

The First World Doesn't Do Slavery

By Stuart Sheridan

Jordan Cameron's head was so low he could almost see his own heels in his £2000 shoes every step he took forward.

'What you looking sad about mate? Aren't ya happy to be home?' said Harry, his best mate from Eton and only friend currently. Jordan spent a lot of money to make sure it stayed at least one.

'Yeah, but Dad's gonna ask me if I got any ass abroad and I'll have to lie to him again. I hate it.'

'Relax. Having sex is overrated and when it happens it happens. Don't worry.'

'Yeah but it's just...he has so many stories about pulling when he was younger. He said one time, his secretary wanted him so bad she did it with him in his office like, apparently even when he wasn't trying just the way he walked made women want him. Must've been years ago when he was like my age too, cos obviously my mum now.'

'It's cos he was loaded that's why they wanted him, just splash your cash and you'll get someone knocking. And by that I don't mean a prostitute. Eh, perhaps a prostitute.'

'I don't want to pay for it, I want her to love me for me. I mean like, there's buying her a drink, then buying her the most expensive drink in the place and that's what I kind of want to do. But I want to see some interest from her first you know. Of course, after I know she's pretty.'

'Bless you sir, could you spare some—'

Jordan's foot flew inches in front of the homeless person's face. A piece of blanket, an empty cup and a cardboard sign all went flying with Jordan's swipe through the man's possessions; the last of which flew up high and drifted slowly down. Jordan pointed up to it and finally smiled with a little chuckle.

'Now that's what I call removing the trash from the street.'

Harry laughed. 'So tell me again what you're celebrating tonight.'

'My sister's pregnancy. A little bit disappointing that the baby's gonna be black but, we can't publicly say that. At least King George married white to keep the throne traditional. Anyway, once we have dinner with my parents we'll go out.'

'Sounds like a plan.'

‘Jordan, good to see you,’ Sir Boris said. ‘How was Africa?’

‘Great, Father. It was fun. Dug a well for kids that somehow can’t afford a shovel. Well, I bought the shovel and others dug the hole. Made sure I got a picture with me in the middle at the end so hey, as long as it gets me on that knighthood track like you said.’

‘Oh, it will. Now sit. Supper’s almost ready.’

The dining room was as wide as a house is tall. With a large circular table covered with a white tablecloth dominating the room with fine highchairs. The family only used the end of the table furthest from the door, forcing the Smith’s to squeeze between the table and the wall. Like most of Sir Boris’ money, the rest of the table was doing nothing untouched.

‘What’s new with the business?’ Jordan asked. He had never done any work with his father’s businesses but would own them one day.

‘Animal care on the rise, still less people buying newspapers, but the big news is the law passed in Parliament. Now tenants make multiple claims, when they probably broke it themselves, rents go up.’

Between appetisers and the starter, Jordan’s sister, Sharon, asked one of the waiting Smith’s for more butter for her bread. This Smith was a baby-faced eighteen-year-old.

He quickly said, ‘Of course,’ before rushing off to the table of kettles and cups. With no success he turned his head back round to her.

Sharon promptly told him that he should have been looking in the kitchen for it. The boy said, ‘Oh yes, of course.’ And went to walk out.

Jordan stopped him. ‘Hang on. Look here.’ Pointing to the boy’s face. ‘The definition. Life unworthy of wage. Are you stupid? Is every Smith stupid? Are we the only intelligent ones around?’

The boy looked afraid to answer.

‘Go get my sister’s butter.’

At pudding (banana splits as per Jordan’s request), Sir Boris picked his arm up and planted it onto the shoulder of the female Smith placing the food. ‘Pudding’s a sweet delicious time, love. That means you undo a few more of your buttons for me unless you want to be shovelling horse manure for the rest of your life.’

She obeyed then walked away. Sir Boris laughed with his face red and puffy jowls jiggling, ‘Hahaha she tries to turn away from me, but darling, I need another wine refill and you’re the one to come and do it.’

Jordan caught his mum’s eye. Her mouth was a hard fold and her eyes stared. Then her jaw loosed and she went back to her meal and back to looking down.

