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Written by Elizabeth Haynes

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ELIZABETH HAYNES

INTO THE DARKEST CORNER



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For Wendy George and Jackie Moscicki –
strong and inspirational women

Lancaster Crown Court

R-v-BRIGHTMAN

Wednesday 11 May 2005

Morning Session
Before:
THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE NOLAN

MR MACLEAN Would you please state your full name?

MR BRIGHTMAN Lee Anthony Brightman.

MR MACLEAN Thank you. Now, Mr Brightman, you had a relationship with Miss Bailey, is that correct?

MR BRIGHTMAN Yes.

MR MACLEAN For how long?

MR BRIGHTMAN I met her at the end of October in 2003. We were seeing each other until the middle of June last year.

MR MACLEAN And how did you meet?

MR BRIGHTMAN At work. I was working on an operation and I happened to meet her through the course of that.

MR MACLEAN And you formed a relationship?

MR BRIGHTMAN Yes.

MR MACLEAN You said that the relationship ended in June. Was that a mutual decision?

MR BRIGHTMAN Things had been going wrong for a while. Catherine was very jealous of the time I spent away from her working. She was convinced I was having an affair.

MR MACLEAN And were you?

MR BRIGHTMAN No. My job takes me away from home for days at a time, and the nature of it means that I can't tell anyone, not even my girlfriend, where I am or when I'll be home.

MR MACLEAN Did your time away from Miss Bailey cause arguments between you?

MR BRIGHTMAN Yes. She would check my mobile for messages from other women, demand to know where I'd been, who I'd been seeing. When I got back from a job, all I wanted to do was forget about work and relax a bit. It started to feel like I never had the chance to do that.

MR MACLEAN So you ended the relationship?

MR BRIGHTMAN No. We had rows sometimes, but I loved her. I knew she had some emotional problems. When she went for me, I always told myself that it wasn't her fault.

MR MACLEAN What do you mean by 'emotional problems'?

MR BRIGHTMAN Well, she told me she had suffered from anxiety in the past. The more time I spent with her, the more I saw that coming out. She would go out drinking with her friends, or drink at home, and when I got home she would start an argument and lash out at me.

MR MACLEAN Just with regard to the emotional problems, I would like to ask you about that further. Did you, over the course of your relationship, see any evidence that Miss Bailey would harm herself at times of emotional stress?

MR BRIGHTMAN No. Her friends had told me that she had cut herself in the past.

MR LEWIS Objection, Your Honour. The witness was not asked about the opinions of Miss Bailey's friends.

Mr Justice Nolan	Mr Brightman, please keep to the questions you are asked. Thank you.
Mr Maclean	Mr Brightman, you mentioned that Miss Bailey would 'lash out' at you. Can you explain what you mean by 'lash out'?
Mr Brightman	She would shout, push me, slap me, kick me. That kind of thing.
Mr Maclean	She was violent towards you?
Mr Brightman	Yes. Well, yes. She was.
Mr Maclean	On how many occasions, would you say?
Mr Brightman	I don't know. I didn't keep count.
Mr Maclean	And what did you generally do, on these occasions when she 'lashed out' at you?
Mr Brightman	I would walk away from it. I deal with that enough at work; I don't need it when I get home.
Mr Maclean	And were you ever violent towards her?
Mr Brightman	Only the last time. She had locked me in the house and hidden the key somewhere. She went mad at me. I'd been working on a particularly difficult job and something inside me snapped. I hit her back. It was the first time I'd ever hit a woman.
Mr Maclean	The last time – what date are you talking about, exactly?
Mr Brightman	It was in June. The 13th, I think.
Mr Maclean	Would you take us through that day?
Mr Brightman	I stayed the night before at Catherine's house. I was on duty that weekend so I left for work before Catherine woke up. When I came back to her house that evening she was at home and she had been drinking. She accused me of spending the day with

another woman – the same thing I heard over and over again. I took it for a while, but after a couple of hours I had had enough. I went to walk away but she had double-locked the front door. She was screaming and swearing at me, over and over again, slapping me with her hands, scratching my face. I pushed her backwards, just enough to get her away. Then she just threw herself at me again and I hit her.

