



FALSE PRETENCES

HEATHER MOORE

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Heather lives and has grown up in Essex, with her close family. Heather currently works as an Events coordinator and enjoys using her creative imagination in her working life. Heather is a 'shoeholic' and currently owns 125 pairs of shoes with a view to expanding this collection vastly.

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This is a work of fiction.
Names, characters, places and incidents originate from the writer's imagination. Any resemblance to
actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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This is for all my true friends and family who have been there for me through everything, you have made me the strong person I am now!

Chapter 1

It's Friday afternoon, only a couple more hours left in the office, then I have a whole two days free – the weekend.

I work for a big advertising corporation called 'Kenton Advertising Limited' (K.A.L.) based in London.

I'm sitting in the boardroom in a final meeting, well not exactly a meeting it's just the client, my colleague Neil and me.

We are trying to decide the background colour for the promotional product, with the client, Mr Hepton.

He is the executive for Hinton Jewellery, and wants to advertise their latest diamond necklace, on the TV and in magazines.

Actually the necklace is rather impressive... maybe I'll get a free one for composing the adverts for it, do you think Mr Hepton would do that?

Do I think he's the generous type? No, I get the impression he's a tight man, I know he's a family man with two daughters but I don't think he spoils them rotten.

Nah he wouldn't give me a free Hinton diamond necklace... I guess I'll have to start saving or hinting to my boyfriend.

There's a rainbow of colour charts spread across the boardroom table, every time he chooses another colour we test it behind the image of the diamond necklace on the Apple Mac laptop that is sat on the table in front of Mr Hepton.

We must have been through all the colours at least five times, we are working through the colour charts again one by one, now giving them a mark out of ten, for appeal, attraction etc.

I mean how long is this going to take?

I was going to just pop into the French Connection sale, and just see if there was anything I need... okay anything I want, before getting the tube home.

I was promoted to marketing executive last Friday; I can't believe I've had the new job for a week already.

Last Saturday I went out with my boyfriend Andy, to celebrate the news and the fact that we've been going out for six months now.

We got fairly drunk on champagne with a few of our mates at our local pub, the Willow, it was a great evening but it doesn't seem like a whole week ago though.

What's wrong with pink? It's a great colour for the background! What happened to pink making the boys wink? In any case, pink is very attractive!

Where was I? Oh yeah Andy.

Well Andy Miller is a typical guy, but I like him... actually I think I love him. Is it mad to think that? Especially only after six months? Anyway he's slightly taller than me (which I like in a guy – not that I wouldn't date someone because of their height). He's got gorgeous blue eyes, and is

twenty-seven, so only two years older than me.

Okay enough about his appearance, he works shifts in the Thames export/import service, which isn't that well paid, but he enjoys the work, so the extra money from my new promotion comes in useful, for paying off our bills... well actually my shopping bills, but that's a side issue.

Ah finally, Mr Hepton has chosen green for the magazine advert background, well personally not my choice of colour, I think it's revolting, but what the client wants, the client gets.

So I see Mr Hepton off, put the Hinton advertising file on my desk to start working on on Monday morning and stride down the long corridor. As I get closer to the lifts, I see Neil waiting for one.

Neil joined the company this morning and my boss Mr Holmes has asked me to mentor Neil for his first four weeks at the company.

He's a young guy in his early twenties, I found out earlier he's just starting out in the industry after three years of marketing at a London Uni.

I join him for the few seconds it takes for it to come. In the lift, we make small talk about the coming weekend. As we both get out of the lift, I say goodbye and wish him a good weekend.

The air outside seems so different on a Friday evening than it does during the rest of the week; I think it's because the weekends coming, you can smell it in the air.

You can also see it on people's faces, they look happy, as if just escaping from their offices on a Friday evening is the best thing ever. I've just got time if I'm quick to catch the sale before they close.

I stride down the streets to French Connection, and walk in.

There's so much; all these rails saying 'sale' I don't know where to start.

Okay, maybe I don't need another two pairs of jeans and another French connection top, but it's an investment, I won't need to buy any jeans for a while, and it's always good to have a couple of back up pairs.