Jordan ate like a champ, his belly was just starting to muffin top over his belt but as he liked to say, it still wasn't as fat as his wallet.

On the way-out Jordan turned to Harry and said, 'See how those Smiths stand just within the doorway. That was my idea, I told my dad to make the girl ones do it so we could see their arses walking down the hallway. He loved it.'

They were chauffeured to the club by Shane, one of the few people on their estate that they actually paid. Jordan then almost got into a fight with the bouncer. Whilst letting a few people in the bouncer put his hand up and blocked Jordan from entering while that group paid.

'Don't touch me like that,' Jordan said. But the dumb brute ignored him which pissed him off even more. Jordan wanted to punch his fat head in and smash it into the metal barriers and then stamp on it when he was on the ground until it was mush and then sue him for ruining his shoes.

Harry touched his shoulder. 'Mate we're being waved inside.'

He bought them both a lager with a Glenfiddich chaser, and they raced to down them. The loser—Jordan, bought the same again. The place was dead though.

Three girls, however, were huddled in a circle at the far side of the dance floor, their backs to Jordan. He walked over and started to grind his crotch against a pair of skin-tight jeans, pressing his hand against a bare back. The girls immediately moved away but he tried again, with the same girl or different girl, they were all a blur of the same height to his drunk eyes. This time actually pushed him back this time before walking away again leaving Jordan with a blank and confused face of why they weren't happy with his presence.

Forgetting about Harry, Jordan marched out of the club and called Shane. The chauffeur drove right up to the still quiet club entrance and Jordan got in.

'Take me to the strip club. I'll have a quickie with someone out back for a few quid then be back there in no time. I'm so good I'll be done in only a couple of minutes,' He said proudly so Shane couldn't suspect him of being a virgin.

They drove for a while before the colours of the lights refracting in the window went from reds and blues to plain white light. 'Hey we're leaving town,' Jordan said.

'We'll be right there don't worry. You remember the roads around here, don't you? When you could still drive.'

'That was complete fucking bullshit.' Jordan, successfully distracted, ranted on about how unfair it was that his license was taken away for constant dangerous driving offences when he had only caused one actual accident.

A sense of familiarity then spoke up within him about the shrubbery and plant pots he was making out outside of the windows. His mind couldn't quite put his finger on it until the lights of his house's garage were hitting the car from every corner.

'What?' Was all he could say as people he knew were there, but before he could make out who they were their hands were in his face blocking his vision. One knock to his body in the dark and now lying down, he passed out.

'Wake up, Jordan.'

'Where am I?'

'Home,' said a blonde girl around her thirties. 'Don't you recognise it.'

He looked around the room. The lighting was poor, a few people standing in the doorway. The undecorated floor beneath his feet was hard, the walls were bare, with scuff marks, and the windowsills looked as if they would drop off any moment. There was a TV against one wall. Against both longer walls were beds, the mattresses on them all had a distinct slump suggesting they were many years overdue replacement. He knew where he was, and he screamed out help, pulling at the restraints holding his arms and legs to an uncomfortable chair.

None of the Smiths reacted.

'No one in earshot of here is helping you I'm afraid. You know our dorms are behind the coppice, so we don't spoil the view of the mansion.'

'Shane? He's not a Smith.'

'No, but his cousin is. His family saved up money to buy his freedom, it was quite a lot, a lifetime worth of wages in fact. Funny since, apparently, we're not worth that. But when freeing a Smith there's many, many forms to go over, and one mistake, one typo renders the whole deal null and void. Of course, the company keeps all the money paid for the Smith's freedom. That doesn't get refunded.'

'Don't act like such victims, you could always be homeless.'

'Yes, we're not homeless how fortunate of us. And if we did leave here to become homeless because it would be of our own choosing, we would get 75 percent less aid.'

'I know you,' Jordan said, 'You used to be my father's secretary, Natalie.'

'Well-done, maybe you're not as dumb as you are fat.'

'That's actually called body shaming. If you were a civilised person you would know that and be more respectful. You just proved that you belong here.'

'You are talking to me about being respectful. You spend more money feeding animals than you do us.'

'Animals are more valuable. I actually get upset when an animal dies. I won't when you go.'

