

# REBECCA GRENVILLE

## Volume I

### Chapter One

My heart was pounding so loud I thought Janey would hear it. She's my best friend and roommate and I was desperately trying to get her to advise me what to wear.

"Come on, Janey! It's my first big interview. I mean it's his first big interview too. I mean ..."

Oh, God, what did I mean?

Janey left her room where she had been putting on her make-up for over an hour. Why she spent so much time on herself when she was drop-dead gorgeous baffled me. It usually took me about five minutes as I reckoned no amount of time would improve my face.

"I need your advice. It's my first interview in my first job and I've gotta get it right."

"Okay, Becs, calm down. Let's see what you've got."

Jane marched into my bedroom and swished through my meagre wardrobe. "Mmm. Yes, Houston we have a problem."

"So, should it be the little black dress or something brighter?"

It was going to be a red hot day in the middle of a long hot California summer.

"Well," Jane said, swishing my clothes backwards and forwards once again, "you need to look cool, as in proper cool, and you need to look cool as in cool cool."

"Janey, this isn't a date. I have to look professional and I don't want to be wearing anything heavy as I want to keep cool, and look refined and ... nice."

Jane laughed. "I don't know what you are worrying about. You always look nice. You're the nicest person I know."

I sighed. "Okay, but come on. I'll be late. I don't want to be rushing."

"No, you won't. You're not meeting him until ten o'clock. It's only gone eight."

"Please, Jane, I'm begging you."

"How about this green dress? It'll match your eyes. I know it's very thin and some of these offices in the city are Artic cool the way the air-con blasts out but if you wear it with this pale yellow jacket you'll be just right. These yellow sandals with heels will finish the picture nicely."

I was ecstatic. I had been thinking exactly the same myself but I'm never very good at making decisions and I usually needed Jane's opinions for guidance.

We'd been friends since my family moved next door when I was thirteen years old some nine years ago. Now here we were together in our new apartment in San Francisco, having just graduated from the University Of California at Berkeley, both of us in English Literature. I'd been lucky to get one of the first jobs I had applied for at *StartUp* magazine.

Jane was still looking. She was also very choosy, beautiful, a wonderful figure to match her flawless face, super intelligent and with access to a trust fund so she could take her time getting a job. In fact I don't know why she just didn't do what I would do in her circumstances: write the Great American Novel (or had it already been written. My dad reckons yes – Mark Twain's Huck Finn.)

Whatever. I was living with my best friend in a super apartment in San Francisco and only one week into my brand new job I'd been given the task of interviewing one of the coolest guys in the area, William King, only twenty five, CEO and founder of the fastest moving new internet company in Silicon Valley. In two years he had made an absolute fortune and that was about all I knew about him.

"Janey. Can I borrow your car? I know it's not far but I want to make sure I have plenty of time."

"Sure. But I thought this King guy had his HQ just over the Golden Gate in Sausalito?"

"He does but he also has a very exclusive house elsewhere in Marin so I thought I if I could persuade him to let me have a look around ... I've also got a camera guy on standby just in case."

"No problem. Now go shower. Go!"

I obeyed and soon I was getting dressed in my cheap bra and panties. On with the dress. Looking good, kid. Sandals. Yes, not bad. Hair. Oh my God! Jane had wonderful long blond straight hair that flowed over her shoulders and down to her waist. Mine could best be described as kind of reddish-brown, sort of down to my shoulders when it wasn't sticking up in clumps like a demented duck.

"Jane!" I wailed. "Look at this mess. What am I going to do?"

"Becs! Becs! Calm down. Remember what you said before. It isn't a date. Here, try this." She darted into the big bathroom and came out with a spray can and started spraying it on my unruly hair. "Brush!" she commanded and I handed her my big brush.

Gently she started brushing my hair rhythmically, teasing my curly locks into a passable semblance of order.

At last Jane stepped back, put down the brush and announced, "There! That's much better. What do you think?"

