

LOVE & JUSTICE

A Compelling True Story Of Triumph Over Tragedy

Diana Morgan-Hill

This book is dedicated to:

Agnes Veen Hill – my wonderful Mama, and best friend

and

Lara Morgan-Hill – my beloved daughter,
you are my life's most precious gift

INTRODUCTION

Fragile

The last time I ran was for a train.

It was a warm August evening and a slight breeze fanned my face as I strolled into the safe, suburban railway station just outside London. A few straggling commuters huddled at the ticket kiosk. Realising the train was pulling in, I hurried across the bridge, scurried down the stairs, quickly and evenly, dashed across the platform and raised my leg to get on the train.

The door was open, I was on the running board and aware of people inside the carriage. Suddenly the train jerked and I lost my grip on the inside of the door. The train jolted again and I lost my balance. The weight of the heavy bag on my shoulder tipped me backwards and I dropped.

With a wrench, the sudden movement twisted me round and crushed me down. As I became wedged at chest-height between the train and the platform, the train picked up speed. I screamed and screamed and grasped desperately at the concrete. But the train dragged me along, gaining

momentum, crushing my ribs against the platform, until I fell into the darkness and the wheels below.

One of my legs was ripped off, just below the knee. Beyond saving, my other leg was amputated above the knee later that night.

In 7 seconds I went from busy girl about international town businesswoman with everything to live for to a double-amputee, my life in ruins.

What could be worse? Could there be anything worse?

Well, yes.

Seven days after my accident as I lay in a hospital bed traumatised and heavily sedated with painkillers, I learnt in the most underhand way imaginable that British Rail were going to interview me with a view to prosecution for trespassing onto their railway line.

It was unfathomable. I couldn't yet believe what had happened.

That a train would move off as passengers were still getting onto it?

That the train would then not be stopped immediately by the Guard?

That I had just lost both of my legs for crying out loud. It simply couldn't be true. But it was, and so the parallel nightmare began.

An indicator as to how British Rail would be behaving came just days after the accident. Their chosen method of communication was not by any letter or phone call to myself or to my dear, traumatised relatives, but, whilst we were all still in deepest shock, via the newspapers. There it was in black and white for all of London, and then as the news spread, the nation, to see: British Rail were going to employ a 100 year old bye-law and prosecute me for trespassing onto their railway line.

This was the first aggressive tactic by British Rail to throw the authorities off the real scent. They then chose to fight me. In every undermining way their highly-paid team of lawyers could possibly conjure up. There followed an exhaustive mission by myself, my family, friends and lawyers to follow this repugnant trail and clear my name. The legal battle that ensued took away five years of my life at a time when I was trying to learn to live again in the most painful ways imaginable.

When I look back on those years I can say with all honesty that my fight with British Rail is the worst thing that has ever happened to me. Yes, even worse than having both my legs stolen from me. This attitude, of a public corporation towards its passengers was, at first, hard to fathom. But as, along with learning to live without legs, I embarked on my legal battle, the reasoning behind their inhumane methodology soon clarified.

CHAPTER ONE

7 Seconds

After a busy morning, I'd left my business partner, Sarah, in the West End to tie up the details on another Primetime meeting, and had raced back to our office to prepare the paperwork needed by a new client that afternoon.

MediaVision was based in an attic bedroom in Sarah and Justin's Wandsworth semi in a safely suburban street 4 miles or so from central London. An arrangement we kept carefully hidden from the majority of our clients with their palatial, glassy offices in downtown New York, LA and Paris.

I was due to meet fellow PR Barbie back in town for pre-dinner drinks and moved speedily around the office, darting backwards and forwards between the filing cabinets and my computer. Yellow Post-it stickers littered the circumference of the screen – messages from Max, a tall, blue-eyed blonde American I'd met at the annual MIP Media Conference in Cannes and fallen for in a big way. When I discovered he was taken I'd finished it but he was still in hot pursuit. So far I'd been fortunate in that Sarah had been there to pick up the phone when he'd called. Though I'd finally moved on I didn't want the temptation. Even his voice was dangerous – heavy in maturity and sexuality.

