

“Nobody Heard Me Cry!”

A story inspired by true events.

P.A.Davies

Chapter 1

Nine years old. It was the one and only birthday that Beth could remember clearly but not because it was the best birthday she had ever had.

She could remember the party her mum had arranged and how all of her friends had been there; the girls in their pretty party dresses and the boys in their smart shirts and trousers ... all except for Niall that was, who for some strange reason had turned up dressed as a *Power Ranger*. She kind of remembers Niall's mum apologising when she'd dropped him off and her own mum laughing about it, saying that it was no problem at all. She also remembers overhearing her mum telling her Aunty Lisa in the kitchen that she felt sorry for Niall because his mum was a *piss head* who spent all of her benefits on drink; which is probably why she had allowed her son to turn up at the party dressed as a cartoon ninja character rather than buy him some decent clothes. Beth had asked her mum what a *piss head* was and ended up getting scolded for eavesdropping. But then her mum had smiled and told her to keep it a secret because it would only upset Niall and his mum if she ever repeated it. Beth remembers saying that she would. After all, she was good at keeping secrets back then.

Beth remembered how her mum had seemed a lot happier on that particular day; how she'd laughed when they had

played musical chairs, how she'd wept when everyone sang *Happy Birthday* and watched her daughter blow out the nine pink candles sitting atop her pink *Disney Princess* birthday cake. She remembered how she and her mum had shared a long cuddle on the couch when everybody else had finally gone home. Discarded paper plates, streamers, balloons, spilt drinks, half eaten sandwiches, crisps trampled into the carpet; none of that mattered for the time being. Mother and daughter alone, talking, laughing, embracing. That's what mattered. And that night, she had slept in her mum's bed and felt safe and happy and loved ... for a while at least.

But she also remembered thinking how the following night would be so different, when her step-dad Ray would be home and everything would change. How the following night, when all was dark and quiet and peaceful, Ray would sneak into her bedroom again and tell her to keep another secret. And how, after he'd gone, she would turn her face into her pillow so that nobody heard her cry.

Beth could remember her ninth birthday clearly. Not because it was the best one she had ever had but because, later that night when she was lying next to her mum, she didn't need to cry.

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Chapter 2

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Beth shivered, as a cold, night time breeze blew across her skimpily clothed body, bringing her swiftly back into the present. Sighing heavily, she glanced up and down the street wondering from which direction her next meal voucher would come. Not that she ate much these days. Truth was, she hardly ate at all, which would account for her being so painfully thin. She hadn't always been this skinny though. In fact, Beth could remember the time when she had a figure that was the envy of her friends and, judging by the amount of pre-pubescent wolf whistles she got, a bit of eye candy for the boys. She was a hot babe! Okay, maybe not that hot but at least she had a decent arse back then! Nowadays, it looked pretty non-existent, especially when she wore short skirts, which was more often than not. Beth parted the front of her worn denim jacket and looked down at the outline of her breasts, sitting pertly beneath her tight fitting vest top. "Still got great boobs though Elizabeth!" she said to herself, smiling. She then cupped them in her hands and pushed them upwards so that they sat a little better in her *Shocking Pink* coloured bra and accentuated her cleavage. She smiled again, satisfied with the result and then looked up to survey the street once more.

After a further fifteen minutes and still no sign of anybody on the horizon, Beth decided to risk taking a little break, smoke a roll-up and rest her aching feet for five minutes. Besides, she hadn't seen that limping cockroach *Tesco* riding

about the area for over an hour, so she reckoned it would be okay. He was probably lying in some filthy flat somewhere, buzzing off his daily quota of smack that he'd injected into his gamy leg, without the slightest care that one day, that leg would probably be coming right off. It had already begun to sprout infected ulcers from the constant jabbing with dirty needles, which, incidentally, was the reason he walked with a limp. Quick as fuck on a push bike though!

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Chapter 3

Tesco, aka Daz T ... or Darren Taylor to give him his real name ... was habitual in two things; drug use and shoplifting, with each activity going very much hand in hand. His current choice of illegal substance, to find that illusive yet much needed *high*, was Heroin, the drug that seemed the obvious next step (the only next step) after graduating quickly through the ranks of cannabis, ecstasy and *flake*; a purer, more potent blend of street bought cocaine. But his habit was expensive and as Mr Taylor was in neither gainful employment nor seemingly able to survive on his two hundred pounds a fortnight disability benefit plus one hundred and fifty pounds of income support, he funded his habit by shoplifting and the occasional commercial burglary. Ironically though, he would never *rob* from private houses, as he considered that to be, '*Bang out of order Boss!*'

Back in the day, when Darren hadn't yet succumbed to the addictive allure of the golden brown liquid and still had full unhindered use of his legs, he was pretty good at the shoplifting game and could easily out run any of the unfit security personnel working the various stores of Manchester ... if he ever get spotted nicking stuff that was. But over the years, as his physical prowess deteriorated, he became plagued with bad luck and was getting caught more and more frequently during his regular stealing expeditions. And the place where he was getting caught the most (and who now displayed a poster of him up on their walls to compliment his banning order) was at the supermarket chain of Tesco. In fact, of Darren's numerous

arrests, twenty three of them were for shoplifting alone, with nineteen of those being instigated by the supermarket in question ... hence the nickname was awarded to him by his criminal peers!