'And I'm gonna die before you?'

'You wouldn't dare hurt me. But I could kill you. I could. No one would care if you died.'

Her eyes dropped to the floor and her head turned away. Then she looked up like she had a refreshed idea in her mind. 'Well actually we could ask everyone here who they care about more.'

'Little bitch, no wonder you were fired from your job.'

'Is that what you call it?' Natalie said.

'When you do work, I would call it doing a job yes. A bit dumb too. That why you were kicked out?'

'Well I organised the "job" to bring you here. So, I'll let my results speak for how good I am.'

'What do you want from me?'

'I don't think that's in our best interest to tell you right now.'

'You don't know who you're messing with. If I get out of here, when I get out of here, you're all gonna look at this shit hole like it was a slice of heaven. I will make your lives that bad I promise you, all of you.'

'Jerry how many punches do you think it would take you to knock out a tooth.'

'One,' said the biggest guy in the room.

There was some hustle through a doorway. 'I think our lunch is ready. Would you like something? We toast all our bread to get the taste of mould out. The top part of our oven has been broken for months and the bottom part heats up incredibly slowly. We requested a new one how many months ago, Jerry?'

'Seven.'

'If it takes so long to heat up just leave it on all the time,' Jordan said, 'You're not paying the electric bill.'

'You really are a parasite,' said Jerry.

'With no sense of fire hazards, shows how good you are at looking after yourself. And I see you eyeing up our telly,' Natalie said, 'Don't even bother saying that we have it good because of that. It's broken. We've been asking for a new one for over a year.'

‘Look,’ said Jordan, ‘I get you hate me. It’s because you’re jealous. People like me put the Great in Great Britain. But I’m very rich and say if one of you got me out of here... they would get a very big reward.’ Jordan knew that they were only tough in a group. ‘All my money can only go to one person though, if they’re brave enough to prove they belong up with the best people. I can’t let you all up unfortunately, we have reputations to keep and I won’t be responsible for poisoning this country’s best.’

Jerry didn’t knock out any teeth. But he did knock Jordan unconscious.

He woke to darkness and confinement. Hands and feet tied and a plaster stuck over his mouth which also seemed to block some of the air flow from his nose. He was under a bed. He could see feet were moving frantically in the open. Then he saw the dorm door open and boots step in, with more boots behind them in fact. He recognised the voice; one of his father’s workers. That random woman’s name he was calling out must’ve just been someone to do with the kidnapping. They didn’t know he was under the bed, so it makes sense to call after the perpetrator.

A first set of Smith legs were dragged out, and then all three workers were through the door and gone.

They were gone before Jordan could react and make himself known.

‘Alright, pull the prick back up.’

Planted back down in the chair Jordan was given some water and a punnet of half rotting blueberries to eat.

Natalie sat opposite and pulled out a banana.

‘That’s actually my favourite,’ Jordan said nodding to Natalie’s fruit.

‘I know. I was your father’s secretary and I did my work well.’

‘Then why were you fired?’

‘Your dad couldn’t stand seeing me,’ she said.

‘As usual his instincts were right. But what the hell just happened? They were supposed to rescue me.’

‘No. They weren’t. They were here to drag Mary to an abortion clinic. She sells her body to a millionaire friend of yours in return for food that she shares with us. But like you said, you have reputations to keep.’

‘What happens now? You gonna demand a ransom for me?’

‘No. Do you think we’re stupid enough to trust your father or the government? No slave—’

‘You’re not called slaves, Oxford dictionary, look it up.’

‘Well it was the politicians who gave us that name, not us. We prefer the truth, slaves.’

‘They’re elected officials and they saved you from homelessness, give them some respect. If you were actually a smart person like you said, you wouldn’t be here. That’s how the system works. It rewards ingenuity.’

‘Er no. I went to school and got all A’s before another smear campaign turned the middle-class workers against us by saying cuts would be made either to their kid’s education’s or to the kids of Smiths. Exactly the same as when you lot created slavery by going to the Government to avoid paying the wages promised to those who gave up thirty years of their life for one huge paycheck at the end by saying you would go bankrupt and couldn’t pay regular workers. Of course, the board members all got their millions in bonuses no matter what.’

