

Writers Factory

By
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Chapter 1

1

It was the beginning of a marvellous day for Tim Dodgeson. The sun was hiding in the shadows, but that didn't matter all that much to Tim. He worried about the temperature more than anything. He hated the cold, but only felt contempt for heat. Heat only made him really sticky and sweaty. When he got like that, all he could do was stand out in the shower. He had the time and the money, so why not? He was a hard fellow to please.

It was over twenty-four degrees out, much warmer than it had been for weeks. Tim was already beginning to feel contempt.

"I could get a tan." He said to Joan (his wife) as he left his house. He carried a black briefcase in one hand, and in the other he held the daily newspaper. He would read that after his interview, as he always had done. He was a man of tradition and routine, much like his father had been.

His father was so into routine that he would dress in the same order everyday. He would always put his socks on, after his pants, and then finally his trousers after his shirt and tie. His father had been a funny man. Now five years in a grave, but the routine played on. Tim could see him dressing in the same way everyday, eating the same shit for breakfast, watching the television for the same amount of time, before leaving for work at the same time everyday. He would always leave at seven-thirty, and would always arrive home at five-ten. His father had been a great man. Tim had picked up some of the routine things, but he wasn't so intense about it.

All Tim could concentrate on now was looking good for his interview. He was out to impress, not that he had much to do. He was good at impressing people. It was a natural talent for him.

Joan laughed and closed the door. She knew Tim too well. He could never catch a tan, not now, not ever. He had the wrong type of skin. It didn't tan easily, but it didn't burn either. It just stayed in its white glory.

He got in his *Ford Mondeo* and started the engine. Almost immediately, he flicked the air conditioning on. The cool air came out stale at first, but as the fans began to chug round, the air became fresh and clean. Tim let it blow on his face. At least it would keep the sweat from dripping from his nose. It was so hard for him to concentrate on driving when sweat was dripping from his chin.

"Stay calm!" he said, trying to build up his self-confidence. It worked. "You can do this, no trouble." He could do this. He had done it more times than most. When you were in his line of work, you always had to.

A little way down the road, a plastic bottle rolled. It was crunched under a couple of cars, but always came out trumps. It gave Tim something to focus on for a moment or two. He sat silent in the car for a moment. The only noise was the constant whir from the air conditioning fan, and the constant blowing sound. Tim sat calm for a moment. He could do this. He *could!*

Joan watched from the windows upstairs as Tim drove off. She lifted the net curtain carefully, so not to cause any suspicion. She didn't want Tim looking at the expression on her face. It was a deep expression, and it showed how she truly felt. She hoped to God he got this new job at J.C.E. She hated him being in the house all the time. He always got under her feet. He needed to be out and about otherwise he became twitchy. This job would be good for him, if only for the reason that it got him

out of the house. She crossed her fingers and prayed to the lord. *Please let him get the job!* She said in her prayer. *I don't think I can cope for much longer.*

J.C.E stood for John Carter Einstein. It was a well-known and loved company. They had been in the business for years, and were renowned for their fresh talent that kept on appearing. Some believed it was the jewel in the crown. In the last six years alone, they had won over ten awards for outstanding achievement in their field.

God heard Joan's prayers, and he did answer them, just not in the way she may have expected.

As Tim drive down the road, he saw the lights at the end. They changed to red. He supposed it was a purpose act. The lights were there to torment him. As he reached the lights, he slowed and pulled up. To his left side was a black sports car, to the right, a red rusty banger. He gazed at the sports car for a moment. The colour was mesmerizing. It reminded him of a dark day. Whilst he was watching the car the window opened suddenly. A hostile looking bald guy stared back. He was better suited to riding a *Harley* than he was in that car, but Tim didn't care.

"What the hell are you looking at pal?" the deep raspy voice asked in an even more hostile manner. Tim had the window wound down a little and heard this big guy speak. He felt like answering with his instincts, with such comments as, *you pal*, but he restrained. Tim swung his head the other way.

"Hey dad!" a small kid shouted in the back of the black sports car. "Stop trying to pick a fight with that stranger. Your embarrassing me..." the kid suddenly stopped. Tim turned around, wondering why he had stopped. The kid was leaning forwards, on the black leather interior. His father didn't seem to like it. The kid's hand was pointing at him.

