Fatal Cut

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Extract

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FATAL CUT

JUNE HAMPSON



PROLOGUE

Her tongue emerged from her heavily painted lips like a small pink snake and her eyes closed in mock ecstasy as he entered her. From the radio in the kitchen David Cassidy was asking how he could be sure love was real. There was definitely no love in this act, she thought.

Her hair, black as jet, bounced about her face as she tried to steady herself by gripping the brass bedstead while he rode her hard. Remember to relax your muscles or the bastard will tear you apart, she told herself – and for fuck's sake smile for the bleedin' camera and *think about the money.*

'Yes, yes!' She mouthed the words she was primed to say.

His sausage-fingered hands with nails bitten to the quick were on her shoulders, fingers that were digging into her flesh as he thrust into her. On her back she could feel the scrape of the metal studs of his black leather belt and vest and knew she'd end up with bloody welts when he finally collapsed stinking and sweating on to the stained sheet.

'Yes, oh, yes,' she cried, 'I love it. You're so big.'

At least the partially zipped leather face mask camouflaged the kid's bad case of weeping acne so she didn't have to think about that. He couldn't be any more than seventeen and hadn't said two words to her before they started fucking, but then, she wasn't being paid to have a conversation with him, was she? He was hung like a donkey and she guessed that's why they hired him. She told herself, pretend he's Adam Faith who's so good looking and sexy in that TV programme *Budgie*.

And then she was making a mental shopping list of food she'd buy from the supermarket on the way home, and perhaps a soft toy for baby Rosie, maybe even a Tiny Tears, for hadn't Rosie cried when she'd had to give the doll back to Val's daughter? One thing was for sure, both she and her neighbour, Val, who never refused to look after her child, would be eating a slap-up meal tonight – the first decent meal either of them as unmarried mothers living on Assistance had eaten in a while. Maybe she'd even buy an Arctic Roll for pudding.

'Fuck me harder,' she cried.

The camera would be recording her every facial expression and every movement of the bloke riding her. Thank God it couldn't record her shame.

The room stank, it was windowless, airless and the three men filming were watching without emotion.

She thought back to how easy it had been to get into debt and for the worry to consume her. And then how quickly the interest on the debt had spiralled,

and her terror at the man's threats and punishment.

The money she'd be paid for this one-off porn flick would set her free.

Free from the fear, free from the debt.

She could begin to live again. Maybe get a part-time job.

'Yes, I love your huge cock.' She repeated the memorised script that had been scribbled on a page from a grubby exercise book.

'I'm coming,' he yelled theatrically.

'Fill me with your cum,' she shouted.

With her eyes now closed to fake passion she saw nothing.

But she felt the sharp object rip into her throat, smelled the metallic tang of fresh blood. Opening her eyes and looking down she saw the red drops falling, splattering, and then gushing onto the grubby white sheet. The man, spent, sprawled by the side of her, his mouth a wide silver-zippered gash in the blackness of the leather. The pain swelled. Oh God, what was happening?

Then she saw the bloodied knife clutched in his fist.

She lifted her hand and felt the slipperiness of her slit throat. The blood was pouring through her fingers.

'Help me,' she croaked.

The three men were staring back at her.

Not one of them moved. Their faces were blank masks.

'Help me,' she tried once more.

And in that instant she knew she'd never see her child again.

'Help …'

Blackness was enfolding her in its arms. She was dying and the camera was still turning.

CHAPTER 1

Asfendiou, the Greek Island of Kos, April 1972

'Please God,' she whispered, her heart overflowing with love for her beautiful boys, 'don't ever let anything or anyone harm my sons. Not when for once in me bleedin' life everything is on the up an' I feel so happy I could burst!'

Daisy Lane bent over the bed and tenderly wiped the perspiration from Eddie's forehead. His dark hair was damp, causing it to curl even more tightly than it usually did. In sleep his breathing was deep, untroubled as only a ten-year-old's can be. In the next bed, six-year-old Jamie's sheet was wound so tightly around his perfect little body it seemed as though he wanted to hide from the world. He moaned quietly in his sleep. Daisy touched his blond hair and sighed. His downfall was his jealous nature, but why it should be directed towards his brother, Eddie, she couldn't fathom. Perhaps he'd grow out of it … after all, didn't she treat both boys equally?