Typing furiously, my eyes drifted out of the window to the sunny day. I thought about ice-cream, wondering if I'd have time to grab a cooling cone to eat on the train. I bounced my way down the narrow flights of stairs, stopping off at the hall mirror to reapply my eye-liner and lipstick. I was looking good, lean and healthy with a sexy real-tan glow, attained from a quick week away to Greece with best friend Dinah and her family at the end of July. I gave myself a little smile before slamming the heavy door behind me and setting off for the station.

Heat warped the afternoon air and I could hear a distant cooing from a summer dove. An endless chorus from twittering birds added further song to the radiated atmosphere of that hot, sunny afternoon. Dawdling by the

post-box, I rummaged in the over-sized bag slung over my shoulder, ferreting for my rail-pass and letters to shove in the slot.

I walked quickly. My Walkman, attached to my trouser waistline, bumped slightly with each step. The headphones were around my neck. I preferred birdsong whilst I was out and about and didn't usually wear it until I was travelling to relieve the boredom of the long train commutes. I produced home-made tapes in my flat. The best songs from favourite albums got me frequently dancing around my home, the volume on the stereo turned up high.

All around were sights and sounds of an overcooked summer. Trees wilted with heat, leaves drooped with dust. An ice-cream van tinkled gently in the distance. I turned quickly into the station entrance, a blast of hotter diesel air greeting me from the hissing, squeaking train standing at platform one. When I got to the top of the stairs I saw through the bridge railings that my own train was trundling its 400 ton weight into the station. My cream, cropped top stuck slightly to my back as I readjusted the heavy bag on my shoulder and began trotting over the bridge.

A crowd of passengers hung around the glass box that caged the ticket collector. This was the fourth time I'd passed him that day. He filled the cubby hole, a black mass of shiny face and uniform. He seemed both distracted and sleepy. I didn't bother to flash the pass that was in my hand. I had to struggle through a crowd of dawdling, chattering passengers who appeared to have all the time in the world.

I knocked one of them with my bag. Sensing she was cross, I muttered a hurried apology, intent on catching my train. I quick-stepped down the stairs and across the platform. The door of the train wasn't fully closed and opened easily. I had my right foot on the running board and was raising the other when the train jerked ferociously. I made eye contact with some of the other passengers sitting inside the train. The train pulled away from me violently. I mouthed OH!

Then my right foot slipped, my hands scrabbled. As I clung to the wooden sides of the doorframe, the train jolted again. My left leg dropped below the running board. I struggled and was twisted down, down until I was wedged, crushed, between the train and the platform wall. Four hundred tons of metal began to roll against my back. The force rolled on, my feet were in the platform well, my stomach and chest pressed hard-up against the platform. I raised my hands, waiting for it to slow down and stop.

But the train didn't stop.

Instead, it speeded up.

Through fear rather than pain I screamed, 'Stop, stop the train!'

In a typically English way, I felt embarrassment. WHY didn't they see me?

A red terror gripped as I realised how much worse my predicament was becoming. I was pinned, a butterfly with all limbs mentally flailing, my feet were with the wheels, massive, heavy crushing wheels and the train was moving faster, faster. I was still relatively safe with the wall and, although flattened, I hugged it still closer to me. I thought very clearly, "Keep your head away from the train".

A metallic fear hit my nostrils and flooded my brain.

I felt a tugging and then – nothing.

My memory of the moment I fell beneath the wheels, thank God, does not exist.

I came out from the black pit of nothingness.

The train had stopped and I was trapped beneath it.

The smell of evil permeated the air, fumes of dust and black grimy coal. I breathed the gagging fumes of diesel and electricity.

A dull thud, atrocious in pain level, reached up from the track and held my body deadly still. I did not breathe, I did not move as the thud hit me again. Electricity was holding me down, claiming its route through my body, the fragile vessel. It made a sound, the deepest lowest buzzzz.

I raised my head from the ground, thinking, 'I've got to get up, I've got to get out of this.' A strange object came into focus, it lay away from my body at a distorted angle. A sliver of something attached it to me. What was it? It didn't look human. But I recognised the shoe. It was mine.

No. It couldn't be.

No.

This is not me.

