

To work for a psychopath nine to five, is like being tied to a chair with a foaming Pitbull Terrier chained up in front of you. The chain restrains the canine from tearing out your throat, but allows the dog enough freedom to bark in your face, teeth bared, hot stinking breath filling your airways, spittle flying across your eyes and lips. You get to live, only suffocated by terror, knowing your mind will break...eventually.

Unpacking my clothes into the walk-in wardrobe and chest of drawers of my new bedroom, my mind drifted back to the various jobs I'd worked as I considered my potential role as a journalist for SINN.

After the phone call with Saul, Vernon had come into the dining room and explained he'd already organised a meeting with Jacob Cain at Five O' Clock Somewhere Beach Resort—the location of my new bartending job.

From the last time I was in the Pharissee Islands, Vernon had known that my primary vocation was writing, so I was grateful he was able to facilitate the meeting when Saul had contacted him while I was in London.

Going to Five O' Clock Somewhere also meant I could visit my new manager and let him know I was ready to work, while being interviewed for this secondary job. I was elevated, but also apprehensive.

Would I be allowed and able to work two jobs?

The way I saw it, I could do days as a journalist and nights as a bartender.

But there was another issue, which felt deeply more unnerving than if my new manager would allow a second job.

The name 'Jacob Cain' maintained a haze of anxiety over me, silently throttling any excitement I could have. It drew my thoughts to unpleasant work experiences with unsavoury people; people with no conscience for others—psychopaths.

Why was I thinking about this?

I'd only endured one employer who I believed qualified for the title psychopath.

That was six years ago.

I was nineteen and it was the third of eight occupations I've held in my life.

Taking a year out from academics, the job was at a software retailer on the Kings Road in London. The employer was not only a psychopath, he was also the only black man I'd ever worked for, not improving my feelings about my own race.

A twenty-seven year-old Jamaican man called Draco, his voice sounded slightly high, almost feminine in its lightness.

One Saturday, after proclaiming with unwavering sincerity that he would be "the next billionaire Bill Gates," he proudly told a story, not looking at me, but at his mobile phone as he typed away.

"I knew of a farmer back in my country," he said, his tall, lanky form almost drooping over his phone. "He would hire people, say three or four workers to help maintain his farm, but after a short time, maybe a few weeks, he would fire the entire workforce. He would then hire some more people to replace them, again three or four

guys. After a few weeks, he would fire them too. He then hired some more people to replace the ones who were last out the door. He would then fire them. You see, this farmer wanted the best from his workers. He wanted them working fast, hard, always giving 110%.”

He paused, taking a long breath as if to create suspense and focused on his phone. “But he knew once the workers got comfortable, they wouldn’t be working so hard anymore. The farmer didn’t want that. You see Chris, people work best when they don’t know what’s coming. They work best when they know there’s no security. That farmer was smart. He kept his workforce at optimum efficiency. You need to ask yourself, is your place here? Are you giving your best? You need to consider, are you working at optimum efficiency?”

Up to that point, every day I’d entered the store to work, I’d felt it could be my last.

Sometimes Draco would whisper, “Head Office have been talking. I can’t tell you what they’ve said, but you’ve got to be careful,” or perhaps a firm word. “Sales have been really low Chris. Really low. It’s not looking good at all. Just a little friendly advice, keep your CV updated and on hand.”

Following months of tolerating Draco’s management methods, the story about the farmer reached the peak of my patience.

“Draco. I need to talk to you,” I said at the end of the workday after his farmer speech. We’d already locked up the shop front and were tallying up the till float.

“Sure,” said Draco. He walked into the tiny storeroom adjacent to the small, carpeted shop floor of the software store.

“Draco, I’m sorry to tell you this,” I said. “But—” I sighed. “I think it’s time I moved on.”

“O-kayyyyyy,” he replied, nodding once and staring at me.

“I’m simply considering what you’ve said.” I paused. “I don’t think my place is here so, I just think it’s time I moved on.”

He took a good thirty seconds, calculating his next words.

“Now Chris,” he said. “I want you to think about this. Are you sure you want to quit?”

“Not really.” I sighed again. “But after what you said about the farmer. I don’t work like that. It’s off Draco. It’s really off. Fear? Working by fear? It’s really not the way.” I released a nervous chuckle of disapproval. “I’m sorry. That’s just too much.”

“Now, I think you may have taken what I said a little out of context.”

“Come on Draco. I didn’t take it out of context. It was pretty clear what you were saying.”