She shook her head, banishing her sudden negative thoughts.

Vinnie was in the next room. Lovely, lovely Vinnie! Jamie's father had come to Greece to see her, a surprise that definitely added to her happiness and would thrill the boys when they woke.

Daisy glanced in the long wall mirror. It seemed ages since she and Vinnie had shared time together. Smoothing her blonde bobbed hair back behind her ears she turned, weighing up her body, and decided on the black halter top and the black shorts that looked like a tiny skirt, enhanced her tan and showed off her slim figure.

If that didn't get him going then nothing would, she thought. God, but she'd missed him. That was just one of the downfalls of being involved with a copper, and a bloody straight one at that! Served her right, she supposed, for co-owning Daisychains, Gosport's premier nightclub, with the notorious London gangster Roy Kemp, friend of the Krays.

Coppers and gangsters just didn't mix socially. It didn't help either that she was looking after Roy's nefarious interests while he was banged up at Her Majesty's pleasure.

Negative thoughts again, Daisy, she scolded herself. Vinnie's come to see you, so bleeding well make the most of it! At least here in her little Greek house she was free from prying eyes.

The thin curtain fluttered at the window letting in a small breeze and the scent of flowers wafted into the room from her garden. Already Kos was about to excel itself with sunshine and colour in true Greek

style. Daisy decided 1972 was turning into a very good year indeed. She winked at her mirrored reflection, closed the door behind her and went out to join her man.

'Why do I always forget how tall you are?' Her arms snaked around Vinnie's waist and she leaned her head against his broad back, breathing in the male scent of him, combined with the orangey cologne he always wore. She'd interrupted the conversation between Vinnie and her very pregnant friend Susie that was taking place on the stone-flagged garden terrace covered with trailing grape vines. 'Where we goin', Detective Inspector Vinnie Endersby?'

He twisted round to face her and she saw that his beautiful, different-coloured eyes were twinkling. Dark honey and chocolate, eyes that she wanted to drown in.

'You'll see when we get there.' Daisy wondered at the seriousness of his tone but quickly dismissed it. Wherever he was taking her, she thought, they'd be together.

'Jesus Christ, Daisy, let the bloke 'ave a shower an' freshen up,' said Susie. 'He's only just got 'ere.'

'It's only a piddly little trip from Gatwick, Suze. Besides if you 'adn't stayed gassing to 'im he'd 'ave had a bleedin' shower by now!' Daisy pulled a face at her friend.

She and Susie had rigged up a shower with a hose from the kitchen tap out into the garden and hung it from an olive tree. The kids thought it was great

fun, and Daisy had reckoned it was one way of getting them clean without them making a fuss. A blanket strung across a branch served as a shower curtain.

'I think a quick shower outside would be in order,' said Vinnie, disentangling himself after kissing her chastely on the forehead. 'So would another cup of tea.'

Daisy rocked back on her heels. 'You're supposed to drink plenty of fluids when it's hot. Fancy a glass of retsina?' She'd grown quite fond of the dry white Greek wine.

'Tea's fine,' said Vinnie, unzipping a small holdall he'd hoisted onto the table. He searched through it and pulled out a folded and ironed light blue shirt. Daisy watched his movements. He wore no rings but his hands were well formed, his nails neatly clipped. She loved his hands. Hands were one of the first things she noticed about people. Hands and teeth. It didn't matter if a person had crooked teeth, if they were clean and white it showed a person looked after themselves.

Susie said, 'Well, you drinks the same bleedin' large amounts of tea at 'ome in Gosport when it's freezin' cold, so what's your answer to that?'

Daisy glared at her. 'If you're trying to pick a fight it won't bloody work!'

Susie shrugged and helped herself to some water from a blue and white jug on the table, splashing it into a sturdy tumbler. Daisy grinned at Vinnie, then nodded towards the garment he was holding.

'That shirt's been pressed well. I'll 'ave to get you to iron my stuff 'cause our Suze is getting very slapdash about her work now she's the size of a bleedin' 'ouse!'

