

LOVE DRUG

by

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(A character prequel to 'For the Love of Money')

'India, if you want to stay here, I need a big story. Get me an interview with Flynn Adams about his wonder drug and I'll get you the front page. Even if we do have to change your fucking ridiculous name.'

The young woman sitting in front of the Daily Mail's features editor gulped, but, determined not to show she was shocked by the newspaperman's typical obnoxious language, fixed her features into a can-do expression.

When India Jones' mother had named her daughter, high on the hormones of childbirth and some really good painkillers, she'd imagined India would grow up to lead a life full of adventurous pursuits in far flung places. Little thought had been given to the challenges of sharing her name with a ruggedly handsome nineteen-eighties action hero.

Arriving at her first day at the Mail to find her desk strewn with plastic snakes and a rubber whip coiled around her chair, she'd consoled herself that it could have been worse... Her mother's second best fantasy squeeze was Robocop.

'Sure Mark, no problem. I'll set up the interview today and have the copy with you for Saturday's edition.'

But Mark Sawyer's attention was already elsewhere, and he flicked his fingers towards the door indicating he needed nothing more from her. Except results.

India's mind was racing as she left the editor's office. She loved a challenge and this would prove to be the toughest of her career so far. Adrenaline beat a fast rhythm through her veins as she charged through the busy newsroom, unaware of the admiring looks of every male reporter she passed. Well apart from Enrique Fernandez. The recently appointed, and hugely camp, office manager was saving his lovelorn looks for Dave Wright the football pundit and had taken to following him around like a lost puppy. Watching Dave try and hide behind a tiny yucca plant, trip and swear as a result, India shook her head and laughed.

Her russet hair shone enticingly under the glare of the office lights as she rushed towards her workstation, but tightly coiled into a business-like French braid, the message was clear: India Jones was unavailable.

Beautiful? Yes. Sexy? Definitely. But up for romance? Never.

India had decided long ago never to be trapped by the honeyed barbs of love that ensnared her mother and led to a hard life of single motherhood. Men were a distraction she didn't need or want; her career was everything she needed and more.

Arriving at her desk at the back of the newsroom, India reached immediately for her keyboard and called up the paper's extensive list of contacts on her computer. She phoned, texted and emailed every possible lead, cajoling, charming and calling in every favour she was owed to get within touching distance of the notoriously difficult Flynn Adams.

Adams MacAndrew Pharmaceuticals was rapidly becoming the most influential company in the country, and the paper had nicknamed its brilliant, but recalcitrant, founder as the 'People's Drug Tsar'. Nothing beyond mere facts was known about the man, but as he was as handsome as he was talented, the Mail's readers were itching to find out more.

As the paper's junior intern, India's workstation - it was a bit too grand to call the strip of mdf propped up by hope and glue a desk - was located in a sliver of space between the recycling bin and the water cooler. Not the most glamorous position in the office, but it had proved to be a fantastic place to overhear gossip. And journalists loved to gossip.

Earlier that morning, she'd heard the paper's business editor complaining to his mate on the sports desk that he couldn't attend the much-hyped Lord Chancellor's summer cocktail party at the House of Lords. Apparently his wife had booked them in for a session of emergency marriage counselling and if he didn't show up, he was toast. What India hadn't realised until her fifth telephone call of the afternoon, was that the cocktail party was today.

Rummaging around in the recycling basket and ignoring the pitying looks of a group of smartly dressed secretaries off to a girls' lunch in a nearby wine bar, India let out a whoop of triumph as she found what she was looking for - a guest list for the party, dumped there by the business editor's secretary earlier that day. The PA was supposed to shred it, but couldn't be bothered as she'd wanted to get ready for her lunch.

The list also contained a brief profile of each guest. India flicked her eyes through the information as she looked for Flynn Adams. As ever, his profile picture was a moody photograph and his bio a dry list of academic and business

achievements. Unlike most of the other guests listed, there were no personal details whatsoever.

Flynn Adams never gave interviews. Ever. But India was determined that this was about to change.

Five hours later, India was in a black cab heading to Westminster, her press accreditation fixed firmly to her black chiffon cocktail dress and her senses fizzing with anticipation.

Two hours after that, her fizz had turned to frustration and she tried to stifle a yawn during an endless conversation about the use of durable plastics. The men and women at this cocktail party may be some of the most influential in the country, but dear God they were dull.

India accepted a glass of perfectly chilled Ruinart Rose champagne from a passing waiter and headed outside to the terrace, rubbing the tight muscles in her neck as she walked.

She was deeply disappointed. All her hard work to get here and all she'd achieved was a mild headache and a detailed knowledge of polymers. She hadn't caught so much as a glimpse of Flynn Adams all evening; in fact she wasn't even sure he was here at all. Sighing and taking a restorative sip of champagne, India forced herself to relax and appreciate her surroundings.

