: We have very good communication; We are both very involved in this marriage; I feel respected in this marriage; I feel loved in this marriage; I feel secure in this relationship; We admire one another; We have similar views about money. To the statement "We both help out with household chores," Mrs. Archer responded with minus one hundred and added the following statement of her own:

*"He's the laziest, most useless SOB I know!!!"*

There were some relationships Deborah felt like pronouncing DOA the moment the couple walked in the door. Relationships that she knew instinctively were hopeless. Deborah was so concerned by Mrs. Archer's reaction to the household

chores question that she sent the Archers a modified version of the Gottman, “*Who does what in the marriage?*” questionnaire. Each chore or task had to be categorized as “Currently Fine” or “Could Be Better.” Mrs Archer amended the “Could Be Better” category to “*Could Be a Whole Lot Better!!!*” and listed the following tasks:

doing the supermarket shopping, cooking dinner, doing the dishes, cleaning the bathrooms, general tidying up, getting the car serviced, putting petrol in the car, paying the bills, doing the laundry, folding the laundry, ironing, putting the clean clothes away, vacuuming, washing the floors, changing light bulbs, and making the beds.

Mrs. Archer then went on and created a third category, which she called “*Currently, Most Definitely Not Fine—Totally Unacceptable in Fact!*” This category included taking children to school, picking children up from school, childcare after school, making children’s school lunches, making children breakfast and dinner, spending time with the children, playing with the children, taking children to the doctor, giving children baths, disciplining children, putting children to bed, looking after sick children, dealing with children’s schools, helping the children with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, attending school functions, taking children to sport, buying children birthday presents, and buying children clothes. In fact, just about everything to do with children wasn’t fine. Mrs. Archer had noted on the questionnaire, “*I’m not sure he even knows he has children!!!!!*”

Just when Deborah thought things couldn’t get any worse, she discovered Mrs. Archer had introduced yet another category. A fourth category she called “*Couldn’t Be Worse, Absolutely Non-Existent!!!*” This included: general conversation, romantic dates,

planning dinner out, and arranging family outings. Mrs Archer then listed another twenty-two things that she thought couldn't be worse.

Mr. Archer, it appeared, had a slightly different perception of who did what in the marriage. According to Mr. Archer, everything was "**Currently Fine**" except the initiating lovemaking statement, where he'd ticked the "**Could Be Better**" column.

Mr. Archer had then written, "*Could Be a Whole Lot Better.*"

Next, it was a short questionnaire, again based largely on the Gottman questionnaire, about the state of their marital romance and sex. It asked the Archers to state whether a number of issues were either a problem or not a problem in their marriage. Mr. Archer ticked the "**Not a Problem**" box for the following statements: My spouse has stopped being verbally affectionate; My spouse expresses love or admiration less frequently; We rarely cuddle; We have few tender moments; My spouse has stopped feeling very romantic; and The amount of love in our lovemaking. Mr. Archer did, however, tick the "**Problem**" box for the following issues: The frequency of sex; The satisfaction I get from sex; Being able to talk about sexual problems; The two of us wanting different things sexually; and Problems of desire.

Mrs. Archer, in contrast, who had described everything as a problem, clearly found the lack of intimacy and romance a bigger problem than the lack of sex. An outcome that wasn't altogether surprising to Deborah. Men's and women's responses to such questionnaires were consistently inconsistent.

"Before I move on to talk about your responses to the questionnaires I sent you, I wanted each of you to take turns talking to me about your marriage, in particular the following things: How you felt about marriage and one another the day of your wedding? How you feel about your marriage and one another today? If things

have changed, why do you think they have? What are your expectations of marital therapy? And how committed you are to fixing the problems in your marriage?"

It didn't take long for the finger pointing to start. But therapy wasn't about the apportionment of blame. Well, actually, part of it was. It was certainly about all parties accepting responsibility for their actions. Acknowledging that their marital problems were in part due to their behaviour. But for therapy to be successful, the parties had to vent. They had to go through the process of telling their husband or wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, exactly how unpleasant and how insufferable they'd been. As far as Mrs. Archer was concerned, no one had been more unpleasant and more insufferable than her husband. No wife had suffered more than she had. It was when the subject of children came up that things got really interesting. Although it was Mr. Archer who was the lawyer, a partner at Cabot & Connelly no less, it was Mrs. Archer who acted like the lawyer in their first therapy session. Her cross-examination of her husband about his marital and familial conduct was carried out with clinical detachment.