A wretched agonising pain filled all of me instantly. If there was a Richter scale for pain, this would be a tornado, a major earthquake, shuddering through my body. A sickening weight was crushing my left leg. I couldn't see what caused it. My hands raked at the wall, my nails clawed the brick, I HAD to get up.

'Help me,' I mewed. 'Help me. This is not me,' I called from some primitive survival base in the back of my throat. I didn't recognise the voice. 'This is not happening to me. 'Help.' It was depleting my energy. I fell quiet. Too frightened to speak. But then came the surge of adrenalin, the adrenalin of fear and flight, my energy hopelessly boosted.

But there could be no flight. The fear accelerated.

A kind face appeared, warm black in colour. Soft eyes, sad eyes. He bent down. 'I'm so sorry, someone will help you. I am so sorry.' He straightened himself and left, walking backwards, his eyes registering horror.

Train doors slammed and banged. Panic rose. I sensed no one until Maggie appeared. I knew that was her name because I asked her and, even in fear and panic, one is polite.

'Diana, hold on. Don't worry.' She was desperately trying to give me some security. Some semblance of hope. But I didn't care. It wasn't me she was speaking to anyway. I didn't know where I'd gone. She held my hand. I gripped her life-force, unsure of where mine was.

Minutes ticked away, every second a tortuous hour of horror. A female policewoman type was there, on the edge of the platform. Her voice annoyed and distressed me. Two ambulance men arrived. They had difficulty getting to me. The train had to be moved. I could hear them talking. They'd have to switch the electricity on again to do that. It could give me an electric shock. The driver, sweating, heaving, tried to squeeze his way to me. He couldn't. I let go of Maggie's hand. I didn't want her to be there when they moved the train off me if that electricity hit again. I knew I wouldn't survive a third jolt of 650 volts. I put my head down on the track and scratched my nails deep into the black coal, perfect shiny pink against black. I remembered painting them that morning so they'd look beautiful.

That was a time long distant. Another, parallel, universe had taken me over.

Oblivion, that's what I craved and that was the vision before me. If I turned my head away from the platform, to the left and to the tracks, that was all I could see – oblivion, an all-enveloping sense of being nothing. Not existing in any form. If I turned my head to the right, and raised it slightly I could see Maggie. I could reach my hand up to her. I chose to take her hand as they rolled the train off me.

I heard the engine of the train and buried my face into the stones of the track. Give me that oblivion. I was groaning and the sounds I made frightened me.

'Don't do this. Don't do this to me.'

'Diana give me your hand. Please Diana, give me your hand.' Maggie ignored the wishes of the forces around her. They were concerned about the amount of electricity required to move the train. I couldn't bear it. I

turned my head to the left, away from the platform, away from Maggie. But the oblivion I faced seemed too deep. Too uncomprehending. Was this death?

I heard Maggie's soft voice again, pleading with me to turn to her. I obeyed and took her hand as they rolled the train off my left leg.

With trembling voices and gentle hands they put, what seemed to be, plastic bags on my legs.

'I'm sorry love, we need a doctor for painkillers,' said one, his voice so low, so timorous, I could barely hear it. But I hadn't asked for painkillers. I pleaded for a direct blow to the head from a sledgehammer. I whimpered the request, like a puppy in severe pain.

When you are in pain, a pain that obliterates everything else, you don't scream, you squeal quietly, conserving energy.

A policewoman stood over me, looking in my bag. Her voice, strangely, got on my nerves. 'Who should we contact?' she asked. My first thoughts were my mum and dad. I couldn't do this to them, not after Dad's accident.

'Sister. Helen. Drew. Drew,' I whimpered half of Andrew's name twice.

'An... Drew. I need him. Please. Sur Name Palmer.'

I couldn't breathe. My parents, oh sweet Jesus, Mum and Dad. I couldn't think of anything. Such pain obliterates most thoughts, my brain didn't work. My eyes couldn't see anything.

'Contact lenses. I wear contact lenses. Tell the surgeons I wear contact lenses.'

The ambulance men moved fast, attaching drips, which I could see, and doing something with my legs, which I couldn't. Their breathing was heavy, I pleaded again to be knocked out. 'Sledgehammer' I muttered, over and over.