“No. No. Chris.” He looked away from me, picked up a piece of PC software about financial management from the desk, and looked as if he were suddenly engrossed by blurb on the back. “You’re one of my best workers here,” he said, comparing me to three other staff members who weren’t present.

“I think you should go home, and think about it,” continued Draco. “And let me know what you decide.”

“Okay.” I stared at him for a second. Not glared. “Okay, I’ll think about it.”

I returned the next day and told Draco I’d be staying.

Two weeks later, Draco resigned and a new manager replaced him.

I didn’t have any other psychopaths for employers.

In all my other jobs, I’d either been promoted or asked to stay when the time came for me to move on. The only occupation I quit was as an administrator, conducting fund-disinvestments for an investment solutions firm.

I was twenty-two and acquired the role straight after University, but following four months, I simply had to escape. It had been nothing but nine to five working a job that had no prospects, consistent drunken nights on Fridays and Saturdays, and lots of inter-office flings.

It wasn’t the world for me.

One man on our team—David Edward Lindsey-Ashcroft, Caucasian, early 30s, skinny with a receding hair line—approached me in the open plan office space.

Amid forty people tapping away at their computers in cubicles reaching desk height, he made a judgement-call that stayed with me. David had passed a few greetings to me here and there, but it didn’t prepare me for his words.

“Look around you Chris,” he said, touching his glasses. “Look at them.” He scanned the office, not glancing at people, but through them with an expression as if a putrid odour emerged from each person.

“We’re not like these people,” he continued. “We’re different. Do you think that these people read the Financial Times? The Telegraph? Hmm?”

He turned to me, then continued examining the staff members. “No. Not these people,” he said. “More likely The Sun or The Mail. We’re different from them.”

All I could do was smile.

“Keep your head up Chris,” he said and walked on through the office to his desk.

It was as if he’d picked up on my discomfort, though my thoughts were nowhere near as condemning as his. The certainty was that the environment wasn’t for me. I quit the job to my manager’s surprise. He asked me to stay and offered a higher salary, but I knew. It just wasn’t the work or social life that I desired.

In hearing the job offer that was being proposed—News Director and Marketing Executive of online News site SINN—I saw the proof of all the new-age, life-coaching, motivational business books that professed, “go out and be your best! Think positive! Change your surroundings! Transform your lifestyle! Exude good thoughts, then, good situations and people will be attracted to you!”

Continuing to unpack my clothing from both suitcases, I put my stained white jumper into a plastic bag for disposal, shaking my head at the black shoe polish smear. My mind returned to the present.

To be a journalist for the first time would be incredible. Still, being unable to remember why the name ‘Jacob Cain’ sounded awful, was disconcerting.

The previous year, I’d lived in Mortigno of the Pharisee Islands for two months—

November and December—getting a good feel of what it would be like to reside in the Caribbean.

The extended vacation had allowed me to meet many people—I was sure one of them had been Jacob Cain.

Jacob Cain? Jacob Cain?

I disregarded the thought and my mind moved to my uncle, who seemed more distant than his usual self. Almost as though he didn't want me there. I saw it in his shorter sentences, lack of conversation on the way from the airport, and eye-contact avoidance. Perhaps it was because he was assuming increasingly dangerous cases on the island and his role was under fierce oppression. No Pharisee Islander liked an outsider undertaking the role of Police Commissioner—I'd learnt that while I was on the islands the last time.

My uncle being Jamaican-born made him an outsider—officially termed a Non-Belonger. The people of the PI would have preferred a Belonger.

In an email he'd sent in January while I was in London, he'd mentioned that on my return to the islands, my connection to him had to be kept quiet. He explained potential reprisals—angry criminals going through the process, annoyed ex-cons coming out, disgruntled family members of convicts—and in coming to live in the Pharisee Islands, I had to be more cautious as opposed to when I was there on holiday.

I wondered if it affected the original proposal. Part of the attractive idea of Pharisee Islands' residency, was that I would live rent and bills free as Vernon worked away from home a lot. The offer had come right on point of my twenty-fifth birthday, falling in line with *the* vow I'd made when I was fifteen.

If things aren't working out in London in ten years time, I'll leave the country.

It shocked friends and family alike when I said, "I'm leaving the country forever. I'm never coming back to live here." But I meant it. London was dead to me.

No one had anticipated I would make such a drastic move, but what they didn't comprehend was the dark pain inside—a deep well of anger and sadness that had been growing for a very long time.