"Name Michael's teacher," Mrs. Archer demanded, referring to their youngest child.

"How should I know? Who the hell cares who his teacher is? It's not important."

"Of course it's important, you asshole!" she yelled back at him.

"I'm not sure this is helping," Mr. Archer suggested to Deborah.

"Let's allow Victoria to finish, shall we?"

"Name one of Charlotte's friends." Mrs. Archer asked next.

"Don't know."

"One of Samantha's friends?"

“Rachel and Sophie,” he shot back.

“They’re his sister’s children,” Mrs. Archer informed Deborah, as she shot a withering look of disdain in her husband’s direction. “Actually, I’m amazed he can even remember their names.”

“What are you planning to get Charlotte for her birthday?” She turned to Deborah. “It’s her birthday in two weeks.”

“Birthday presents are your department.”

“Why?”

“Because the children are your responsibility. When you agreed to be a stay-at-home mum and look after the kids, you agreed to be responsible for them. That includes buying their birthday presents.”

“All I’m asking is that you make a little bit of effort and show a little bit of interest in your children. You’re a complete stranger to them. You don’t even know the names of their friends for fuck’s sake. Doesn’t that embarrass you?”

“No. Why should it?”

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“Hi, it’s me,” said James.

“Hi,” replied Sienna.

“Can I see you tonight?” he asked.

“Sure. Where’s Deborah?”

“On her way to New York. She decided to leave a day early.”

“Lucky me,” she replied. And lucky me, thought James. There was, of course, a part of him that thought what he was doing was wrong. A part that thought he

wasn't that kind of person—the cheating kind of person. While Sienna might have thought she was lucky, there was little doubt that Deborah wouldn't see herself as quite so lucky. Wives of cheating husbands rarely did. Like all affairs, James's and Sienna's relationship had a momentum of its own. A momentum that had overridden such moral quandaries as marital infidelity. The thing was, James Mason and Deborah Sacks were by all accounts happily married. By all accounts except their own. There was a time when they had been happily married. There was a time when all the boxes were ticked “Fine” and “Not a Problem.” But that seemed a long time ago now. Deborah didn't need to fill out a questionnaire to know her marriage was in trouble.

James arrived at Sienna's home in Holland Park shortly after 7 p.m. Sienna's husband, Nick, son of Sir Richard Barrett, who was of course James's boss, was in New York on business. Their secret trysts had been going on for nearly a year. They had first met at Sir Richard's Mayfair residence and then again at the London Premiere of a new James Bond film. Their initial introduction would, of course, be deeply regretted by Sir Richard when his daughter-in-law's liaison with James was revealed. He would quite wrongly hold himself partially responsible for what transpired. There would be many regrets, not the least of which would be James's.

Like many people involved in such illicit trysts, when he arrived at Sienna's that night, future regrets were the furthest thing from his mind.

At twenty-eight, Sienna was fourteen years younger than James. More importantly than age, though, Sienna was one of London's “It” girls. She was someone who had appeared on the *Globe's* Page 6 more than any other socialite her generation. Being the daughter-in-law of the *Globe's* owner, her Page 6 coverage had not surprisingly been very favourable.

Within ten minutes of arriving, Sienna and James, as they invariably did, found themselves shagging one another on the living-room sofa. James thought that Sienna, with her perfectly sculptured arse and some expensive yet somewhat slutty French lingerie, looked fantastic. Their shagging was carried out in a frenzied fashion, a frenzy rarely found in the marriages of the not-so-newly wed. A frenzy that had been absent from James and Deborah's own marriage in the last few years. Sienna's shagging was intense, it was aggressive, and nothing was off limits; everything was possible. She knew what men liked and she was happy to give it to them because of the power it gave her. She had something they were prepared to sacrifice a lot for—in fact, almost anything for: a marriage, a family, the lot.