I had to admit Jane had done a good job. Whatever was in the can had licked my hair into shape with her careful brushing.

"Let me see that can?" I put my hand out and Jane passed the can to me. On the side it said Stay Down with a description of the way the gel kept unruly hair under control. "Can I take it with me? Please? I'll be near the ocean when I leave the car. If there's much of a breeze it'll set my hair flying again."

Jane laughed. "Don't be silly. Here you are. Of course you can take the stuff. Remember it works best with just a little spray and gentle brushing. Okay?"

I nodded. "Thanks. Now, makeup. What do you think?"

Jane sighed. "Becs, you're hopeless. You simply must have more confidence than this. Get your stuff and I'll put it on."

Jane's make over class lasted a bit longer than I expected. She worked on me with great care until I scarcely recognised myself. "Wow! I look – I look pretty good for once."

Jane shook her head. “You always look good. You’d better be going. It’s nearly nine o’clock.”

“Badgers and camels!” I shrieked. “Where’s my notebook, my pens, my bag, my recorder, the directions. Help!” I quickly stuffed my pens in my bag with my notebook and recorder and clutching the directions I ran for the door.

Jane laughed as I opened the door and scampered towards the elevator. She waved and mouthed, “Good luck.”

I jumped up and down nervously as I waited for the elevator. Why was it stuck at Floor 1? I pushed the button again and again. It was no good. Whoever was down there must be jamming the door open. I ran down the stairs and nearly broke my neck. Damn these sandals. I took them off and went down barefooted.

I passed Floor 1. Some idiot had a huge fridge/freezer on a trolley that he was trying to move on his own. It was stuck fast in the elevator door. I headed for the ground floor.

Luckily Jane had a brand new car, a VW Golf. It was small but useful in San Francisco. I headed for the Golden Gate Bridge, the sun on my right.

Jane’s car started straight away just as expected. I eased it slowly down the hill and joined the stream of traffic on Van Ness Avenue. Slowly I edged along Lombard Street and headed for the Golden Gate Bridge. The traffic was heavy but moving, albeit slowly.

I was on the bridge. My heart always gave a leap when I hit the magnificent piece of engineering. I gazed briefly at the water beneath me. It was a deep blue, the sun glinting on its surface.

A few minutes later I was on the Redwood Highway watching out for the exit on my right for Alexander Street to take me down to the bay front and on to Sausalito. For some reason I thought of B J Hunnicutt from the old TV series *MASH*. Now why was that? Did he mention in one episode he did his residency in Sausalito? Is that why I was thinking of him? Strange how the mind plays tricks on you and dredges up things you don’t even know you’ve assimilated.

Suddenly the traffic ground to a halt. I glanced at my watch. 9.30. Damn! I could see the sign for my turn off. What had happened? Oh God, I was so nervous. So much depended upon this interview.

Ever since I was sixteen I had wanted to be one of those confident, sexy girls who always know what to do, what to say, how to say it and how to do it. I sighed and stared at my face in the mirror. I had one of those faces that was singularly less than striking. Face to face I suppose I wasn’t too bad but nothing to write home about. I turned and tried as best as I could to look at my profile. Better. I had a cute nose – at least one boy had told me so when I was about fourteen – small, maybe a bit – oh, I don’t know. Why this agonising, Becs? Huh? It’s not a date. I know but it was my first assignment in my new job, my first job, and I had been given – very much stressed that word given – the task, or rather the pleasure of interviewing William King, CEO and owner of William King Enterprises and founder of selfiegram.com that had made him a billionaire by the time he was twenty five.

“Now, Rebecca,” my boss J D Wortle had said, “we are sending you on this assignment because you are young, very young, and so is Mr King so we thought you might be the best person to engage with him and find out what really makes him tick. Our readers are all budding entrepreneurs – well, they like to think they are – and I want you to get as

much information as you can about how he got started, why he decided that selfiegram.com could become a challenge to Facebook and so on. But,” he added, “I want as much of the personal stuff as possible. Our readers are affluent but we have nearly as many women as men as subscribers so we want a well-rounded picture of our hero. We have a few basic facts but not much else. He’s a recluse and that’s a bit odd for a very successful, young, rich man. I know you can do it, Rebecca. Good luck.”