I get home about twenty minutes before Andy. I run up the stairs and hide my new clothes in the wardrobe. I then head to the kitchen to do dinner.

Tonight we are having pizza. I have set the table as if for a romantic meal, with candles as the only source of light in the kitchen. I hear Andy walk through the door at about the right time. Over dinner Andy asks me about work, I tell him about Mr Hepton and how long it took him to choose the final colour.

"He's the executive for Hinton Jewellery you know? They've got this gorgeous new diamond necklace. The sort of one that would go perfectly with that black cocktail dress I've got, that I wore when we went to my office party," I hint.

"Oh, it would, would it?" is all he says then tells me about his day at work.

Well the weekend went quickly; I spent all day Saturday at Westfield shopping centre, with my best friend Claire. I love shopping with Claire, she's honest about what looks best on you and what doesn't, what colours work best and is such a laugh.

She's great; she's more like a sister. I've known her since I was five; we've grown up with each other and never lost contact, but now we try to meet up on a regular basis, when we can, as she lives and works in Kent.

At the moment she lives in a studio apartment with her gorgeous boyfriend Chris, but they are in the middle of looking for a bigger flat.

We often compare boyfriends and who has the best; we always end up

with the same conclusion that we both have gorgeous boyfriends.

She works for Ford, in some kind of office job; I don't actually know what she does. We talk more about office gossip than what she does.

Anyway, I tell her everything, there's not a single thing she doesn't know about me. That's why I must remember never to fall out with her, she knows too much, she could use it against me. I don't need certain people to find out certain things.

Don't get me wrong, It's not as if I've been really... you know, everyone has their fair share of secrets, it's just I have slightly more and Claire knows all about them. Claire has the most gorgeous long, straight, blonde, silky hair.

We spent the day chatting, trying on clothes and shoes and spending... well spending lots of money!

I ended up buying twelve new tops, three pairs of jeans, five pairs of shoes, and a new lingerie set.

Maybe I didn't need all twelve tops but they were worth it, great prices, I mean I would have been stupid to pass up the chance of twelve tops at those prices and they were all designer labels.

And I'm a shoe queen as Mum says. I must have at least ninety pairs of shoes easily. My motto is a girl can never have too many shoes.

Perhaps I should have a bit of a clear-out though, I mean I've bought a lot this weekend, but whenever I do decide to have a clear-out there's nothing I need or can get rid of, they all still fit. Okay, maybe the three pairs of size eight jeans don't fit... but I'm planning on losing some weight, it'd be silly to get rid of them. I just need to get round to joining a gym. And I know on Friday I said, no more jeans after buying the two pairs in French Connection but you can never have too many jeans, and these were such great prices that you won't get jeans for again.

Sunday was a day at home with Andy, in our two bed-roomed semi in south London. Well it was mine, but Andy moved in after two months of going out so it's more our house now; anyway we did odd jobs around the house. Andy put up a new shelf for me in the bedroom and put my new desk together in the study, although we did have a slight disagreement... well more of an argument over the desk.

Andy said I didn't need a new desk, but the truth is I did.

I'd had the other for about a year and it's all out of fashion now... I mean does he expect me to be behind in the interior fashions? You've got to keep up these days. Everyone's got these new modern space saving metal desks... a pinewood one would just be way behind.

"People don't look at what desk you've got, when they come round." Is what Andy said. Anyway I ignored him and did the washing and ironing, etc.

We had lunch – beans on toast, I couldn't be bothered to cook anything else. After lunch we watched a movie, whilst I snuggled up to Andy on the sofa with his arms wrapped round me.

We've made a compromise to forget the desk issue, and I'm not to buy any more furniture without consulting him on it. He doesn't know about all my new clothes and shoes from Saturday, I had planned to do a fashion show for him especially with the new lingerie, but decided after all the trouble with the desk, it might not be the best time to show him what I bought. Anyway as much as I love him, he's not that observant so probably wouldn't notice even if I wore my new clothes anyway.

Then we went to the Willow for the evening and had a couple of drinks. A

few of Andy's mates were there.

I know with guys, they need some male time, just them and their mates but I was starting to feel left out, what with them all sitting there with their beers and male language.