“That was unbelievable,” gasped James as he lay on the sofa. Even though it was over, in many ways it had only just begun. The frenzy was addictive and no addictions were ever good. Addictions distorted judgments and destroyed lives.

“It was good, wasn't it?” she replied. “It always is with you.”

“Really?”

“Don't you believe me?”

“I want to. Really I do.”

“Well trust me, you're good. Very good.”

James tried but failed to suppress a smile. He wanted, of course, to ask why Nick wasn't good. He didn't know for certain that he wasn't good, but he kind of assumed he couldn't be, otherwise he wouldn't have been shagging Sienna instead of James. She and Nick had been married only two years. In the world of marriages, two years wasn't that long. There should have been plenty of frenzied activity on the sofa after two years, and if there wasn't, well, obviously there was a problem.

An hour and a half later, as they lay together in her bed, she asked about the paper. He was tempted to tell her about his Charles Evans splash. She was, after all, married to one of the paper's owners. But there was something about Sienna that made him think better of it. Their discussions soon turned to Page 6 and what gossip Rachel Goldwyn had on London's social elite.

"Have you ever told anyone about us?" asked James, pulling himself up onto his elbow.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because Rachel Goldwyn said she'd heard something."

"Heard what?"

"That you were seeing someone."

"That bitch. That fucking bitch," cursed Sienna, suddenly sitting up in the bed.

"She wasn't being a bitch, okay? She was doing her job. She's a gossip columnist for God's sake. If anything she's done you a favour."

"A favour! How do you figure that? Running around telling people I'm cheating on my husband."

"She wasn't running around telling people," he replied defensively. "She was telling me, her editor, who she thought should know—given your father-in-law owns the paper. And let's not lose sight of the fact that she's right. You are cheating on your husband and I am cheating on my wife—in case you've forgotten."

"I don't care. She's still a bitch," fumed Sienna.

James decided to let the matter lie. Sienna would talk to Rachel Goldwyn again. She couldn't afford not to. Page 6 gave Sienna the kind of good press no amount of money could buy. Even with someone of Sir Richard Barrett's not-insignificant means.

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In the five years James had worked as editor of the *Globe*, Sir Richard Barrett had never once visited him at his Canary Wharf office. Sir Richard Barrett didn't visit people, they visited him. That's how things worked at The Christie Group. Like other media moguls, Barrett was an intimidating man. The mere mention of his name rendered many incontinent.

So when James's PA interrupted morning conference to tell him that Robert Carson and Sir Richard would be waiting for him in his office after conference, he nearly had an incontinent moment himself. *Why the fuck does Barrett want to see me?* was the first thing that popped into his head. Followed very closely by, *why the fuck does Barrett want to see me?*

"Sir Richard, it's a pleasure to have you here at the *Globe*. What brings you down here from the city?"

"A mutual friend of ours."

"Really," said James, shooting a look at Robert Carson.

"The Right Honourable Charles Evans."

He's going to kill the fucking story. I can't believe it. He can't. I won't let him, James said to himself.

"Charles Evans. Yes. Well, he's not going to be a friend of mine or this paper for much longer, as I'm sure Robert has informed you."

"Yes, he has. And when are we intending to run this story?"

“Day after tomorrow.”

“And what’s the headline going to be?”

“We have a few ideas we’re tossing around.”

“Would you care to share any of them?”

“Well, the frontrunner at the moment is ‘Future PM likes shagging schoolgirls.’” Robert Carson couldn’t stop himself laughing. Sir Richard even allowed himself a smirk.

“I should point out that our lawyer has counselled us against using that headline. He’s worried it might be defamatory.”

“Hmmm. It probably is,” mused Sir Richard. “But I like it. Don’t change a word. And please have the first copy off the press delivered to my home immediately,” he requested as he left James’s office.

“Of course.”

And then he was gone.

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It was a big crowd—just as all of her book appearances attracted. And it was a crowd made up predominantly of women. With her latest book, *The Cheating Husband: Rebuilding the Trust*, she didn’t expect a lot of husbands to show up. Besides, women had always been her biggest fans. It was a book written for them.