‘So what do you mean by calling me a slave? Am I gonna have to work for you? Be a Smith for the Smiths?’

Natalie laughed. ‘That’s actually not a bad idea. But I think I’ll let you torture yourself with what it could mean for you. Put him back under the bed.’

‘You can’t make me a Smith. I’m too fat.’

‘You’d be surprised Jordan, at how invisible you are when you’re one of us.’

Jordan couldn’t hide his smile. The Smiths, seemingly happy that he was cooperating in walking out to work didn’t see how sly he was by positioning himself right on the outside of the column. If this plan didn’t work, he had a backup one later, but soon the group of two hundred or so formed from all the dorms on site began to bottleneck through onto a drive where several large vans were waiting, their back doors open showing cheap bars and seats in place to transport as many people as possible at once. But there was also security helping guide this process, and after a quick look round to see how closely he was being watched, he darted out of the column to the first good man in uniform that he saw.

‘You’ve got to help me, my name is Jordan Cam—’

‘Get in the truck, I don’t care if you’ve shit yourself.’

‘No, I’m Jordan Cameron, my father—’

He flinched as the man’s arms came up near his face, when he got his bearings he saw other guards coming to him and quickly he was grasped on the shoulder, on the forearm, under his ribs. The pain that a finger and thumb could cause surprised Jordan enough that he

couldn't shout out who he was. And then he was dumped into a van like a heavy bag of garbage. On his family's own property. There were no more seats available but a gap between a seat and a bar could work to keep him secure if he sat on the floor. He managed one deep breath of recovery from being shaken before his head was thrown again, forced back with a pain in his neck being grabbed. Jerry was in the van too, not saying a word just pushing harder into Jordan's throat. Jordan didn't fight back and was only focused on trying to breath.

Jerry let go and it took a while for Jordan to recover. Once his mind was working again, he became more aware of the van's turns, braking and accelerating. He didn't need to ask anyone where they were going, he knew it was race day, an event he had been looking forward to attending as a patron not a slave. The C&H racecourse wasn't far, and it was owned by his father.

The Smiths were shepherded out of the vans away from the entrance upon arrival. There were huge lines of people going through the front – workers. Even though some people owned hundreds of Smiths, they were still a minority in the country.

A man wearing a black waistcoat, silver font embroidered on the chest, stood on a platform above them, talking down and making a hand signal to an area of Smiths where a manager would then go over and collect a few.

Jordan's group was taken to a backroom filled with silver barrels. The manager said, 'I've seen one or two of you before, you know what to do.' And left.

The area was poorly lit, very thin and cramped, mainly thanks to the barrels, eighteen in total with tubes coming out of them and protruding out meaning a half foot area of free space couldn't be stood in. There was also a very large fridge for all the spare barrels, it made constant noise, an old fan on it looked to blow out dirty air and Jordan was becoming sick of the vibrations it made in the carpet already.

'What do we do?' Jordan asked.

'We wait until a barrel is empty, then we change it,' said Jerry, also in the group.

'So you're just sitting on your butts now? No wonder you don't get paid.'

'And how did you earn your money?'

Jordan was silent.

'Save your energy. You'll need it for when it gets busy and you're changing them every two minutes.'

Jordan studied the floor, there wasn't space for everyone to sit down at once but he knew just outside was a pathway from the smoking area to the turf, so asking about going out there was out of the question, but maybe there was someplace else.

'Do we ever get to go outside?'

'Only to take an empty barrel out.'

'What, just out the door and straight back in?'

'Yes, others will come and collect it.'

'Wouldn't it be more efficient for us to take them back? I mean we can't all be busy non-stop in such small place.'

'Yes we can, and no, we can't take them, one Smith team does a round and that's it, don't want too much dirt in customers sights.'

'And what if we just don't do it?'

'Then we get thrown onto the streets and it gets counted as voluntary homelessness so no help from the council.'

