

Chapter 1

“What’s happenin’ dude.”

Nick was trying to be ‘cool’. Tom stood motionless and replied without moving,

“Just looking.”

His eyes scanned the room, ready to pounce, like a lion eyeing a herd of gazelle. Which one would be his next victim, which one would find herself trapped in his stare, unable to resist his overwhelming charms.

“Who you after?”

Nick asked.

“Just looking”

Tom repeated.

He had of course met most of them before, some of them in more intimate ways than others. Tom was no stranger to the local party scene and Bury, one of the smaller towns bordering Manchester, was a very small pond for a big fish like Tom to be swimming in. There were not many parties that he didn’t go to, invited or not, he was the life and soul, the main attraction and unfortunately, he knew it.

“I’m looking too!”

Nick was still trying to be cool.

Most of the girls at this party had already been caught up in the Tom Frazier whirlwind and had come out the other side feeling used and rejected. He could convince even the smartest girl of his undying love for her and before she could see through his charm he would use her to satisfy his unquenchable lust for sex and move onto his next unsuspecting victim. He was by no means a monster or some kind of perverted, sexual deviant, he was just young and handsome and had, through trial and error, perfected the art of seduction to a degree not often seen in one so young. At only 18 years of age Tom Frazier was an intelligent and mature young man with the charms and seductive technique of an accomplished gigolo.

Tom had been brought up on ‘the wrong side of the track’. His family were good, honest, hard working people but not particularly well off. In fact they were down right poor and the neighbourhood they lived in reflected that. Tom’s home life had consisted of seven people (mum, dad, four brothers and a grandma) all living in a two up two down terraced house with an outside toilet and no bathroom. The outside toilet wasn’t too bad. In fact, they didn’t know any different. That was until Jimmy Smith blocked it up with a bag of sherbet lemons he had stolen from Percy’s sweet shop.

Percy saw Jimmy’s crime from behind the multi coloured plastic strip blind separating the back room from the shop and after temporarily putting the ‘CLOSED’ sign in the door, went straight round to Jimmy’s house to see his parents. Jimmy, thinking he had carried out the perfect crime was horrified to see Percy heading

towards his house and decided that the best thing to do was to get rid of the evidence as quickly as possible. Dashing into the back street, in a complete state of panic, the Frazier's toilet seemed like a great place to dispose of his ill-gotten gains.

Thanks to Jimmy the whole family, all seven of them, found themselves without a working toilet and ended up having to share the next door neighbour's outside toilet. There was no way the Fraziers could afford to have the drain unblocked and despite several attempts by Tom's dad to solve the problem himself the sherbet lemons just wouldn't budge. Luckily for the Frazier family the next-door neighbours were friendly and very understanding.

Mr. and Mrs. Patel had recently come to England from Pakistan and were keen to fit into the local community. They welcomed the Fraziers with open arms and an open toilet door! The winter nights were the worst. For Tom, going out of the gate into the back street in his pyjamas and then into next door's yard was bad enough but if his timing was bad, having to wait in the freezing cold for Mr Patel to finish his business and come out of the toilet was sometimes unbearable!

Bath time at the Frazier house wasn't much better. Once a week, usually Friday, it was bath night. Bath night consisted of an old tin bath filled with tepid water in front of the coal fire in the living room. Tom was third oldest out of four sons. It was always oldest first so by the time his turn came to get into the tub, the water was usually stone cold and a dirty grey colour. Tom didn't mind, it was only once a week and when it was really cold his mum would cancel bath time and tell the boys to keep their t-shirts on under their pyjamas to keep warm. Tom's family simply couldn't afford to do anything to modernise the house and they certainly couldn't afford to move.

Despite the hardship and distinct lack of money the whole family was happy and looked out for each other. Both his mum and dad worked full time and regularly took on extra shifts to make ends meet. Grandma filled in at home and made sure that the boys were never left alone or left to fend for themselves. This strong sense of parental responsibility and family values would stay with Tom for the rest of his life.