Her appearance that evening was at Barnes & Noble Union Square. She had caught a cab down from her hotel on East 58<sup>th</sup> with her friend Kate Davies. Her American publisher, Natalie Wylie, and her New York agent, Susan Kaplan, would also make a brief appearance. Deborah had miscalculated the traffic and ended up

arriving a fashionably twenty minutes late. Her readers would forgive her, though. New Yorkers didn't expect visitors, even Londoners, to appreciate just how bad their traffic could be. Deborah immediately apologised for her lateness, while promising never to complain about London's traffic problems again.

On the cab ride from Midtown to Union Square, Deborah and Kate had discussed what kind of readers would come along that night. There would of course be women whose husbands had cheated on them. There would be women who suspected that their husbands were cheating on them, but hadn't yet caught them. And finally there would be those women who, although not yet suspecting their husbands or boyfriends, thought that one day they might and that they should be prepared for any eventuality. There would be a small group of men, of course. Most would be husbands or boyfriends of the women but some would have come alone. Those men were fans of Deborah for a different reason. They were fans because she was beautiful and famous.

Deborah spoke to the crowded bookstore for about half an hour on how to rebuild the trust after a husband's infidelity. It wasn't easy, she told them. It took time and hard work, she said. But it was possible. She had to believe that, of course, because she was in the relationship salvation business. For fifteen years she had been telling the cheated that while being cheated on was unforgivable, they in fact needed to forgive if they wanted to save their marriages. And more importantly a marriage was something worth fighting for. In sickness and in health. In good times and in bad. Those were the promises people made.

Deborah normally enjoyed Q&A but tonight it would be different. The first question came from an angry-looking middle-aged woman.

"Your question, Ma'am?" Deborah asked with faux confidence.

“Has your husband ever cheated on you?” the woman asked.

“No. No, he hasn’t,” Deborah replied.

“Then you have no idea what you’re talking about. No idea at all,” she spat venomously. The mood in the bookstore changed instantly. Writing and talking about things you hadn’t directly experienced yourself was always problematic. Could Deborah really advise people on how to deal with a cheating husband when she herself had never experienced such a thing? Deborah could, of course, imagine what it would be like to discover that your husband had cheated on you. And just imagining it she found it difficult.

Deborah took a deep breath. “I’m not sure I agree with you. I’m sorry. I’ve counselled thousands of couples over the years who have experienced infidelity, and I feel that experience makes me more than qualified to talk on the subject. Your experience with your husband, although undoubtedly difficult for you, does not on any objective analysis make you more of an expert on the subject of infidelity than me, I’m afraid.” Deborah hoped that might be the end of the matter. But it wasn’t. It simply wasn’t going to be that kind of night.

“How can you ever trust a man who sleeps with your sixteen-year-old babysitter?” the women then asked, although it wasn’t so much a question as it was a statement.

Learning to trust your husband again wasn’t easy. But it was important to know that not all infidelity was the same, said Deborah. A one-night stand was different from a year-long affair. And both of these were different from non-sexual emotional affairs. One-night stands could be explained away as aberrations or anomalous events brought about by too much alcohol. A one-night stand was by its nature spontaneous and lacking in pre-meditation. Affairs, on the other hand, although

they may have been consummated by a one-night stand, were marked by prolonged and calculated deception. An affair was a relationship. A one-night stand was just sex. Women, although not truly understanding it themselves, should know that when a man screwed his babysitter it didn't mean he didn't love his wife. It didn't mean he couldn't be trusted again. As long as he did it only once. Everyone makes mistakes and everyone should be given a second chance, lectured Deborah. Even husbands who slept with sixteen-year-old babysitters. Even a husband who had an affair should be given a second chance—at least, if the marriage meant something to his wife.

The woman whose husband had slept with the babysitter would have none of it. She was completely unconvinced that her cheating husband could or should be trusted again. Let alone forgiven.

After her book signing, Deborah and Kate caught a cab back up to Midtown where they met with Michael Spencer at a restaurant on East 55<sup>th</sup> Street. Deborah had first met Michael in Boston, when they were both at Harvard. They had had a brief relationship before Michael had ended it, somewhat suddenly in Deborah's view. When she'd asked why, he gave her some reasons. None of them seemed to ring true. When Michael had started dating someone else shortly after their breakup, she suspected that he'd been unfaithful. He had denied it when she confronted him about it, and she chose to believe him. Although Deborah always had her doubts, Michael had in fact been telling the truth.