“What is it son?” the father asked, all hostility now vanished from his voice. Tim had the distinct feeling that the father was trying to protect his son. He almost seemed like a mother to the poor kid. For a moment the kid didn’t answer. He just looked back at Tim, with a look that could only be classed as recognition. Understanding passed between them, like a shot out of a gun. It passed through the air like a bolt of lightning, and struck its victim. The little boy jolted forwards.

“Its Dodgeson!” he squealed excitedly. He began to jump in the back of the car, something his father didn’t seem to approve of. “It’s Tim Dodgeson.” The kid knew who he was. That was both exciting for Tim, and annoying. He hated been recognised, but he also loved people knowing who he was.

And then the lights changed. Tim put his foot down and accelerated quickly away from the lights. Someone had recognised him, for the first time in ages. His career fortune seemed to have changed. People were recognising him again, like in the beginning. *It was so good to be recognised again*, he thought *just so damned good*. Suddenly, as if by magic, people knew who he was again, and it had been a kid. The kid had recognised him. That brought more hope to his face. *At last!* He exclaimed in triumph, *at last I have been recognised*.

No more would his name and the word ‘failure’ be heard in the same sentence again. That lifted his sprits no end.

If Tim had stayed to follow up the conversation, he would have heard a very excited young boy, and his angry father. His father didn’t know who Tim was, so his son had to explain it all.

“Tim is my favourite!” the boy said. “I can’t go to bed without him.”

“I hope you are not turning on me, boy!” his father had said, but that had been lost on the kid’s innocence. He was too young to understand the hidden meaning in

that last sentence. He didn't understand those sorts of comments, or sarcasm. He was only seven, but he did understand a lot for his age.

"I love him!" the boy had said as he jumped up and down on the back seat. His father had turned around to slap the boy when someone behind him, honked his horn in aggravation. The lights were on green and would be changing again soon. The big bald guy in the black sports car floored the accelerator.

2

The car pulled into the parking lot. Tim looked around, and shut the engine off. This place looked relaxed. There were a number of fountains running. Water splashed out of them. Tim remembered back into his childhood. His grandparents had a fountain in their back garden. Him and his sister had played in it, endlessly, in the summer, until...

He got out of the car and slammed the door shut. He looked back at the big fountain by the main entrance. It sent jets of water at high speeds, spouting out. It looked just like the one he and his sister had played in. It was so like the one in his grandparent's garden, that he was compelled to walk closer. His legs were controlling his body now. He had no control anymore. As he approached the fountain, he caught a glimpse of something shiny. Now he was compelled to look even closer.

It was a wishing well, he saw, as he got right up close. He placed his hand in his pocket and rummaged around for some petty change. He pulled out a slightly battered ten pence piece. That coin, in its own right, had a hundred wishes ridding on its back. He threw it into the jets of spraying water, without thinking. He had thrown coins into a fountain before. His body automated it all.

As he threw the coin, he had a flash back. He was with his sister and they were splashing each other with the water. As the coin left his hand, in the flash back,

his hand rose to the jets and pushed the water at his sister. The coin bounced into the jets and fell with the water. The water in his flash back jumped at his sister and fell on her chest. It soaked her instantly.

“I wish I get this job!” he said out loud. Sure, wishes are meant to be personal things, but he felt like saying this one out loud. The coin bounced on the concrete at the bottom of the fountain, and finally came to rest as he finished speaking. His wish was made, but that didn’t make him move. He stood listening to all the others wishes people had made. He could hear them, as if they were being spoken into his ear.

Please make my Johnny better, one person wished.

Another, *I wish I had a thousand more wishes.* A twenty-year-old had made that one male. It was the first thing he could think of. You had to make a wish when you passed a well, was the thought he had been having at the time.

I wish my hair was blond. I wish my mother was with me today. Please stop Jacky from killing herself. Please help me, I have a knife and I want to kill myself. I wish I could be at home. I wish my week would go faster. I wish my father didn't have cancer. I wish I was a little taller...

Tim felt guilty listening to everyone else’s wishes.

