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in this publication are fictitious  
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companies or organizations, acting or defunct,  
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is purely coincidental.

For any former comrades or associates who might think  
they can recognize themselves: you are *wrong*.  
Believe me, you were never *that* good... or bad.

For my darling wife,  
Natasha Nikolaina  
And my daughter,  
Eleana,  
Who both bear the brunt of  
Distance and separation

*Some sail East  
And Some sail West  
By the very same Wind that Blows  
It's not the Wind  
But the set of the Sails  
That decides where Each One Goes*

**THERE'S NO LOGIC AT ALL IN LOVE, BUT EVEN  
LESS IN HAT**

# *Celia's Daddy*

*Celia's Daddy*

***A Romance***

*by*

**Dominic Fahr**

For those who aren't too sure:  
The Old Oxford English  
Dictionary defines "romance" as  
being, (amongst a dozen other  
things): (ix) *An extravagant fiction,  
invention, or story; a wild or  
wanton exaggeration; a  
picturesque falsehood*  
and (xi) *a love story. This tale  
fulfills all those requirements!*

**IF IGNORANCE  
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY MISERIES AROUND?**

## *Frustration and Confusion*

### **First**

Danielle Dee choked a sob of anger, screamed with anguish and then, kneeling in the rain soaked garden, she hammered on the ground ferociously, though fruitlessly, with petite curled fists more suited to using a pen, and shed tears of frustration. This miserable, rainy January, Thursday had been yet another gruelling day of a working week so hectically demanding, that she had been left both mentally and physically drained and exhausted. Working *week*? All the housework, washing, mending and shopping had taken up much of last Saturday and what time was left *and* the whole of Sunday had been swallowed into the black hole of “*out of hours*” work, preparing the response for Monday’s court hearing.

Only today, it had been necessary to pore over a complicated and divers application with the architects, which naturally resulted in a zillion trivial points and phrases being raised, argued, agreed and finalized. Then, bubbling to the brim with more petty details, another pile of writs and letters, albeit relating to another, though just as tortuous, matter, had been argued with Bryant’s, another solicitors. Rushing to the County Court for what was to have been a *minor* hearing but which had proceeded to drag on for fifty-

five minutes longer than anticipated because the plaintiff was asthmatic, and had mislaid her inhaler. All these party frolics were followed by a swift dash back to the office at just after four o'clock to clear the day's paperwork. The *junior* assistant solicitor, they had told her, gets all the dross but she hadn't realized just how far a dross carrier might have to *run*. To round off the day's work, the *delightful* cycle-ride of the five miles, or is that eight kilometres now, in the driving, drenching, *deluging*, damned rain to get home where, penultimately, she had to prepare dinner for Celia and herself. She had sat for just a minute, to catch her breath, as it were.

The harsh quarter chimes of a clock that, had it been the farmer who originally bought it, would be receiving a centenary congrats telegram from the Queen, had wrenched her back suddenly to the cold dull light of late day. Had she dozed for a moment? A *moment!* Five fifteen! She *had* to be on the main bypass to meet the bus at five twenty! Celia would be waiting at the bus stop and it would take Danielle at least another twelve minutes, with the luck of a following breeze, to cycle there. The idea of her baby daughter waiting for fifteen minutes or more, alone, at the side of a busy road terrified her. But now? Now a *cat-a-strophe!*

The rear tyre lay flat. Airless. *Uninflated*. The telephone lines were being attended to by some soul

forsaken engineer in some soul forsaken place where they usually site the junction boxes, and her mobile phone lay in slothful idleness, overlooked and forgotten in the rush for home, on her desk in the office. In utter panic, she scrambled to fetch the instruction book and the little box with '*Puncture Kit*' embossed in classic gothic script on the lid. Trying to keep the book dry(ish) in the rain, she opened the mini manual, frantically fumbling for the right page.

*Punctures*... "Punctures"... *What* had to be done?

Well, firstly, you must remove the wheel. Remove the wheel!! *Take off? The wheel?!* Just how are you supposed to manage that? This is the *back* wheel, with the chain threaded through all those cogs and things?

...*The gears*. That's it. Through the gears!