From ten years old, I held the dream of meeting the perfect woman at University, getting married, and having a family by the time I was twenty-seven.

The vow of leaving the country hadn't sprung out of thin air. It had arrived at fifteen, when I reached a trough of sadness from being in a single-sex school that I detested. A full seven years—aged eleven to eighteen—in an academic establishment with no girls was akin to being drafted in the army.

University was the light at the end of the tunnel—I would meet my dream lady and all would be well. Such a simple dream, that had gained huge strength year upon year.

I recall walking home from the last pub social of my final day at University, entering my bedroom, locking the door, and letting every bit of pain spill out of me in one, long, deep cry. I had no idea why I was crying at the time and it was so sudden, but a year later, I realised.

The simple dream of a ten year-old having a family of his own, hadn't come true and

I'd really, really, really trusted in it. Fully invested. Believed in it like a kid believing in Father Christmas. But like that shocking moment when I discovered that the fun, jovial, loving Father Christmas wasn't real, so I discovered that I was never going to have the woman of my dreams. It was a childish lie. A gamble. And similar to the death-wish of a gambler putting his lifesavings, his hoard, his precious earnings on thirty-one black and it coming up thirty-two red, so I felt it was an end to everything I held dear. I couldn't shake the feeling of hopelessness. I'd lost it all. All gone.

The light at the end of the tunnel, had been an oncoming train, and it had smashed every ounce of life out of me; a dream so simple had morphed into a mammoth and trampled me underneath instead of becoming my great future.

I lost all self-confidence after University.

Anytime I looked in the mirror, a voice in my head would whisper "you're ugly. You're dirty. You're never going to meet the right woman. Your chance is over. University is done."

In attempting to keep the dream alive and be a good man for the perfect woman I'd one day marry, I remained celibate for the entire year after University. It wasn't planned—it just happened because I feared losing morality and still sought the unblemished, idyllic woman of my dreams. I saw one night rendezvous' as plain wrong, so I didn't make the 'moves.' It shoved my confidence into minus degrees.

A year later, my mother orchestrated a debt-mounting, surprise family vacation with my brother and sister on a Florida cruise liner—a second one. But this seemingly great gift that was far outside my mother's means, invited a new sensation I'd ignorantly thought would never happen to me. The concept of betrayal.

I met an American girl called Arianna Lane—the girl in the red dress. She'd looked amazing in that dress, but the two-week holiday had been awkward.

My confidence was at an all-time low and Arianna had shown an attraction to me I couldn't understand.

My abysmal self-esteem put me in a place of compromise, because despite her beauty, I knew that her personality didn't meet my preferences.

It was words and sentences that revealed she didn't really care; not the way I would wish a prospective partner to care.

Or the way she jokingly told me to respond to her statement. "I bet you get a lot of girls digging you," she said.

"Nah, I don't know," I replied.

"Nooo," she said, giggling. "You don't say that. You say, 'Arianna. Of course I do because I'm hot!'"

I scrunched my face. "Sure Arianna," I mumbled. "Of course I do because I'm hot."

"There you go," she said, forcing me to a silence.

I didn't like that exchange at all.

Then there was the way she absorbed her best friend's advice to play hard-to-get and not call me on the cruise ship intercoms.

Some people like games. I can't stand them.

Her worst motion was at the ship's nightclub. She danced with my brother in front of me in a way that was beyond acceptable; but she wasn't my girlfriend so I had no say. My confidence took another smashing blow.

Why was she doing this to me?

It wasn't right. Envy rose out of my principles, that dictated, "this is disgusting." But I had no say. It seemed like she was playing a game and the scenario—where my brother at one point felt compelled to bring her over to me, knowing she was going too far—made me feel tiny.

She asked me if I was jealous.

I denied it.

She enjoyed telling me about a time when she'd been on a cruise before and 'played' three guys at once.

In my moral superiority, I'd thought that no girl would ever do this to me—not out of arrogance, but out of a simple old message from Sunday School days.

"Do to others as you would have them do to you."

I believed I was protected by that message. If I didn't play the field and cheat on girls, no girl would do it to me. Simple. And so very very wrong.

When the holiday came to an end and we departed from one another, I was upset, but her joyful disposition told me she really didn't care at all. I was astonished when she wanted to continue an overseas romance online.

It was January; a new year and a new start.