Then this one came. *I wish I get this job.* That one bounced around in his head. He had spoken those words only a couple of minutes ago. He immediately regretted wishing for anything. His head began ticking over and over; *maybe someone is listening to the wishes we make.* That was the stupidest idea he had ever heard, but it was a good idea. He noted it down at the back of his head, in the way that came naturally to him now. He may be able to use that idea at some later point.

He finished with the fountain and turned away. Across the road he saw two young looking guys crossing. They were holding hands in a way Tim was not

familiar with, apart from with his wife. His stomach began to churn, and suddenly he could see that breakfast he had eaten before he left the house this morning. It was churning, and being hurled out of his throat in a burning hot liquid.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have had that extra piece of toast.” He said to himself as he made his way back through the car park towards the main building. The air was hot, and made him feel uncomfortable with his shirt and tie on. He never wore ties, apart from at weddings and funerals. They were his only exceptions. He wouldn’t wear them for job interviews, but Joan had convinced him otherwise this time. She knew better than him. She was ten years older than him and had clocked up a little more experience than he had. She had seen the way the world worked, and didn’t like it one bit.

“You have to play them at their own game!” she said earlier that morning. She always knew best, and she always had done. Joan didn’t have to try to be the loudest voice. She wasn’t into this male race, I am sure you know the one I am on about. (I will explain, just in case. There seems to be a thinking amongst a large amount of males in this world, and none of them can deny it. The thinking is, that if you beat your chest the hardest and yell the loudest, then you qualify as the biggest man. That is what Joan disagrees with. If you are right, there is no denying it). Joan was always the strongest voice; just by the way she spoke it. She didn’t yell it from the treetops, nor did she squeak it like a mouse in the floorboards. She spoke it with an assertion that no one could argue with. She could scream for the longest if she needed too, but she never did. Tim felt weak at the knees, every time she spoke in that tone of voice. It told him that he was wrong and she was right.

Of course, Joan was always right anyway. Tim knew it, but just hated accepting it. Joan said it was ‘gritting your back teeth’. Tim didn’t care what it was

he just hated doing it. He had hated doing it as a child too, but sometimes you did have to take the deer by its antlers.

Realising he was standing at the front door, and had been doing so for a few minutes now, he knocked. On the second rap on the glass, there was a loud buzz from his left. He hadn't even noticed the intercom, or the camera above it. A woman spoke into it, but most of her voice was lost in the transmission, as crackly as it was.

"Doors open!" the voice was friendly and welcoming. Tim guessed she was a blond. He pulled the door, felt stupid when he realised you had to push them, and entered.

Inside the glass doors, there didn't seem to be much. In front of him, there was nothing. A blank wall. There wasn't a sign on the wall to tell him which way to go. There was nothing. He looked all around, and the only thing he could see were the odd pictures that hung around. Some weird people had painted them. One of them, Tim thought, was meant to be a picture of a fruit bowl. He squinted to see if he was right or not, but it was too hard to tell. All the colours ran into each other, and there were no hard lines defining anything. He wondered how much they had paid to hang those pieces of 'art' on their walls. He bet it had cost them a fortune.

"This way!" a welcoming voice said. It startled Tim, so he spun round fast. In front of him was a small woman. She was about five foot five, with no meat on her bones. Her clothes almost hung from her. Tim thought she looked a little like a dwarf. Her hair was black and wavy, which did make her look more man than woman. She looked like an old-fashioned guy. If she had been wearing the right clothes, Tim would have mistaken her. If Tim had been watching this on television, he would have laughed out loud and Joan would have scolded him. Because this woman was in fact

standing there, he thought it rude to laugh. Instead, he held out his hand, and offered it to the woman. She looked down at it for a second, as if thinking ‘what am I to do with that.’

“I am Jenny!” she said taking his hand timidly. She had a firm grip though. With the other, she pushed her glasses further up onto her nose. If she pushed them any harder, her eyes would practically pop out of their sockets. “We spoke on the phone the other day.”

“So we did.” Tim said with indifference. It came out rather flat and dry. As soon as he had spoken, he wished he could take the words back.

“Come this way.” She said with a smile Tim couldn’t place. He wondered if it was a smile because she fancied him, or just a smile out of pleasantness. He was so out of touch with this world that he could no longer tell. It had been a long time since anyone had fancied him either, so he wouldn’t know if someone was flirting with him. Someone would have to bite him on his bum before he would even take the slightest bit of notice.