So I said I was tired and was going to head home. As I went to leave Andy got up and followed me, shouting back, "Cheers guys, cya tomorrow!"

How sweet? Leaving his mates to be with me. We walked home holding hands. As we turned the corner into our street Andy stopped and pulled me back to him and kissed me hard on the lips. How romantic is he? I could taste the beer on his lips though.

I'm so happy with my life, great job, just been promoted (well a week ago), great best mate, home and best boyfriend ever, who loves me just the way I am. Well that's what he keeps telling me anyway.

Chapter 2

Now it's Monday morning and I'm back working in my office, I've started designing the initial magazine advert for the Hinton case, now that I've got all the ideas and points Mr Hepton wants included.

I'll show him the design when I'm done and if he's happy with it then it goes down to printing and off to the magazine and paper agencies. Then we will start work on the television adverts, apart from coming up with the advert I need to get studios booked, get a film crew and an appropriate cast organised.

At about quarter past eleven, the phone rings. It's a call from Andy, he rarely calls me at work even when it's his day off like today, he usually just sleeps, watches TV or spends the day down the pub drinking.

Which I think is totally stupid; if I had the day off I'd go shopping, but that's guys, they just don't get it do they?

He sounded fine, but told me to get home immediately, this has worried me slightly, so to make sure everything is fine, I'm going to do as he says, and head home.

I get home within ten minutes; although my usual journey from work takes twenty, it's lucky there are no speed cameras on my route.

I slide my key in the door, turn it, open the door, step in and am abruptly pulled in by a masked man.

As he pushes me into the lounge, his left hand is tightly gripped to my right forearm. He shoves me on a dining chair from the kitchen.

Another masked man, slightly taller, ties a rope round my stomach and around the back of the chair, I try to wriggle free but their grips are too tight, I can't get away.

Both the men are wearing all black: gloves, jacket, trousers, mask and shoes, but somehow I feel they are really familiar to me.

The curtains are closed; I suppose they don't want anyone seeing.

I'm sitting here, just wishing at the least that they hadn't shut the curtains, but most of all that this wasn't happening.

I've got it, I recognise the face of the man who dragged me in, it's Dale and the other one is Harry. They are Andy's mates, two of the ones who were at the Willow with us last night. But why are they here? Why have they tied me to the chair? Has Andy upset them?

Dale now disappears into the kitchen; I'm scared for my life.

He comes back, but not on his own this time. He's with Andy. I just want to know he's all right; his arms are behind his back.

They've got him as well I think; so much for hoping he had gone out and would be back any minute, and save me.

I knew then that he was obviously forced to ring me at work; he wouldn't have brought me back to danger, would he?

They put Andy on a chair, positioned right next to me; but they don't tie

him up like they did me. Why? Do they trust him not to run away?

He looks at me, there's a pause, and I stare straight into his non-expressional eyes. Then he says that he is sorry. But what's he sorry for?

Dale tells Harry, the other guy, to stand behind the both of us.

This puts me on edge, what's he doing behind us?

Dale picks up a knife from the sofa, which is positioned behind him; it looks like my kitchen knife. Dale passes the knife to Andy, "Do it!"

Harry whispers into my ear, "Say goodbye, darling Sarah!"

With that Dale comes towards me... but as he gets closer he bends over and sticks his tongue down my throat, I try pulling back away from him, but he keeps on, I lift my left leg, and kick him, I kick him somewhere a man never wants to be kicked!

At this he steps back in agony, I'm still breathing deeply trying to recover, when Andy punches Dale, who falls to the floor.

Andy now with his hand stinging red with pain yells at Dale on the floor.

"I said, I'd do it, just in my own way, then you go and stick your tongue down her throat!" he grabs the knife from the chair, and plunges it into Dale's neck.

I scream, at the sight of the blood this time.

Harry throws himself at Andy, howling, "What do you think you're doing? We were in it together. Now you've killed him! You've killed him! This is getting too out of hand, it's dangerous, just finish the job and we can get out of here!"

Andy's face goes bright red, he lifts his hand and plunges the same knife into Harry's stomach, I scream again.

Andy drops the knife. As it hits the floor I shudder.

He rips the gag from my face and then sits back on the chair next to me. I shakily ask, "What's going on, babe? What did they want you to do?"