Daisy saw Vinnie colour up. She'd embarrassed him. Her grin deepened into a smile.

His curly hair was shorter than the fashion of the moment dictated though he'd allowed his sideburns to grow a little. It must be difficult, she thought, being a copper and unable to follow fashion. She wondered what he'd look like with a droopy moustache. Probably ridiculous; he was too clean cut for facial hair.

'C'mon, you.' She hoisted Susie from the chair in which she'd wedged herself.

Vinnie asked, 'How long you got to go now, Suze?'

''Bout a couple of months.'

'You sure?' Daisy could see the doubt crossing Vinnie's face.

'She's got mixed up with 'er bleedin' dates, hasn't she? We got 'er booked into Blake's Maternity Home but she won't keep 'er appointments with the doctor.'

Daisy was still grumbling as she ushered Susie inside her whitewashed house. 'Get in the kitchen, Suze. Don't want you gettin' any bleedin' ideas if you sees my Vinnie in the nuddie.'

'I might be missin' my husband somethin' terrible but I think you can keep your copper to yourself.' Susie, with a big groan, plonked herself down on the sagging green velvet sofa.

'I don't know how you manage it,' said Daisy. 'In all the time the pair of you 'as been livin' with me I ain't never seen you cross with each other. You been married donkey's years but you're still like bleedin' newly weds.' Without waiting for Susie's reply Daisy carried on, 'You sure you don't mind me an' Vinnie poppin' out for a while an' leavin' you with the boys?'

'It's me job at 'ome in Gosport to be chief cook, bottlewasher and child minder, ain't it?' Susie put her hands beneath her belly as though supporting her unborn child. 'What's so different 'ere?'

Daisy busied herself plugging in the electric kettle. 'You could do with a bit of a kip yourself, take it while you can. Eddie an' Jamie'll sleep for ages.'

'I know you persuaded me to come away because we both needed a bleedin' break but I feel fine now, honest I do. A few days in the sun an' I soon gets me energy back. I'm a bit like you, Dais. I reckon the sun recharges me batteries.'

Daisy was peering into the dark recesses of the high cupboards looking for biscuits. 'Aah, gotcha,' she said, pulling out a packet of Bourbons. 'Your old man's one in a million, ain't he, to entrust you to me in your condition?'

'Why wouldn't he? He knows I'm all right with you. And 'e 'ad the offer from you to come 'ere an' all, didn't he? But he didn't want to spend time away from managing his bleedin' World's Stores. Anyone'd think it was the only grocery shop in Gosport's High Street. Anyway – ' Susie paused and took a deep

breath. 'He'll be eatin' his dinner at 'is mother's every night an' they'll be decidin' all sorts of things about the baby.' She patted her stomach. 'But I miss 'im, Dais.'

'Why wouldn't you? You do know how 'appy I am for you? About the baby, I mean. I'll always be 'ere for you.' Daisy set out mugs on the draining board. She thought about Susie's first child, a little girl who had died in a terrible road accident. Si and Susie had waited a long time for this baby.

'I do know. If it wasn't for you taking me in when I was a kid …'

'Don't start on that!' Daisy didn't want to be reminded of how hard she'd worked to make a living in the grubby cafe in North Street. Susie had turned up one night, an abused kid on the run from her stepfather, and had willingly helped Daisy further the success of the caff. 'We 'ad some good times as well though, didn't we?'

Susie nodded, her blonde curls bouncing around her face. Her blue eyes shone with happiness.

'I met my Si an' you fell in love with—'

Daisy interrupted Susie. 'A lot of water under the bridge since then, Suze.' She put a mug of thick dark tea and the sugar bowl on the coffee table by the side of her friend then stared hard at her. 'There are times, Suze, when I think I'll never get over Eddie Lane.' The words had come out of her mouth without her even thinking about them. She felt the touch of Susie's warm hand brush against her fingers.

'I know. No one will ever take 'is place. But he's dead and gone an' you got 'is son, who's like his bloody mirror image, an' you got a good relationship with Vinnie. Not to mention your pet gangster, Roy Kemp.'