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Beth had first met Darren (or rather, Darren had come onto Beth) at a house party almost six years earlier and though he wasn't the best looking bloke at the ball (nor the tallest) she had found him to be very charismatic. He was funny, attentive and all too willing to share his beer and his spliff; which is probably why she ended up having sex with him later that evening. When that far-from-tender act was over and done with ten minutes later, Darren jumped up off the mattress, buttoned up his jeans and placed one of his hand-rolled cigarettes onto a worn, spindle back chair that was sitting next to the bed, being used as a makeshift table. He then looked at Beth and gave her a quick nod of the head. "In a bit yeah?" he offered and, without another word, left the room as though he was in a hurry to be somewhere more important.

Beth frowned as she watched Darren quickly scurry out of the bedroom and close the door behind him, their romantic interlude over. It wasn't the first time she had ended up alone in the bedroom of an unfamiliar house and it probably wouldn't be the last. As with all the other men she had *slept* with, Darren had shown no real emotion towards her and had absolutely no desire to cuddle up and discuss any potential future they might have had as a couple. That was never going to happen was it? Not with any of the men that found their way into her social circle anyway. And so, it was what it was; just sex, pure and simple. Meaningless, empty and in Beth's life, a

tragic but acceptable norm. Once upon a time, she had wondered what it would feel like to be in love with somebody who actually loved her back; loved her for who she was and not just for what was in between her legs. As the years passed, that particular wonderment had not only faded but found itself being locked away in the filing cabinet of her mind marked, '*For fairytales only!*' ... and so far, her life had definitely been no fairytale.

Beth sighed and looked around the sparsely furnished bedroom, a bedroom that was not dis-similar to others she had found herself lying in before now. There was dirty laundry piled high in one corner of the room whilst discarded pieces of paper, broken mobile phone chargers and the odd silver takeaway container lay strewn about the half carpeted, half chipboard floor. Random holes in the back of the door marked the spots where somebody had obviously decided to vent their anger in the past. Better that than somebody's face, Beth thought. The colour of the bedroom walls remained in a permanent state of transition between eggshell blue and brilliant white gloss where somebody had no doubt started to decorate ages beforehand but then suddenly given up halfway through the job. Against one of the walls sat a lopsided, white laminated unit that housed four drawers, two of which had lost their fronts so that the contents of each were revealed to anybody who happened to be in the room. Atop of that unit sat a worn and cheap looking, dust covered, portable television and video player, numerous VHS boxes, a variety of different shaped and sized drinking glasses and a chipped blue mug that had been printed with the crest of the Manchester City football team and sported the legend, '*City Till I Die!*'.

Beth's eyes finally settled on the last piece of furniture in the room: a bedside table, cleverly disguised as an old chair and

upon which, Darren had considerably placed his token gesture a few minutes earlier. The seat of the chair was covered in a selection of half dismantled cigarette lighters, yet another takeaway carton that doubled as an ashtray, a scratched and liquid marked *2Pac* music CD and two empty beer cans which had also been used as make-do ashtrays. A cannabis grinder, a metal pendant in the shape of a handgun, a cigarette rolling machine and an old mobile phone battery completed the selection of oddities.

And, as if purposely created to compliment the Feng Shui of the room, (and indeed the rest of the house) the air was laden with the mixed smells of old, greasy food, stale tobacco smoke and sweat. In fact, the aroma was so pungent, that Beth had to wonder if the owners had even considered using a can of air freshener before ... as in, ever!

When she felt that the time had come to think about returning to the party downstairs, Beth recovered her underwear from the bedroom floor, put it back on and adjusted her skirt. She looked back at the uncovered mattress and frowned when she noticed a visible damp patch in the spot where she had remained once Darren had reached his peak, jumped up and then fucked off. In a bizarre, subconscious urge to save herself from any possible embarrassment, Beth quickly and tactically, flipped the mattress over so that the patch was now sitting on the bottom, hidden from view. Smiling at her own ingenuity, she decided to sit back down on the mattress for a while longer and smoke the complimentary roll-up left by Darren.

Ten days later, Beth discovered that the roll-up wasn't the only thing to have been left behind by Darren, when she was patronisingly informed by her Doctor that she had contracted a dose of gonorrhoea ... tut tut Elizabeth!

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Beth sat herself down on a small, crumbling wall that bordered the footpath, recalling how she hadn't seen Darren after that first encounter for another seven months or so; which was bloody lucky for him, she thought, as she was ready to knock him the fuck out after the STD he had given her. There again, she considered, maybe that was one of the prices to pay for having such a blasé attitude towards sex?

Despite that attitude, which had become increasingly prevalent amongst the teenagers of the council estate on which she once lived, there was still a line that should never be crossed by any young buck hoping for a quick shag. And as long as they remembered and respected the concept that *no* actually meant *no*, then the integrity of that line (and thus the status quo) would remain intact.

Unfortunately for Beth, that particular line had been crossed two years before her first liaison with Darren and whilst she had learned to cope with the pain that the memories brought, she still had the memories. They might not hurt as much anymore but she would never forget.

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