

This is the original teaser that I put together one rainy Saturday afternoon in 2012. It is the most read piece of writing on my website and the aim was to do a series of Ruby books once my SF/Fantasy trilogy was finished. "Ruby" The book is now a work in progress and will be different to this teaser, but I'm leaving it here as so many people liked it. There is a PDF version in the downloads section.

## **Ruby – Part 1**

### **The Party**

The party had been going well, but then a private island with everything provided by the Polandrous Foundation was certain to please everyone. Just close enough to a major tourist island with its safe international airport, but private enough to make even the most paranoid financier loosen their tongue. Not that Ruby needed them to talk much, just relax.

"Circulate Ruby. Give Carlson the full charm offensive." Said George

She liked George Polandrous. Some of the people she'd worked for since discovering her gift were cold fish, treated her like an appliance. Most and not just the men had made it obvious that her duties were to include sharing their bed on demand. Not that Ruby was against a varied sex life, she'd enjoyed mixing with the rich and beautiful and would probably pick a lover for tonight, but it would be her choice. George had been different. He treated her like a favourite niece, even teased her about her love of chocolate covered Brazil nuts. Even George though didn't realise the anguish that the thoughts of others could bring.

Ruby had just been introduced to a Dutch banker who had a thing for children and he seemed to have a constant private screening going on in his head. A German property developer who looked like Santa Claus, jolly laugh, flowing white beard, was selling arms to both sides in a long running spot of trouble in the Middle East. Even the charming HR lady from a well-known London bank had started to picture what she'd like to do to Ruby if given the opportunity, and very little of it was pleasant or legal. Ruby had once thought of giving names and details to the police, anonymously of course, but then George had made her rich, very rich and Ruby had thought 'fuck it' and kept quiet. She walked towards the Carlson group, him with his minor entourage of office minions. The mental fingers started to go over her body, but she was used to that, almost flattered by it. A close friend had once told her when she was 18 that she'd be very dangerous when she was 25. She was now 22 and could say with certainty that everyone in the Carlson Group wanted her and that gave her power.

"Mr Carlson. I'm Ruby, PA to Mr Polandrous."

It was almost the truth, on the payroll of the foundation she was listed as a PA, but there was a room full of girls to do the typing and filing and God forbid the dictation. Ruby was paid obscene amounts of money to rub shoulders with the rich and famous.

"Hi Ruby, a very nice weekend, did you arrange it?"

She gave him her full blast smile. She'd quickly learned that her gift had a broadcast facility as well as being able to read minds. Ruby looked at him with her green eyes, looking out from under her honey blonde bob and gave him complete trust and adoration in a single smile. It worked, it always did, Carlson was hers now.

"Only some of it, I had a lot of help". She lied. George had minions to organise parties.

Carlson started to look awkward, but there was nothing instantly repugnant in his mind. True as a married man with three children perhaps he shouldn't have been thinking about how she'd look without her little black dress, but at least he wasn't thinking of strangling her with her own stockings, unlike the HR lady.

"Can I refill that ?"

She brushed his hand as she went to take his glass and felt the awkwardness go away. No magic involved, no use of her gift, physical contact usually had that effect. Ruby took the glass all of three feet before a waiter offered to get it refilled for her and return it to Mr Carlson. As she turned back to the beaming CEO of Melanic Chemicals she was wondering how best to put her seed phrase into the conversation.

"How long have you been with George ?" Asked Carlson.

"About two years now."

Good a question she didn't have to lie about.

"Where were you before that ?"

Perfect ! Just a small lie and she'd find out the information George wanted and become just another party goer out for some fun.

"I was with a large city brokerage you've probably never heard of. Prendell Brothers."

His mind did a quick flip, but he'd have made a good poker players as the smile didn't falter. He touched her shoulder, which probably meant he was about to lie to her and wanted to reassure her. Only the best behavioural science trainers for George, but the money spent had made her a far more efficient intelligence tool.

"No. I don't know them. Were you with them long ?"

A silly lie, everyone knew his company were using Prendell for their takeover of GKDN, but Carlson was after all a CEO and not a corporate spy. In his mind he was thinking of GKDN and in a fraction of a second the top bid price he'd pay. Now all she had to do was get to her room and transcribe the thoughts onto her laptop before she forgot anything important.

"Several years. Please excuse me, but I think George needs me."

She turned away and tuned out the many and varied fantasies the people around her had about the beautiful blonde in the tiny black dress, her. Tuning out was vital, letting every thought into her head in the chance of picking up something interesting had nearly driven her crazy. Now she was like a precision instrument. Give the target a key phrase about the intelligence of interest and then grab it and away.

"I hate to see the best looking girl in the room without a drink."

Carlos, one of the security team. He was cute and she might choose him for tonight, but not now. She had to get the information onto a hard drive before she could have fun. Ruby hadn't always had the gift, hadn't always been confident and self-assured. As she entered her room she turned up the air conditioning and looked out of the window at the waves breaking on the pure white sand she remembered that night.