These days Michael was in the New York office of Cabot & Connelly. He had left Cravath Swaine & Moore three years earlier to head up Cabot & Connelly's M&A department and had never regretted it.

Michael knew a thing or two about infidelity himself. Michael's ex-wife of some four years, Sarah, had had an affair for eighteen months before Michael found

out. She was a lawyer at Cravath at the time and her fellow adulterer was a lawyer at Sullivan & Cromwell. While Sarah showed remorse and a strong desire to rebuild their marriage, Michael simply could not get past what had happened. Deborah had offered to help but he wasn't interested. How did you begin to forgive someone, begin to trust someone, who had lied to you every day for eighteen months, he had asked Deborah.

You started by taking it one day at a time, she had told him. It would take time, she had said. But it was possible. She wouldn't have kept doing what she did if she didn't think it was possible. Perhaps others could forgive, Michael said to her, but not him. There was a part of him that wanted to punish Sarah. To exact revenge of some sort. Spurning her efforts to reconcile seemed the best way to do that.

It was 8:30 p.m. by the time Deborah and Kate got to the restaurant. Michael had reserved their favourite table, at their favourite French restaurant. It was conveniently located near to Deborah's hotel on East 58<sup>th</sup> Street. Michael had already moved onto his second glass of wine by the time they arrived.

"Hi, Mike, sorry we're late," apologised Deborah as she leaned forward and kissed Michael.

"No worries, babe," he replied. "Hi, Kate."

"Hi, Michael."

"How did it go?" he asked.

Deborah rolled her eyes. "Awful," she finally admitted.

"Really?"

"It wasn't pretty," said Kate.

"What happened?"

“Oh, you know. The usual kind of stuff. Some woman whose husband had slept with their babysitter didn’t take too kindly to me telling her to forgive her husband and try to rebuild their marriage.”

“The babysitter. I’m not sure I blame the poor woman, to be honest.”

“I knew you’d take her side,” said Deborah as she hit Michael’s arm playfully.

“I am just being honest. I thought you therapists liked honesty?”

“Not this one. Not with you anyway.”

“Well, it’s good to see you again, Deb, anyway. Kate and I have missed you, you know?”

“I know. I’ve missed you guys too.”

“Then why don’t you leave London and come and live here?”

“I’d love to one day. You know that. But now’s not the right time.”

“Why?” said Michael.

“Well, James for starters. He loves his job. I’ll never get him to leave. And the boys really love London. I love London too. It’s not the same without you guys, of course, but it’s not a bad old city.”

“How is James anyway?” asked Michael.

“He’s good. I’ve barely seen him the last few weeks. He’s been working crazy hours on some big story that he’s paranoid one of the other tabloids will break before he does.”

“Actually, I was talking to Mark Torley in our London office the other day and it sounds like James has been keeping him rather busy. Whatever it is, it must be big. I couldn’t even get Mark to tell me what the story was. Not even a hint. He said you never knew who might be listening. I think some of James’s paranoia must be rubbing off on him.”

“Thick as thieves, those two,” replied Deb.

“And what about you?” she then asked, changing the subject. “How is the world of Cabot & Connelly treating you?”

“Good.”

“No regrets. Not missing your friends at Cravath?”

“Nope.”

“How’s Sarah?”

“No idea. Don’t care.”

“Is she still at Cravath?”

“I presume so.”

“But you don’t care?”

“Nope.”

“Kate tells me you went on a date last week.”

“Did she now?” remarked Michael, glaring over at Kate.

“I thought she should know,” Kate pleaded in her defence.

“Why?”

“Because.”

“Because she’s a marriage therapist?”

“Precisely.”

“Even though I told you not to say anything.”

“I’m sorry,” replied Kate.

“You don’t look very sorry,” he muttered.

“What’s the big deal? It was just a date,” said Deborah.

“Which I told her not to tell you about.”

“Why? What’s wrong with me knowing?”

“Because you’ll psychoanalyse it and start offering me all sorts of unsolicited advice.”

