Before We Wrap

The Cathedral City Comedies
Book 3

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SCENE 1

Dammit,' muttered Kate as she picked at a hole in her T-shirt.

Sighing, she pulled it off over her head, balled it up and tossed it in the bin beside the chest of drawers.

T-shirts lived in the third drawer down, so she yanked it open—hard enough that the entire thing fell out and landed on her foot.

'Bollocks!' she yapped, gritting her teeth against the pain.

No more flatpack furniture, she resolved.

Tidying up would have to wait. Call Time was 08:00 and she couldn't be late, not on the first day. Not with a fancy American director calling the shots, one who wouldn't care that she'd never once arrived late. That wouldn't wash with Brandon King—and crewing for him was a real career boost.

She plucked another identical black T-shirt from the newly-formed heap on the floor, pulled it on, scraped her unruly brown hair up into a scrunchie and plonked her favourite cap on her head.

'Ow.'

She went to the bathroom, found the nail scissors, lifted the T-shirt's hem, and carefully cut out the scratchy label.

Who needs washing instructions? It's a T-shirt. Dark wash, 40 degrees. The world's default cycle.

A quick glance in the mirror to check that all was okay, then she went to the living room and put on the familiar black

hoodie—one of three—and collected her bag from the sofa. She'd packed and checked it the previous evening.

Her phone was charged and ready, sitting on the small dining table. Beside it lay the wedding favour from Saturday.

Rachel's was the third wedding that Kate had attended in the last year. It was that time of life, mid-30s, when the RSVPs came thick and fast—even if you were a social caterpillar rather than a social butterfly.

Luckily, Rachel had kindly sat Kate next to their mutual Uni friend Lucy, who Kate hadn't seen since her wedding four years ago. Crowded diaries were only part of the problem, as Lucy had married a farmer—great eyes, amazing arms—and moved to Cumbria. As such, there was a lot of catching up to do, which was a great way to avoid the crowd, shut out the noise, suppress modest jealousy of Rachel's happiness, and politely decline any invitations to the dancefloor.

Making it to the event in the first place was a big win. Saturdays weren't sacred in the film industry, and it was fortunate that the date fell between two projects. Perhaps less fortunate that all *three* weddings had also landed on rest days...

Kate shook that off.

No time for reminisces about enforced socialising. Work to do.

Today's location shoot was indoors, so no coat was needed. She grabbed her keys, locked the flat, and went out to the row of weatherbeaten garages. Outside number 6 stood her dark green 1995 Mini Cooper. Nippy, reliable, unassuming. Maybe in need of a little TLC.

A kindred spirit.

The buzzy engine caught immediately, and Kate eased the car out towards the dual carriageway. As she drove, a smile slowly grew, as it always did when working with Spencer. By the

last count, they'd spent 493 days together, spread over five years. In an ideal world, every shoot would have him by her side, but the dolly grip has no say in the crew roster. All Kate could do was hope that loftier directors and producers noticed that they were a go-to combination of grip and camera operator.

The fact that Brandon King had specifically asked for the duo spoke volumes. However, as he was almost exclusively US-based, it would likely be a flash in the pan.

Don't look too far ahead. Just have a good shoot. Enjoy pushing Spence around as usual.

Still, she'd get to meet beloved British TV actor Daniel Jessop. Best not to reveal that she used to have a crush on him, given that it was twenty years ago, and he was still fifteen years too old for her.

Sighing, she pulled at the rim of her tired, grey baseball cap.

Be brilliant, be yourself, make no waves.

Life is fine. No, life is good.

A red traffic light brought her to a halt. She checked her sports watch.

Thirty minutes to get to the location. All OK.

Still, she picked at one of her short nails.

A convertible pulled alongside, low-slung, down at her level in the diminutive motoring icon. The driver peered over the rim of his sunglasses, then raised an eyebrow.

She looked away. He was too buff. Exchanging glances of mutual appreciation, at either his car or physique, was pointless. What was she going to do, hop out and give him her phone number? Besides, he was probably only wondering why this weird tomboy creature was driving a decades-old crate.

She looked back. He winked. She swallowed hard.

Mercifully, the light turned amber, so she dropped the clutch and hit the accelerator.

The Mini stalled.

Smooth, Kate. Very smooth. Very on-brand.

Flushing red, she grappled with the key. The sports car accelerated away, exhaust blaring. The car behind her honked.

She took her hand away from the ignition barrel.

Calm. Process. Feel.

The car honked again.

She shut it out, ignored whatever might be happening in the rear-view mirror, methodically restarted the engine, and eased away from the lights.