I could smell the sweat on them, it reeked of distress.

Somehow they got me onto a portable stretcher. Somehow they got me across four tracks and into the ambulance. I was shivering with shock, my teeth chattering and clacking with a fearful shuddering.

'They will sew it back on again, won't they?' I asked the poor sod who had to travel with me in the back of the vehicle.

'Don't worry about it love. Not now,' said the ambulance man, his words shaking away the enormity of the truth. I remembered the same cadence of voice from inside the ambulance that had taken Dad to hospital, a few weeks previously.

The kindly lie. A lie is kinder than the truth. For everyone.

I lay face down and remained face down when they took me out of the ambulance and through the swing doors to Accident and Emergency. I'd seen this on television. I was in an episode of ER.

White coats flapped. There seemed to be a room full of them.

Voices asked about my back. Scissors sheared material off my back. A slight piercing of indignation hit my senses. I like that shirt! What are you doing? I called again for a sledgehammer. I pleaded for the big hit over the head that would overrule all pain which had moved me from the real world into who knows what this was.

'Your back, Diana, does your back hurt?'

'No. Please knock me out, Doctor. Please.'

Still face down, I lifted my head slightly and looked straight ahead. There was one of the sweetest faces I'd ever seen. Another angel, looking distressed. A nurse with soft eyes. Deepest compassion.

'Breathe into this Diana.'

'Am I going to have a baby?' I muttered, ironic to the end. I gulped at the mask and I was gone.

I came to and Andrew stood at the end of the bed, looking at me, his pale face shadowed in gloom. I felt I must say something, sensing my last words had to be said now. It was not just him I delivered those three words to, they were for everyone close to me.

'I love you.'

'I love you too.' His words, reluctant, hoarse with fear.

I felt I could go, aware of my last exhalation as I fell away to the darkness.

CHAPTER TWO

Everybody Wants to Rule the World

I was becoming an addict. Not to the soothing opiates that my severely damaged body required, but to the past. The Diamorphine, providing a soothing path through the arterial highways and nestling in my brain, released visual other-worldly clips of me. What I had been and what I had

done. Self-induced hallucination: I escaped whenever I could to my previous life, to the land of the now dead Diana. The memories were colourfully vivid, with a clarity only dreams can generate. Jasmine on a warming breeze. Sunlit sand kissed my feet. I walked to the water's edge.

Cannes

'Imagine the view from up there,' I murmured to the group of girlfriends scattered around me on the long stretch of manicured beach. We were looking at a mountain range to our right. Five peaks haloed by a haze of pink light unique to the South of France. I smiled at the beauty of the sun waltzing on the gentle azure of the sea.

A sound system lay beside us, peppered with grains of sand from our rigorous aerobic activity. I had chivvied the others through a half-hour routine, calling on them to pull up their knees, perform star jumps into the air and run on the spot, all in time to carefully selected non-stop rhythms.

I had devised the "keep-fit in Cannes" plan on the spur of the moment, the night before. The idea had not seemed too crazy then, pricking my brain with a rush of energy at 2.30 in the morning. I had been buoyed up with champagne cocktails and a television programme launch that had gone well. It had seemed the natural thing to do. By 7.30am, my head pulsing with a slight hangover, I regretted the scheme, but still I phoned the girls to remind them. At 8am I handed out extra large white T-shirts, splashed across the front with a bright green logo of my company, *MediaVision*. By 8.15am Black Box's *Ride On Time* was blaring out of the speakers and we were well into the routine, producing endorphins for our bodies and publicity for my new company, a press and publicity service for the television industry. Our audience included four beach sweepers, a couple of miserable waiters who were putting out tables and chairs for the lunchtime sessions, and a number of key industry figures quick-stepping their way into the Palais for breakfast meetings. An ambitious start to another day in television hell!

The Palais du Festival, or the "bunker" as it's called by regulars, is the commercial castle of modern Cannes. It dominates the harbour, welcoming the famous, the rich, and the media peons. The gates to the Palais will be forever open to those who hold passes, costing upwards of £100 (around \$148) per day. Cannes thrives as a media hot-spot, location for the most famous film festival in the world and is home twice a year to television and publishing executives attending events like MIP, the biggest international market for the sale of television and multimedia programmes.