“Since when have I offered you unsolicited advice?”

“Do you really want me to answer that?” Michael teased.

“No. But what’s wrong with your friend giving you advice? Kate and I are only trying to help.”

“I know you are and I do appreciate it. But it was only a date, okay?”

“Are you seeing her again?” asked Deborah.

“Probably.”

“So what’s she like? What does she do?”

“She’s nice. As far as I can tell from one date. She’s a psychiatrist.”

At which point Deborah started to laugh.

“You’re kidding,” Deborah said.

“What’s so funny?”

“I don’t know.” She continued to giggle. She just couldn’t help herself.

“See. This is why I didn’t want to tell you.”

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I don’t know why I think it’s funny. Actually, I do. You’re just so emotionally stunted. Dating a psychiatrist must be your worst nightmare.”

“Emotionally stunted?”

“Well, you know. You’re such a closed book. You’re not the best at opening up and talking about your feelings.”

“I thought all men were like that?”

“They are. But you’re particularly bad.”

“Thanks.”

“So how did you meet this psychiatrist?” asked Deborah, as the waiter arrived with their coffees.

“Through a friend. His wife went through med school with her.”

“What’s her name?”

“Julia Robinson.”

“Nope. Doesn’t ring any bells with me. When are you seeing her again?”

“I’m not sure. Maybe Friday.”

“A second date. How exciting. I couldn’t imagine dating again, though. I wouldn’t know what to do,” joked Deborah.

“Me neither,” said Kate.

“Are you going to shag her?” asked Deborah.

“Shag her?” queried an amused looking Michael. “Where do you pick up these strange British phrases?” he asked, half mocking her. Deborah’s increasing use of the British vernacular—shagging being her latest favourite word—was a source of much amusement to her American friends.

“Give me a break. I’ve been there over ten years, so stop teasing me, please,” she pleaded in her defence.

“Sure thing, Deb. Well, to answer your question, I must confess that she doesn’t strike me as the kind of person who would put out on her second date, so the answer is no.”

“That’s a shame.”

“Tell me about it. It’s been a while, you know.”

“I’m sure you know how to look after yourself,” quipped Deborah.

Shortly after 11:30 p.m. the three of them parted company. Michael walked Deborah the three blocks to her hotel, while Kate caught a cab to her apartment on the Upper West Side.

# 2

## A Career-Limiting Move

“Why the hell didn’t we know about this?” demanded William Hamilton, the shadow chancellor of the exchequer. It was 9:30 a.m. on the twenty-seventh of June and he was standing in Charles Evan’s office in the House of Commons. His accusatory question was directed at Simon Martin, Evans’s Director of Communications. By “this” Hamilton meant the *Globe*’s front-page splash headed, “*Future PM Likes Shagging Schoolgirls.*” It would in time become one of the most memorable tabloid headlines in Fleet Street’s history. It was everything a great tabloid headline should be—bold, shocking, and titillating.

Simon Martin, however, took exception to Hamilton’s insinuation that the crisis they now found themselves in was somehow of his making. Martin had known

of Evans's sexual proclivities for some time and felt any responsibility rested squarely with the Tory leader.

“Because, as you well know William, we don't have a relationship with the *Globe*.”

“And whose fault is that?” snapped Hamilton.

“Again, as you are aware, the people in this room made a conscious decision to more actively court the *Tribune* in preference to the *Globe* because we decided it was more influential with the voters of this country. In the process we severely fucked off James Mason and the *Globe*. We are now paying the price of that decision.”

When it came to the relationship between the major political parties and the leading tabloid newspapers, it was sometimes hard to know which needed the other more. The reality was that the politicians usually needed the newspapers more than the papers needed them. Evans and the others in the room were in the process of getting an important lesson of who really held all the power.

Like any good editor, while James knew the importance and advantages of cultivating close relationships with key members of the Labour Government and Tory Party, he was also very aware of the need to show those people where the real power lay. From time to time the papers needed to show the repercussions of disloyalty. In James's view, no party had been more disloyal to the *Globe* than the Tories. Their active solicitation of the *Tribune* and their leaking of numerous important stories to them, in preference to the *Globe*, was simply intolerable in James's view. He was determined to make them pay.