The distinctive red and white striped awning above the House of Lords terrace rustled in the breeze and India leant on the river wall, drinking in the view.

It was stunning.

The gothic bell tower of St Stephen stood guard over Westminster Bridge and the bells of Big Ben tolled the quarter hour, their chimes heavy in the evening heat. India watched transfixed as commuters hurried home to enjoy an evening of late summer sunshine, jumping on iconic London buses as they flashed red against cobalt sky, crossing the bridge from north to south. Mopeds, cars and vans vied for road space with insistent black taxis, and colourful lycra-clad cyclists swerved and weaved amidst the never-ending throng. Flowing lazily through it all, timeless and majestic, the ancient River Thames meandered eastwards, following its tidal pull towards the sea.

Her gaze fixed on the urban scenery, India didn't realise someone else had joined her on the terrace until her skin prickled with an almost primal awareness. Her first glimpse of the man who would change the course of her life forever, and not

necessarily for the better, was of his forearms. Strong, tanned and leaning on the river wall beside her, they drew her gaze hypnotically, the cityscape forgotten.

Navy suit sleeves and pristine white cuffs revealed the man to be a guest and not a waiter, as did the platinum sheen of a Rolex Mariner watch. He balanced his glass, cognac not champagne, on the railing and turned his head in the same direction as hers. He didn't say a word as he looked south at the slowly revolving pods on the fairground style big wheel of the London Eye. Neither did India, but then she wasn't sure she could. Instead she flicked her gaze towards the man's face, and caught her breath in alarm as she realised who he was.

The angle of the setting sun caught the contours of his famous profile, and India forced herself to look back towards the Southbank and its own attractions. Shafts of evening sunlight created alchemy as they burnished the curved metal structure of the huge ferris wheel into gold, making it gleam like the magical gateway to a mysterious kingdom.

'Quite beautiful,' said the man, his deep tones making India jump and spill the remains of her champagne into the inky river below.

Flustered, India wiped ineffectually at drops of spilled champagne as they soaked into her dress, and looked directly at him for the first time. She caught her breath in surprise to find his gaze was not fixed on the London Eye as she had expected, but staring at her with brooding intensity.

'Not quite the word I'd use,' she stuttered, her normal confidence and assurance failing to assert itself.

'Oh I would....' replied the man, taking a long sip of his cognac, the movement drawing India's eyes down to the firm column of his throat. The man mirrored her actions, his gaze grazing along the creamy contours of her neckline and his head jerking back in surprise when he saw the press pass hanging from her neck. He made no comment, choosing instead to swirl the last amber drops of his drink around the crystal glass and waiting for her to fill the silence that now felt uncomfortable between them.

'Flynn Adams...' stammered India, annoyed to be caught unprepared for the meeting that could make or break her career. Her body was reacting entirely unprofessionally and she needed to get a grip.

'India Jones...' Flynn inclined his head slightly as he read her press accreditation, derision souring his words.

Their eyes locked again, disdain meeting distrust, but before India could rise to his unspoken challenge, the Lord Chancellor's arrival was announced and Flynn was whisked away by an officious aide.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur as India sat on the periphery of proceedings, waiting for her chance to speak to Flynn again. She was buzzing with a need she told herself was purely to do with her job, her ambition to succeed at the paper. But when at last he found her again, the interview, the job, even the front page was forgotten.

'Come home with me.' he said, a statement rather than a question.

India nodded, feeling sweat prickle at her hairline, and followed him wordlessly to a car waiting in the covered courtyard outside.

They sat rigidly apart, not saying a thing as the chauffeured black Mercedes drove them the short distance to the discreet Goring hotel in Victoria. And again, not a word was uttered as they stood within a hair's breadth of each other in the antique lift that took an agonisingly slow ride up to Flynn's exclusive suite.

It was only when the glossy, black double doors had locked behind them and Flynn had ripped himself free of his Brioni suit, that any noise escaped them at all.

Gasps of need exploded from them both as Flynn picked up India in strong arms and strode towards the bedroom. Their mouths fused instantly in an expression of passion that was almost savage. Desperate desire trumped finesse as they freed themselves from the confines of their clothes. Heat seared flesh as finally Flynn pinned India to the bed with his body, stilling her writhing limbs with the hardness of her body. Within seconds he was inside her, and within minutes they were crying out each other's names as they reached a roaring, tumbling climax.

As the shock wave of her orgasm subsided, a shaft of shame took its place as India realised she and Flynn had exchanged less than ten words all night. That she'd gone slept with a man she'd barely spoken to. But not just any man. Flynn Adams, the man she was supposed to be interviewing...

'Flynn, I need... We need to talk... To try and understand what it happening here..'

But before she could say anything more, he had reached for her again...

The morning found India alone.

