

## Excerpts for Open the Door & Other Stories:

### Open The Door

Cane Markham liked the look of the apartment complex.

'Elegant and stately is what I would call them.' he thought as he parked his old red Jaguar in the visitor's parking.

'This is what I'm looking for! Let us see if it looks as distinguished inside as it does on the outside.'

He was pleased they didn't have one of those presumptuous signs that reads "Future Resident". What kind of sign is that anyway? An inquiry doesn't make you a future resident. To his mind that kind of sign is tacky. He didn't want tacky.

Carefully he pulled up the handbrake and removed the windshield guard from under his front seat. He didn't know how long he was going to be but he didn't want his steering wheel to be like a scorching steam iron when he did return to the car. He opened it and stuck it under each sun visor.

Then he took a deep belly breath before he opened the car door. It was something he had learned to do to keep his equilibrium when he stepped out into THE WORLD. The world of people. To brace himself for the LOOK. That horror look that would quickly turn to embarrassment as they lowered their eyes briefly before meeting his eyes again and pretending not to be shocked by him.

He glanced around the garden in front of the Office and Clubhouse that were tastefully landscaped. He stopped in front of the double glass doors through which he could see polished pink-tinged marble floors, artful Grecian columns and an opulent chandelier that sparkled and reflected its sparkle from its shiny brass fittings.

'Yes, this is a feast for eyes craving beauty.'

He pulled open the door and stepped into the cool air-conditioned, gardenia smelling lobby. He heard the high heeled click of the leasing associate's shoes before he turned to look at her.

The wide welcoming red lipstick smile on her face died. Here was the horror.

### The Heart of Diane

The letter arrived just before her weekly bridge game with Doris, Mable and Evie. It was unusual to get a Fedexed overnight envelope and she frowned in an attempt to read who the sender was but finally she gave up and walked across to the neatly set card table where she had already placed the deck of cards beside her reading glasses case.

She tucked the envelope under her arm and with arthritic fingers, removed her glasses and a soft cloth from within its golden leather case. Wiping the lenses before hooking them over her ears, she was careful not to upset the salon styled blue-gray tinted curls. Dropping the glasses case on the table she drew the envelope from under her arm and focused on the sender's name.

Then the color drained from her cheeks and she sank onto one of the chairs at the card table as she read the name. Phillipa Drummond. She gripped the envelope until her

lumpy knuckles whitened and then taking a deep breath she tore the envelope open to reveal the small one inside. It was a flat white one with her name scrawled across it in a flamboyant hand.

With a fluttering heart and fear gripping her stomach like a hawk grips its prey, she read its contents. It was brief.

"Dear Diane

My mother and father were recently killed in an automobile accident. I was amazed at what their private papers revealed about our relationship and even more surprised by some of the letters you wrote my mother.

I would like to meet you. I will be in Orlando during the latter part of this week and I am taking it upon myself to call on you and hope that you will receive me as graciously as I believe the Rothenburgers always receive guests, even those they find distasteful.

Phillipa Drummond"

Twin spots of pink put a glow to Diane Rothenburger's powdered face. Her sapphire blue eyes flashed with anger.

## **Just A Little Loving**

Their eyes met and Jordan smiled.

"You're doing fine." he said.

Fern flamed. Her whole body was on fire. She looked away from his magnetic Irish eyes. She felt embarrassed. This is absurd. I feel like a teenager.

"Okay, try one more. Good, follow through, gently back. Great." he squeezed her shoulder.

Fern slumped forward, resting her forearms on her legs and bending her head so that Jordan couldn't see her face.

"Now let's do something for those abs .... oops! You okay?"

"Yes ... . yes. Just a little dizzy."

"Then let's rest a while. Did you push that last one a little too much to impress me?"

"You do have an ego!"

"It comes with the job."

"Really? How do you work that one out?"

"I have all these women chasing after me. I guess it's the biceps ...."

"I hope you're not including me in all these women!"

"Not yet, but I wouldn't be surprised if you handed me your card some time in the future."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because I find you very attractive and I'm probably going to come on to you."

Fern blushed scarlet. "Do you have any idea how old I am Jordan?"

"Does it matter?"

"Well, hell, yes it does!"

## **My Heart Is Bursting**

Dennis Daws did a Windsor knot on his mustard tie. He liked this double knot more than any other and the mustard tie was long and lent itself to this expression. He stared at himself in the mirror, running his tongue along his top row of teeth and smiling at himself. Immediately tiny creases on the side of his eyes softened his look and his Arabian blue eyes filled with a spine-shivers, heart-melting sparkle.