Daisy pulled her hand away. 'How many times do I 'ave to tell you that my business with Roy Kemp is strictly that, a business relationship …'

'Might be for you, Dais, but maybe not for 'im …'

'I'm mindin' 'is interests, as well you know, because I owe him the bleedin' money he put up for Vera and me to open our business!' An image of Vera, the feisty ex-prossie who was at this very moment not only coping with the running of Daisychains but her own massage parlour in Gosport's High Street, brought warmth to Daisy's heart. Daisy trusted Vera with her life.

Susie smiled at her then raised her eyebrows. 'You knows that an' Vera knows that an' I knows that. An' we all knows you wants to run the club drug free. I just don't think Roy looks at things in the same way.'

Daisy was breathing heavily, watching as Susie stirred sugar into her tea. She was trying to think of a witty remark when Vinnie's shadow cut the bright sun from the doorway and she turned to see him watching her, his curly hair damp and glistening from his shower.

'Where's my tea then?'

'Just like a bloke, expectin' to be waited on 'and

and foot,' said Daisy, but she went over to the draining board and brought back his mug. Handing it to him, their fingers touched and as the fiery longing sprang to life inside her, Daisy mentally counted her blessings.

'I'll just take a quick look at the boys. I won't wake them.'

Vinnie quietly opened the door on the sleeping children. His Jamie looked like an angel. He wished he could spend more time with the lad instead of flitting in and out of his life. That's exactly what it felt like at times, he thought. That he was forever flitting between cop shops in London, Liss and Gosport, and juggling crimes he was working on while trying to put some stability in his two sons' lives. He couldn't walk away from his wife, Clare, because of his son Jack and he didn't want to walk away from Daisy because he loved her and Jamie. It also pained him that he was in Greece at Roy Kemp's request.

He stared at the wallpaper with its pictures of trains and planes and then his eyes dropped to a large wooden box in the corner where toys spilled across the woven carpet. The room smelled of blossom from Daisy's mad tangle of a flower garden outside, while inside you could almost touch the atmosphere of love that Daisy surrounded her boys with. She was a damn good mother, he'd give her that.

His eyes travelled to young Eddie. Jesus but he was the spit of his father at that age! A mental picture

flashed through his mind of the two of them as kids, him and Eddie Lane, best friends, racing through the back alleyways of Gosport after scrumping apples and the fruit falling from their rolled-up jumpers, laughing at their crime yet terrified of getting caught.

He could sense Daisy hovering behind him and smell her perfume. He was growing hard. He turned, causing her to step backwards while he gently closed the bedroom door on the children.

He gathered her into his arms, nuzzling his face down into the enticing warmth of her neck. For a slim woman her breasts were large and luscious, just the way he liked them.

A quick thought slid into his mind. Why couldn't life always be easy? Why did bad people want to hurt the innocent? He pushed the thoughts away. He didn't want to upset Daisy here. Now was not the right time to tell her of his fears.

Instead he asked, 'Why do sleeping boys look like butter wouldn't melt in their mouths?'

'And little buggers when they're awake,' said Daisy. 'Jamie's still wettin' the bed, you know.'

'He'll grow out of it. Everyone knows little boys are worse for piddling than girls.' He stared hard at her. Her long-lashed green eyes were wide and trusting. 'I love you,' he said.

'I know,' she whispered back before her lips found his. With short tender kisses he then traced her cheeks, her nose, her forehead. He felt her shiver with excitement.

'You're beautiful,' he said and swept her hair off her face. She moved her arms to his shoulders and he let his hands wander over the warmth of her flesh while he breathed in the softness of her skin. It always amazed him that she fitted against him like she was supposed to be there and that such a small person could fill him with so much pleasure. He would have liked to wave a magic wand and make her small enough to fit in a matchbox that he'd carry with him everywhere. His palms found her breasts and he cupped them one in each hand. 'Perfect,' he whispered, delighted to feel her nipples harden and thrust themselves against the thin cotton of her top.

Susie's voice cut short his excitement.

'If you two don't bugger off, I'll not get a nap because the boys'll be awake!'

He heard Daisy's deflated sigh match his own.