J D Wortle is really old, about forty five I think, but he seems to know what he wants for his magazine *StartUp*. We specialise in new companies and how they got started. Not hard to guess really when you think of the mag’s title. Plus we are based in Silicon Valley in San Jose, the venture capital of the USA.

I tapped my fingers on the dashboard in irritation. “Come on, come on,” I muttered to myself.

Nothing. Stuck still mere yards from my turn off. What was wrong?

Irritation passed into boredom. Until I looked at my watch. 9.40. “You’ve got to be joking,” I shouted at the windscreen. And then, “Calm down, Becs,” I told myself. “Just calm down.”

William King, 25, young, rich, handsome? Perhaps. I could judge for myself soon enough. At least I hoped it would be soon enough. I should really have done more background research on the guy. I hoped my questions wouldn’t be too banal.

I wonder how clever he really is? I mean would I have to reduce my language to the simplest level possible? No, surely a guy who comes up with the software to start a major internet company that’s at the forefront of innovation must be clever? Maybe not, you know, Becs. He might just be a super coder. One of those geeks who spend their lives in front of a computer screen getting excited about stuff the rest of the human race hasn’t got a clue about.

I sighed. Who knows? I glanced at my watch for the trillionth time. 9.50 Oh my God. Tick-tock, tick-tock.

The car in front started to move. Six inches. Another nine inches. “Go on,” I muttered. If the guy moved his car another foot I could just about creep past him in Janey’s tiny Golf.

I beeped my horn. The guy turned around. I waved at him, urging him forward. He shrugged. I tried to indicate I wanted to turn off.

At last he understood and pulled over as far to the left as he could and I edged past him.

“Hurrah!” I shouted and blew the guy a kiss. He looked astonished and then he took a photo of the car with his cell phone.

I shook my head. “Whatever!”

I found the building straightaway which is unusual for me as I can get lost at the drop of a hat. It was just coming up to 10.00am as I pulled into the parking lot of William King Enterprises.

I picked up my bag and got out of the car. Sausalito used to be a quaint little place, a fishing and yachting town but now it was inhabited by a range of folk, some with money, some with not a lot but generally it was a prosperous little town.

I walked across to the newish building. In spite of the surrounding glass and steel buildings this one is surprisingly traditional in look with huge columns either side of a marvellous portico. Above is the name KING HOUSE neatly engraved into the stone in large

but not too large letters. It was more reminiscent of an old New York brownstone than anything modern.

Inside, the desk appears to be made from an old redwood and I can't help but run my fingers along it as I wait for the dazzlingly good looking receptionist to look up and ask me how can she help. She reminds me of one of Thomas Hardy's heroines, with jet black hair that tumbles down to her waist. Eustacia Vye perhaps from *The Return of the Native*. She really is stunning.

I am guided to the elevator in the far left corner where, several floors up, I am surprised to be met by another stunning brunette. Must be Mr King's thing. Odd, I think. I mean California is all about stunning blondes surely.

"Rebecca Grenville for Mr King," I announce.

"Mr King is expecting you, Miss Grenville. He was in a meeting so I'll just check that he's finished. Take a seat, please."

A number of black leather chairs surround a table. I go to sit down and then stop and look out of the window that dominates the room. I can see straight across the bay to the Golden Gate Bridge. If I scrunch my eyes a little – I am slightly short sighted - I can just about make out our apartment building.

I sit down and check through my questions. Mmm, perhaps I'm not as well prepared as I thought I was. Most of these questions seem pretty obvious. What did Mr Wortle say? Try and dig up the personal stuff. Something like that. Well, too late to change much of this now. Here comes another stunning brunette.