MR MACLEAN How did you hit her, Mr Brightman? Was it a punch, a slap?

MR BRIGHTMAN I hit her with a closed fist.

MR MACLEAN I see. And what happened then?

MR BRIGHTMAN She didn't stop; she just yelled louder and came at me again. So I hit her again. I guess it was probably harder. She fell over backwards and I went to see if she was alright, to help her up. I think I must have trodden on her hand. She screamed and yelled at me and threw something. It was the key to the front door.

MR MACLEAN What did you do next?

MR BRIGHTMAN I took the key, unlocked the front door and left.

MR MACLEAN What time was that?

MR BRIGHTMAN It must have been about a quarter past seven.

MR MACLEAN And when you left her, what condition was she in?

MR BRIGHTMAN She was still shouting and screaming.

MR MACLEAN Was she injured, bleeding?

MR BRIGHTMAN I think she may have been bleeding.

MR MACLEAN Could you elaborate, Mr Brightman?

MR BRIGHTMAN She had some blood on her face. I don't know where it came from. It wasn't a lot of blood.

MR MACLEAN And did you have any injuries yourself?

MR BRIGHTMAN I just had some scratches.

MR MACLEAN Did you consider that she might have needed medical attention?

MR BRIGHTMAN No.

MR MACLEAN Even though she was apparently bleeding, and crying out?

MR BRIGHTMAN I don't recall that she was crying out. As I left the house she was shouting and swearing at me. If she needed medical attention I believe she could have got it herself, without my help.

MR MACLEAN I see. So after you left the house at a quarter past seven, did you see Miss Bailey again?

MR BRIGHTMAN No. I didn't see her again.

MR MACLEAN Did you contact her by telephone?

MR BRIGHTMAN No.

MR MACLEAN Mr Brightman, I want you to think very carefully before answering my next question. How do you feel now with regard to the incidents of that day?

MR BRIGHTMAN I have deep regret for everything that happened. I loved Catherine. I had asked her to marry me. I had no idea she was so emotionally disturbed and I wish to God I hadn't retaliated. I wish I had just tried harder to calm her down.

MR MACLEAN Thank you. No further questions, Your Honour.

– CROSS-EXAMINATION –

MR LEWIS Mr Brightman, would you have described your relationship with Miss Bailey as a serious one?

MR BRIGHTMAN I thought it was, yes.

MR LEWIS Do you understand that it is part of your terms and conditions of employment that you will inform your employers of changes in your personal circumstances, including providing the details of your relationships?

MR BRIGHTMAN Yes.

MR LEWIS And yet you chose not to inform anyone you work with about your relationship with Miss Bailey, is that not the case?

MR BRIGHTMAN I had planned to do so when Catherine agreed to marry me. My vetting review was due at the end of September; I would have mentioned it then in any case.

MR LEWIS Now, I would like to draw your attention to Exhibit WL/1 – this is on page fourteen of the exhibit packs – which is the statement by PC William Lay. PC Lay arrested you on Tuesday 15th June 2004 at your home address. In his statement he asserts that when he asked you about Miss Bailey, you at first stated, and I quote: 'I don't know who you are talking about.' Is that correct?

MR BRIGHTMAN I don't remember exactly what I said.

MR LEWIS This is the woman you have subsequently stated that you were in love with, that you intended to marry. Is that correct?

MR BRIGHTMAN PC Lay and PC Newman turned up at my house at six in the morning. I'd been

working for the past three nights and I had only just gone to bed. I was disorientated.

MR LEWIS Did you also state when questioned at Lancaster Police Station later that same day – and I'm quoting again from your statement: 'She was just someone I was investigating. When I left her she was fine. She had emotional issues, mental health issues.'?

MR BRIGHTMAN *(inaudible)*

MR JUSTICE NOLAN Mr Brightman, could you speak up?

MR BRIGHTMAN Yes.

MR LEWIS And were you conducting an investigation into Miss Bailey?

