

Floats like a butterfly

Stings like a bee

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Chapter One

October 29th 1956, if you were one of the fortunate few who owned a television set, the news broadcasts would be showing black and white grainy footage of the British Army action in the Middle East in what was to become known as the 'Suez Crisis'. At the same time in Central Europe there was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the government of the People's Republic of Hungary and its Soviet-imposed policies as Hungarian anti-communist protestors marched through central Budapest to the Parliament building; an important land mark in the Cold War.

World affairs at 17 Mulberry Terrace, Liverpool, however were the last thing on the mind of Jerome Walker and his wife Bridie.

"Jerome," said Bridie. "You better call the midwife; I think it's coming."

Bridie spoke calmly with authority in her distinctive Irish brogue, but with little drama. Jerome was not calm however, and struggled to put on his coat; but he knew what to do. Making sure he had the change for the telephone, he left the house and headed for the red kiosk on the corner.

It was a bleak late-afternoon; a stiff breeze ruffled the surfaces of the puddles and chased the sodden leaves of discarded newspapers down the street like tumble weed on a Wild West film set. He was oblivious to the women cleaning their front steps in the autumn gloom. He quickened his step.

"Oh no," said Jerome out loud as the phone box was in sight; there was someone using the phone and what looked like a small queue waiting.

He reached the gathering. "Please, please I need to use the phone. It's my wife... she's just gone into labour, the baby is coming." There were looks of suspicion, and some hostility, but the woman at the front of the queue opened the door and shouted at the occupant. "Put that phone down now, sure there's a man here with a medical emergency." Jerome thanked the woman and the disturbed caller who was muttering under her breath as she passed him. He ignored the 'dirty nigger' comment; he'd heard it all before.

Jerome made the call, thanked the waiting queue and headed back to the house. Twenty minutes later the midwife arrived on her pushbike and unloaded her medical kit from the pannier on the back.

It was three hours later that Joel Patrick Walker arrived in the world.

Jerome, a Jamaican immigrant and a stevedore at the docks, had been married to Bridie, an Irish Catholic, for three years. Mixed marriages in the 50's were rare and colour prejudice, particularly in working class areas, was rife. Jerome was affectionately nicknamed 'Blackie' by all his workmates; any maliciousness in the term was gradually lost as friendships developed and dependences grew. He had put up with all the dirty jobs and the abuse without any resentment and over time built a reputation as a hard and intelligent worker, well-liked by his co-workers.

Bridie was also from immigrant stock, second generation; her mother and father, like many others, came searching for work from Belfast in the thirties. She was brought up a strict Catholic but after the death of her father at Arnhem in 1944, religion played less of a role in their lives, although there was always a crucifix hanging on Granny Murphy's kitchen wall the young Joey, as he soon became known, would remember.

The house was one of a myriad of similar terraced properties which stood in rows upon rows in the inner suburbs, a two-up-two down with a toilet in the back yard. Downstairs was the sitting room and kitchen; upstairs, two bedrooms. The weekly bath was courtesy of a grey tin tub in the kitchen and would take the form of a ritual, with several kettles of boiling water and a bucket of cold. With no central heating, in the winter, the process was a brief affair. On many occasions Bridie would keep the door to the gas oven open to warm the room, provided they had enough money for the gas-meter.

For the Walker family it represented home and Bridie kept it immaculate. She was the traditional 1950's working-class house-wife, responsible for all the household chores and finances as well as the bringing up of their son. Jerome worked down the docks every day, except Sunday, from seven-thirty in the morning until five in the evening and on Friday he would present Bridie with his wage packet. Bridie would take out what she needed for food, rent and utilities and hand back Jerome's spending money for the week. Sometimes that wasn't very much, but with Birdie's strict control they never got into debt and never went without food or heat.

Joey's early life was a mixture of the love and affection bestowed on him by his doting parents, and the vitriol poured on him at school by some of his classmates. He was not prepared for the early taunts from

his peers at primary school. As the only coloured pupil he was initially the subject of some curiosity but the name-calling both confused and upset the young lad. His father who had had to endure similar insults in the past had his own way of dealing with the abuse. He told Joey to ignore the jibes. "Turn the other cheek," he would advocate, but it was hard; Joey's natural tendency was to fight back. So Joey would deal with it by walking away, heeding his father's mantra, and gradually the taunts gave way to more mutual respect as Joey's abilities shone through.

He was a bright lad and having shown academic promise at the local Church school, he successfully passed his eleven plus and entrance exam and was admitted to the Christian Brothers School where he faced the uncompromising doctrine of his teachers.