For the previous three years I had attended trade exhibitions as a journalist, interviewing luminaries like David Puttnam, Silvio Berlusconi, Ted Turner, Robert Maxwell; Peter Gabriel and Bob Geldof. I had been working for different magazines, all exciting, tiring and addictive, but this was my first year at Cannes as MD of my own company. My ambition turbo-charged by 100% pure adrenalin.

As we danced and leapt about on the beach, above and behind us the famous Croisette pavements began to teem with life. Amongst the locals an invading army had begun to march. They appeared as if from nowhere. Tight suited women, their hair and make-up immaculate, high heeled and shoulder-padded their way into the Palais; men in sombre ties and plain coloured ensembles carried briefcases or bags displaying television logos. These were people dressed with a purpose and a mission – to buy or sell.

‘Barbieeeeeee!’ The screech pierced our blissful haven on the beach and all of us stopped dancing at the same time. Barbie clawed for her sweatshirt top and sunglasses, buried in the sand, and rushed off towards the woman yelling from the Croisette.

‘She’s late,’ grinned Christine.

‘And so are we,’ announced Jane, looking at her watch.

We jogged back to our hotel, nodding to other “members” of the industry who looked surprised at our red, sweating faces.

‘Are you still seeing Max?’ asked Christine as we approached our small, basic hotel tucked away up a tiny back street.

‘Dunno,’ I answered quietly, feeling my stomach twitch at the sound of his name. He was perfect for me in all but one way. He was married.

I had met Max at my first market in Cannes three years previously. I’d fallen for the charms of Cannes on my first night and for Max on the second. My business partner Sarah had introduced us and then backed away as Max and I stood, smiling at each other. I had cheekily leaned over to him and commented on his dreadful tie (blue, yellow and purple swirls). His soft, sexy drawl had captured my interest and immediately planted the seeds of desire in my mind.

We saw each other perhaps five times a year – he lived in New York, I in London. I was madly in love with him. He was handsome, blonde, blue-eyed. He had a kind face, was tall and always dressed in beautiful well-cut suits ordered from a London tailor. Originally from Indiana, he was now a sophisticated and cultured New Yorker. He was the consummate gentleman and I smiled to myself as I remembered the first time he had got up from his seat because I was leaving the dining table. It was a type of half stand,

half crouch position he had adopted, leaning on the table with two large hands. I thought he was going to break wind and told him so.

We laughed a lot. My laughter was gut-wrenching and linked somehow to the sex organs. I flirted for England, my subconscious acknowledging that I wanted to touch this man emotionally and physically. That first evening together ended abruptly with a kiss on both cheeks. I saw him the next day. We walked towards each other through the crowds in the Palais, making eye contact all the way until we were close enough to touch. I was in awe of him, and drowned my feelings of desire in stilted waves of business conversation.

‘It was a lovely evening Diana,’ he’d said, looking so tired I wanted to hug him there and then right on the spot.

‘Yes, wasn’t it,’ I replied quietly. ‘Anyway, I wondered if you could give me some information on the children’s television programmes you mentioned.’

He had looked surprised that I was reducing a potentially intimate conversation to business.

‘Yes of course,’ he rallied. My hand shook slightly as I handed him my business card.

‘Let’s speak on the phone soon,’ he said.

I nodded in agreement and tore myself away. Cursing his living in New York, blotting out the sight of the Russian three gold rings on the fourth finger of his left hand. But consoling myself with thoughts of our future there together. Even at that early stage I’d have followed him over to the Big Apple like a shot if he’d asked.

Our relationship, if that’s what it could be called, was not consummated for another year. Much of the foreplay was via telephone, a twisting of phone wires, a heart-hammering jolt every time it rang outside normal hours. A more than satisfactory conclusion had been reached in Cannes at my second MIP market. The revelation that making love could be so much more than mere sex concluded with the inevitable parting talk about the future and the shocking, miserable, truth of it. No children, but definitely taken. There followed a year of soul searching to acknowledge this cold fact whilst his pursuit continued. I was still clinging to the notion that Max was ideal for me, ignoring the guilt that our affair was causing. Now in year three I finally knew. He wasn’t the handsome commitment-phobe who’d finally found the woman of his dreams, I told myself over and over, but a cheater, playing away from home. But the pulsing physical excitement I was feeling now a couple of months since our last

“encounter” meant the anticipation of seeing him again wasn’t something I could deny to anybody, least of all myself.