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Ruby had passed her driving test a few days after her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and bought an old battered Ford Focus. It was a heap that the sales guy had given her a good deal on to get it off his lot and a few friends had suggested the years MOT that came with didn't seem to suit the dented wreck in the road outside the house she shared with five friends. But to her the car was a Rolls Royce because it gave her freedom and got her out of scary public transport.

"But it keeps letting you down." Her Mother said, often.

True it had made her late for work once, but there was always the AA and Paul had been around then. Good old boring but reliable Paul who kept asking her to marry him, but did have a way with her car and spent most Sundays keeping it maintained and on the road.

That night, the night her life changed had been a dull and rainy March night, a Friday she remembered. Rather than another Pizza followed by a shag with Paul she'd decided to have a night out with girls and had gone to a wonderfully seedy club in the West End. Angela and two others had left early, but she'd decided to stay until they were invited to leave at 2am. The DJ had even put Bing Crosby's White Christmas on to make sure the place emptied quickly.

"Can I give you a lift home?" She asked.

A tear came to Ruby's eye as she remembered her best friend Lucy accepting a lift. If only she'd gone for a mini cab as she usually did.

"I'm not trusting that heap of rust."

Had been her usual comment about the much maligned Ford, but that night perhaps it was the end of the month and finances were tight? For whatever reason Lucy followed her back to the car parked in a side street near Cleveland Street.

"Get the door open, I'm freezing." Lucy said.

Ruby was weeping as she remembered and looked at her keys to the Audi lying next to her laptop. Top of the range street sleeper, nothing too flashy looking, but fast, tough and reliable, not a car to get your best friend killed.

"Are they following us?" She'd said.

Lucy was a bit drunk and by the time Ruby noticed the large old Mercedes seemed to be turning with them at every set of light, Lucy was also half asleep.

"No Ruby, no more of that, just get me home."

More of that! Yes Ruby had been through a period when everything worried her just a bit too much, but she wasn't crazy. By the time she realised she been watching the car behind a bit too much and the streets around them a bit too little, she was lost.

"Do you recognise where we are Lucy?"

Lucy was fast asleep, or passed out might have described her better. The street sign said Cable Street E1, E1! They were miles away from where she wanted to be.

'Calm Ruby, calm.' She told herself.

Then in her mirror she saw the car again as it turned into the street a few yards behind her. Ruby forgot all about staying calm and took a left turn so quickly that she heard a wing mirror hit a parked car and hurtle off into the night. Still not fast enough the Mercedes was still there, perhaps even closer, the driver now flashing his lights at her.

Ruby reached into the drawer for a tissue and realised her makeup would need a bit more than just a retouch before he went back to the party. Had the driver been a he? Even now, when she was calm and several years had intervened since that night she found it hard to think clearly about it, but yes a male face had been looking through the windscreen at her car.

The Streets signs had gone by so fast that she had no idea where she was and then as she turned a corner at speed the Focus stopped. It had done it before, the engine dying for no apparent reason, but that had usually been during the day on bright friendly streets with smiling people to help her push it into the kerb so she could get the AA to look at it.

"It does this all the time." She had told a great many concerned strangers.

Now she was in a dark street in E1 with what looked like condemned warehouses either side of her and it must have been nearly 4am on a cold night. The Mercedes came around the corner at speed

and couldn't stop in time. Ruby remembered seeing the road going in front of her windscreen as her ancient Ford started to roll.

"Must have rolled over three times, a miracle you survived." A policeman had told her.

She'd seen her friend briefly wake with a look of fear on her face and then everything had become a chaos of flying glass and crushed metal.

"Leave her, we have to go."

By some miracle her car had landed on its wheels against the wall of one of the grey and drab looking warehouse buildings. She was conscious and her contact lenses hadn't moved, so she could see the Mercedes with its crushed front and air bags coming out of the side doors like huge pillows. One girl was helping a man to stand while another man who looked unhurt was in the middle of the road and looking at her.

"I felt her in the club. She's almost one of us."

The three people in the Mercedes were arguing and Ruby looked for Lucy and saw a bundle in the street wearing her dress, a very bloody bundle.

"I'm sorry!"

The man was at her car window and pulled her door open with some difficulty. Now the girl was behind him, a pretty brunette with high heels on.

"We have to go Kurt. You can't invite her without permission."

"Fuck permission."

Kurt had leant into her car and briefly touched her cheek and then kissed her. Not a quick peck, but a full on open mouth kiss from a lover. The girl had pulled him away, still shouting at him about rules as they got their injured friend and all three vanished into the night.

Ruby finished redoing her makeup and had decided that Carlos would be sharing her bed that night. All the fantasies in his head were reasonably normal and some quite excited her. The Police had told her the Mercedes had been in the country on foreign plates for two years.

"No one cares Miss Travis." A man from the insurance company had told her.

"No insurance, registered to a fake address in Prague. The police just see the foreign plates and ignore it."

Of course the man from the insurance had really told her that the police would of course find those responsible, the truth she had pulled out of his thoughts. Whatever else Kurt may have done the kiss seemed to awaken something deep in her mind. She'd always seemed to understand how people were feeling, had more than her fair share of empathy, but her new gift was different.

Ruby looked at herself in the mirror and gave her hair a final brush into place before going to look for Carlos.

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