The school was about a mile away from Mulberry Terrace and was a throw-back to Edwardian times. The facade was austere and unwelcoming, reflecting the atmosphere inside. '*Facere et discere*' – '*To Do and To learn*', the motto which appeared over the front door of the school said nothing about its methodology. Compliance was drilled into students and beatings were commonplace; that, and the humiliation used to control young minds and ensure subservience. The slightest of transgressions would mean summary justice in front of the class normally by means of a leather belt by Brother Conor McCluskey, a brute of a man who carried out the administration of the punishment with total dedication and unnatural satisfaction.

The 'private' beatings however were the worst. Joey only endured it once and it was an experience that would leave an indelible mark on his character for the rest of his life.

He was twelve years old, in his first year, and one day he was caught cribbing an answer off one of his class mates.

"To my office," bellowed McCluskey to the petrified young man.

Joey stood waiting in the office for half an hour while the class finished the lesson and he could hear the approaching footsteps. The teacher burst into the room and Joey nearly fainted with shock.

"What have you got to say for yourself, Walker?"

"Sorry, sir," came the reply.

“But that’s not enough is it? In the Lord’s name we cannot have cheats, can we Walker?”

“No, sir.”

“Right, stand there and take your punishment, drop your trousers.”

“Sir?”

“You heard,” and Joey undid his belt and dropped his trousers.

“And pants,” shouted the admonisher. Joey complied.

“Now bend over.”

Joey felt the excruciating pain of the leather belt as it splat against the flesh of his buttocks. Ten times the blows rained down and then something strange happened. Brother McCluskey gently and slowly massaged the bruised area for several minutes with his hands whilst saying, “Oh Lord, heal this sinner,” as if in prayer.

Joey said nothing of this incident to his parents but it would be locked in his inner thoughts for a long time.

As he grew older the verbal abuse from the playground bullies would occasionally turn into violence as Joey’s generally mild disposition was stretched to its limits, and he became adept at looking after himself physically. A point not lost on another of his teachers, Brother O’Donnell. Seeing the thirteen-year-old Joey set upon by a group of five fifteen-year-olds and more than holding his own outside the school gates, the teacher weighed into the fray.

“What’re you doing, boys?” he asked in his broad Irish accent, grabbing one of the perpetrators by the hair.

“Erm, nottin’ sir,” came the reply, as the group fled, disappearing down one of the countless back alleys of the terraced houses.

Brother O'Donnell showed compassion and understanding to Joey taking him back to the staff room and dressing his wounds before accompanying him back to the house in Mulberry Terrace. Since his previous experience with the menacing Brother Conor McCluskey, Joey kept his distance from his teachers and was still a little suspicious of Brother O'Donnell's motives.

Bridie was preparing the tea for when Jerome returned from work when Joey arrived with Brother O'Donnell.

"My goodness, what have ya done to yourself?" enquired his mother looking at the bloodied and bruised boy.

"To be sure; bullies I'm afraid, four or five of 'em, set on him after school," replied the teacher. "He'll be ok, nottin' too serious. Is yer husband in?"

"He'll be in shortly can I get you a cup of tea or even something a bit stronger for your troubles while you wait?" asked Bridie.

"A tea will be fine," replied the man.

"Joey, go upstairs and get yourself cleaned up," she said.

Bridie left the teacher in the sitting room while she went to make the tea. Brother O'Donnell looked around the small room with its two paisley print arm-chairs and worn carpet. Old black and white photographs stood on the mantelpiece, the fire although prepared in the grate, was not yet lit and it was quite chill. The warmth of the hospitality however was not in question and a few minutes later Bridie returned with a pot of tea, two cups from the best china and a plate of 'Nice' biscuits. They passed the time discussing the school and various other topics of interest until Jerome returned from the docks to be greeted by the teacher and Bridie.

"Brother O'Donnell is here Jerome, wants to talk about our Joey; it seems he's being bullied at school," said Bridie.

Jerome acknowledged the teacher and spoke in an accent deep-rooted from his West Indian origin. “Brother O’Donnell, thank you for your concern, I’ve said to Joey to turn the other cheek and ignore these cowards.”

“That’s a very fine philosophy, so it is, very fine indeed,” said Brother O’Donnell. “But young Joey shows a skill for fightin’ and I thought he should be given a chance to develop these skills.”

Jerome looked at his wife. The teacher continued. “I run a boxing class for young lads at a club not far from the school. We meet after class on a Monday and a Wednesday and I would like to take him along if you’ll let me.”