I took the steps up to my room three at a time and flung myself into the shower, dried myself, carefully applied make-up and dressed in a pale orange jacket and blue linen trousers. Ten minutes later I was walking into the Palais and, after a bit of crowd searching, found Sarah.

We ran through our schedule for the day: eight meetings, including pitching for two new clients. Our work involved sprinting between exhibition stands, organising, cajoling and interviewing American, English, French and Canadian television clients. It was a delicate balance between taking information about their programmes, business deals and events they felt important, and then disseminating the data into journalistic intelligence. This would be printed, relayed on radio reports or even broadcast in the various documentaries being produced that year about the business of international television.

‘First meeting Leworthy & Price on the Primetime stand,’ Sarah announced, straightening a silver brooch attached to the lapel of her well-cut jacket. ‘I bumped into them last night and they want journos and photographers on the stand at 3pm this afternoon. Something about a deal with NHK in Japan.’

Primetime were then the biggest distributor of television programmes in the UK.

We raced for the escalators. The four-storey building heaved with over 8,000 people from 150 countries, all charged with the energy of those who have people to see, places to go. We joined the crowds and weaved and dodged our way up three floors to the press room, past hundreds of stands blaring out their wares in technicolour vision. Indian, Spanish and Hungarian companies made up most of the third floor: mini-cultures blasting out from banks of television screens, a blaze of noise and colour, a techno Turkish bazaar.

Experienced industry veteran that I was, I knew how to stagger energy levels through the five-day periods that the markets spanned. That day we had a further pitch lunch with a broadcaster and dinner with a party of journalists, organised by us to market our company.

I had met Sarah when we worked together on a magazine called *TV World*. It was run by a small London publishing firm which produced an unusual combination of titles in far-flung places including the Far East, Africa and Russia. The publisher was a canny man called Derek who had a naughty grin and a business mind that closed like a trap if you suggested a

pay rise. He was, however, eternally generous with his travel budgets and within weeks of joining as Deputy Editor, I was travelling to places I had previously only dreamed about – New York, Los Angeles, Monte Carlo, Houston and Cannes.

Christine and Jane joined us on the press room balcony, clasping notebooks close to their chests, Jane with a biro behind her left ear.

‘We need stories already,’ Jane giggled. ‘Tony wants news exclusives and he wants them NOW!’

They were working for the Exhibition organisers, MIDEM, producers of the daily papers for the television market. I had worked on two markets as a journalist and knew the pressures all too well. We stood beside the railings of the balcony. Whilst the others nattered and looked down across the vast sweep of the exhibition floor, I studied the appointment list Sarah and I had completed.

‘There’s this possible new astrology series with Joan Collins and Omar Shariff.’ They both looked at me, straining towards my notes, two journos sniffing out a good story.

‘I haven’t mentioned it before,’ I explained. ‘We just don’t know if it’s a goer. There’s been some problems with budgets and the backers are proving a bit too mysterious.’

‘I don’t care,’ interjected Christine, producing a biro from behind her notebook. ‘Fire away. If I have to do just one more story on the size of US programming exports I swear I’m going to drop my drawers in front of the French Minister for Culture.’

‘Speaking of large US exports,’ hissed Jane. ‘Eyes right.’

My heart lurched. Max was walking towards us, smiling. By the time he reached the balcony, my tactful colleagues had slipped away, muttering excuses about deadlines and broken phones. Sarah whispered details of where we should meet later. I barely heard her, the blood was thumping in my ears.

‘Good morning Diana,’ drawled Max. Adding quietly, ‘You look beautiful.’

I forced myself to look into his pale blue eyes and pulled myself up to my full 5ft 10 inch height. I breathed slowly, recalling a promise I had made to myself: to keep cool, to appear less interested.