The air was dry and warm as Vinnie led the way down to the road. Daisy's house was on an incline reached by stone steps that were garnished with terra-cotta pots of bright red geraniums. Vinnie knew that when Daisy was at home in Gosport her beloved pots were tended by the owners of the nearby Taverna Asfendiou. That was another thing he admired about Daisy. She got on with people. It was rare to hear her put someone down or say bad things about them, and people gravitated towards her.

At the bottom of the steps, parked on the road's grass verge, was the motorbike he'd hired at the airport. Vinnie climbed aboard and started up the engine.

'Get on,' he yelled, steadying the machine. He felt her arms around his body, felt her make herself comfortable on the pillion seat, and soon he was moving through the sleepy village. Some of the houses were still in ruins. He knew the earthquake of 1933 was to blame for this. After the desolation many families had relocated to the larger town of Kos, the island's port. It was a small island, barely thirty miles long, but the terrain changed from sandy beaches to pine forests and bare mountains. 'I'm going to whisk you away so I can have my wicked way with you without interruptions.' He had to shout, the warm wind was taking his words away.

'Thank God for that,' Daisy yelled back. He released one of his hands from the bike's handlebars and patted her clenched fingers that were gripping his waist.

The bike plunged through the Greek countryside and Vinnie loved the sensation of being at one with the machine, the sun and the speed. Smells of herbs, flowers, and the yellow whins that were whisky scented filled his nostrils and he wondered whether it was possible to get drunk on smells.

On the airport road he headed towards Kefalos. Here the land was uneven, with vegetation growing in gullies. The wind from the sea had torn away all but the strongest trees, which had bent themselves into strange shapes to survive. The sea, blue today as baby ribbon, bordered volcanic earth and outcrops of rock. And then ahead, like a thin yellow stripe, the

road pushed upwards in a zigzag to the top of the mountain where the small village of Kefalos lay.

After a while Vinnie changed gear and slowed the bike to a standstill.

'Just look at that view.' He waved an arm expansively, taking in the panorama around them.

'Fuck the view, I thought I was never goin' to get you to meself,' Daisy said. She'd climbed off the seat and was rubbing at her bottom. He shook his head and smiled at her then switched off the bike's ignition, rose from his astride position and set the machine on its stand.

'Come here,' he said. 'It really is so good to see you.' He noticed her eyes travelling over his body, and the familiar hardening began at his groin. She reached for him.

He kissed her for a long time, tasting her sweetness, holding her head back so he could kiss her throat and her neck.

'Not here.' Daisy tugged away and led him from the road to the shelter of a group of trees. A grassy hillock gave them invisibility from the road.

He pulled her down on to the soft spring grass. The ever-present chirrup of the cicadas was in his ears. Kneeling before him, Daisy picked up his hand and raised it to her lips, kissing each finger in turn, then, with her eyes locked to his, she began undressing slowly. Mesmerised, Vinnie watched her every move, while the breeze sent tantalising wafts of her perfume and skin to inflame him. When she was completely

naked she said, 'Your turn,' and began unbuttoning his shirt.

The pleasurable sensation of her fingers on his skin made the surfaces of his body tingle with anticipation. 'Let's get these off.' She unzipped his jeans and he wriggled out of them, looking down at his hardness, and the milky fluid glistening at the engorged head of his cock.

She was gazing at him with such tenderness.

And then he was inside her, pushing through the soft folds of her body, pushing and pulling back, pushing and pulling back until he could almost stand it no longer.

The fucking, he thought, was as soft as velvet yet as hard as stone. She grasped him tightly and thrust her pelvis at him as though wanting him to come yet willing him not to. Every movement was a discovery that made him want to cry out.

'Come now,' he commanded.

A jolt ran through him like wildfire, wave after wave.

Tears of happiness seemed to stream from every pore of Daisy's body.

'We came together,' she said.

Afterwards Vinnie clung to her. Held her tight and close. She had exhausted him, mentally and physically, and he felt marvellous!

'Daisy?'

'Yes?'

'I love you.'

'I know you do,' she said.

He, feeling the sun on his skin and the weight of the woman he loved at his side, closed his eyes. He was completely satisfied. Until he remembered why he had to come to Greece.