Despite the fact that Tom couldn't wait to escape from the poverty trap he felt he was in, he still held fond memories of his childhood. He would never forget catching mice with his fishing net whilst his grandma jumped up on a stool and screamed loud enough to be heard at the end of the street and chasing cockroaches around the kitchen trying to squash them with a rolled up newspaper. Mice and cockroaches were part of every day life in the Frazier household. They tried everything to get rid of them but nothing seemed to work. In the end it was easier just to get on with it and learn to live with them. Outside the safety of the family home the people Tom grew up with were, to put it mildly, rogues. Most of them ended up in some sort of trouble, either with the police or with the gangs from the council estate. Many of the girls found themselves in the other sort of trouble, which usually meant an abortion or life in a council flat with little or no future. He spent much of his teenage years trying to distance himself from his neighbourhood. It never quite worked, most people knew where he lived so the rich kids would have nothing to do with him and he didn't want anything to do with the poor kids. Ultimately Tom didn't fit in with anyone so he went his own way, did his own thing and became totally independent

By the time he was seventeen Tom had his own flat, a steady job and more importantly a plan. He wasn't going to get trapped by his working class background. He had the intelligence and the character to do something with his life. He had no intention of living his life on the bread line. He could, and probably should, have gone

to college and maybe university but he couldn't wait. He wanted to start earning money. He wanted to start living his life and that is exactly what he did, he lived life to the full. Tom Frazier worked hard and played hard. There was nothing he wouldn't do for money and likewise there was nothing he wouldn't do for pleasure. Tom's philosophy was that throughout his childhood he had already experienced the lows so now it was time to hit the highs. He worked six days a week at the local supermarket and five nights a week at the wine bar. He managed a little sleep in between but mainly he just partied. Tom did make some friends but he thought of them more as opportunities to further his ambition rather than people he could be close to. As long as they served some purpose in the 'plan', Tom would tolerate their company until he no longer found them useful. Tom Frazier had many associates but no real friends he was still the loner, still independent.

Working sixteen hours a day and partying all night wasn't easy, not even for Tom Frazier. He needed a little help. Quite deliberately and somewhat inevitably he turned to drugs. Tom saw cocaine as just another ingredient in his recipe for success. A few quid spent on coke meant that he could work all the hours he needed to do without having to give up any of his pleasures. It was the ideal solution. He could, through his 'rouge' contacts, easily acquire his supplies and he was more than capable of keeping his use under control. He wasn't going to become some sad drug addict dependant on a low life dealer. He was using coke because he wanted to not because he had to. Once he had moved up the career ladder, as per his 'plan', he would drop the night job and knock the cocaine on the head. Life was sweet, plenty of money, with girls, drink and, of course, recreational drugs to spend it on. Tom was well on course to meet his aspirations and enjoying every minute of it.

"Hiya Tom".

Katy had noticed Tom watching her and couldn't resist acknowledging him. She spoke nervously as she stepped towards him

"I didn't know you were invited,"

"Oh you know how it is, a friend of a friend and all that,"
Replied Tom, dismissing the suggestion that maybe he shouldn't be there.

Tom rarely got an actual invitation to parties, he just turned up and generally that was accepted by everyone as the norm. He did get asked to leave occasionally but on those rare occasions he would take the 'in crowd' with him and ultimately take the party elsewhere.

"Who are you here with?"

he asked, easing a hand onto Katy's slim waist and leaning close to her. Katy gulped at her bottle of beer, suddenly caught in the headlamp like gaze of Tom's deep brown eyes.

"Carmen...., my cousin Carmen".

Katy's chest and neck flushed red as she felt Tom's breath against her face.

"She's just moved here from Maidstone, do you want to meet her?"

Tom wasn't interested in Carmen but Katy slipped from his grasp and darted off, a little overwhelmed by Tom's sudden advances. As quickly as she had gone Katy returned with her cousin. She felt more confident around Tom now she wasn't alone. Tom was suddenly distracted. His gaze was no longer focused on Katy. For the first time in his life Tom Frazier was speechless. He had never felt such a sudden rush of emotion as he felt right now.

"This is Tom, the one I just told you about"

Katy didn't realize what she was doing. By going for moral support in the form of Carmen she had extinguished any interest Tom had in her.

"Hi."

Carmen whispered.

"She's a bit shy,"

Explained Katy

"She doesn't know anyone around here".

Carmen looked embarrassed, partly by Katy's lack of tact but more so by the attention she was receiving from Tom. He broke his uncharacteristic silence with a clumsy

"Hiya"

Katy interrupted, sensing what was happening.

"Do you want to dance Tom"?

"No."

He replied sharply.

"Dance with Nick."

Nick was oblivious to what was happening, too many drinks and a couple of ecstasy tablets had all but finished his night.

"Oh come on Carmen Lets dance"

She said, quickly dragging Carmen away from the limelight. For Katy it was too late the damage had been done. Tom had eyes for only one girl in the room and he wouldn't stop until he had her. Carmen had achieved something that many had tried before but none successfully. She had monopolized the attention of Tom Frazier. Neither of them realized it right then but it was to become a bond that would change both their lives forever.