There is truly only so much panic driven stress any one body can take and this elfin form had taken more than enough. Bowed low, like a lily on which the rain has fallen too long and too hard, she folded and wept, almost overwhelmed with the sweeping feeling of anger at her own uselessness and inadequacy. But, no matter how useless, how inadequate, only she was here to mend the puncture. Her tear-blinded eyes made the fitting of the spanner to the wheel nut that much more difficult but, with nobody to ask for help, what choice did she have?

'For whom do you weep sweet maid?' The voice was gravelly, though sympathetic and deep, and filled with

a dozen accents. So engrossed had she been in struggling to get the wheel off her bike she hadn't heard the approach of those long black leather boots, even over the pebble dressed side way to the cottage. Her pale, rain wetted, tearstained face stared upwards. Through the salty blur, she saw the alien. Totally *nonhuman*; it had two black glossy domes! As she shook her head to clear her eyes she noticed it also had little appendages sprouting from its neck; little legs with white ankle socks and black shoes. And the top dome wore a face just like...

'Hello, mummy!'

Danielle struggled to her feet, whereupon the *alien* became human as he swung Celia from his shoulders.

'Please mummy, I must get a drink. I am *perched*.

Devy, this is my mummy... tolded to you she is luvvy. Oh, mummy this is Devlin, he is my new daddy!' chirruped the little mite, as she then dashed away to the house, removing her mini sized crash helmet as she flew, her burnished red curls become dancing flames.

'Typical Fire Child.' The man murmured to himself with a half smile, removing his own helm and eyeing Danielle's red tresses.

Who was *he*? ...*my new WHAT?* Oh good grief!

'Typical Fire... Who? What? Celia? Or me?' From inadequacy to turmoil!

'Yes,' nodded the man in agreement. He had his head

turned slightly from her. The rain was reduced to the odd drip, at last, and the newly lightening sky had silhouetted him in left profile.

‘But I did ask for whom do you weep?’ his voice sent shivers down her back.

Defensively, Danielle pointed vaguely at the flat tyre. ‘I finished work and cycled home and cooked dinner for Celia and me and I had to collect Celi from the bus but the tyre... is... flat... and the book is ...is a joke.’

The explanation had started so fast as to be almost manic and she slowed it towards a stuttering end.

‘*Everything* is a joke.’ The man spoke seriously as he lifted the bike, spun the rear wheel and nodded.

Standing the bike back on its stand he commented, ‘Unfortunately, very few jokes are funny!’ Nodding again he asked, ‘Right, Might I ask you to please fetch me a bowl with some water?’ he asked politely, and headed round the corner of the house to the path to the gate. Instinctively female she watched him as he moved with the grace and casual arrogance of a prowling tiger. An aura of strength and understated power. A man who... *Whoa!* Her lawyer’s mind dragging her off the track that had once led her into terror, and almost to the grave; prosaically prompting her to note the “*would*” not “*could*”, the “*fetch*” not “*get*”.

Grammatically perfect, she thought almost inconsequentially.

Not quite sure why he wanted any water? To wash his hands?

Dani, still with a hundred or so questions, bustled to the kitchen. Bowl... bowl... what *size* bowl? The one for washing up was far too big she decided and settled for a small pudding basin. Hot water or cold? Warm then, easier on his hands. Celia appeared from the hallway dressed, surprisingly, in play clothes.

‘I hunged my school uniform up, mummy.’

‘You *did*? You did? Oh, good.’

She wanted to ask “*Why*”? But, as her mother had once told her, “*Never question a child’s good deed, dear.*” “Did you ever question mine, mum?” “*Of course not, darling. Not that there were many to question.*” But her mother’s loving, teasing smile was a memory that still drew pain. There was one immediate question, however, that *did* need asking, ‘Celi, who *is* this, um, *gentleman*?’

‘Mummee! I did tell to you, He is *Devy*.’ averred Celia in the type of frustrated voice normally reserved by elders for rather dull children. ‘He is my new *daddy* and... *mummy*?’ a look of mystified wonder, ‘what *are* you doing with our little puddy bowl?’ Thrown by bewilderment in her little girl’s question, and as she couldn’t honestly give her daughter the answer she was so obviously awaiting, Danielle answered vaguely. ‘What? Oh, I’ve got a flat tyre and he, your *Devy*, said he wanted a bowl of water. Although I’m

not quite sure what he actually wants it for.’

