

Chapter 10 before editing

Professor Farquharson put down his book with a sigh. 'The Whale's Song', although it concerned neither whales nor singing, reminded him too much of his wife, Jemima. Her whale like exterior hid an interior equally whale-like in its thick skin, large quantities of insulating blubber, and a hole from which issued increasingly indeterminate noises that he had long given up trying to understand. She hadn't always been so fat, and yet he had not been aware of her getting fatter. Why had he ever married her? He had loved her once. He must have, surely. Perhaps they should have had children. He shuddered momentarily at the thought. Twenty three years they had been married and he could picture the years to come ticking into eternity. A death sentence as Jemima grew fatter and more incomprehensible with every year. Perhaps she would explode or spontaneously combust into a heap of cinders. People did, he had read it somewhere. That happy thought caused his lips to curl into a contented smile.

'Quentin! Why are you smiling? You look like you're happy.'

Jemima's voice caused his stomach to twist into a tense knot.

'Just thinking of our holiday home on the island, dear.'

'You are not. You're thinking of that little tart in Smart's office. I saw you eyeing her up this morning.'

Saw him! How could she have seen him? She was five miles away shopping in Glasgow. Was she winding him up? Sometimes she did it just for fun, or was she having him watched?

'Nonsense dear. I don't know where you got that idea. Anyway Maria's just a child. A mere... mere...' He paused, finding himself thinking confused thoughts about Maria with the red hair, the knee length boots and the perfectly formed...

'Maria! So you know her name?'

'Of course I know her name,' he said in feigned exasperation. 'I have to know her name. She does things for me. I mean,' he added hastily seeing Jemima's mouth open for the inevitable remark, 'I mean she does my typing, filing that sort of thing. That's all.' As yet, he added under his breath.

'Well just make sure it stays that way.' Jemima's lips puckered into a round scarlet 'O' as she looked him up and down.

He turned away from her, not just from her searchlight eyes but from the sight of her frumpy, dumpy figure standing full rigged in the middle of his study. The blue cardigan buttoned tightly across her green print dress, button and buttonhole struggling to keep together.

'Feeling well, dear?' he enquired amicably.

'Never felt better, Tommy, and don't you forget it.'

He winced. She knew how he hated his middle name.

'Well got to get on,' he muttered turning to his desk.

'Hah, we'll see about that,' she announced, inexplicably, and marched out leaving a smell of baby powder behind.

He sighed. There was nothing left. Nothing. Perhaps she would fall under a bus or drop dead from some disease. Nothing painful mind you, he wasn't sadistic. Something quick and deadly. His suggestion last year of a trip to West Africa had been a flop. She had holidayed with her sister in Bournemouth, phoning him every day at random times.

He sighed again. Something quick... now then?

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Comment [D1]: Might think about changing hair colour perhaps – isn’t Susan a redhead too?

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Comment [D2]: Thought this might continue the ‘ship’ metaphor

A Clear Solution

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