Dennis' charm grew out of his smile, which crept into his eyes and he had learnt to work it. He never beamed but rather let it slide slowly into place. Slow and sensual worked best. He'd practiced this smile for hours over a period of a month before he went on his first sale years ago just as his salesman manuals had suggested. Within weeks he was a top selling salesman and he'd never looked back since. There wasn't anything Dennis Daws couldn't sell but his specialty lay in the sales of BMW's from his own BMW dealership. Daws BMW. Tonight though, his mind was far from cars. Tonight he had to sell himself. It wasn't new territory for Dennis. After all, that's what salesmanship was all about; selling yourself and your product. But tonight the product was he himself. He had to stand-alone. Aaah, he'd done it before. He'd sold himself to other woman but this time it was different. This time he wanted the sale real bad.

He ran the palm of his hand across his bald pate and thanked his mother's side of the family for providing him with his aristocratic nose and shapely eyebrows and strong jaw line. If he'd lost his hair with his father's huge snuzzle and floppy lips he might have had a few problems bringing his smile together in quite the charismatic way he did.

He lifted the heavy gold cufflinks with their onyx stones and fixed them into the deep olive green silk shirt sleeve then he shook his hands until the shirt sleeves fell into place. He adjusted his tie again, moving his Adams apple up from the strangle-hold knot like a swimmer coming up for air and he slipped his mustard suit's jacket on and popped a silk kerchief, the color of his shirt, adorned with mustard polka dots into the breast pocket.

"Go get 'em shaker." he said and his voice held a timbre of Christopherson.

## **MCGEE**

When Gordon Swanson died of a sudden heart attack in the early morning of that unusually hot December, none of his family thought to call McGee to let him know.

He was not a member of the family and never considered a friend by Louise, Gordon's wife and Charlene, his daughter, despite the fact that he had visited the Swanson apartment at least three times a week for ten years.

To Louise and Charlene he had been an unwelcome guest in their home. Unwelcome but tolerated because it would be rude and hurtful not to invite him in when he knocked at their door. The only days he was guaranteed never to intrude was on a Saturday and Sunday. McGee sensed their wish for privacy on the weekend, but if he sensed their wish not to have him around them at all, he ignored those vibes.

It seemed he was totally unaware that his shabby and often dirty looking gray

baggy clothes, unkempt multicolored beard and strips of graying hair combed from the side and plastered to his bald pate were off-putting and also an embarrassment to them if they had guests.

Gordon's sentiment on McGee differed from that of his wife and daughter. Although he might have agreed with them that McGee's uninvited visits could be annoying, sharing his conversation and opinions stimulated him.

McGee shuffled from his bedroom to the bathroom. His body was always slow in the morning. It was as though it had to catch up with his mind that had been active and exercised all night while his body had slept and stiffened. As he stood at the toilet with one of his hands pressed against the wall for support he became aware of the urgent whine of an ambulance. His mind registered that that was what must have woken him. It sounded very close.

## **The Residents' Dinner**

Through kingsize sheet pane windows, the clubhouse glowed and beckoned its guests. Lamps and wall sconces pooled their soft light dropping it onto the puffed Italian navy leather sofas and chairs arranged in the center of the room in a circle around spindly legged lamp tables and coffee table. Small round dining tables and chairs hugged the windows on the outer perimeter and a cold buffet stretched across a back wall and behind the wetbar a hired barman cut and tossed curls of lemon into a dish ready for the party to begin.

Joanne Winslow's eyes swept the scene then settled on the barman, watching his long slim fingers working the lemon and the knife. She felt the rise of desire within her. It had been a long time since she'd been with a man. No one had asked her out since Wally had died despite her spending a good whack of her salary on tummy tucks, blond hair color and Botox. Sure, she carried a little on the hips but hell there was a time when 38-24-38 would have been considered sexily voluptuous. She smoothed the collar of the burgundy, black and gold light brocade bolero over her black satin dress and stepped forward onto the welcome mat and into the foyer. Her shoes tip tapped on the tiled floor as she balanced on them and gingerly walked into the sitting area.

Paul Cavendish looked up into the aquamarine blue eyes staring at him. Her red burgundy lips parted and pearly white teeth flashed and her smile dazzled. Raw sex appeal hit him between the eyes. He knew she was younger than him. Probably a lot younger than him. Heck, at 75 just about everyone was a lot younger than him but she had the moves and he felt the affects.

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