Jordan sat down in the comfiest looking patch of free floor. He opened the lunch they had given him and tried to think, *this isn't so bad*, his lunch consisted of a sandwich, some plain crisps and a banana, *a pretty nutritious lunch, sandwich looks decent and my favourite fruit. This green carpet isn't un-soft.*

'When do we get our break?'

'When the racecourse closes, and you've cleaned to the manager's satisfaction.'

After a few hours in which Jordan discovered that doing nothing wasn't the easiest thing in the world, a barrel was finally finished.

'Can you let me take this one outside? I'm dying for a bit of fresh air.'

'Go ahead,' Jerry said, 'You know it's pointless to try anything.'

Jordan lifted the barrel outside with only a bit of strain, once out and barrel placed, he walked across the width of the concrete path where several customers were going up and down at the same time. He didn't think appealing to them would work he just wanted to stretch his legs. Thank god they let him keep his shoes, they looked in far better knock than anything the other Smiths had.

But then some cups were dropped into his chest and shoulder, the plastic ones served in the bars, mostly empty but enough liquid was still inside that his arm was noticeably wetted.

Jordan just stared at the backs of the two lads, both in suits, who would literally drop their rubbish onto another human being, *just because I'm a slave, I mean Smith.*

‘What are you waiting for? Pick that up.’ A wandering manager ordered him with a shout, like Jordan had personally angered him.

He bent down to collect the discarded cups when someone kicked the cups with the shiny black shoes coming mere inches in front of Jordan’s face.

‘Why would you do that? What the fuck is wrong with you.’

‘Did you just fucking say that to me?’ the kicker said, a young adult man with a blue suit and tie on. ‘Fucking better say sorry right now or you’re in for it. You have no idea who I am and what I could do to you.’

The manager from before rushed in between the men. ‘I am so sorry sir please accept some vouchers for free drinks, please, have a nice day and leave this to me.’ He turned on Jordan, ‘Are you defective in the head or something? Get back in there now.’ He was looking down on Jordan with hatred.

‘What? That’s so unfair you should be taking my side.’

‘You are pushing your luck, get in there now.’

‘No, I have a right to this I’m Jordan Cam-‘

He was smacked in the eye with the corner of a clipboard. It burnt like the wood had scratched across his right eyeball. Jordan was bent over, even after blinking and holding his eyes shut, he opened them to blurriness. His breathing became inconsistent, his face screwed up in pain in between the moments of breathing, *is this what a breakdown feels like?*

He caught the manager speaking, ‘Security to behind Medina bar, got another one for the horse pens.’

With every step, Jordan was blinking and rubbing his eye. Then regretting the rubbing and holding his eye shut for a few seconds and hoping when he opened it again the blur would have gone. It didn’t. He was, however, able to keep in line as the security guards walked him through cellars and back rooms up to the stables.

Once there a manager stepped into a small white kiosk hut with him where a bunch of shovels were.

‘Take your shirt off and grab a shovel.’

‘Pardon?’

‘Do I have to smack you with the shovel? Get a fucking move on.’

He obeyed.

The manager said, ‘Tubby one aren’t ya. How long have you gotten away with being lazy?’

Jordan walked into the pen. His pace slowed seeing how much of the ground was covered in manure. The thick smell of horse shit literally effected Jordan's breathing. Even taking breaths through his mouth it was like his tongue could taste the stank. Eventually he settled into breathing the foul stench into his nose and quickly breathing out his mouth. It felt like his lunch would come up with it but he didn't have a choice; it was as if his body was automatically reacting to purge the toxic smell out of his body. He walked as far away from the manager as possible relying on his one good eye and the contrast between brown and grey on the floor to walk there cleanly. Then he got one small scoop of leavings onto his shovel before attempting to whisper to the nearest fellow shoveller.

'Hey why did he want me to take my shirt off?'

'Shit gets everywhere it's. A lot easier to clean it off your skin than your clothes.' the nearby man, ten maybe twelve years older than Jordan said.

Indeed, the shit was everywhere. Even if it wasn't manure someone would place their hand onto a pole and when they took it off, a layer of grim would come off with it. No matter how hard he tried every now and then his ankle would collide with the flank of a pile of horse dung, his forearm would edge a horizontal bar and come away with something brown and mud-like, and then that forearm would brush his body spreading the muck.

