

Cathy could see the door lift slowly closing as she turned the corner. She shouted instinctively. David peered between the doors and pressed hard onto the key pad trying to hold them open. He stared in frustration at the closed doors; there was just a few seconds delay before they shuddered to reveal her relieved expression. Cathy blinked concerned about the manner in which they had opened. Lifts should be smooth, why would the doors react like that if they were working properly?

David smiled through the open door.

“Are you coming in or were you just randomly shouting?”

Cathy smiled in response blushing as she stepped forward into the lift.

“I was unsure whether it was safe, I mean should the doors do that juddery thing, shouldn't they be smooth?”

David dismissed her relaxed comments with a lazy smile.

“Seventh floor?”

She continued smiling and nodded.

Cathy was part of the Innovation Team and they were in the process of preparing for this year's 'Dragons Den', where each team on the Marketing floor would pitch an idea and see which, if any were taken up. David had been there for over six years and each year Cathy had failed to get her ideas accepted. Everyone knew she had the innovative brain and the ideas had always originated with her. Later each of her ideas had been worked into a great campaign or product but she was always held back by her team members in the presentation. This year her two team members were absent, one was on maternity leave and one had been taken suddenly ill. It was the core of the office banter that she was going to advocate poison as this year's 'must have' product, after all without them she really had a great chance of winning.

David liked Cathy; she had always been pleasant and friendly and was exceptionally talented. He had never had the confidence to talk to her about anything other than work before and this was such a good opportunity. He had to think quickly.

Cathy liked David; he was intelligent and handsome but excruciatingly shy. It was his turn to be a Dragon and she hoped that would give her a little bit of heads up for winning. She stood by his shoulder facing the doors as they closed. They both stared at the flat grey colour waiting. David's mind raced, this was a perfect opportunity but he couldn't think what to say. He lived with a male house mate and they watched football and played tennis, he just couldn't imagine her being interested in those subjects. He could barely make conversation with women even when he had downed his third pint and here he was sober. He swallowed and panic started to fill his mind.

Cathy felt the same. She could feel panic building, the lift hadn't started to move and the doors were still closed. She looked at her watch.

16:06

Perception of time can be difficult; she would wait for a few minutes then panic. She stared at the wall, her eyelids were beginning to feel damp and clammy, and that wasn't a good sign. She pulled back her jacket and stared at her watch. Shit!

16:10

Cathy turned to David.

“I think we need to press the button again, I think it's stuck.”

He stared at her barely recognising the words. She was so pretty he thought, and then suddenly he deciphered them. He reached out and pressed the button again. They waited and still nothing happened. He then pressed the open door button and the lift jerked into life making them stagger with the shock. David realised he was supporting her elbow. He glanced at his hand and released her immediately.

“Sorry”.

He said meekly. Cathy stared at the lift doors.

“I’m not good with enclosed spaces, I’m not claustrophobic or anything but it’s the walls, they start to pulse and then lean inwards and I think I.”

She stopped suddenly. This wouldn’t look good when he was considering her product innovation; he would just remember her idiocy in the lift. David cautiously glanced out of the corner of his eye, she looked terrified.

“It’s not moving.”

Cathy whispered. David stared at the doors and reached out his hand to touch a wall, the lift had slowed and then stopped. He pressed the alarm and waited for someone to answer. Cathy looked at her watch.

16:20

She sucked in air through her mouth and slowly released it, closing her eyes. She had to imagine being somewhere outside, Dartmoor, her favourite place. She pretended to reach out and touch one of the wild ponies. He stared as she took a deep breath and closed her eyes. He watched her hand reach out to him, her fingers resting on his jacket. He clasped her fingers and she jumped in fright.

Cathy stared at him holding her hand. She forced a smile and threaded her fingers between his and waited for someone to answer the alarm. He pressed again.

“My name is David Ellis and Cathy Marcom and myself are stuck in the lift, can you come and help?”

“The mechanic is on the way, five minute tops are you both alright?”

David looked at Cathy and coughed slightly.

“It’s very hot in here and it feels slightly oppressive but I think we’re ok.”

Cathy suddenly pulled away her fingers, he stepped back in shock. She yanked off her jacket and unfastened the top three buttons of her shirt. She pressed her hand against her neck and gasped loudly. David stared at her and moved closer.

Cathy yanked at her cuff and stared at her watch.

16:31

“Oh god it’s been over thirty minutes I can’t cope, I just can’t..”