‘Oh, mum-my!’ (*Isn't this how your mature daughter, standing there, hands on hips, and shaking her head in concern and dismay, will speak to you when you are a-hundred-and-nine and in your dotage??*) ‘The big bowl mummy! He has to find the hole! In the tube... in the tyre, mummy. Where the air is coming out, mummy.’ Clearly, *mummy* needed this last *fully* explaining to her, or why would she be stood with a pudding bowl of water.

‘Ah!’ Dani felt as though it was she, not her daughter, who was the little schoolgirl. She did know all that about the puncture leaking air into the water, of course she did but it’s sometimes hard to think straight in a panic! But the panics over, she reprimanded herself. Celia’s home safely, *although* ... where did that helmet and the little leather coat come from?

They must have cost quite a bit and surely, the school doesn’t run to that sort of thing? Having half filled the washing-up bowl, she twisted to ask about that...

‘Celi?’ ... but Celia had flown.

In the front garden the wheel, now denuded of the tyre and inner tube, stood upright against the shed wall, the rim edge protected, as was the saddle on the now upturned bicycle she noted, by pieces of tattered but clean towelling laid on the damp concrete. Watched intently by a little redhead, as delicate as a gossamer fairy, albeit clothed in a bright blue t-shirt, her tiny

pink trainers peeping out from under baggy stonewashed dungaree jeans, the man examined the inside of the tyre. He murmured quietly to the waif and she showed him some tool or other from his box. He nodded and softly muttered something else. Dani, statue still, holding the bowl of water, watched as he spread the tyre and held it firmly whilst her moppet wrestled and drew something from it with the pliers she had held in both her dainty hands. ‘Yes!’ the pair cried in unison and Celia’s face shone with success and hero worship as she held up the broken rusty remains of a nail.

‘Ha-ha! Das wasser!’ he cried, at last spying Dani’s patient bystander. He rose from his crouch, passed the tyre to Celia, who grinned at her mum through the circular frame as Devy took the bowl from her and sat it on a level paving slab.

‘Now vot ve are going to do, my little schugar dumpschling?’ he asked and Dani began to answer, ‘You ha...’

‘We make air in the tube and hold the tube under the water and the air comes out and makes bubbles. And *that* is where the hole is.’ stated Celia proudly. Her mummy was blushing - *Little Sugar Dumpling? Celia!!* Oh, ye gods and little daisies, where am I going?

‘Obviously a lady of remarkable cosmic knowledge, your ma’amship.’ A quavering voice full of admiration

and awe told the tiny lass, and Celia smiled happily, if somewhat smugly. His rough throated voice carefully explaining the whys and wherefores of every move, Devlin connected the foot pump to the inner tube and with an air of intense concentration, and four thrusts of her baby size 6's, Celia pumped hard enough to turn the flat tube into a fat, if hissing, black pudding hoop. Devlin disconnected the tube from the pump and submerged it in the bowl, slowly drawing it through his right hand with his left...

'It's there, it's there, Professor!' The excited voice drew smiles from both adults. Devlin held up the rubber tube and Celia carefully drew a yellow circle(ish) shape around the bubbling hole with a pointed yellow crayon. 'You tink ve got only vun?' he asked and the little girl, nodding with a certain boffin-like perception, told him,

'Bubbles out, Moonmen in.' Celia was very knowing. 'Best to check.'

*(Are they crazy? Was Danielle's thought. Followed by, nobody taught us how to do punctures when I was at infants' school!).* He grinned again, nodding, and once more submerged the tube. Seven minutes later, the tube was patched, back on the wheel and the wheel locked safely between the rear forks of the bike. Dani sat on a stone boulder set on the grass and watched her daughter eagerly and delightedly running in search of an oil can and rags. Wearing huge, oversized

garden gloves to keep her tiny hands clean and oil free, she held wheels whilst brakes and nuts were adjusted, the chain had a link removed and the gear mechanism oiled and tightened and a dozen other small but *important* jobs. Dani was bemused by her daughter's questions and the casual but matter-of-fact way this big man was explaining how ET managed to make the boys' bikes fly whilst everybody else had to make do with the earth. Fantasy and reality all in one bundle. *Her* bicycle was in excellent repair by the time they had finished, no longer the *death trap* that *Devy* now told her it had been at the start!