Joey returned from his clean up, the bruises starting to show clearly round his face. His father turned to the lad and said, “Brother O’Donnell says you can fight a bit and wants to know if you would like to learn to box. What do you think?”

“Yes,” replied Joey, somewhat taken aback by the suggestion; it had come out of the blue, “I would like that very much,”

So the scene was set for Joey Walker to learn the noble art of boxing, initially from Brother O’Donnell. After twelve months, as the maturing young man was progressing beyond his mentor’s knowledge, it was time for Joey to be handed on.

Elijah John, who himself was a gifted professional, now retired, ran and coached at a boxing club near the centre of town and O’Donnell had already discussed Joey’s progress with him and the invitation was made.

On his first visit to Elijah’s gym, Brother O’Donnell felt nervous for his young protégé. He accompanied Joey on the bus to introduce him and give him some support. He also presented Joey with a pair of boxing gloves.

“These? For me?” said the fifteen-year-old excitedly, on receiving the gift from his mentor.

They entered the club and there was a heady smell of male sweat. In the centre of what used to be a large old drill hall was a boxing ring with numerous weights and training devices scattered around the outside. A number of boys and young men were furiously skipping on their toes to the encouragement of what looked to be a drill sergeant. A couple of 'heavy-bags' were being pummelled by two fit-looking youths. Another lad was being urged to hit the gloved hands of another, much-older, man with a shaved head and rugged features; the result of years of being hit by more talented opponents. A few chairs surrounding the ring provided a vantage point for any watching parent or in this case, teacher. O'Donnell introduced Joey to Elijah.

"Elijah, this is the lad I've been telling yer about. I really think he's got a good future, sure I do," and the man shook hands with Joey.

"Well, erm, pleased to meet you, Joey, lad," said Elijah in a broad local accent. "Let's see what you can do, eh?"

He called out to one of the skipping boys. "Ali Briggs, over here!" he boomed and the room went quiet. A youth of about sixteen put down his rope and approached the small group.

Elijah made the introductions, "Ali, erm, this is Joey, wants to join us. Can you give him three rounds sparring for us, see what he can do?"

Ali was always happy to stamp his mark on new-comers; he had already assumed the role of leader among the young aspiring fighters in the club. Seeing that a live bout was going to take place, the remaining club members stopped their exercise regimes to watch.

Elijah produced two strips of what looked like bandages. "Hand wraps, erm, you must always use them or yer'll do yerself some serious damage."

Brother O'Donnell hadn't used them at his club, funds wouldn't allow and, seeing how a professional prepared, felt a bit guilty at his lack of knowledge. Fortunately apart from the odd bruising, no-one had damaged their fingers or knuckles too severely.

Elijah showed Joey the right way to bind his hands, the thumb loop and wrist wrap and the diagonal hand wrap and so on until both hands were encased in the protective covering. It felt good to Joey and he

could feel his confidence rise as he put on his new gloves. Gum shield and head guard applied, Joey entered the ring and the shaved head-trainer, who'd been co-opted as referee, brought the two lads together in the middle of the ring. Elijah rang the bell and the fight started.

Apart from Brother O'Donnell's limited help Joey had never had any real boxing training and fought intuitively.

The term 'swarming' in boxing parlance applies to a style which is particularly aggressive and relentless. One of the early exponents of this style was Rocky Marciano and in later years was adopted by Mike Tyson. Joey was a natural swarmer and before Ali could raise his hands in defence he had been overpowered by the sheer pace and aggression from Joey's fists. Despite his head-guard he quickly became engulfed in a rain of blows that doubled him up on the floor and the shaved head stopped the fight before any further damage was done.

Ali Briggs stumbled to his feet and graciously touched gloves with Joey who frankly had hardly broken sweat. Elijah looked at Brother O'Donnell and smiled.

"Joey, erm... that was fantastic," Elijah said, as he helped the lad from the ring.

A groggy Ali Briggs went up to Joey. "Where did you learn to fight like that? I've never been hit that hard before?" he said graciously.

The rest of the club were amazed at the prowess of the new arrival.

"Joey, I think yer gonna have a good future, erm, a few rough edges mind but nottin' we can't iron out," said Elijah and the long road to a future career started this night.

With Elijah's coaching, Joey's boxing skills developed from a natural 'scrapper' to a more thoughtful and tactical fighter without losing those natural killer instincts that he originally demonstrated. On the amateur scene he became a feared opponent and gradually rose through the ranks unbeaten. As his body developed from a fairly scrawny kid to a strong and muscular eighteen-year-old his weight category changed and he reached the welterweight division, 147-160 pounds which was to become his optimum

fighting weight. Joey's hero was Sugar Ray Robinson, who ruled the world stage for over twenty-five years before retiring at the age of forty-four in 1965, and he tried to emulate the great man's style.