'There's machines that can do this better than us I've seen them on farms.'

'People are cheaper than machines.'

Jordan knew he had half a dozen hours left at least, and although he tried to not let the shit shovelling get to him soon his lower back hurt bending down, his wrists hurt manoeuvring the shovel, he was hungry again and thirsty and his eye was still blurry, yet the skin on his face around his eyes stretched to stop him from crying with fear that the damage was permanent. Every time he thought about it the only way to stop thinking about it was to shovel shit until his brain became hollow again.

Eventually the sun got lower and his day ended. He scraped his hands down his front and back and it felt like he was knocking off actual chunks of dirt out of his skin. He still felt dirty; just less dirty. But when he put his shirt back on it did give a feeling of getting cleaned, even if it was just a placebo.

Getting back to the dorm, even with one of the Smiths offering him some clean clothes the stress of his eye and cramped walls being a reminder that he couldn't escape left him twitching and shaking in the corner.

Natalie came and sat down next to him.

'I'll do anything you want,' he said, 'Please. I can't take anymore please just let me go.'

'And what will you do?'

'I'll...talk to my dad, he'll listen to me, I can make things better for you.' He was crying.

'That's not good enough I'm afraid. You'll never convince him. He was asleep when your day of work started and he's probably asleep now. Does he still have a respirator to help him or is there something new? We've been out of touch with the world since our TV broke.'

'Still got the respirator.'

'Ha we don't get anything like that with our hospital.'

'Your hospital?'

'Yeah, someone's got to give us vaccines otherwise your free labour all dies, and we're not exactly allowed into regular hospitals.'

'Do you think I could go to the Smith hospital and get my eye checked out?'

'It'll heal with a good night's sleep.'

'I feel really ill as well.'

'That's because you've never worked hard in your life. This is us every day, if it's not the racecourse it's a factory, if it's not a factory it's cleaning and then at the end of it we come back here and have to make our own food. Do you think that those people who took your dirty clothes haven't also been working like you all day? What would you be doing now normally? With all your millions in profits.'

Jordan looked at the floor with guilt.

'While we live in this house too small with terrible lighting and crappy equipment. Some Smiths have skills that mean they get a bit nicer work. A bit nicer place to stay, but these days most new Smiths are kids with nowhere to go, so they don't have any hope. Cheer up, more races tomorrow.'

'Can't I just spend one night in the hospital to get a little rest? Then I'll be better to help tomorrow, I promise. I've got so many headaches and heart pains.'

'Hospitals full, it's always full. If you ask for a night they'll give you one, but they'll throw someone who's a long-term sufferer. So go, if you like, make them kick out someone with pneumonia and take their bed because you're lazy. But don't come back here in the morning expecting any more kindness from us.'

Natalie got up and walked away. Jordan sat for a while in silent contemplation before getting up and walking to the TV. With all eyes on him he turned around and said, 'It's the

fuse in the plug. It's blown and that's the only thing wrong with it. They're quite cheap to replace but if you want it fixed right now erm, is there a plug on anything else that's not working?'

Quickly a toaster was presented in front of him, Jordan remembered how they needed to make toast in the oven. He said, 'I don't suppose you have a screwdriver to get this open?'

Jerry walked over and took the appliance before heading over to a stone step and smashing the plug on it, sending bits of shattered plastic flying. He carried the remains of the plug back to Jordan and said, 'This what you need?'

'Yes, now we need to get it into the TV one though. Try and smash that on the other side though we only need to get rid of the plastic, not damage the actual parts.'

Jerry did so and once Jordan had placed the new fuse in and plugged the socket back into the wall the black box burst into colour for the first time in over a year.

He stood against the wall admiring his handywork before the familiar voice of Natalie caught him, 'Come sit down here. To be honest I'm a bit disappointed I didn't think of that. I got an A in science.'

'Well I finished science much more recently than you did so.'

'Oh thanks for reminding me I'm old.'

'No, nah you're not old. I would totally go out with you and it definitely wouldn't be for your money.'

'Haha that's nice. You're a handsome boy but I think I'm a bit old for someone who still goes around looking for quickies.'