\* \* \* \* \*

In answer to mummy's *casual* query, Celia was explaining patiently. That is, as patiently as any five year old could be expected to manage, 'He did bring me home from school on his motorbike.

It's called Berty.'

How was it that on this of all days someone should bring her safely home? 'But why weren't you on the bus?'

Still the epitome of patience, '*Because, mummy, I was coming on Berty.*'

'But *why* on the *bike* and not on the *bus*?'

A puzzled pause, and then daylight at the tunnel's end.

‘*Oh*, I unnerstand *now*. I did come on Berty because Devy telled to Mrs Bentley that you would be a tad too late for the bus today.’ Explanation over?

‘A tad... And how on earth did he know that? He couldn’t possibly have seen ...’ she paused, and Celia’s sighed response came deprecatingly in the gap. ‘*Mummy*, he is *Devy* and *Devy* do know ev-ery-thing.’ It seemed quite self-explanatory to an idolising five year old although, perhaps, a little more complicated to a cynical lawyer, in her mid twenties. Ignoring for a moment the various lines of enquiry *that* reply invited Dani asked her next question.

‘Please tell your *mummy*, then, what did you mean when you told me that this ma... that *Devy* is going to be your “*new daddy*”?’

‘Oh! *Mummy!*’ (Retirement home voice again) ‘Mrs. Bentley - she wried you to a letter and said if I could have a daddy, and you said yes.’

‘*I* did? Did I? When was this?’ Dani was startled. Surely she would have remembered *that*?

‘In the *letter*. Oh a long time ago! You put your name in it and gived it back to me in the envelope.’

A letter? The *letter*? Oh! *The Letter*. “*Champions!*” *That* letter. Six weeks since. Well, six weeks is certainly *long time ago* when you’re just in infant school, and obviously too long ago for an *old* woman going on twenty-six to recall! Dancing daisies and daffodils, what else do I sign and forget? *But*, yes,

now she did recollect the letter and, *gorblimey guv*, the reply a week later, to what she had thought was a fantastic idea. It was just that she had been given to believe, had thought, ... alright, she *assumed*, 'I thought that would be only for the Fair and for Sports Day. Didn't Mrs Bentley say he was to be your Champion?' The swift transformation from *Champion* to *Daddy* perhaps said too much about a little girl's needs.

'Mummy, I did askted Devy what is a champy-on and he tellded to me that he must do all the things I would want my daddy to have to do. So,' head tipped with a child's innocent beam of affirmation, '*he's* my daddy.' The logic was simple, obvious, *absolutely* clear. At least to *this* little girl. Dani felt the terrible prickle behind her eyes as her baby daughter now sat contentedly eating her dinner. Trying not to sound anything but unconcernedly interested Dani wondered, 'And, um, what sort of things *does* a daddy do?'

The answer came with pauses to eat. 'Must look after me when you are at working.' with a happy nod, 'Devy do give me lots rides on Cassandra the Great.' Pause: *Cassandra the What?*

'And on Berty.' Proudly she announced, 'He buyed for me a helmet and a proper coat because that's what us Bikies *have* to wear. It's the law.' she informed the lawyer(ess). Another pause. '*And* Devy do talk with

Mrs. Bentley when *she* says I've been naughty.' Celia looked up from her dinner plate and, with a slightly haughty voice, informed her one woman audience that, '*Devy says that all little girls must be naughty sometimes or nobody will know when they are good.*' Obviously, this particular sentiment appealed to Celia as did, so it would appear, anything else that Mr *Devy* said or did. 'He do make Mrs. Bentley laugh. And he do make me laugh.' In Celia's long pause while cutting up her lamb chop, Dani had to smile because she could understand how he did that. 'And he do tell to me stories with funny voices and how I must love my mummy... I do! I do!' afraid mummy might think she didn't and needed telling. 'At school *Devy* says that mummies have to work *very* hard and if there isn't someone to help them they get *very* tired, but they can't ever stop because they have to look after little waves and veggi-bands.' (*waves and veggi-bands??*)

Pause for chewing, which can be hard work when you are only small. '*And Devy did tellded to me that I am a Fire Child, because I have hair from the volc-□-no,*' she pronounced carefully. 'And I tolded him back that my mummy has hair like mine and he says then we are two Fire Maids.' She nodded once more to herself and kept eating.