Andy looks straight into my eyes, and then for the first time I notice his blue eyes are glazed with hatred, they're not gorgeous anymore.

"I want... no I am going to finish this!" he pauses and reaches for a big brown envelope on the arm of the sofa, then he continues, "I can't believe how gullible you've been, I've never loved you, you're a high class city girl, earning a four-figure salary, and there's me earning minimum wage, we were coning you... we... no, I only wanted your money... you're so stupid, but I did all the work, I reeled you in -"

Reeled me in? Who, what does he think I am? He makes me sound like a fish. He waves the brown envelope in front of my face as he continues, "Why should they get a cut off the money, I worked for?"

"I worked for!" I exclaim.

"Well I guess so, if you call it working that is, compared to the work I've had to do to get it. I've had to spend all this time pretending to like you and care for you, put up with all your moans and groans, sleep with you for it and watch you fritter my money away on stupid clothes and other things... especially that bloody desk! Do you know what it's like to wait six months to get paid, well it'll be mine soon, it's all in here -" he shows me the envelope, with my entire financial document, my credit cards and the odd cash I had kept hidden under the mattress. "-all I've got to do is get rid of you!"

Rid of... me... he's going to kill me, that's what Dale meant when he said, 'do it!'

"Hold on.... No it couldn't be... it all makes sense now, that's why you wanted me to change my account to joint access, isn't it?" I yell, unable to

understand what's going on. I feel my self-esteem caving in.

I glance at him waiting for an answer, trying to make sense of it all. It's all happening so fast! Is this all because he is jealous of my money? He hates me because I earn more than him?

"Well done... ten points for observation," he says sarcastically. "That's supposed to be the hard part of my job, convincing you to move the money into a position where I can get access to it, but you, you just practically signed the money over to me. If anything *unfortunate* was to happen to you, I as the other account user, would automatically get full ownership of the account –"

"–Of my money," I cut in.

"Yeah smart ain't it?" he replies patronisingly.

I've got to think quickly, I'm tied to a chair and have just been told I'm going to be got rid of, what am I going to do?

Andy rises from the chair, kisses me on the cheek and whispers in my ear, "Thanks for the sex though! And the money I suppose, although I've waited long enough for it."

With that he turns and bends over to pick up the blooded knife from the floor.

This is it, this is my chance, and I lift my left leg again and kick Andy's backside. He falls to the floor. I tip my chair and land on him.

The ropes slip off the back of the chair by the way it fell and I'm free again.

I stand up and go to run out the lounge as Andy rises, in panic I grab the nearest object which is my hairdryer and throw it at his head, which he fends off, but with his own strength wrenches the wire out at his end. Being live, this brushes him and that gives him a shock jolting enough to let me leg it.

I need to get my clothes and pack, I'm about to run away and never come back. So I run upstairs, to get anything I may need or want, I get a large trolley suitcase and fill it in five minutes.

I pack clothes, the carrier bags of new clothes from the weekend, throwing in anything I can find, the essentials, and my laptop.

I take it back down. "I'm running away!" I say out loud, unable to believe this is happening.

Along with what I had already packed I add food, drinks, my handbag, and other odds and ends.

I look around frantically trying to see what else I might need, then my eyes fall on the brown envelope lying on the floor by Andy's left hand, with all my financial stuff in it, I grab it and edge back out of the lounge.

Andy is now starting to regain consciousness.

I grasp hold of my keys, and run out the front door, slamming it hard. I load the suitcase, and my bag into my car and speed away.

Chapter 3

I didn't really concentrate on the road for the whole journey.

I sat replaying the whole incident in my mind, every little detail being replayed, blood, the knife, the lot.

I arrive at a Holiday Inn along the M25 somewhere, I don't know where; I wasn't really looking where I was going. I just wanted or needed to get away, I'm not sure which one yet.

I book in for just one night. Andy will come after me, he said he was going to finish it and one thing I do know about Andy is he doesn't give up till he gets what he wants.

I feel like these four walls are closing in on me, with my face up against the glass window; I'm wondering if this is my life, it's all happened so fast.

I close the curtains in my room and get into bed.