I was living in Southampton in six-bedroom house with University friends, post Uni and the financial firm job I'd quit. The company I was working for delivered a redundancy notice to us within our first days back from Christmas holidays. I was an Insurance Underwriter—a seemingly secure job—and the announcement came as a surprise to the entire team of seventy. But online companionship with Arianna revived my hope in life.

She invited me to her home in Florida for a follow-up vacation.

"I have to wait three months for this redundancy package to come in," I said, worried she wouldn't be able to wait for me in fast-paced American society.

"We'll see how things go," she replied. This was no assurance at all, but I knew I definitely could be faithful to her. To have a woman from the States interested in me was a miracle. To have any woman interested in me was special, because at this point, I'd still not experienced the pleasure of a proper girlfriend.

We talked, we laughed, and grew more excited about our impending reunion as January and February passed.

For the first time in my life, it was great to know that someone out there actually had feelings for me.

But it didn't last.

Messaging became strained.

Arianna began to get angry at statements where I meant no harm.

"I'm just going out tonight," I said, outfitted in a knight's garb for a fancy-dress

party. I took a photo and sent it to her via Windows Messenger programme we communicated over. Skype video wouldn't work which made her increasingly upset, but I kept telling myself, "Hold it together. It's only two more months. She'll wait for me."

She laughed, but turned sour. "You're always going out," she said.

"It's Friday night," I replied.

"Yeah, but you should stay in and be with me."

"I would but this is one of my housemate's birthdays. I wish I could stay. I would, believe me."

I knew she didn't fully comprehend how much I meant it. I didn't want to go out, but such a drastic move would have upset the party of housemates consisting of guys and girls.

"Okay. Go then!" she said.

"Arianna," I replied. "I really want to stay, but I did tell them I would be coming along. I'll call it off, if you really want?"

"I do want you to call it off, but you're all dressed up. So go. Have a good time."

"Okay. Cool. I'll go then. Talk to you later."

Arianna Lane has signed off.

I hated when she'd sharply sign off.

On returning home early from the party, she'd sent a host of messages.

"I miss you so much."

"I hate being alone without you."

"I think I love you."

"I'm a drunken mess right now."

"I'm stupidly drunk."

"Where are you?"

"Forget everything I've said!"

When I spoke to her again, I reassured her that I wasn't afraid of her messages, even though I was apprehensive. My worry didn't come from what she'd said, but more that she was drinking so heavily.

What would she do? Would she go out and get a one-night fix for her loneliness?

I stomped on the brakes of my racing mind and allowed a pit-stop moment. I breathed a full sigh and shook my head as I looked at my blue shirt before hanging it in the wardrobe. I'd worn that same shirt on the night I met Arianna. My lucky shirt. I shook my head again.

I'm in a new place now. A new start, I reaffirmed. The past is done. That's over.

But like being caught in a tornado's path, I relinquished my grip on present reality, back into the spiralling abyss of nasty memories—the girl in the red dress...

Soon, Arianna's demeanour mutated.

Our online messenger conversations violently altered in tone, with her icy persona as the conspicuous changer.

There were no longer any romantic gestures and talks of when we would see each other.

She became increasingly distant and frosty.

She would sign off saying, “good night friend,” or “goodbye amigo.”

Whenever I would talk of our reunion, I would receive a gust of pure hail in my face.

“I can’t wait to see you,” I said. “Only a month left.”

Arianna Lane has signed off, *emerged on the screen.*

My heart sunk.

When she returned online later or the next day, she would say her Internet disconnected.

Ending a conversation, for what felt like the hundredth time, I said to her, “and I’m really looking forward to seeing you.”

“Bye Amigo,” she replied, using a ‘thumbs-up’ icon.

No kisses. No hugs. No hearts.

Arianna Lane has signed off.

My heart beat fast and hard, and my stomach fell into my legs.

During various conversations that followed, I began to ask her intermittently, “what’s wrong? What’s going on? Are you okay? Are you seeing someone else?”

“Every thing’s fine,” she would always respond.

Then I tried a different approach.

“Arianna, if you’ve met someone, I understand.” I typed with a heart-beat so fast, it made breathing hard.

“No, I haven’t met anyone silly,” she replied. “I haven’t met anybody at all. Don’t worry so much.”

It got worse.

“Hey Arianna,” I said one night.

“Can’t talk for long Chris. I have someone coming over. We’re having steaks and wine!”

“Okay. Cool.”

Please let it be a ‘she.’ Please let it be a ‘she.’