‘Morning Max. Thank you. You look well.’

He kissed me on both cheeks.

‘I came to look for you. To congratulate you on your new business venture. I’ve heard it’s going well. Perhaps you could do something for

me.' He grinned and gently fondled the fine gold chain I was wearing around my neck. I stood still and let him. He had given it to me.

I felt lost, I could feel my previous resolution melting away.

'We should talk,' I said. 'And not about business, although I would be delighted to handle your press and publicity.' I smiled and attempted to look directly into his eyes. He looked faintly saddened and nodded in agreement. The sun was shining on his hair.

'Are you going to the CBC party?' I asked.

He shook his head slowly.

Just as well, I told myself as my heart sank.

'Can you get me a ticket?'

My stomach tightened in anticipation of seeing him at an interesting event, late at night. 'Yes, I...'

'Majestic bar, 10.30 tonight?' he suggested, backing away slowly, his eyes penetrating deep into mine.

I hurried down three sets of escalators, feeling ashamed at the renewed vigour in my step. I smiled at people I didn't know and yelled greetings at those I did. I both cursed and loved the fact that Max could have this regenerative effect on me.

The air in the ground floor of the Palais was static with the electricity of thousands of television sets and video recorders pumping their contents and a cacophony of sound into the enclosed atmosphere.

I made my way to the stand of Rissos, the Greek producer who was trying to raise funds for the astrology TV show.

'You ask the computer a single question, mentally in your head,' he wasted no time ushering me towards the seat in front of his elaborate, costly PC astrology system. 'It will give you a 12 page tarot spread. All it needs is your place and time of birth.'

'16 October 1960, 8.15pm, the Wirral, West Kirby. Quick birth, mother knackered, father delighted. Second child, first daughter.'

I was eager to see my future. My love life was in a bit of turmoil. In a way Max was the least of my problems. He was the love of my life, yes, and, romantic though I am, I had also resigned myself to the hopelessness of the situation long before this trip. For, by now, I had grown a complicated multidimensional love life all of my own.

I was still living with Duncan in a together but not together situation. We'd grown apart but shared a mortgage on a flat in Bromley and weren't entirely sure what we were going to do about it. Whilst Duncan slept in the spare room and lived his busy life as a chef in a central London restaurant,

“fake” dating the occasional girl, I was a young woman desperately seeking chemistry with a new man, anyone to pull me away from the electric glue that kept me sticking to Max. I was therefore an ideal candidate for a touch of astro-driven psycho-babble.

Rissos plotted the coordinates on a cheaply printed chart and nodded at me to ask my mental question. ‘Easy,’ my brain ticked over. ‘Will I marry Max?’

I hated hearing myself say that. I’d started thinking as much about his wife as I did about him. I felt for her, *she* deserved him and *I* didn’t. That was the simple truth of it.

My palms felt a bit sticky and my heartbeat rose slightly in preparation. ‘All a load of nonsense,’ I said to myself. ‘All to be taken lightly, with a pinch of salt.’

With Rissos distracted by a new visitor to his stand, I snatched at the pages as the computer spat them out, glad to be able to scan the words in privacy. Nine cards had been drawn and each had a page of information. Most of it was, as I had predicted, written in the standard and frequently ambiguous horoscopic language. The answer to my mental question was evident from page one. Even a piece of American hardware referred to my current romance with the words “infatuation”, “gullibility” and “instability”. It went on to forecast into the future year ahead so I read on, in search of better news.

The summer was going to be interesting. The World card had been drawn. I knew this was a fantastic card to receive. I smiled and then panicked as I read through the whole page. A shiver crept up the back of my neck and into my brain. It *was* the World card, only reversed. My eyes leaped to the “Key reversed meaning” section at the bottom of the page.

“Overbearing restrictions, irreversibility, danger!”

And worse, the computer print-out had defaulted.

It had cut off part of the page.

‘Well Diana,’ said Rissos turning back to me as his visitor left. ‘Wealth and riches beyond your wildest dreams? Ha ha ha.’

‘It’s a load of bollocks, Rissos.’ I stood up and shoved the stack of computer papers into a nearby bin.

c. Diana Morgan-Hill

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