I can't sleep, every time I close my eyes, all I can see is Dale and Harry, lying on the floor, not moving, blood just pouring out.

I can't stay still in bed. I just keep tossing and turning.

I can't believe any of this, last night I was sitting in the Willow having drinks and civilised conversations with three typical men, who I thought were all decent. If their plan had gone right, it would have been me lying there.

Andy killed Dale and Harry. Aaahh, it sounds awful saying that, I thought they were his mates, I thought he was kind and loving, I thought he loved me. I never imagined he'd lay a finger on me, let alone kill me, or attempt to.

He's right I'm so gullible, I just let him walk straight into my life, walk all over me, everything I thought I knew about him was a lie, I knew nothing about him. Why am I so stupid?

Why did I believe everything he said to me?

And why did everything feel so right when his arms were wrapped around me? From now on it's nothing but my way, I'm not going to let loneliness get to me, I don't need a man!

During the night I must have dropped off, but not into a proper sleep, instead nightmares of Andy.

I wake at about six and am in a cold sweat, I get out of bed, go to the ensuite to use the loo. Whilst sitting there I realise there was someone sitting in the chair by the window.

I rush out and look round, he's sitting by the window; Andy is in my hotel room! But how?

"Is something wrong, love?" Andy enquires.

"Is something wrong...!" I repeat, in anger.

How can he act so innocent, and pretend nothing's happened?

"I've been like this since three this morning, you were asleep, I didn't want to wake you, so I waited," he states casually.

I'm so scared; the guy who tried to take my life yesterday is sitting in my

hotel room, and it's like yesterday never happened, he's acting as if we are on holiday, as if I'm having a conversation with the guy I love, and he's not a murderer or come after me for my money.

How can he act so casual?

"What are you doing here?" I mutter nervously.

"I told you yesterday what I want, and I ain't going anywhere till I get it, and your silence!" he demands.

He gets out the chair and moves towards me. "So hand it over, baby! I ain't playing any more games with you!" he says in his soft voice, the one he used to use when he wanted something, when he wanted me or was it just sex to him?

Usually when he uses that voice I would agree, it does something to me that I can't control. But not this time, he lied to me, he only wanted me for my money, I thought he loved me.

He said he loved me just the way I was; now I understand he only loved me that way 'cause I'm so gullible, he knew I'd believe anything he said.

"NO!" I snap, flustered with nerves.

"Don't make me do it, I killed Dale and Harry yesterday, I can kill you today!" he pauses, and steps closer to me, then continues, with each word he steps closer. "You... deserve... it... after... yesterday!"

My back is now against the wall and he's towering over me.

"Then why didn't you kill me when you got here, and take the money? You would've got what you wanted and silenced me."

He slaps me round the face, hard. I feel faint, my legs buckle, my body wants to sink to the floor and curl up in pain, but before I can do anything, before my body can react to the slap, he pushes my shoulders hard against the wall, his fingers digging into my skin, and is about to speak when his phone rings. His arms drop, I feel a wave of relief rush through me.

He wanders towards the window and answers the call.

"I was just getting there –" he mutters furiously into the phone, "–then you go and mess it up," he continues.

Who's he talking to now? Who else knows about his little plan? I suddenly realise this may be my only chance; he had me cornered, but now he's distracted.

I grab my case and run for the door, which is at the other end of the room to Andy, who's muttering away into his phone.

I'm out... but where now, he's obviously going to come after me... I need to get out of here.

I'm running down the corridor in my lacy pink silk pyjamas and my pink silk dressing gown, dragging along my suitcase behind me.

I can hear Andy running after me, still talking into the phone.

A door of another room opens and a man appears to see what is happening.

This is brilliant, somewhere to hide.

I look back; I can't see Andy for a minute so I barge past the man into his room.

He closes the door, turns to face me and demands I get out his room.

But I can't, I don't want to upset him, but this is my life that's at stake.

To be honest I'd rather this man was peeved off with me and complained to the hotel, than lose my life. Wouldn't you?

But I haven't got the time to explain this fact to him, and hope he spares me my life, all I can do is beg.

“Please sir, I just need to hide... for a minute! Please I’m begging you!”