**HE DOESN’T WANT TO SEE ME ANY MORE**

We first met just over 5 years ago. My husband was with me at that first encounter. “Mr Owen” he said, as he offered his hand in greeting “You must be Ann?”. We shook hands, his were big and strong, well-manicured and no ring. “This is my husband, Nick”, they shook hands too. “Call me Michael” he said. He had a soft Irish lilt to his voice and spoke in a confident, reassuring way. His whole focus was on me, asking lots of questions with genuine interest in the answers I would give. There are not many men that have that quality.

He called me two days later on my mobile, asking to see me again as soon as possible. I went to meet him again, choosing my outfit carefully and making sure I looked smart, confident and healthy. He was a bit older than me and had that suave, sophisticated look of a professional at the top of his career, someone who ate well and went to the gym regularly.

He was very authoritative, but I liked that about him, in control and in command, nothing for me to think about or organise. He had arranged for me to go and stay at his place for 3 – 4 days. He didn’t bother to ask if the dates were convenient for me, just assumed in his self-assured way that I would fit in with his demands. I did!

I didn’t enjoy the stay particularly, he was very charming but he told me he saw lots of other women, he didn’t need to tell me that, it was very obvious that he was very “sought after” and that I should perhaps be grateful to have been introduced to him. He was far more intimate with me than I would have liked but he was impossible to refuse, it felt as though I had no option but to allow him to do whatever he wanted. It was a very confusing time for me, on the one hand I was so glad to know him and needed to keep seeing him but, on the other hand, I wished we had never met. He made lots of rules about what I should or shouldn’t do and made it clear that he would be checking that I kept to my promises to do as he asked – I never asked anything of him. I just went along with his requests and always arrived on time or even a bit early at whatever venue he chose. On occasion I would wait for over an hour to meet him but it was worth the wait. Sometimes he would half-heartedly apologise for being late but with an air of “I’m too important to explain myself to you”.

After my stay at his place we met regularly, just me and Michael. He would arrange the date by a “Private & Confidential” letter posted to me, or occasionally a text with a date and time. I would look forward to each meeting with excitement, trepidation and a slight sense of “I can’t believe I’m doing this!”.

Michael was an intriguing man. Our meetings were fairly brief but during the whole time he would devote all his attention on me, he would tell me how I seemed compared to the time before….stronger, fitter, healthier and all because of him. It felt as though I had no option but to obey his orders, always re-arranging my time to fit in with his busy diary. I didn’t tell many people about my relationship with Michael, not even some of my closest friends. It was usually every 12 weeks that we met. I never, ever questioned his availability nor asked him any personal questions, although I obediently did exactly as he asked and told him everything he wanted to know about me and my life. He would even ask about my sex life with my husband!

Today, after 5 years of seeing him regularly, he has told me that this is the last time we will meet, he doesn’t want to see me any more. No more letters to be hurriedly taken from the doormat, no more texts to be memorised and then deleted, what will I do without Michael in my life?

I am standing on the pavement outside his office, he had asked to meet me there today. My legs are shaking uncontrollably with the shock of his decision. He was very polite about it, he shook my hand and said it had been a pleasure knowing me. He had opened his door to let me out and said “Goodbye then, take care” and, in case I had misunderstood what he had told me “I don’t expect to have to see you again”.

I feel so emotional, overwhelmed with a sense of unreality to the whole situation, I don’t even know who I can call to discuss it, there isn’t anyone who knew I was seeing him today.

Then reality kicked in. I am elated, excited, happier than I have been in years, a bit nervous at the newness of being free from his demands but most of all so very grateful. I am not just free of his demands but I am, at last, completely free of cancer. He was my consultant, of course I had to do exactly as he said. From the moment he told me of the aggressive cervical cancer he had found I obeyed his orders completely. From the massive, invasive operation he performed when I stayed at “his place”, to the regular 3 monthly checks. Through all of it there was a feeling of secrecy about it all, it was one of the few things I had done completely on my own with no-one else involved.

I owe my life to him but now I am glad he has dumped me. The black cloud has lifted and I can get on with the rest of my life.