"Miss Grenville, would you like a drink of anything? Coffee, tea, water?"

"A glass of water will do fine, thanks."

The brunette talks to the brunette at the desk. "Angelica, can you get a glass for Miss Grenville, please? The water from the coolers is good but those plastic beakers do give a rather poor impression."

Angelica nods briefly and quickly finds a glass in a cupboard beneath her desk. Perhaps she's done it before.

The standing up brunette takes the glass without a word and fills it for me at the machine in the corner. "Here you are, Miss Grenville. Follow me, please."

She turns and walks briskly towards a door from which I assume she earlier emerged when I was checking my questions. She holds the door for me while I try in vain to catch up with her. I've just managed to put my stuff back into my bag and grab my glass of water. I'm becoming jumpy. Come on, girl, calm down. It's only an interview. Yes, but it's my first in my first job and it's got to be perfect my brain keeps telling me.

The brunette walks across another room that appears to be stuffed with contemporary art. She knocks gently on a large oak door and sticks her head inside. "Miss Grenville, sir. From the magazine *StartUp*."

I hear a deep, melodious voice reply. "Oh, good. Show her in. Thank you, Gloria."

Gloria. That's old fashioned. I haven't heard of many Glorias lately. Oh, God. Stop your crazy thoughts, Beccs. Concentrate.

The brunette opens the door wider, but not wide enough and as I attempt to squeeze past her I lose my balance and throw my glass of water all over the young man who has left his desk and is standing ready to welcome me.

“Badgers and camels!” I shriek. “I’m so sorry. Let me dry you.” And I’m pulling tissues from my bag and rubbing them over the man’s wet white shirt.

Gloria intervenes rapidly. “Leave it to me, Miss Grenville.” She half pushes me out of the way, more than a bit irritated.

William King, I assume. I stop rubbing his wet shirt and look at his face properly for the first time. Oh my God! I’ve seen photos of the guy but nothing, I swear nothing, can fully prepare you for your first proper look at William King in the flesh. He is so young, but so utterly gorgeous. And he is stripping off right in front of me!

Bananas and cucumbers! I can’t believe it!

“Sorry about this, Miss Grenville, but I am very susceptible to colds for some reason and must avoid chills at all costs.” He is drying his magnificent torso with a towel that Gloria has magicked from somewhere. I can’t speak. I can’t take my eyes off his body. William King is slim but he must work out. He has a six pack like I’ve never seen. The guy’s ripped.

I open my mouth but no words come out.

William King is putting on another white shirt that the dependable Gloria has handed him. He unzips his light grey trousers. My heart pounds harder.

“Excuse me,” he says and turns away from me as he tucks his shirt into his trousers and zips himself up.

Carefully he sits down behind his desk. “Gloria, let’s assume that Miss Grenville and I have shaken hands. Can you guide her to her seat, please?”

My mouth just gapes. What a fool I am. And here is Gloria who takes my left arm as if I am some wobbly old lady about to try and cross a busy street. She leads me to a chair in front of William King’s desk and pushes me into it quite forcibly.

“Don’t move!” she hisses at me. “I’ll get you another glass of water.”

At last I manage to speak. “It’s quite all right. I’m so sorry. I think I’m better off without it.”

“Good decision. Mr King, may I remind you of the meeting in ten minutes.”

Ten minutes! How can I interview the man in less than ten minutes?

“Err, excuse me, miss, but in your letter it says I’ll have half an hour with Mr King. I thought he wanted to make clear his views on some of the more important aspects of technology and privacy?”

Mr King waved his arm. “It’s all right, Gloria. Please cancel the next meeting. Rearrange for this time next week.”

This time it was Gloria’s mouth that hung agape. “But Mr King, it’s a very important meeting. We tried to arrange it weeks ago.”

“Gloria, I’ll ring Thompson as soon as Miss Grenville and I are finished. In the meantime fix up a game of golf with him for tomorrow afternoon at four.”