'Oh, you heard about that?'

'Shane told us.'

'You know I'm not really like that. Like, my mates they all love to go out with as many people as possible, but I'm just sort of looking for one special thing you know.'

'Oh yeah, tired of dating a hundred different women?'

'Not exactly a hundred. Or really dating. I've just had like, moments with a few girls.'

'Well when you get out of here and all the girls see the new you I bet you will have a hundred lining up to be that one special thing.'

'You're gonna let me out of here?'

'Sometime. For now get some rest. It's another day exactly the same tomorrow.'

The next day Jordan kept his head down and changed the barrels. Following the others completing the task. While he was still suffering in many of the same ways as yesterday his

body seemed to adapt and feel the strains in his joints and feet less. The only negative that was in his mind was how he now wished he'd helped when he was in Africa.

His head was overflowing with hope Natalie had given him that he would be freed again. No barrel was too heavy while he had one hundred percent faith that she would make the right choice.

That night after a pizza that was more base and sauce than toppings, Natalie told him to follow her. They reached the door to the dorm. A few other Smiths were loitering about.

She turned to him and said, 'Do you trust us?'

Jordan was still riding his work high, 'Yes.'

'When we leave, we need you to do one thing. Then you come back here. Will you do that?'

He smirked. 'Do I have a choice.'

'Ok.' She turned to the group of Smiths in the hallway. 'Get the key.'

One of the women there pulled out a key and unlocked the door. They weren't supposed to have this key. Or be allowed out.

As they left and stepped out onto Cameron lands Jordan asked, 'What's the plan?'

Natalie looked at him again. 'You said you trusted us. Now come on.'

They walked up the path to the mansion. The grass was well cut, and the flood lights showed flower beds well maintained by Smiths with gardening skills.

Once at the door to the house Natalie said, 'Get us inside.'

Jordan used a thumb print scanner on the door to unlock it.

'Tell the house to turn off all the lights.'

'House, turn off all lights.' The inside hallway and all the light coming through doorways vanished. 'House, turn off flood lights.' And the whole place became dark.

'Wait here,' said Natalie. One of the Smiths went inside while the four others stood still.

The Smith came back and said, 'Give me your thumb.' Without waiting for a response the Smith pulled out a strip of special tape and pushed it into Jordan's thumbprint. Three of the group then went inside and closed the door.

Natalie said, 'Come on.' She turned and began walking without seemingly noticing if Jordan was following.

'Where are we going?' he said.

'Back to the dorm.'

'Why don't they need us inside? Isn't all this your plan?'

She paused for a beat. 'They know what to do.'

She continued to give Jordan a cold shoulder until they were back inside. There, she told him to sit in an empty room and after leaving for a minute, came back in and gave him a banana.

'Consider that a reward for not running off. Not much I can give as a present but hopefully your favourite food will do.'

'I didn't even think about it. I just wanted to help you.'

'That's good. You know tomorrow you go back. Have you thought about what you'll tell people?'

He smiled. 'I'll say I got astounded by a girl ten years older than me. To the point I wanted to show her so many amazing things I didn't even care that my phone ran out of battery.'

'I would say you need proof of that, but I've seen your wallet and the amount of cash you had on you. Everything will soon be changed.'

'And it will be changed for the better. Like whatever those guys are doing in there now is just the start. To be fair I get it, I can access all the records and security and stuff but I've never looked at it so I wouldn't be any help. And my dad's so strict on his money that even I don't know where most of it is hidden.

'They're not going in there to change records or steal money. You once asked me why I was fired as your father's secretary. The answer is shame, but not mine. One time in his offices, he rushed everyone out earlier than usual. It was just me and him there and in his private office he called me in and locked the door behind me. He never said a word, just closed the blinds and then threw me onto the couch. He sat on top of me, pulled off enough of mine and his clothes that he needed and looked me in the eyes the whole time it was happening. Someone came back though, came back to their desks. Maybe they had forgot something. So he just laid there on top of me, still looking at me, with neither of us making a sound. Slowly he got off and before he left to see who was there, he told me that if I ever told anyone, he would kill me, and that he would get away with it because no one would care if I died.