Jenny walked to the left, her little body swaying hypnotically as she walked. A little way down, the room opened up, and became more of a reception area. Above the door was a small notice. Tim glanced at it quickly, not taking much notice. *This property belongs to...* it read. It vanished as he entered the reception area.

“Have a seat would you Mr Dodgeson.” Jenny said pointing over to the far wall. There was a row of three flat, plastic backed chairs. They were much like the ones that schools used. Tim looked back at Jenny, but she had already vanished. He spun his whole body round in a complete circle. Jenny had gone. With nothing else to do, Tim walked over to the seats and parked himself on one of them, the middle one. They weren’t very comfortable. Tim made himself as comfortable as he was

ever going to get and began to relax a little. He had already done the hard part, and besides, good things come to those who wait.

Glancing around the room made Tim feel alone. There was no one around. The only two objects that made this room look anything like a reception was the desk and the dull grey telephone. Everything else reminded Tim of a bedroom. There were posters on the wall. They weren't the type of posters you found in a doctors waiting surgery, but they were the type of posters that your sixteen-year-old daughter might have hanging on the walls. They were all of her favourite pop stars, and some of them were half naked. Tim shivered. He remembered his bedroom when he had been sixteen years old. He didn't have posters at all, but neatly cut out pictures of the page three models. They had been more to his taste than the pop stars that sang like drowned rats.

Today's stars weren't good to him, with the exception of *Robbie Williams* and *Westlife*. Tim liked them a lot. *Robbie* was cool. He could be big headed at times, but then isn't everyone? He really hated the guys in *Westlife*; they were all too full of themselves. They thought they owned the charts, but they don't. Something about the way they sang though. There was something special there, and that was the reason he had their albums. He liked their music, but not them.

He glanced around, and caught sight of one poster in particular. This one reminded him so much of his best mate in school. He was a good looking model, but weren't they all. They were chosen for their looks and their giant pecks, something Tim had never been blessed with. This guy (his name was Sean Reilly, so the poster boasted) looked so much like Gene Ikman from his English class. Gene was more interested in sex and rock and roll than English, so it was really no wonder he didn't pass his exams. Getting back to the poster, this Sean guy had his hands down in his

pants. The idea behind it was to get the women (and gay men, something that Tim frowned well upon. He had been brought up by his strictly Catholic mother, and carried all her values still, for some reason), looking at the poster to feel horny and sexy. It made Tim feel nothing more than sickness in his stomach.

What kind of image was this to be giving young girls? The same went for Gene. At every chance he got, he would grab his nuts, especially in front of the sexy girls in the class. No one ever fell for it. His main downfall was the fact that he smelt bad. He smelt of piss. Not just any piss; mind you, but the worst kind of piss; stale piss.

“Come this way!” Jenny said. Her voice was loud and piercing. It broke Tim from his little dream world. He looked up from the illusion of his dreams, and saw Jenny was hovering over him. She had changed clothing, Tim noted immediately. She was no longer wearing her drab receptionist clothes, but her sexy page three clothes (leaving nothing to the imagination). Her breasts were practically falling out of the red, low-cut top she was now wearing. *What lovely breasts she has got!* Tim thought. His tongue lolled a little in his mouth as he stood up. “We will see you now.” She said and then turned on her heels.

“Why have you changed clothing?” Tim asked, sounding a little stupid.

“Me!” she asked loudly and then began laughing. “I want you baby!” she said still laughing. Jenny stopped moving and spun round. She still laughed a little as she spoke. “I want you. Now!” she said, and pushed him against the wall. Before Tim was even able to escape, she thrust her little weight against him. Her breasts bulged against him, and he couldn’t help but fall into the routine. He began to kiss Jenny in a way his wife had been familiar with for five and a half years. Never did he think of his wife.

“Tim?” she asked in his ear. “Will you open that door for me?” she asked.

Tim reached round and opened the door, following the order. He immediately fell backwards, with Jenny still very much on top of him. As he hit the floor, birds began to tweet in his head, and he raised his hand to feel for the growing lump. He was fine.

Jenny knelt up and closed the door behind them. It was only when the door had been closed that he realised what was going on. *I want you!* The voice played in his head.