“He’s a really good friend,” she continued. “Oh! He’s here. Got to go. Talk to you later!”

Arianna Lane has signed off.

Every time she disconnected abruptly, my room took on the atmosphere of a Temple of Doom trap—walls closing in, ceiling shifting down.

The coldness continued for a month and a half. And it wasn’t just her. My actual room seemed to be descending into sub-zero temperature, like the freezer of a morgue readying me for the grave.

I was permitted a fraction of hope in that she told me she hadn’t met a new man. But the repeated torment of the sudden disappearance of our romantic connection—no explanation—was like central heating switched off during a bitter UK February winter.

Whether at home or work, it made every breath I took like inhaling water. I was

drowning, but extremely slowly and there was nothing I could do.

When I told my father about Arianna, his words were the catalyst that can turn a flowing stream into rock solid ice.

“Son,” he said. “You’re talking about a young, pretty single American girl, who lives in an apartment by herself? You know she’s got to be having fellas over, right?”

In the end, I sent an email to her calling the whole thing off in the most polite and loving way I could. I signed off the letter: “If you could make someone fall in love with you over this long distance, then I know you’re going to make someone very happy.”

Her email back was nowhere near as warm...it was blunt-force truth; the sentence that repeated in my mind like water-drip torture, kept me awake for four days straight: “The idea of you coming here is stressing me out so much. **We don’t even know each other.**”

We don’t even know each other, I repeated in my mind. We don’t even know each other.

It had all been a lie. Fake. There was nothing between us. I should have known from all the signs. Even the Valentine’s card she’d sent—my first one ever—was hollow.

“I love how much I like you,” the card had said and played a rock track that had no association with me. I’d sent her a huge card and created a comical, lengthy poem of how we met.

Looking back, I recognise that the size of the card was all the love I’ve wanted to give over the years, amassed in one gesture.

After the closure, I would sign onto Windows Messenger service, only to see her sign off after a few minutes passed.

A couple of weeks later, Facebook’s public mini-feed delivered the last, choking blow.

Arianna Lane: I just had a great night out with you-know-who wink wink...and a good morning wink wink.

I was alone again with a tiny financial redundancy package and unemployment.

I moved back to my mother’s small flat in London. Signing on for the Job Seekers Allowance benefit cheques of fifty pounds a week, then failure to acquire a job was a spiral with the escalator steps travelling in reverse. Running it was exhausting, but inactivity took me to a basement so dark, I wanted out.

Completely out.

Full days sat in my dressing gown, curtains drawn, air stifling with the stench of rejection, my only escape was heavy weekends on whiskey off credit cards; it all had to stop. I wanted to start over.

Things hadn’t worked out for me in any way I’d hoped throughout life. No girlfriend. No job. No car. No place to call my own.

Private school education at a prestigious all boys’ institution and attendance to a top English University—all for what?

I would listen to music to raise my spirits. Not mainstream singers. Couldn’t stand the material they spouted with Rock moaning about a broken heart and Hip-Hop promoting use of girls, drinking-up, and loitering in the clubs.

I listened to film OST's from John Williams, Hans Zimmer, and 90s Dance like Robert Miles and Sash. It instilled hope and the nostalgia of waking up in the morning as a child, optimistic that life would be fantastic when I reached my teenage years. But it hadn't been.

One night I returned home seriously inebriated.

"Mum," I said, waking her up at what was around three in the morning. After much incoherent speech, I made the only request that made sense.

"Please let me go," I cried, through slurred talk. "Allow me to let myself go. I don't want this anymore. I don't want any of it. Let me go."

In this month as I turned twenty-five, my mother's brother came to visit London—Vernon Sterno. I hadn't seen him in ten years. He proposed I return to the Pharisee Islands with him, live rent and bills free at his villa, and get a job so I could save money. Get back on my feet.

To my family and friends' surprise, and much to my own, the vow ten years prior was kept.

I left.

Spending November and December in the Pharisee Islands, I managed to scrounge a job as a beach bartender, the only industry that would hire me because every other required that I had a driver's license.

Following, I returned to London for January and February while my Work Permit processed—part of immigration rules—and was back in March.

"Chris!" shouted Vernon from the other side of the bungalow.

"Yeah!" I replied.

"I need to introduce you to the dogs and security system before we leave."