MR BRIGHTMAN No.

MR LEWIS I have no further questions.

MR JUSTICE NOLAN Thank you. In that case, ladies and gentlemen, we will adjourn for lunch.

Thursday 21 June 2001

As far as days to die were concerned, the longest day of the year was as good a day as any.

Naomi Bennett lay with her eyes open at the bottom of a ditch while the blood that had kept her alive for all of her twenty-four years pulsed away into the grit and rubble beneath her.

As she drifted in and out of awareness, she contemplated the irony of it all: how she was going to die now – having survived so much, and thinking that freedom was so close – at the hands of the only man who had ever really loved her and shown her kindness. He stood at the edge of the ditch above her, his face in shadow as the sun shone through the bright green leaves and cast dappled light over him, his hair halo-bright. Waiting.

The blood filled her lungs and she coughed, blowing scarlet bubbles that foamed over her chin.

He stood motionless, one hand on the shovel, watching the blood flow out of her and marvelling at its glorious colour, a liquid jewel, and at how even at the moment of death she was still the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen.

Once the flow slowed to a mere trickle he turned away, casting a glance across the derelict no-man's-land between the back of the industrial estate and the beginnings of farmland. Nobody came here, not even dog-walkers; the ground was rough and scarred with manufacturing rubbish accumulated over decades, weeds growing through empty cable reels, brown fluid leaking out of rusted oil drums, and at the edge, beneath a long row of lime trees, a six-foot ditch that brought dirty water when it rained, draining a mile away into the river.

Several minutes passed.

She was dead.

The wind had started to pick up and he looked up through the canopy of leaves to the clouds chasing each other across the sky.

He scrambled carefully down the rough slope into the bottom of the ditch, using the shovel for support, and then without hesitation drove it into her skull, bouncing roughly off the first time, then with a dull crack breaking the bone and splintering it into her flesh. Again and again, gasping with the effort, smashing her face away, breaking teeth, bone and flesh into one ghastly mixture.

After that, she wasn't his Naomi any more.

He used the knife again to slice away at each of her fingers in turn, her palms, until nothing identifiable was left.

Finally, he used the bloody shovel to cover her over with the rubble, sand and rubbish that had collected in the ditch. It wasn't a very good job. The blood was everywhere.

But as he finished – wiping away the tears that he'd been shedding from the moment she'd said his name in surprise, just as he'd sliced her throat – the first spots of rain fell from the darkening sky.

Wednesday 31 October 2007

Erin had been standing in the doorway for almost a minute; I could see her reflection in the darkened window. I carried on scrolling through the spreadsheet on the screen, wondering how it could be that it was dark when I left for work this morning and now it was dark again already.

'Cathy?'

I turned my head. 'Sorry,' I said, 'I was miles away. What?'

She leaned against the door, one hand on a hip, her long russet hair wound back into a bun. 'I said, are you nearly finished?'

'Not quite. Why?'

'Don't forget it's Emily's leaving do tonight. You are coming, aren't you?'

I turned back to the screen. 'I'm not sure, to be honest – I need to get this finished. You go on ahead. I'll try and get there later if I can.'

'Alright,' she said at last. She made a show of stomping off, although she didn't make much noise in those pumps.

Not tonight, I thought. Especially not tonight. It was all I could manage to agree to go to the sodding Christmas party, let alone a night out to celebrate someone's departure, someone I scarcely know. They'd been planning the Christmas do since August; as far as I'm concerned the end of November is too bloody early for a Christmas night out, but it's the date they all chose. They're all partying from then on, right up to Christmas. Early or not, I was going to have to go, otherwise I could see comments being made about me not being a 'team player', and God knows I need this job.

As soon as the last person left the office, I closed down the spreadsheet and turned off the computer.

Friday 31 October 2003

Friday night, Hallowe'en, and the bars in town were all full to the cauldron's brim.

