

My Love Affair With Tony Blair

By Tom Green

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Scene 1

Split stage.

On one side: a cafe. Claire is sitting alone at a table, fiddling with her cigarettes.

On the other side: an office. Christian is sitting behind the desk, feet up, looking through a box of cigars.

Straddling the two scenes, which take place simultaneously, is Howard. He steps between the two.

Christian: Was it a woman?

Claire: Mr Zift?

Howard: Get your feet off my desk.

Howard: You must be Claire.

(She looks over his shoulder as if expecting more people)

Howard: There's only me. Sorry I'm a little late. Can I get you something?

Claire: A latte. Thanks. Two sugars.

Howard: We could sit outside if you prefer. If you want to smoke.

Claire shakes her head.

Howard: Latte?

Claire: Thanks.

Christian: So, it was a woman.

Howard: (taking the cigars from him) Have you been sucking these?

Christian: A secret meeting with a woman...

Howard: It was not a secret meeting.

Christian: But you didn't tell anyone about it and it wasn't in your diary.

Howard: In this business, as you will probably never learn, discretion is still valued.

Christian takes a cigar and, grabbing the matches from Howard's desk, lights it.

Howard returns with a cup of coffee and a mint tea.

Howard: Hope this place is okay. I know it's not very grand but...

Claire sips her coffee and grimaces.

Claire: is there any sugar in this?

Howard: Sorry, did you ask-

Claire: Two.

Howard: Sorry. I'll...

Howard: That's actually not funny.

Christian: Who is she?

Howard: Christian, I'm being serious. Put that out.

Christian tries to pinch the cigar out with his fingers, and burns them. Howard takes the cigar from him and puts it in a glass of water.

Howard returns with a handful of sugars.

Claire: My brother-in-law recommended you.

Howard: Yes, you said that on the phone. I've been trying to think where we might have met, but-

Claire: You don't know him.

Howard: Is he a writer?

Claire: No.

Howard: But he works in publishing?

Claire: No. Cleaning.

Howard: Cleaning?

Claire: He's the finance director at a contract cleaning company. They used to do your offices before you moved.

Howard: Right.

Claire: He told me your firm was the best. And that you were the best person there.

Howard: I didn't realised my reputation extended to...

Claire: It's not quite true to say that he's not a writer. He does write. A lot. But nothing published. You might know him by his other name.

Howard: But if he's not published.

Claire: Cherie Tynack.

Howard: Er...

Claire: She's sent you several novels.

Howard: Yes, yes of course. We get quite a lot of unsolicited material so it's sometimes hard to remember names.

Claire: Anyway. He doesn't know why I wanted to contact you.

Howard: Right.

Claire: He thinks I've written a novel, too.

Howard: Most people have. And most of them send them to me, it seems.

Claire: No one knows.

Howard: No one knows what?

Claire: What I told you. Why I called you. Why I'm here. You haven't told anyone, have you?

Howard: No.

Howard sits down at his desk. Christian loiters.

Howard: Haven't you got work to do?

Christian: It can't be a novelist. There's no woman novelist big enough to make you keep mum about meeting her. There just isn't. Is there? It was work, wasn't it? But why be so secretive if it was just a date? You're a free man, Howard. No need to skulk about as if you're having an affair. We all envy you. You should be making the most of it. Philip Roth-ing it with anything in a skirt. No, it was work. You've got a work face on. So, not a novelist.

Howard: I didn't say that.

Christian: Definitely not a novelist. Must be memoirs of some kind. Or cookery. But again, why keep it secret? Either someone huge, who you've not yet sealed the deal with. Or someone embarrassing who, for some reason you couldn't resist. Am I getting warmer?

Claire: It's important that no one finds out.

Howard: You said that.

Claire: No, but I mean it. Everything has to be secret.

Howard: Okay.

Claire: I know they'll find out somehow but -

Howard: "They"?

Claire: His people. They'll get wind of it at some point but I want to keep them off the scent for as long as possible. What?

Howard: What?

Claire: You pulled a face.

Howard: Did I?

Claire: If you don't want to help me, I'll go.

Howard: I just -

Claire: I'm sure I'll be able to find someone else who's interested.

Howard: I'm interested.

Claire: I do have proof. Diaries. Photographs. Letters.

Howard: Can I see?

Claire: Of course. But I need to know that I can trust you. I'm already worried that I might have told you too much.

Howard: Does anyone else know? That I was at this meeting.

Christian: I don't think so. Anna thought you were at Paulo's – or was she in on it?

Howard shakes his head.

Christian: So it's only Sherlock-moi.

Howard: Why did you come looking for me?

Christian: Oh, yeah. Just some gossip I'd heard.

Apparently Fitzroy are withdrawing their offer.

Howard: Really?

Christian: That's the good news. The bad news is that Fitzroy are getting taken over themselves.

Howard: By who?

Christian: "Whom." ABD.

Howard laughs.

Howard: That's hilarious! Poor old Alan. Fucked on his own petard.

Christian: Do you remember I said that was bad news.

Howard: For Fitzroy, yes.

Christian: ABD want us as well. I say want. More accurately, ABD are going to take us over as well. Want and get are synonymous for them.

Howard: Where did you hear this?

Christian looks away. Howard looks sternly at him.

Christian: I know I shouldn't do it.

Howard: You've been looking at Cheryl's emails?

Christian: It's her own fault. She should have invested in a properly secure network years ago.

Howard: ABD?

Christian nods.

Howard: Fuck.

Christian: They want to merge us with Fitzroy. I mean, they're going to merge us with Fitzroy. Brand new offices by the Hammersmith flyover.

Howard: Lovely.

CAFE

Howard: Show me one thing.

A long pause. Then Claire takes a slim document folder from her bag and pulls out a printed sheet of paper.

Claire: This is an email. From him to me.

Howard reads it and his jaw slowly drops. Claire takes it back from him.

Howard: What do you know about Tony Blair?

Christian: Not much.

Howard: Personal stuff. Not the politics.

Christian: Family man. Four kids. Wife. Likes rich people. Foreign holidays. Why?

Howard: Can I trust you?

Christian: What kind of question's that?

Howard: It's the kind of question I ask just before I tell you where I've been this morning.

Christian: It's not something medical, is it? You're not ill are you? If it's cancer I'd rather not know.

Howard: Can I trust you?