

Another Day, Another ... Day.

It was virtually the crack of dawn, and I had to admit it, she looked good. Not fair, I thought, raking my hand through my untameable curly hair. She stood in the doorway of her trailer looking like Hollywood come to Devon.

Her hair lifted, showing cheekbones with a pedigree of their own, and the kind of perfect, glowing skin that remained flawless despite the colossal amount of dark chocolates she shovelled down. At least, she did in the commercials, but then, that was why I was here, stuck in the middle of some field with two neurotic actors and a grumpy production crew.

I don't know why we still had to do things this way, in the age of computers that can put anybody anywhere in the world, or out of it. The whole shoot could have been done from the comfort of the studio, in rooms with running water and hygienic toilets. Or even just toilets.

But it was not my job to argue, just to make sure that Mr. And Ms wonderful were correctly made up and looking sensational. If the client specified 'field of waving corn at first light', that is precisely what they got, and I only hope they appreciated it. I hadn't even realised that there *was* a five o'clock twice a day, and the one this end had very little going for it in my opinion. But the union rates were good and I did feel a bit like a girl guide; out in the open air, dew on the grass, all that feel-good stuff.

Clarissa Deacon appeared in the doorway of the make up trailer and I sighed; she really was stunning, and working with her was so easy when she was in a good mood, however it was obvious that today she was in anything but.

“OW! Stupid girl!” she screeched, clutching at her head as though my comb had ripped out half her hair.

“Lovely day,” I commented. She grunted something in reply, but I was not going to let her off that easily.

“Oh, yes,” I pressed on, determined to shake her out of her self-indulgent silence, “gorgeous. Look at that sunrise.” In fact, to my mind, the sun had no business being up and about while most of my friends back home in the city were just tumbling into bed, or even still partying.

I carefully applied a base foundation to her creamy skin, hating having to disguise such blatant perfection, but knowing that on camera she would look like a shop dummy without it. All the while I kept up a meaningless babble about the early mornings, and how good fresh air was for the complexion. Finally she turned and fixed me with a look that left me in no doubt as to how she felt about the mornings. For once she and I were in complete harmony.

Some time later, she and her co-star were standing close together in the field, talking in low voices while the lighting crew adjusted their lenses and whatnot; I could never understand all that technical stuff, but I knew I had made Clarissa look amazing with my own brand of theatrical wizardry. Simon had been on the receiving end of my assortment of brushes and blushers as well, but he was just the man, and nobody really took any notice of him. It was a well-documented fact that the only time advertising casting worked in favour of the female consumer, was when they were trying to sell

jeans or, of course, diet coke. All attention for this shoot was on Clarissa - she was the focus; the one who would sell the product.

At this point I should mention that, despite the length and glorious colour of her hair, this was not a shampoo commercial. Nor was it for perfume, chocolates, or fabric softener. We were being paid by the Sunshine Cereal Company, to make their Corn Bites look like the best idea since a certain Mr. Kellogg had made the cock crow all those years ago. Although who on earth would want to eat the stuff after this pair had trampled all over it was beyond me.

At last the crew were ready and, having done my bit I was free to watch the action. If action was in fact the right word. Naturally the music and the get-up-and-go voice-over would be added later, so the most that would happen here was Clarissa twirling around in a state of breakfast induced ecstasy, while Simon laughed merrily at the idea of being in a field at dawn with a gorgeous woman.

Laughing is what the entire population would be doing as well when they saw this case of cereal murder, and it was a pound to a penny that more than one red-blooded male would be saying; "Yeah, right. *I* can't think of anything better to do with *her* than stand around in a field either..."

I settled into Simon's empty seat and watched him and Clarissa doing their thing. Despite the ludicrous nature of the commercial they were both utterly professional, and from a distance she could still pass for twenty – it was easy to forget that she was in fact in her late forties; she had the kind of looks that would last forever. I allowed myself a tiny, envious sigh and glanced away. A moment later a startled shout made me jerk

around and I stared in alarm as Clarissa stumbled and fell, another shriek rending the air. Simon froze, as did the crew, and I found myself propelled forward by some instinct I had no time to analyse.

I dropped down beside her and she stared wordlessly up at me, her face pasty under all my carefully applied make up. Her pale hand fluttered somewhere near her leg, twisted under her at a strange angle, and she tried to speak, but no words came. She looked close to panic and tears trembled like crystals on her lashes. By now the rest of the crew had come running over to us, all of them trying to get to her first.

“Get back,” I snapped, “someone call an ambulance, she’s broken her leg.”

“How?” demanded the producer, and I could virtually see his mind springing into cash-register mode as he worked out litigation costs.

Nobody answered, but when I looked back down I saw the deep, ragged hole in the ground. It was all but hidden, but still - how had no one noticed it? This was supposed to be checked out before filming even started, to have made sure this kind of thing *couldn't* happen. The producer tried to kneel beside Clarissa, who had turned from white to a sickly green.

I pushed him away as Clarissa tried to turn her head away from the face he pushed up close to hers.

“Clarissa, darling,” he began, “I hope we can discuss this before you –”

“Oh, go and fill out your insurance forms!” I snapped. I took no pleasure from the sick look on his face as he turned away, and even less from the little whimpers I heard from the woman of whom I had been so envious such a short time ago. She still looked

lovely, even with her tear-smearred make-up and her hair sweaty and tangled. She stared at me for a long moment, and seemed about to say something, but with frightening suddenness, her eyes rolled back in her head and she slumped into my arms. I patted her cheeks gently.

“Come on, Clarissa.” I said softly, repeating it over and over. After a minute, she stirred and a look of alarm came into her eyes as she stared up at the circle of anxious faces that surrounded her.

I waved them back and they moved, albeit a little reluctantly. I sat with her while she sobbed and moaned, trying to move away from the agony that had her in its grip, and only making it worse.

The ambulance arrived; it seemed as if it had taken forever although it had only been ten minutes, but by now Clarissa was almost demented with pain, and the grip she had on my arm was beginning to hurt. I prised her fingers off my wrist and let the paramedics take over, but I couldn't stop myself from dropping the odd 'Be careful', and 'Please don't hurt her...'

I volunteered to go with her to the hospital and when we arrived, the paramedics, busy making her comfortable, asked me to sign her in at the desk.

“Patient's name?” the receptionist asked briskly.

I hesitated. Glancing back over my shoulder I saw Clarissa nod gently, as if giving me her blessing. “Edna” I said with a little sigh. “Edna Stick.” I looked back at Clarissa and gave her a little smile.

“It's okay, Mum.” I said. “You'll be fine now.”

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