Gloria glared at me. I thought she was going to stamp her foot she was so mad.

William King waited until Gloria shut the door as she left. “Now then, Miss Grenville, if you can carefully lean forward we will shake hands properly.” He stood up and held out his right hand. I started to lean towards his desk and then had visions of me falling over and cracking my face on his desk so I too stood up and gingerly shook hands with Mr William King.

At once my heart flipped and started off pounding again like a jack hammer. What on earth was wrong with me? I've had boyfriends before. I mean I've enjoyed a certain amount of intimacy with a few men I know but this spark of electricity was making me weak. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to speak. I sat and stared at Mr William King with the beautiful face. He had a straight nose, a fine head of shocking blond hair which he wore long to his shoulders, bright blue eyes, a jaw that was so handsome it looked like a drawing from Dick Tracey – square and straight – and a wry smile that he tried to suppress.

I just stared at this amazing Adonis.

Mr William King stared back. "Well?" He raised an elegant eyebrow.

"Well?" I repeated puzzled.

Mr King smiled. "Shall we begin? I assume you have some questions you wish to ask me?"

"Oh, sorry," I manage to gasp out as I force my eyes towards my bag and away from the most handsome face I have ever looked upon. Of course I then drop my pens on the floor and end up on my hands and knees picking them up but not before the gorgeous Mr King rushes from his seat to help me. Our heads nearly bump but we are saved by our hair, mine because it sticks up so much and his because it is so long. The result? Total hair entanglement.

"Gloria!" he bellows.

"I'm so sorry, I can't seem to do anything right today."

"That's quite all right, Miss Grenville. I should get my hair cut."

We stand up, still entangled, our lips far too close together for comfort.

Gloria rushes in. "Mr King! What are you doing?" The way she says it makes me think bossy Gloria has designs on Mr King herself.

Now what do I mean by that? Herself! Do I have ... no, no, no!

"It's all right, Gloria. Miss Grenville dropped her pens and I was just trying to help her pick them up when our hair became tangled."

Gloria frowned. She walked to Mr King's desk, opened a drawer and took out a comb. Skilfully she combed his long blond locks out of my scruffy sticky up hair.

She ushered Mr King back to his seat and waved me to mine.

"My pens," I started.

"Stay there," the imperious Gloria commanded. "I'll get them."

She picked up my pens, waited until I had my pad out and then handed them to me one at a time. "Don't move!" she hissed at me. "Even if your panties fall down!"

I stare at her, speechless. Why is she thinking about panties falling down? She must have the hots for the delicious Mr King.

"All right now, Mr King," Gloria purrs at him.

"Fine, Gloria. Thank you. You may go now."

Gloria flashes him a stunning smile, turns on her heel, fixes me with another don't you dare glare and then is gone.

"Mr King, I'm so sorry. I don't think I made a very good impression with Gloria."

The beautiful Mr King waved a hand airily. "Don't bother about Gloria. She thinks she owns me. It can become rather tiresome. Now, let's drop the formalities. Call me Will. That's what my friends call me."

Oh, am I going to be his friend?

“And what is your name, Miss Grenville?”

“Rebecca, but everyone I know calls me Beccs.”

Mr King grimaces. “Mmm. I think I prefer Rebecca. It’s a beautiful name, just like its owner if I may say so.”

If he may say so? Is he kidding? Did he just call me beautiful? I’m trembling now more than ever and I haven’t even asked my first question!

“Shall we start, Rebecca?” Mr King, or rather Will, has taken a small tape recorder from his desk and has set it up between us.

“What’s that?” I ask nervously.

“Just a small voice recorder. I’ll have Gloria make a copy for you. I’ll send it over to your office tomorrow.”

“That seems unnecessary,” I say without thinking. And then I remember my own new recorder that JD had allowed me to have just before I left on Friday.

Will smiles. “No, it’s just a precaution. I don’t want to have to sue you and your magazine for putting words into my mouth that I never said.”