Joey continued his unbeaten run as an amateur and his performances were noticed by representatives of the Amateur Boxing Association who had regularly attended his fights. This resulted in the ultimate accolade by being chosen to represent Great Britain at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. His parents were understandably proud of their son and in the local streets around Mulberry Terrace a great deal of excitement mounted as Joey gradually progressed through the tournament. A unanimous points-win over the Cuban champion, Juarez Esquivarez in the semi-finals gave him the chance to go for gold but in the end Joey had to settle for the silver medal after a narrow and controversial points' decision in the final against a Ukrainian, Vassili Kolev. To most opinionistas, Joey had won handsomely, there was even a suggestion that bribes had been exchanged, but the result stood and Joey was proud to stand on the podium proudly wearing his silver medal.

On the day of the final there was a street party in the 'Terrace' and those who had once chosen to bully and malign the family years earlier were now basking in the reflective glory.

Naturally there was a great deal of media attention on his return from the Olympics and in a relatively short period Joey had become a local celebrity. Fame however did not sit easily with the shy and introspective nineteen-year-old. Despite his success in the ring, the spot-light felt unnatural and uncomfortable as he struggled with all the attention.

After the heady heights of Montreal, the decision was quickly taken for Joey to turn professional and Elijah moved from being his coach to becoming his manager. Unfortunately his beloved father did not survive to see his son start his professional career. Jerome died shortly after the Olympics sustaining a fatal heart attack. Jerome, although a gentle and kind soul, had supported Joey and had been with him alongside Elijah throughout his amateur career.

The death of his father left a gaping hole in Joey's life and it was to change him from his normally reserved and respectful disposition into an angry and belligerent young man. Although not strongly religious Joey had been surrounded by Catholic doctrine and he was unable to equate the religious teachings with the fact that his father had been taken from him before his time. He felt let down and even

thought of giving up fighting altogether but, as Elijah had said to him, Jerome would have wanted his son to do well.

Joey's first professional fight took place in December 1976 in Sheffield and given the success he had had as an amateur there was a lot of interest in his performance. With Elijah taking over as manager, a new trainer was brought in to support the team. Keith Jarvis, ex-military, had introduced more up-to-date training methods which concentrated not just on anaerobic endurance and physical fitness but gave attention to other areas like nutrition and mental preparation. Getting the right mindset was a vital ingredient required of a successful boxer and Joey learned how to relax his body properly to enable him to overcome the adrenalin rush which would be the natural reaction to a boxing fight.

There was a lot of hype being built up by the media. Because of Joey's explosive style and ability to knock opponents out early in matches he had been dubbed 'the exterminator' by the populist press, an epithet which Joey hated.

Despite being third on the bill, with the media interest, Elijah had been able to negotiate a good 'purse' from the promoters and Joey was set to earn in one night more than his father earned in a year for one bout, a sad fact not lost on the young boxer.

Then there was the gambling. Joey had not really been aware of the money exchanging hands on his fights even as an amateur. His father had always sheltered him from the more sleazy side of the sport. Tonight however on his professional debut, a great deal of money was being placed on his winning the bout. Odds starting at 10/1 quickly reduced to 5/4 by the time the match started.

Joey's opponent was a thirty-five year old 'journey-man' boxer, Sid 'The Baron' Patterson; with over a hundred professional fights under his belt. He was past his best but would still provide Joey with an examination.

As they sat in the changing rooms just prior to the match, Keith Jarvis and Elijah were taking Joey through the game-plan, the trainer reminding him to keep his guard up and conserve his energy. This was a fifteen round bout and totally different from the amateur three by three minute fights.

“Now remember what I told you, jab and return, jab and return, for the first couple of rounds and keep your guard up until you get use to his style,” said the trainer. Joey was totally ‘in the zone’ and nodded without really hearing the words of advice.

To a huge fanfare the fighters entered the ring like some modern-day gladiators. The noise was deafening as over two thousand people roared their arrival. Joey, accompanied by Keith Jarvis and Elijah, shadow boxing as he walked, followed his opponent and climbed into the ring. An M.C. shouted into the microphone and managed to whip up even more frenzy. Joey and The Baron met in the middle of the ring to be given their final briefing by the referee. A scantily-clad young woman walked around the ring with a sign saying ‘Round 1’. The fighters touched gloves and went to their respective corners awaiting the start. Joey’s focus was total, his face etched in concentration.