Groggily she checked her watch to find it was long after nine. The smile of satisfaction that had curved her lips in sleep faltered as flashbacks of the night before replayed in her mind.

Heat flooded her body as she remembered what they had said and done to each other in the long hours of passion. Things that seemed natural and right in the shadows of the night, but as sunlight streamed through the sash windows and on to her naked body, felt stained with shame. Tears welled in her eyes and she needed Flynn beside her, his presence and warmth to make it right.

Struggling free of the tangled Frette sheets, she called out his name. She blushed again as she realised her voice was echoing her cries of passion from merely hours before.

Wrapping the bedclothes around her in an attempt to regain some modesty, India scrambled from the bed and made her way to the sitting room of the suite.

Empty.

Except for a huge bouquet of Titian-red roses covering the coffee table in a profusion of blooms.

India reached for the embossed envelope nestled in the creamy ribbon that bound the flowers together and tore it open.

‘Come to Adams MacAndrew at noon. The boardroom. I’ll give you your blasted interview if it means so much to you. Flynn.’

At the strike of noon precisely, India was ushered into the boardroom of Adams MacAndrew Pharmaceuticals in the heart of the City of London. Demurely dressed in a sombre black suit, green silk shirt with her hair tied into submission, the only concession she had made to her femininity was a pair of high, black patent Louboutin shoes.

‘Thank you Felicity, I’ll take it from here.’ Flynn didn’t look up from his seat at the head of the polished walnut boardroom table as he acknowledged his secretary. The PA nodded her understanding and quickly left the room.

India stood ignored as Flynn took his time to finish signing the pile of documents in front of him and began to feel extremely angry.

How dare he leave her without saying goodbye this morning? How dare leave a terse note summoning her to his office with the promise of an interview, and then

ignore her? Just because she was a journalist on a tabloid newspaper, it didn't mean she was a whore!

Finally Flynn looked up and met her heated gaze with his signature raised eyebrow and a smile that could have easily been seen as a sneer.

'Well that *is* what you wanted isn't it? An interview?' he drawled, pushing away his paperwork and leaning back into the leather chair that was so huge it resembled a black throne.

'So what are you now then Flynn? A bloody mind reader?'

'Merely giving you the thing you so desperately require,' he mocked. 'Your career *is* the most important thing in your life isn't it? Or did I get that wrong?'

India was so angry that she was surprised flames weren't flying from her hair.

'I thought we were *talking* Flynn! Exchanging details in our lives that were important to us?'

'In all honesty India, there was hardly time to talk, was there? And what you did say, well, all I've done is respond to that and given you the opportunity to interview me...'

'Screw your bloody interview Flynn. And *screw you too!*'

India raced to the door, but Flynn was quicker. His quads strained against the fine fabric of his suit, revealing that at 42 years of age, he was in the prime of his physical fitness.

The arm that barred India's exit from the room was immovable, and even at the height of her fury, she couldn't get it to budge. As she struggled to free herself feeling Flynn's biceps bulge against her attempts to open the door, her anger morphed into passionate need. But humiliated and ashamed by her body's reaction to a man who treated her like a cheap newspaper hack or worse, she continued to fight against him.

Twisting her into his arms, Flynn pushed India back against the unyielding wood of the boardroom table where he looked hard into her eyes, raising a single eyebrow in triumph as her felt her body soften, her breath become ragged and finally her hands draw his head down towards hers.

As soon as Flynn kissed her, India was lost. Her head fell backwards in abandon, giving her a hazy view of the City's skyscrapers through the panoramic windows of the penthouse, and India felt dizzy. Dizzy with the height, dizzy with passion, dizzy with Flynn.

Flynn groaned in satisfaction as he felt her response to the firm pressure of his mouth and loosened his grip in order to unzip the ugly skirt she had worn as armour. With a deep sigh that Flynn absorbed with his lips, India allowed him inside her body and her heart.

As they gasped their way to another desperate climax, both lost sense of their surroundings. Neither noticed Felicity's silent entrance to the room and her hasty retreat. Neither noticed the shock and despair that etched onto her face. And even if they had seen any of this, they were too far gone to care.

A long time later, they lay together the languorous satisfaction. The ragged breathing of passion finally slowed into lazy contentment, and smiles contoured softness into their faces. But as India reached over to kiss Flynn once more, she saw his smile freeze and die. The blue of his eyes was piercing and cold as he fixed her with his intense gaze.

'India, remember how you said we should share personal details and things that are important to us?'

India nodded, unease tensing her body.

'Well, there was something I didn't get around to sharing last night...'

India looked up at him expectantly as he stared broodily out of the window, pausing and collecting his thoughts before he continued.

'I need to tell you I'm married...'

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To catch up with India & Flynn some years later, download 'FOR THE LOVE OF MONEY' a full length novel by Victoria Louise Butler now on Amazon Kindle. It's the perfect summer read!

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