In the Cheshire Arms I'd drunk cider and vodka and somehow lost Claire and Louise and Sylvia, and gained a new friend called Kelly. Kelly had been to the same school as me, although I didn't remember her. That was no matter to either of us; Kelly was dressed as a witch without a broomstick, all stripy orange tights and black nylon wig, me like the bride of Satan, a fitted red satin dress and cherry-red silk shoes that had cost more than the dress. I'd already been groped a few times.

By one, most people were heading for the night bus, or the taxi rank, or staggering away from the town centre into the

freezing night. Kelly and I headed for the River bar, since it was the only place likely still to let us in.

'You are *so* going to pull wearing that dress, Catherine,' Kelly said, her teeth chattering.

'I fucking hope so, it cost me enough.'

'Do you think there will be anything decent in there?' she said, peering hopefully at the bedraggled queue.

'I doubt it. Anyway, I thought you said that you were off men?'

'I said I've given up on relationships. Doesn't mean I'm off sex.'

It was bitterly cold and starting to drizzle, the wind whipping the smells of a Friday night around me, blowing up my skirt. I pulled my jacket tighter around me and crossed my arms over it.

We headed for the VIP entrance. I remember wondering if this was a good idea, whether it might not be better to call it a night, when I realised Kelly had been let in already and I went to follow her. I was blocked by a wall of charcoal-grey suit.

I looked up to see a pair of incredible blue eyes, short blond hair. Not someone you'd want to have an argument with.

'Hold up,' said the voice, and I looked up at the doorman. He wasn't massive like the other two, but still taller than me. He had a very appealing smile.

'Hello,' I said. 'Am I allowed to go in with my friend?'

He paused for a moment and looked at me just a fraction longer than was seemly. 'Yes,' he said at last. 'Of course. Just…'

I waited for him to continue. 'Just what?'

He glanced across to where the other door staff were chatting up some teenagers who were busy trying their hardest to get in.

'Just couldn't believe my luck for a moment, that's all.'

I laughed at his cheek. 'Not been a good night, then?'

'I have a thing for red dresses,' he said.

'I don't think this one would fit you.'

He laughed and held the velvet rope to one side to let me in. I felt him watching me as I handed my jacket in to the cloakroom; chanced a glance back to the door and saw him again, just watching me. I gave him a smile and went up the steps to the bar.

All I could think of that night was dancing until I was numb, smiling and laughing at people with my new best friend, dancing in that red dress until I caught the eye of someone, anyone, and best of all finding some dark corner of the club and being fucked against a wall.

Thursday 1 November 2007

It took me a long, long time to get out of the flat this morning. It wasn't the cold, although the heating in the flat seems to take an age to have any effect. Nor was it the dark. I'm up every day before five; it's been dark at that time since September.

Getting up isn't my problem, getting out of the house is. Once I'm showered and dressed, have had something to eat, I start the process of checking that the flat is secure before I go to work. It's like a reverse of the process I go through in the evening, but worse somehow, because I know that time is against me. I can spend all night checking if I want to, but I know I have to get to work, so in the mornings I can only do it so many times. I have to leave the curtains in the lounge and in the dining room, by the balcony, open to exactly the right width every day or I can't come back in the flat again. There are sixteen panes in each of the patio doors; the curtains have to be open so that I can see just eight panes of each door if I look up to the flat from the path at the back of the house. If I can see a sliver of the dining room through the other panes, or if the curtains aren't hanging straight, then I'll have to go back up to the flat and start again.

I've got quite good at getting this right, but it still takes a long time. The more thorough I am, the less likely I'll find

myself on the path behind the house cursing my carelessness and checking my watch.

The door is particularly bad. At least in the last place, that poky basement in Kilburn, I had my own front door. Here I have to check and re-check the flat door properly six or twelve times, and then the communal front door as well.

The flat in Kilburn did have a front door but nothing at all at the back, no back door, no windows. It was like living in a cave. I didn't have an escape route, which meant that I never felt really safe in there. Here, things are much better: I have French doors which lead onto a small balcony. Just below that is the roof of the shed which is shared with the other flats, although I don't know if anyone else uses it. I can get out of the French doors, jump down to the shed roof, and from there down onto the grass. Through the garden and out the gate into the alleyway at the back. I can do it in less than half a minute.