“Actually I was going to let you have a look at my piece before it goes for printing.”

“Well this way we’ll cover all the possibilities. Do you mind?”

“No, not at all,” I mumble. “And I have a voice recorder of my own,” I say as I take it out. “Oh, look it’s the same as yours.” The identical Sony ICD-UX digital voice recorders sit side by side. Of course I drop mine before I get it set up next to Will’s.

Will looks at me anxiously. “Are you all right, Rebecca?”

“Yes, I’m just a bit nervous, that’s all. This is my first interview. My first job,” I confess. “I’m just worried I get it right.”

Will jumped up. “We can’t have such a pretty woman being nervous just because she’s asking me a few questions. Come on, we’ll find somewhere more comfortable so you can relax.”

I remain seated. “But where are we going?”

“My home. You’ll love it. Come on, Rebecca.”

I gulped. I wanted to see his home, of course I did. J D Wortle would be delighted if I could get inside and dig up a bit more than the usual *StartUp* stuff such as How did you get started and What gave you the idea of selfiegram.com. But I also needed to find out more about this gorgeous man before he took me to his home. And did I hear correctly? Did he just call me pretty? Wow! Beautiful and pretty.

“I’m sorry, Mr King, but I would prefer to stay here if you don’t mind. That is until you’ve answered a few of my questions.”

“Will, Rebecca. Will.” He sat down.

I could feel his eyes scrutinising me. I deliberately focused on my pen and started to write William King and the date.

“Look at me, Rebecca.”

I looked up. He smiled.

“I do believe you’re afraid of me. Can I ask you why?”

Oh, God. This was becoming far too heavy. How could I tell him that if we were alone together in his home and he tried anything I would leap into his arms? But, Beccs, would



you really? You still think about what happened when you were thirteen. Men only want one thing, remember?

“It’s nothing. I don’t want to talk about it.” I shuffled uncomfortably.

“That’s okay, Rebecca. We’ll stay here if that’s what you want. I just thought you would be a little curious about where I lived, that’s all.”

“Oh, I am, Mr .... Err, Will. In fact my boss will be furious if I pass up the chance of seeing your place. I’ve even got a photographer on standby just in case I got the chance to visit your home.”

“So, why are we sitting here? It’s me, isn’t it? You don’t trust me, do you?”

I blushed. How could I say I didn’t trust myself? But the truth is men scare me. Ever since I was thirteen and ...

“We won’t be alone, you know, Rebecca. I have a gardener and a cook and a handyman on the premises as well as Siegfried or Siggy as we like to call him.”

“Who’s he?” I asked

“Siggy? Siggy has an interesting background. He’s a kind of butler in the old fashioned sense of the word. Although that doesn’t really describe him properly. He used to belong to my father but when I left home he told my dad that he had better go with me to look after me.”

“Really? Can I put him in the article? What does he do?”

“I suppose he’s a sort of valet, a gentleman’s gentleman in the very old fashioned sense of the word. Although I have no pretensions to be a gentleman whatever that means nowadays. Siggy looks after me even though he’s about ninety. He offers his often trenchant views about anything and everything. I suppose he keeps me balanced. That’s what dad says anyway.”

I felt more relaxed as Will opened up to me. I guess he was doing it deliberately for as soon as I asked him about his success he started telling me about how he was a good judge of people and how he had built up a good team around him.

“Yes,” I said, “I’m sure what you say is very important, Will, but that doesn’t explain how you got started. I mean you really did that after you became successful didn’t you?”

Will frowned. “Yes and no. You see I can’t say I came from nothing. My dad’s an entrepreneur – he runs a software company in the valley – but you probably haven’t heard of him. As soon as I started to come up with ideas of challenging Facebook by making FB stuff easier to use and adding different features he began pouring money into my company.”

“Yes, but how did you get your ideas? Did you sit in your room writing code? I mean are you a geek? Sorry, I didn’t mean to be rude. It’s just that our readers are a curious bunch and like to know the details of how you got started.”