Tim made love to Jenny in the closet of the building he wanted to get work in. He wondered if it was some sort of ritual that everyone had to go through, but he nonsensified the notion. Tim never thought of Joan, his wife, all the way through. He never considered the consequences, just the there and now of it all.

“I love you!” Tim said after he had cleared up. He didn’t really mean it, but it just felt right to say it. He had done this sort of thing thousands of times before, just not behind his wife’s back. Women loved to hear that they were loved after having a good shag, as far as Tim knew. Things had changed though. Times had changed a lot.

It had been five and a half years since he had picked his now wife up. Things had changed a lot since then. No more would a woman fall for stupid lines like, *I find you attractive or have a drink on me*. Now people said corny things such as *get your coat love, you’ve been pulled*.

Jenny gave him the brush off, and opened the closet door. Tim felt like laughing, as he had just found a funny side, but didn’t. (‘Everyone has a closet in their cupboard,’ Joan had said on one occasion. Up until today, Tim could say he didn’t have one, but now he did. That was what tickled him).

“Mr Ramsday will see you now.” She said holding the door open. Tim wasn’t going to get up, but the cold stare that he was given was enough to make him move. He stood up fast and zipped himself up, being careful not to catch anything in the zipper – an experience he would rather not witness. He adjusted his tie quickly, and exited the room. Jenny slammed it closed behind him.

“Aren’t you going to show me the way?” Tim asked as Jenny turned and began to walk off.

“No!” she said in a cold and harsh tone over her shoulder, and then she was gone. Tim was left all alone in a building he had never visited before. He looked around; there was only the second corridor by the empty main entrance. He turned and headed that way. *It must be this way* he thought. It was the right choice. He came into the main entrance area, and looked around. Everything was as it had been when he had entered the building.

There was one door at the end of the corridor. He knocked on it with the sheepishness of a five year old, which was trying to check under his bed for monsters. He understood what monsters might lurk behind the door and wasn’t sure he wanted to confront them yet. Again, he checked his tie, and entered.

At first, he saw nothing. The blinds to the room were closed firmly, letting no light in at all, apart from a small glitter of light where the blinds didn’t quite reach – only a tiny bit though. Once his eyes had adjusted, he stepped in and closed the door. On one side of the room was a desk, and a huge leather chair. Behind that, mounted on the wall, was a large television set, which emitted a high pitch buzz. It was on.

“Hello!” he called, looking at the chair. It was the only possible place that anyone could possibly lurk.

“You’re late!” the voice said from behind the big leather chair. A small puff of smoke rose from the chair. Whoever was there, was smoking. Smoking like a chimney, Tim thought

“I got...” Tim started. He couldn’t finish that sentence. *What could he say? I was shagging your receptionist. No! How could he say anything?* He stood silent for a moment, not daring to finish the sentence.

“Way laid!” the voice said. The chair spun round, and a small, rounded, bald man stared up at him. He held a fag in between his index and middle finger. He took a quick drag of it before offering it to Tim. Tim shook his head. He didn’t smoke. The guy took another drag of his fag and moved it away from his face. For a moment he sat silent, and then he let out the breath of smoky breath. “Sit!” he said first.

Tim followed his hand, and pulled up a chair. It was a comfy chair this time. It was padded with a pillow like material.

“I know your story, Tim!” the guy said. “I have been in this business a long time, and been in this building nearly as long. I know what goes on. Don’t think I don’t know, because I do. I have seen it all before. Don’t think I don’t know.”

“I don’t think...”

“No, you don’t think!” Mr Ramsday snapped. “That is your problem. You don’t think at all. You don’t think about the consequences, do you? I bet you never thought about your wife.”

Wife! He thought. *How does he know I am married? I never told him. Maybe just a lucky guess, I guess.*

Tim hung his head in shame.

“No! Didn’t think so.” The small rounded man stood up and held out his hand. “I am Mr Ramsday, and I run this operation.” He smiled. Tim took his hand,

hardly looking up. "Look at me son." He said with his fag dangling in one hand, and his hand still in the air. "I have done it too."

"Why don't you stop it?" Tim asked.

"It is more fun to see people squirm a little, I guess. I won't give you no bullshit. Jenny is the best God damned receptionist in this town. She may be a tart, along with everyone else around here, but she does a job, and she does it well."