David reached out and steadied her arm, she tried to pull away in panic, but he pulled her gently towards him. He could feel her body rigid in his arms.

“I’m here, let’s talk about something, anything, what hobbies do you have?”

“I ride horses, I have two horses which I ride, I don’t own them I couldn’t afford the stabling near my flat, but I like to ride across the moors. I went to Mongolia last year, I rode across the Steps, god it was fantastic.”

He watched her babble, barely taking a breath, she seemed to be talking too fast but her mind was occupied. The lift shuddered slightly and he leant forward concentrating on her face.

“Do you have any photographs?”

“Yes, yes.”

She pulled at her bag flustered; she pushed her hand inside and grabbed her phone. As she squeezed her hand around it, he watched it slide through her sweaty palms and leap into the air. He caught it and placed it carefully into her hands. He pressed it safely there and waited. She took a steadying breath and continued slower this time.

Cathy skipped through the photo gallery and found some photos of the beautiful horses and superb scenery of Mongolia. He smiled as she flicked through the images of the family she lived with and the horse she rode. Her face was animated as she described her holiday. He liked her expressions, she wrinkled her nose and her smile was slightly lop sided and he nodded as she spoke and she grinned back at him. He had no idea what she had been saying, he liked her but he found her dull. He had no interest in horses or travelling to bizarre holiday destinations. He went to Ibiza or Alicante, drank too much and read war adventures in the sun. He chased girls and failed to catch them but he was fine with that, the girls he could catch he didn't really want anyway. Cathy was a really nice person, but that was the problem he didn't want a 'nice' girlfriend, he had watched too many films and read too many novels, he wanted a gorgeous girlfriend. She had to be stunningly attractive, not stupid but not too clever, that would be a real pain.

David stared at the wall of the lift; he hated the dull grey colour. Why was it grey? Why choose such a subdued colour out of all of those available.

“Is everything alright? Here I am being a pain in the arse chatting on about my holiday, are you ok?” David stared back at her and nodded. Maybe all he really wanted was someone to care for him, to be there for him, he smiled, maybe he should just buy a Thai bride, now that was some internet shopping. He imagined his mother's face and realised that option was unrealistic.

Cathy could hear a soft metallic sound whispering through the metal. She smiled relieved, they were fixing the problem. She reached up and tilted his face to hers.

“We'll be out of here soon.”

David stared back at her. He really did like her and now was the chance to start the conversation. Cathy released his chin and started to refasten her shirt. A disembodied voice echoed through the lift.

“Mr Ellis the lift needs a new part but we can manually manoeuvre it to the next floor which is floor 5, it will be a slightly jerky ride but we should start immediately, is that alright with you both.”

Cathy stepped forward to respond.

“That's fantastic news, go ahead.”

She grinned at David and braced herself against the walls. David hadn't spoken he felt suddenly unbelievably sad.

16:47

Cathy closed her eyes and ran through her presentation in her mind. She knew all the words, she knew the background data intimately and she was passionate about her idea. She had to stay calm and remember the witty remarks, the inflections of her voice and the knowing look. She had researched her Dragons and had a good idea what they would ask; she just had to make it seem that she was relaxed. It was all an act, she could do this; she could pull this off, this was her year.

David watched her chest rise and fall; he had never really looked closely at a woman before, not in such detail. The position of her arms pressed against the walls meant her blouse gaped slightly, he could see white lace through the fabric tunnel, he considered what she might be wearing

under her trousers, maybe softy lacy panties only partially covering the cheeks of her bottom or maybe a thong leaving her bottom bare for exploration. The lift slowly ground to a halt.

Cathy gathered her bag and waited excitedly by the door. The doors slowly opened and she rushed forward relieved to step out into the hall way. She grinned back at David and smiled. He had lost his opportunity. All those minutes he had been alone with her and now she was about to leave him. He felt like an idiot dismissing this beautiful real woman; she had intellect, humour, kindness and she wasn't perfect but who was, and all because of some stupid artificial ideal of what a woman should be. He opened his mouth to speak as he took a step forward.

16:57

The lift disappeared with such suddenness, the sound of grating steel and squealing metal echoed through the building, there was a few seconds silence before the dull thud of the lift hitting the bottom of the shaft. Cathy stared at the space where he had been. They had spent an hour together in that metal box and she knew nothing new about him at all, in fact they had barely spoken and now, her knees felt weird as her body folded neatly into a pile on the industrial carpet. And now he was gone.