Will laughed. “I guess in some ways I am a geek and that’s why my dad sent me off to Paris when I was sixteen.”

This was new. “To Paris? What did you do there?”

“Oh, nothing much. Saw the sights, learned French. That sort of stuff.”

“Now that’s interesting. I would have thought Mandarin Chinese would have been more useful.”

“I already spoke Chinese. I think my dad wanted me to get away from computers for a while and to become a more rounded human being. Less of a geek really. So, yes, I guess I was a geek. I used to write programs for fun from when I was six.”

I scribbled away furiously.

“So when your company needed more investment your dad provided it.”

“At first, yes. I couldn’t have grown the company so quickly though without other investment. I’m sure you’ve heard some of the rumours but I’m not in a position to say anything more about it at present.”

“Do you have any plans to expand further?”

Will stops to think. I get the impression he doesn’t want to tell me too much. “Let’s just say that a company cannot stand still. It either goes forward or it goes backwards. We are a young company constantly looking for and at new ideas. So, yes, we do have various plans to expand.”

“Can you give me a little more detail, Will?”

“No, I can’t. That would reveal too much to our competitors.”

I waited and looked up at him. A mistake. The interview had been going well and I was pleased with what I had got so far. I mean Siggy and Paris were brand new! But I had been keeping my eyes down and when I looked at Will I started to tremble again. He was so good looking, so absolutely gorgeous it wasn’t fair. He was so beautiful he should have been a woman but I sure as hell was glad he wasn’t. Now why did I think that?

“What I will tell you is that we are considering moving out of our software focus into other areas, possibly engineering although there will still be the need to write new programs for ...” Will hesitated. “Actually, Rebecca, I would be grateful if you crossed out that last bit. I’ve said too much. Just a moment, please.”

Will stopped the tape and looked at the counter. He wrote something down on his pad.

“Best to cut it out as we’re currently negotiating with some well-known players and we don’t want to alert others in the business although I bet some of them already know. Anyway, best to just keep quiet about it at present.”

I nodded. “Fine. I won’t mention it to my boss. Just make sure it isn’t on the tape.”

“Will do. That’s what I was writing down.”

“Will, I’m sure our readers would love to know what you do to relax. Do you have any hobbies?”

Will smiled. “Of course, Rebecca. I sail, I fly, I race expensive cars. I’m a rich man so I can indulge myself. But perhaps I get more fun out of simpler activities such as swimming and playing soccer.”

“Playing soccer? Where did you learn to do that?”

“In Europe, of course. When I was in Paris. It’s the most wonderful game in the world and in spite of what we think the whole world plays it. It is truly the world game, not our version of football or baseball or whatever.”

“Anything else?”

“Well, my favourite activity is ...” Will stopped.

“What?”

“Nothing. I’ll leave that to your imagination.”

I blushed. Did he mean sex? Before I know what I’m doing I ask my next question.

“Do you have a girlfriend, Will?”

Will hesitated for a brief nano second. “Err, yes I do.”

Badgers and camels! That is so, so annoying. But of course this beautiful man would have a girlfriend unless he were gay. At least I have a chance if he isn’t gay. Have a chance! What am I thinking of?

“Can you tell me her name?”

“I would rather not. She’s a very private person.”

I nod. Before I can go on Will speaks.

“Tell me,” he leans forward, “about yourself.”

I frown. I’m interviewing him, not him me. Why does he want to know about me? What does he want to know? What can I tell him?

“I’m twenty two, single, just graduated in English Literature and was lucky enough to get a job where I can write. I live in the city – San Fran – with my friend Jane whom I’ve known for about nine years. That’s about it really.”

“Mmm, we’re always looking for good young graduates. We’ve got a good scheme going here.”

What? Is he offering me a job?

“Are you offering me a job? I already have a job that I’ve just started.”

“Yes, I know but I could offer you a better job.”

“Better? How?”