"Shall we cut the shit?" He asked. "You know why your here. I don't need to tell you."

"No you don't!" Tim said with modesty creeping into his voice.

"I would like to offer you a job of a lifetime. I want you to come and work for me. I want you to work for my company. I have read your credentials, Tim. I know who you are and I want to take you on. What do you say?" he asked

"What can I say?" Tim thought out loud.

"I will be offended if you say no." My Ramsday fired back.

"What can I say then?" Tim held up his hands, as if saying 'you got me there'. Mr Ramsday had got him. There was a reason for the large screen T.V. you know, but that would come later. It was obvious Tim would not try and get out of this place yet. He wanted this job, even more than Mr Ramsday had thought.

"Welcome aboard!" he said, standing up and offering his hand. Tim took his hand and gave it a firm, friendly shake.

"What would I actually be doing here?" Tim asked. Mr Ramsday began to laugh.

"You will do what you normally do, but instead of other people at the end of the rainbow, it will be me. I am your pot of gold."

“When can I start?” Tim asked. For some reason Mr Ramsday began to laugh again, and that unsettled Tim a little. He wanted the job though, so he ignored it as best he could. Only a hint of his emotion showed in the smile on his face. Tim managed to hide his fear.

“I will show you the facilities now.” He said standing up. Tim stood up too, and then moved away from the desk and waited for his new boss to show he round. It was funny; Tim never thought to ask about pay or the working hours. He didn’t deem them necessary at the time.

Tim opened the door and stepped out.

“Down there!” Mr Ramsday said walking down two-steps on the flight. That confused Tim. There had never been any stairs there, in the main entrance on his way in. He could have sworn it. He was sure he had seen an empty wall. The stairs were there now, and there was no certainly no dispute over that.

“Where did they come from?” Tim asked stepping down three steps. He never got an answer. Mr Ramsday stood behind him and pushed him. Tim fell down the stairs, and was out cold.

“Welcome to the writers factory Tim!” he said laughing. Jenny stepped up behind him, wearing her usual receptionist clothing again and placed her arms around his waist.

“We did it again!” she said looking at the still body at the bottom of the steps. “We did it again.” They truly had done it again. Jenny began to kiss her husband on the back of the neck. “Another signed up soul.”

Tim lay in a heap at the bottom of the stairs, until they bothered to move him. When they finally did take him, they took him down the stairs and into the factory. They went through the factory and to the back. There was a row of three prison cells.

They threw Tim in one of them and locked the door. It was the middle cell. They couldn't let him out until he was part of the company, part of the team.

3

Joan sat tapping her foot, waiting impatiently for her husband to return. It was late. She sat worried, her face whiter than the pair of socks she had only just put on. She looked like she may vomit any second, but she didn't. She sat in silent panic. The phone was rested on her lap. Her hand was edging over it, waiting for it to ring. She had been waiting since six earlier in the evening. The phone had not rung once. Things must have gone bad, she was thinking. They had gone bad, but Tim had gotten the job. He had gotten his new job.

Suddenly she snapped out of her waiting mode, and began to dial Tim's mobile. It was never turned off, and was always in his top right hand pocket. She dialled the number and waited. It began to ring.

Tim lay against the brick wall of the cell. It was cold on his back, but it beat the pain away. He had woken up about three hours ago. He had been lying there waiting for something to happen, but nothing had. His growing headache was fuelled by the constant whirring of the heater above his cell. It blew hot, and he was unnerved by it. It unsettled him to be blowing such heat in this hot whether. Suddenly it dawned on him that his mobile was still lying heavy in his shirt pocket. He pulled it out and looked at the small screen.

"Shit!" he exclaimed. He had no reception what so ever in that cell. He moved it around, hoping to pick up a couple of bars. That would be all it took to get a call through, but he had no luck.

“You have reached the message service. The number you are dialling is out of service. Please leave a message after the tone, and the caller will get back to you once they reach a serviceable area.” Joan slammed down the phone and began to cry. She feared the worst now. His phone shouldn’t be out of range. They were in the middle of England for Christ’s sake. They had almost one hundred percent coverage. Something was seriously wrong.

She picked up the phone again, and dialled Kevin, Tim’s best friend. He might know something. She dialled the number, her fingers trembling and her eyes watering. The phone began to ring.