*Devy, Devy, Devy: does this, does that, Devy says.*

Intrigued, Dani enquired, 'Did he tell you what a *Fire*

*Maid is?*

‘Hmm.’ Celia nodded again. ‘When the giants did steal some daughters from Our Goddess, they all had silver hair. But they were locked up in caves under the mountains until the Hunter came with his brother who was,’ pause for thought and then with yet another nod, ‘the *Bird*, he can tell stories and sing songs, magic ones, and get them out. But their hair was gone red like the fire because of the volc-□-no. So they were turned into being Fire Maidens.’ A long pause before she added with a whimsical frown, ‘But *Devy* say Fire Maids do have *terrible* tempests.’

(*Tempests?* He might just be right about that...)

‘Does he now? And what does *Devy* do? Where does he work? And when does he do all these things... of looking after you and talking to Mrs. Bentley?’ With a distinct feeling that it might be a patch of quicksand safer to skirt around, Danielle thought it better leaving the subject of “*Our Goddess*” for another time. She wasn’t too sure how she should feel about a man who appeared to be doing so many things that she, as a parent, thought that she really ought be doing if there were only enough time. A man who was in fact conducting himself more like a *father* and just might so dangerously be replacing her in her daughter’s affections. She became conscious that her voice had been far sharper than she had intended, (*Devy say they do have terrible tempests!*), and *that* was being

unfair both to Celi, and to her new found Champion. But why wouldn't a *mummy* worry after the dreadful things *she* had known in the past? She had fired off a whole slew of questions in one go, but Celia did try to answer. Her face lit up.

'Oh, Devy can do draw things and make pictures with paints and they go in books and we got some in school because he gets them for nothing from his pubbisher,' (*his what? Oh, publisher?*) 'and he gives them to us to look at and read. And he comes to the school to tell us about... *things*.' A strange emphasis on that last word, as if the Official Secrets Act was involved. Now what could be...?

'Things? What *things*, darling?'

Seriously, in a quieter voice, as if divulging the deepest clan mysteries, Celia explained with meaningful nods, '*Important* things that girls *have* to know.' Danielle was more than intrigued. *Important things?* 'All about, why the fairies have to hide in flowers and why we can't see dragons very much anymore.' Celia sat eating, still nodding to herself as to how important it was for every girl to have such knowledge.

Before Dani could ask anything further, Celia was holding forth on something else that she hadn't been prepared for. 'On Thursdays he do come when *parents*,' very careful enunciation, 'can ask teachers how we are beeving.' (*Beeving? Behaving!*)

Now a flash of guilt hit Dani. Thursday was a court day and she could never make those morning meetings. This must be a problem surely for other working mothers; but this man makes the time? *Why? Hasn't he anything better to?* (A dead shadow laughed and scolded her “*Don't be a bitch all your life, dear, have at least one day off! Perhaps he thinks such things are important. Perhaps he needs to care about somebody other than himself.*”) The words had come from nowhere, surprising her.

She hadn't thought deeply of any man for a long time and certainly had *never* known one who showed any concern about little children's schoolwork or seemed able to understand their problems! (*All little girls must be naughty sometimes...* What a defence!! It would have been nice if that had been the philosophy when she was five). She'd always had a weakness for dangerous men, but that had almost ended with her and Celia being beaten to death. But Devy, he confused her. There was no denying his aura of danger in the way he moved and acted, but he radiated none of the menace and terror she'd suffered last time.

There *was* something definitely *wicked* about this one whom, she was sure, would fall into mum's category of a *bad* man. At the hospital, on her death bed, her mum had told her,

“Find a man, darling,” She found something amusing, ‘although I think it would be better for you if he is a

bad one!”

“I’ve learnt my lesson and have had enough of bad men!”

Dani had snapped without thinking, but then felt guilty for talking to her poor, sick mum that way. Cecily Dee may have been dying, but she still had strength of character, and a sense of humour. Her face had shone when she told Danielle, “Not an *evil* man, you silly thing, a *bad* one. Evil men *are* evil, but not all bad men are all bad, just more... *realistic*. And, daughter, *they* know how to look after a woman! For a girl like you, a *good* man would be an utter a waste of time.”

*A girl like me, mum? What sort of girl am I?* She never had been too sure about that either before or after the tortuous attack. She hadn’t been able to make sense of it all those long five years ago with her babe in arms, but now it could be that she was beginning to understand what her mother might have meant.