'And the next day, the next week, the next month I was forced to stand right beside him every minute of every day. He got paranoid, I wasn't allowed to speak to people unless he was present, I couldn't be allowed to go off on my own, I had to be in his eyesight every second. Soon though he realised that he could just get rid of me, throw me as low as low goes. Out of sight out of mind, there was nothing I could ever do.'

Jordan, who had broken eye contact with Natalie the moment he realised what she was saying, continued speaking to the floor. 'I believe you. Every word.'

'Tomorrow you go back. I imagine the police will be very interested in you. You've trusted us so far Jordan. Now is when we trust you.'

Before he left he was given his things: wallet, phone, keys. There were police cars around the front of his house, and an ambulance. He was rushed by officers and without really listening to them Jordan repeated, 'I'm alright, I'm alright.' He gave a brief version of his false story and told the officers he just wanted to go back home.

'Have you heard about your father, Mr Cameron?' a doctor asked.

'What?'

'Last night, there was a problem with his respirator. It breaks my heart to tell you this, but your father didn't make it.'

A few weeks later, before his first official press conference as the new head of the C&H company, Jordan asked for a particular Smith to be brought to his office.

'This isn't the usual head office. Are you working in this smaller one?'

'No I'm using the same office. I'm just having this meeting here because it's closer to the press room. And so you don't have to step back into that one.'

'Oh, clever and kind. I would never say that about the Jordan I first met.'

'I've bought a wine field in France. I can only free a few Smiths at a time here or I'll be voted out of my own company. Maybe I can improve conditions here for the others. In fact, I definitely will. But to speed things up, several Smiths will be sent to help in France and then will escape to Germany, even though they were outvoted on Smith laws in Europe they still banned it and they protect Smiths from all the countries that followed Britain into slavery. It's a bit inconvenient, but independent Scotland is too close. I can't guarantee they won't be sent back.'

'That's excellent. I'm so proud of you. Do you need me to help with France? I was actually hoping to be your assistant, but I'm kind of used to beggars can't be choosers. Wherever you need me, I'm captain Natalie, reporting for duty.'

'No. You're not.'

'Sorry?'

'What you did. I understand why you did it. But there's a million other things you could've done that would put me here right now. And every one of them would mean that I

could still at least see my father again. I know who he was. And that's the only reason you're not behind bars. But he was still my father.'

'You called me here to say that?'

'No. I called you here to give you this.' He picked up a bag from the floor. 'Keep it safe. Inside there are hundreds of cheques, for the wages you've earned, and the wages of your parents. Take it, create a bank account now you're a free woman and go live your life.'

'But I want to stay here. I want to work for you.'

'Well I don't want to see you ever again. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a room of reporters waiting.'

At the podium with the journalists below him, Jordan started, 'Thank you all for coming. As you know it's been a tough couple of weeks. Thankfully I've had my friends and my family; and my fellow board members all there for me. My father once told me they put the Great in Great Britain, and recently I've learnt to what degree that its true. But, moving forward, I've been told a million times how young I am to be a man in my position. And you know what? I've thought let's bring some youth into the company then. So I'm delighted to announce, that I've purchased a vineyard in the south of France to make a wine to be sold specifically and solely at the C&H racecourse. Soon I will be sending some of our very own slaves I er mean Smiths sorry. To er, help.'

A few days later, on the other side of the city, a blonde girl in her thirties was ordering a sandwich at a till.

'Would you like it toasted?' the clerk asked.

'Yes please.' She liked hot things. For years she had used an oven so slow an old that it heated food up but didn't really cook it, leaving any contents only warm and always soft.

While she waited, she turned and looked at the newspapers, one of the headlines read, "Slave Slip Up. C&H accidental jumble of words causes Britain to come under international pressure to abolish Smith Laws."

Outside a homeless person sat on the ground, the blonde girl bent down to him. 'It's quite cold out. Do you want to come with me to someplace inside and I'll buy you something warm?'

'No thank you. I heard the other day billionaire Jordan Cameron and his new girlfriend helped a homeless person completely out of poverty right here the other day.'

'I heard that too.'