“Hello!” a tough voice called almost immediately.

“Something’s happened to Tim.” Joan blurted out. That was how it all began. She told him all about the interview, although she didn’t know where the place was exactly. It was called J.C.E. She remembered that. She told him she hadn’t seen him all day, and he was due back too many hours ago. Kevin advised her to stay calm; he was coming over to see her. As soon as he got off the phone, he jumped in the car and powered his way through to Joan. She needed someone right now. Tim wouldn’t care who it was with her, as long as someone was there for her.

Things weren’t getting better an hour after Kevin arrived. More time had past and there had still been no phone call from Tim. Kevin picked up the phone and dialled 999. He reported Tim as being missing.

“Tim who?” the operator asked. “Did I hear correctly?”

“Get the God damned police out here now, bitch!” he yelled.

“Tim Dodgeson has gone missing?” She asked again, and then she turned serious. “We will be over right away.”

“Thank you!” he said and slammed the phone down.

The news travelled down the grapevine, and eventually ended up in the newspapers offices the next morning. There was still no sign of Tim. Joan opened the front door and took the paper that had been jammed in the letterbox out. She hated the way the paperboy did that. He rammed the paper in the letterbox ruining the outer edge. By the time Joan had gotten it out of the damned thing, it looked like it had been run through a shredder.

She unravelled the paper and stared at the front page. Her mouth dropped open, and she suddenly felt very weak at the knees. She collapsed onto her knees, and began to pray for her husband’s safe return.

The article in the paper read:

Writer of the year missing! (An extract taken from the *Daily Express*.)

*Late last night, the police received a phone call claiming that the best-loved writer, Tim Dodgeson, had gone missing. We can exclusively reveal to you that this report is true. The four time bestseller, whose life had been dogged by unforgettable mistakes such as **A boyhood dream** and **The winters untrue**, until two months ago with the publication of his latest attempt, **Fate worse than death**, which entered at the top of the book charts. A source close to the writer revealed his many drug addictions and the writer’s addiction to alcohol. At this early stage no one knows for sure what has happen to the writer, but we do ask you to keep your eyes peeled. There is an undisclosed reward awaiting his safe return.*

*Tim Dodgeson, who was last week awarded the title, writer of the year, was looking for a new agent and publisher, according to our source. At this time we cannot say if he was rejected from the highly acclaimed **J. C. E Agency** or not, which may explain his disappearance. Some think he may have gone off the rails. Others believe that drugs and alcohol may have gotten the better of him, finally, and are awaiting the discovery of his body. We look forward to reporting news...*

A quite emotional extract Joan's televised appeal that same day:

Tim, I have known you for more of life than I care to bare witness too. My love for you is greater than the biggest ocean, the biggest planet or the biggest galaxy. My love for you has no bounds. That is why I don't care what has happened. I don't care if you have slept with another woman. I don't care if you have eaten your own shit. All I care for, is you safe return. If I loose you, then I loose part of myself. You are the only one whom I could ever love. I want you back. I don't care if you have lost a job. I don't care if you work sucks. All I care about is you.

Please come home to me. I lay in my bed without you and I cry...

An extract from **Fate worse than death:**

"...Nothing can prepare us for what is to happen. Nothing can make us ready for what will happen, whether it be ten minutes from now or ten months from now. You know I want you here with me baby. I don't want you to leave me alone, in the dark. I want you by my side forever. I don't think I can live with out you here."

Katie rolled over in her bed. The words still came from her dried mouth. Freddie was gone, and she wanted him back. The incident that claimed her dreams as nightmares had taken place three years ago. She still dreamt of him – her husband. She would lay awake at night and scream out his name. The darkness engulfing her, and stifling her ominous screams. She missed him so. He had rudely vanished from her on one night, and now she was left with haunted dreams (the nightmares) of him.

“...Please don’t leave me here alone. I can’t live with out you Freddie. I want you here. I want you by my side. I want you.”

Freddie had vanished in the middle of the night, leaving her on her own. Whether he had just got up and left, or whether he was taken, was decided amongst the many. Everyone thought he had left his wife for another woman, but to Katie, he had been taken. He could never be with another woman in her mind. He only had eyes for her. She awaited his return with...