‘Do *all the* parents come? To the Meetings?’ she asked Celi, calmer now, but curious.

‘Oh *No!* Ginny Norton has got a mummy *and* two daddies but they *never* come. Well, one isn’t her daddy now but he was once and the other one was her bedroom daddy, but he doesn’t come to the school and he is in a very hot country with camels.’

‘What her new daddy... with the camels?’

‘No, *mummy*, the *old* daddy. *He* is in a hot country

with camels. Hmm.’ She shook her curls, disgusted that people didn’t listen to what you tell them. With a brighter look she went on, ‘But *we* are special girls, Mrs. Bentley said we are special. All our champy-*ons* do come and tell us all sorts of things about their work and why they don’t have little girls of their own and that’s why they are so lucky to have us.’

However fairylandish a view of life Celia might have, Danielle was suddenly almost inordinately happy for her daughter and asked herself how men who had families and children could abandon them, ignore them or, worse, beat them, hurt them, kill them, whilst those with none were willing to sacrifice their time? A querulous little voice was also asking what little girls could possibly mean by *bedroom daddies*?

Surely they didn’t understand about sex at that age? Were we as old as that at five, she asked herself or is it just a picture they have of life? Losing herself in thought she nearly missed Celia’s closing remark, which left her pondering for more than one night.

‘We *are* lucky. More lucky than girls with mummies and daddies who don’t come to see our school work and look at our pictures and what we do. *We* have daddies what cares about us.’

If Dani felt guilty, and perhaps slighted, her tiny daughter throwing her arms around her mummy’s neck and telling her how lucky she was to have a luvvy mummy like her nearly, truly *did* make her cry.

She told herself that ten days of tiring work, the weekend taken up preparing her court response, was the reason for her blubbering. Yeah, right!

Even more tired out than her mummy Celia went happily to bed with her three rag dollies and was soon fast asleep, a happy smile etched on her baby face. Having washed the dinner things, put all the day's laundry into the washer and, finally, made herself a cup of Ovaltine, Dani sat gratefully near the fire and she mused. She mused about men who did things merely because they needed doing. More pointedly, she mused about a rather hard and rather wicked looking man who appeared ready to give all the time in the world for a tiny tot of a girl, demonstrating the kind of patience and understanding that seemed so rare these days, was so sure of everything he did but still came over as being inordinately shy. He hadn't leered at her, hadn't tried to make a pass. He had waved his goodbyes, and dashed off after fixing the tyre: '*your dinner will spoil!*' he had called out. Oddly, a man whom she could only remember in left profile.

### *Some Explanations*

#### **Second**

Her phone lay snoozing idly on the *top*, and the letter, the reply she hadn't *properly* read, was folded up asleep in *inside* her desk in the office!

In a nutshell, she now digested: “ ...Celia chose one of these from the album and with some *persuasion* he agreed that he would be happy to act as her Champion.

Celia’s new “Champion” is called Devlin Carmichael, formerly a soldier of sorts, something of an offshore banker, and now an illustrator of children’s books and quite a storyteller. He is of impeccable character, own house, cars, and motorbikes and has a monster of a dog.

They have met and Celia has adopted him. And his dog!

She acts so much less on the defensive, is open and happier now, and plays a far greater and involved part in general class discussions. She also pays a lot more attention to her class work, in which she takes considerable pride showing off to her new Champion.”

Questioning of Sherine, on the reception desk proved to be of some help, if slightly obtuse, ‘*Do you mean Colonel Carmichael? Wowee!*’ She eyed Dani with something akin to having found a gold and sapphire ring in a box of bric-a-brac.

‘Smashing bloke but,’ she looked cautiously around, ‘just be careful who you mention his visit to in *here*. And,’ she added cryptically, ‘you just watch that Cecil Wilcox as well!’ Dani had begun to ask, *why?* Why

the caution in here and what on earth had a boy like Cecil Wilcox, barely out of his teens got to do with anything? But the phone was ringing and Sherine was back into her snooty receptionist mode.

Bernadette Fletcher, the junior partner of the firm, was prepared to offer womanly observations and some further advice. Dani found herself quite surprised both by the advice and by her own response.

\* \* \* \* \*

The morning court session ended with a “*break for lunch and all parties to return at two-fifteen*”