“Financially for a start. Perhaps creatively too. We would have to work out the details.”

I frown. “No thanks. I can’t abandon a job I’ve just started. That would hardly be fair.”

“Most commendable, Rebecca. I don’t think you realise you have a stronger sense of morality than most of the people who could employ you.”

“Perhaps,” I say as casually as I can make it sound. Why does he want to employ me? Is he trying to ... No, hardly. He’s just met me and besides he said he had a girlfriend. I wonder what she’s called? I wonder if it’s one of those daft Hollywood/California names you keep coming across such as Devine or Angel or whatever.

Will clears his throat and clears away my reverie. “Now, would you like to take a trip with me and go and see my house? It’s not an offer I’ve ever made to a journalist or am likely to again so you’ll get a scoop. That should impress your boss.”

I smile. I feel a little bit more relaxed with Will now although I’m still suspicious of his motives. Badgers and camels! Why should I be? And if he does have devious motives for getting me into his house wouldn’t that be a good thing? Well, maybe not. I still haven’t gotten over what happened before I arrived in California when I was thirteen.

“Yes, that would be nice.”

“Good, I’ll just tell Gloria where we are going and then we’ll go out the back way.”

“Oh, I almost forgot. You were going to talk about new technology and privacy.”

“We can do it over lunch.”

“But I’ll need to write down your thoughts.”

“After lunch then. Don’t worry, Rebecca.” Will picked up his phone and spoke briefly to Gloria.

A moment later the door opened and Gloria appeared with Will's jacket. She gave me one last glare and hissed so that Will couldn't hear, "Be careful!" Then she was gone.

What did she mean? She fancies him, I'm sure of it and was just warning me off.

"This way, Rebecca." Will held open a door at the back of his office.

Outside was a corridor and a private elevator. I entered nervously and gasped as Will leant across me to press a button. The elevator was small and he was so close to me I bet he could hear my heart hammering away.

"All right?" Will asked solicitously.

"Yes, I'm just a bit nervous in elevators. Something that happened a few years ago."

"Oh, I'm sorry to hear it." He paused. "But you're all right now?"

"Yes," I muttered. What did he mean? All right now? I can't undo what happened. I still think about it and wonder if it was all my fault? Did I do anything to encourage him? I didn't think so but some men I've since learned are turned on by almost anything.

The elevator quickly came to a halt and Will ushered me out into an exclusive underground car park.

A young man dressed in a chauffeur's uniform got up from a desk where he appeared to be writing on a laptop and walked swiftly towards us.

"Mr King. Where can I take you and the lady today?"

"That's okay, John. I'll drive myself. I'll take the Lamborghini."

Several expensive looking cars were parked side by side but the bright red Lamborghini stood out.

Will opened the passenger door for me and I slid in trying desperately to keep some decorum by not revealing my panties. I'm sure some of these toys for boys are deliberately designed to show off as much of their women as possible. And to be honest the women do tend to milk it.

Will got in beside me. "You see you could have a job like Johnny's. He gets to spend all day writing his novel unless I need him to drive me to a meeting. Some days he gets a lot of free time."

"No thanks, Will. I think I would be bored with a job like that. I need to feel I've earned my salary."

Will grinned and started the car. It burst into life with a roar and we were soon up the ramp through the very secure armoured door and out into the open air.

"Why do you have your office car park so heavily fortified?" I asked in surprise as the huge door ground back into place.

"My toys are very expensive. I don't want any of them stolen. This car for example is one of only a handful in the world. It's a Lamborghini Veneno Roadster and it cost four and a half million dollars."

"What! For a car. That's obscene. You could feed half of ... well you know a lot of starving people for that amount of money."

"I know, but I do. I run a food program both here in the US and overseas."

"Why didn't you tell me about that before?"

"You didn't ask and anyway it can sound like bragging. Hang on, I'm going to wind up the car."

We were out on the bayside. Will put his foot down. My hair stood up like ... well, my hair!

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