Sometimes I have to go back and check the flat door again. If one of the other tenants has left the front door on the latch again I definitely have to check the flat door. Anyone could have been in.

This morning, for example, was one of the worst.

Not only was the front door on the latch, it was actually slightly ajar. As I reached for it, a man in a suit pushed it open towards me which made me jump. Behind him, another man, younger, tall, wearing jeans and a hooded top. Dark hair cropped close to his head, unshaven, tired green eyes. He gave me a smile, and mouthed 'sorry', which helped.

Suits still freak me out. I tried not to look at the suit at all, but I heard it say as it went up the stairs, '…this one's only just become available, you'll have to move fast if you want it.'

A lettings agent, then.

The Chinese students who'd been on the top floor must have finally decided to move on. They weren't students any more, they graduated in the summer – the party they'd had had gone on all night, while I lay in my bed underneath listening to the sound of feet marching up and down the stairs. The front

door had been on the latch all night. I'd barricaded myself in by pushing the dining table against the flat door, but the noise had kept me awake and anxious.

I watched the second man following the suit up the stairs.

To my horror the man in jeans turned halfway up the first flight and gave me another smile, a rueful one this time, raising his eyes as if he was already sick of the letting agent's voice. I felt myself blushing furiously. It's been a long time since I made eye contact with a stranger.

I listened to the footsteps heading up to the top floor, meaning they'd gone past my front door. I checked my watch – a quarter past eight already! I couldn't just go and leave them inside the house.

I shut the front door firmly and unclipped the latch, checking that it had shot home by rattling the door a few times. With my fingertips I traced around the edge of the doorframe, feeling that the door was flush with the frame. I turned the doorknob six times, to make sure it was properly closed. One, two, three, four, five, six. Then the doorframe again. Then the doorknob, six times. One, two, three, four, five, six. Then the latch. Once, and again. Then the doorframe. Lastly the knob, six times. I felt the relief that comes when I manage to do this properly.

Then I marched back up to the flat, fuming that these two idiots were going to make me late.

I sat on the edge of my bed for a while with my eyes lifted to the ceiling, as if I could see them through the plaster and the rafters. All the time I was fighting the urge to start checking the window locks again.

I concentrated on my breathing, my eyes closed, trying to calm my racing heart. They won't be long, I told myself. He's only looking. They won't be long. Everything is fine. The flat is safe. I'm safe. I did it properly before. The front door is shut. Everything is fine.

Every so often a small sound made me jump, even though it seemed to come from a long way away. A cupboard door

banging? Maybe. What if they'd opened a window up there? I could hear a vague murmur, far too far away to make out words. I wondered what price they were asking for it – it might be nicer to be higher up. But then I wouldn't have the balcony. As much as I love being out of reach, having an escape route is just as important.

I checked my watch – nearly a quarter to nine. What the fuck were they doing up there? I made the mistake of glancing at the bedroom window, and then of course I had to check it. And that started me off, so I had to start again at the door, and I was on my second round, standing on the lid of the toilet, feeling my way with my fingertips around the edge of the frosted window which doesn't even open, when I heard the door shutting upstairs and the sound of footsteps on the stairs outside.

'…nice safe area, at least. Never need to worry about leaving your car outside.'

'Yeah, well, I'd probably get the bus. Or I might use my bike.'

'I think there's a communal shed in the garden; I'll check when we get back to the office.'

'Cheers. I'd probably leave it in the hallway.'

Leave it in the hallway? Bloody cheek. It was untidy enough as it was. But then, maybe someone other than me would make a point of locking the front door.

I finished off the check, and then did the flat door. Not too bad. I waited for it, the anxiety, the need to go round and start again, but it was okay. I'd done it right, and only two times. The house was silent, which made things easier. Best of all, this time the front door was firmly fastened, indicating that the man in jeans had shut it properly behind him. Maybe he wouldn't be a bad tenant after all.

It was nearly nine-thirty by the time I finally got to the Tube.