"Okay," I said. I packed the last of my clothes away and grabbed my plastic wallet with all my Work Permit paperwork inside. I shot out of the room, pacing around the corner, passing through the dining room, enjoying the unique smell of the place—like sun lotion. It confirmed I was in new territory. A new beginning.

Vernon was standing by the back door of the kitchen that led to the garden. He had two blue dog bowls in his hands.

"You see these bowls," Vernon said. "This one is for Rocky. And this one is for Rambo."

"Okay," I said, noticing that Rocky's bowl was larger. "Rocky's the bigger dog?"

"Yeah. Now I mix the dry food with the wet for both of them and add water. You're going to need to feed them sometimes."

"Oh, okay," I replied, remembering I went through this before. They were security dogs so they needed to get acquainted to my scent so as to know I wasn't an intruder. I put my Work Permit documents down on the table.

Vernon opened the door to the garden and handed the bowls to me.

Here I go again, I thought as I stepped outside. I could hear footsteps bounding around the house before both dobermans appeared, running toward me. Rocky the bigger

one jumped at me and I could feel the weight of him as he lifted his forefeet to push against me. I placed the bowls down and the dogs were into the food quickly.

“Okay,” said Vernon smiling the first smile I’d seen since arriving.

“Alright,” I replied, walking back inside fast and picking up my file.

“Are you ready?”

“Yeah, let’s go.”

Vernon locked the kitchen back door and moved toward the front door. “You remember how to use the alarm system?”

“Yeah, but remind me just in case.”

He handed me a spare key and showed me the code to switch the security on and off.

“You got it?” he said.

I nodded. “Got it.”

“Good.”

We left the bungalow. Vernon jumped in the four-by-four and I followed into the passenger seat.

“Do you think I will be able to have two jobs?” I said, pondering the challenge of doing the bar job and the journalist role—if I got it.

“Shouldn’t be a problem,” said Vernon. “All you need to do is get the go-ahead from Fives regarding the journalist position. If they allow you, you can have Permits for both jobs. Sometimes it can be tricky though. Islanders want the jobs first. They see someone else doing two jobs, they don’t like it.”

He was quiet as we began the drive up through Street Village and took one of the steep, meandering mountain roads into the country of Mortigno. Traversing the path, we passed clumps of thick forest, till we reached clear roads where huge detached villas could be seen dotted across the mountain terrain. Views of the open-ended sea came into sight and the beautiful, infinite blue sky.

I’m really here. I’m in the Caribbean. I’m in paradise.

As we descended from the mountains of greenery to flat ground and cut across a road parallel to the sea, the view of the ocean was even greater on this side of the island.

We were welcomed onto the bay by the smell of the salt air breathing over us and the sound of the waves crashing against the wall, that separated the road from the sea.

We passed bars I recalled on my last visit. There was Malone’s—a little shack on the side of the road, then there was Neato’s night club—a large building with a spacious deck area leading onto the beach. Following was Kiwi’s, a bright green bar on the right side, also adjacent to the beach. On our left side were apartment blocks of flats and studios, permitting phenomenal views of tropical, panoramic vistas, diverse in nature every single day and night—I remembered how much I missed those views during my two months in London.

The jeep pulled up into a dirt track car park, surrounded by tall trees that leaned in as if they were protecting the few vehicles around.

I’ve made it. I’m actually here. My new job location—Five O’ Clock Somewhere—I’m going to be a real bartender.

I looked toward the beach retreat that I'd be working at.

The sign, high up among the trees was covered by a few palm leaves.

We stepped out of the car and Vernon leaned up against his vehicle. "Cain should be in there by now. I'll be around," he said.

"Okay, thanks very much," I replied and walked toward the sign. A thin path cut-out among the bush into a garden area with a couple of outdoor tables and chairs. The path meandered through the green, opening to the bar and restaurant like a secret garden location. I walked through with a smile on my face, feeling the same joy of seeing the establishment as I had the first time. There were no nerves, despite the fact that I was walking toward a job interview. Just contentment.

Jacob Cain, I thought. The smile disappeared from my face.

Jacob Cain. Jacob Cain. Who is he?

I looked around the bar and the patrons—obvious tourists by their dress. Then, I saw them both. A large man standing up with a grin on his face and the other sat with his back to the restaurant area.

I gritted my teeth as I recognised the bald head and awkward body shape of the man sitting down.

Oh no.

I knew that dark complexion and those round glasses.

Oh, no way. No, it can't be him, I thought. *Of all people, not him. Seriously...no way.*

He turned around.

It was *him*.