“So what do we do?” asked Hamilton.

In the room were Charles Evans, William Hamilton, Simon Martin, Tom Strauss (Evans's Chief of Staff and Principal Private Secretary), Harriet Mayer

(Chairman of the Conservative Party), and Robin Cromwell (Shadow Foreign Secretary). They represented the majority of Evans's inner circle of trusted advisers. Their response to the *Globe's* headline would determine whether the Tories would stand a chance of being voted into government at the next election. That, in turn, depended on saving Charles Evans. The enormity of the task that lay in front of them wasn't lost on anyone. To save Charles Evans and his job, they would have to convince themselves, and then the public, that it was acceptable for elected representatives aspiring to the highest office in the land to pay women to dress up as schoolgirls and provide them with sexual favours. In Simon Martin's view they would have had an easier job convincing people that cigarettes or suicide bombers were good for them. But he was paid to do the impossible, so he would have to try, however hopeless the situation seemed.

"We have to tell the truth," advised Evans.

"And what exactly is the truth, Charles?" asked Hamilton.

"That's what we're here to discuss," Evans replied. But they didn't have much time to work out what it was. Simon Martin's phone had been ringing nonstop. Every newspaper, radio station, and TV network in the country wanted to talk to him. And right now he didn't know what to say to them.

"I've spoken to the *Globe's* political editor, Derek Cameron," advised Martin, "and expressed our immense displeasure that they chose not to speak to us to confirm the story's veracity before running it. I said they had irreparably damaged the relationship between the Conservative Party and the *Globe*." Derek Cameron hadn't taken kindly to the rather sanctimonious lecture from Martin. As far as Cameron was concerned, there were a number of good reasons the *Globe* hadn't gone to Evans's office prior to running the story. First, James no longer liked nor trusted the Tories, so

why would he do them a favour? Second, the evidence they had was so overwhelming they didn't need to check its veracity with Evans; and finally, but importantly, they didn't want to run the risk of Evans trying to obtain an injunction. While Mark Torley had advised that his chances of succeeding were very small, there was always a risk. With a delay and a court hearing there was a danger the story might leak out and the *Globe's* exclusive would suddenly lose its exclusivity. These were risks James hadn't been prepared to take.

“One thing we are doing right now is polling voters, under the guise of being a local newspaper, to ascertain their reaction to the story. All the major TV networks are already running their own polls,” advised Martin.

“What are we asking them?” asked Harriet Mayer.

“If the story proves to be true would that change how they vote?”

“Isn't the answer to that obvious?” she asked.

“At this point, I don't think we should assume anything,” said Martin.

For the next four hours, the Tory Party hierarchy desperately tried to find a way to save the career of Charles Evans. Under the guidance of Martin they considered every possible way the story could be spun. No matter which way they looked at it the result was the same. As the first polling data came in during the early evening, and as they reviewed the TV polls, Evans came to a decision. Over the next few hours, he and Martin prepared the statement he would read to the awaiting media.

At precisely 2 p.m. the following day, Simon Martin appeared with Charles Evans and announced to the waiting throngs of media that Evans would be reading a short statement and that he would not be taking questions.

*“Yesterday morning the Globe newspaper published a story alleging that during the course of the last year I have engaged the services of a prostitute while*

*holding my current position as leader of the Conservative Party. While I categorically refute that I have ever used the services of a prostitute, I do admit that I have had a brief extra-marital affair with the woman referred to in the Globe's story. She was introduced to me by a mutual friend and at no time was I ever aware she was a prostitute. I am not proud of what I have done and I deeply regret the hurt I have caused my wife and children.*

*Throughout my political career I have always emphasised the importance of honesty, truthfulness, respect, and responsibility for one's actions. I accept that my behaviour when measured against those attributes has been found wanting, and it is for that reason that it is with deep regret that I have tendered my resignation as the leader of the Conservative Party.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to apologise to all those people who have supported me and the Conservative Party over the years I have been in Parliament. In particular, though, I would like to apologise to my wife, Catherine, and our two children. I would also ask that you respect my family's privacy during this very difficult time.*

*I sincerely hope that the people of this country continue to have faith in and support the Conservative Party, which I believe, now more than ever, is the only political party capable of leading this country into the future. Thank you."*

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As Charles Evans read his statement, James was sitting in his office with Rachel Goldwyn watching it unfold on TV.

“Honesty and truthfulness!” he exclaimed. “Then why don’t you start telling the fucking truth, you lying bastard. Of course you knew she was a prostitute!” he yelled at the TV. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. He was incredulous that Evans could try to deny that he knew Tina was a prostitute. As he paced up and down his office he started conjuring up headlines for the following day’s front page. But at the end of the day, Evans’s mendacity didn’t really matter. Few people would end up believing Evans. The polling data that came in showed overwhelmingly that Evans’s illicit liaison with Tina Wells had irreparably damaged his reputation and career. People simply didn’t tolerate hypocrisy, and in the eyes of the public there was no greater hypocrite than a politician who preached the virtues of honesty and truthfulness while cheating on his wife.

In the space of only two days, the career of one of the country’s most brilliant politicians, a man who looked destined to lead Britain, was in tatters. His life and marriage lay in ruins. No one would be more shocked by the rapidity of Evans’s demise than Evans himself.

In the weeks that followed the breaking of the story, the unkind comments, the unflattering photos, and the public’s sheer glee at his own misfortune would all take a heavy toll on Evans and his family. Politicians, by the nature of their jobs, accepted a certain amount of intrusion into their personal lives. They learned to brush off unkind comments, unflattering photos, and at times a disdain and contempt for what it was they did. But the events of the twenty-seventh of June wouldn’t be so easy for Charles Evans to brush off. While his political demise may have been swift, the depressing aftermath would feel like it was never going to end.

After Evans finished his statement, and Rachel had left, James picked up the phone and called Deborah.

“Have you seen him?” he asked.

“I have,” she replied.

“He’s unbelievable, isn’t he?”

“James. I’ve got Sir Richard on the phone for you,” said James’s personal assistant, Mary, sticking her head into James’s office.

“Darling, I’ve got to go, it’s Sir Richard. I’ll give you a call tonight, okay? Take care. I love you,” said James, then hung up. He wouldn’t call her that night in fact. She would wait up for his call before eventually drifting off to sleep. She would assume that once again he had been caught up with work. Too busy, and too consumed in his work, to spare a thought for his increasingly lonely wife.

“James, it’s Sir Richard. I just wanted to congratulate you on a job well done. A splendid front page. A brilliant piece of tabloid journalism.”

“Thank you. It feels very satisfying, I must say. Have you seen some of the TV coverage of Mrs. Evans? I wouldn’t want to be in Evans’s shoes right now. If looks could kill.”

“Yes, quite. Can’t say I blame her. I’m just glad the arrogant bastard has been caught. He is an awful man. Anyway, keep up the good work, and I expect to see more stories like that.”

It didn’t take long for some of the media attention to shift away from Charles Evans and his wife, who even by generous standards wasn’t the most attractive woman in the world, to the stunningly beautiful Tina Wells. Within a week of the story breaking it had become apparent that Tina Wells had aspirations beyond those of a highly-paid call girl, and that the media and the public were only too willing to indulge those aspirations.

When she called James for advice on how to manage the offers that were pouring in, he advised her to get an agent and a publicist and gave her a list of names. Within two weeks of the story breaking she had appointed IMA, International Management Agency, as her agent, and she had engaged the services of Sophie Clayton as her new public relations adviser. Within a month of the story breaking, she had a book contract, offers to appear on the covers of a dozen magazines, film offers, and invitations to every important social function in London.

While her ascent had been almost as swift as Evans's demise, few in the media sought to reconcile his rapid slide down the ladder of social acceptability with Tina Wells's rise up it. In the space of a week, everything Evans held sacred had been destroyed. Within a month, everything Tina Wells had ever dreamed of was becoming a reality. Few questioned its fairness, and even fewer cared. Tina Wells looked hot, she liked dressing up in schoolgirl outfits and latex attire, and she was undoubtedly one hell of a good shag (or so they assumed—rightly in her case, though). What more could you want in a celebrity, they asked themselves. For most men—nothing. She was perfect.