“Seconds out...” Clang... “Round one.”

The noise from the crowd drowned out any advice being shouted from his corner as Joey went about his work. Head down, he started his jab and return routine as counselled by coach Jarvis. Joey was clearly fitter and quicker than his older opponent and was able to bob and weave away from any dangerous blows. Then unexpectedly he took a hit on the side of his head which clearly shook Joey and suddenly, as though a fuse had been lit, all the careful preparation went out of the window as Joey set upon his opponent with a flurry of sustained strikes. Three to the body followed by an upper cut that seemed to lift Patterson off the floor. He went down and got up on a count of eight still not knowing which planet he was on.

Without a moment’s hesitation Joey was at him again like a leopard on its prey, with body shots which seemed to cut the older man in two, followed by a punch to the jaw which saw The Baron go down again and this time there was no getting up.

The referee raised Joey’s arm in triumph and the crowd went wild. Joey’s first professional fight had lasted two minutes twenty-three seconds.

After the formalities, Jarvis and Elijah led Joey, his head covered with a towel, back to the dressing room; screams of appreciation ringing in his ears.

Away from any distraction, the trainer gave Joey an energy drink to replenish his blood sugar levels. Joey's eyes were still wild and in fighting-mode and it took several minutes before Jarvis gradually got him to calm down.

Instead of congratulating Joey on a job well-done, Jarvis set about him mercilessly.

"What on earth were you doing back there?" asked Jarvis.

"What do you mean?" he took a sip of water. "I won didn't I?" replied Joey dismissively.

"This time, yes, but believe me, a better opponent would have played on your aggression took your punches, worn you down then picked you off. We have a lot of work to do if you are going to get to the top."

Joey listened with a degree of disdain and some uncharacteristic arrogance.

"What do you know...? Can you hear that?" he replied.

The noise was still incredible and cries of "Joey, Joey," could clearly be heard.

Elijah looked at coach Jarvis and frowned. Something had changed; this was a different Joey Walker; one they did not recognise from the hard-working dedicated boxer they had nurtured through the amateur ranks in the dingy gyms and sleazy dives that had been the venues of his earlier fights. This was a self-assured, cocky Joey who had the acclaim of his adoring fans still ringing in his ears.

Joey looked at Elijah and Jarvis. "I was good tonight; just listen to that. I'm destined for great things. I'll be packing them in across the country... People'll want to see me fight and I'll do it my way and if that doesn't suit you then, tough."

He got up from his chair and made his way to the showers, Elijah followed him.

"Don't be like that Joey, erm. We want the same thing as you do; it's just, well, you know, this was your first professional fight against an average boxer. That's all Keith is saying. You might think you're the king bee and, yeah, you won well but it is just the start. You'll need to carry on working hard to make it to the top."

Joey ignored Elijah and finished his shower.

He dried off and dressed. Joey looked at Elijah. "What about the guy from the BBC? Is he still waiting to interview me?" he said.

"He's waiting outside," replied Elijah.

"Let's get him in then," said Joey who was now dressed in an immaculate shirt and slacks, brown loafers and sports jacket and looked more like he had just stepped off a yacht than having endured his first professional boxing match. There was not a mark on him although his left ear was still 'singing' from the only effective punch The Baron had landed; not that Joey would ever admit it.

Elijah opened the door and there were a dozen photographers and numerous journalists jockeying for position. Flashes from ranks of cameras illuminated the room as the media throng gathered for Joey's first official post-bout press conference.

Joey took centre stage and acquitted himself with an unfamiliar self-assurance using charm and wit; he had dropped the excesses of his Liverpudlian accent but was still very much the working class hero. The adoring press were smitten by this new kid on the block. He had of course dedicated his fight to his recently deceased father which further endeared him to the 'red-top' hacks. The headlines in the papers the following day would remark about his 'star quality' as well as his pugilistic skills. Joey was on the way.

After the press had had their fill, Elijah and coach Jarvis led their protégé through the passages of the venue and out through the stage door at the side of the building. A throng of autograph hunters immediately besieged them and Joey obliged everyone and patiently played the crowd like a virtuoso performer. Elijah eventually managed to get Joey into the waiting limousine and slowly made their way back to the hotel that had been reserved for the evening.

It was now gone midnight, but Joey was still high on adrenaline; sleep was out of the question. Jarvis left Joey and Elijah in the lobby having had enough melodrama for one day and went up to his room.

"Let's do a club," Joey said to Elijah who, it had to be said, was well past his disco days.

"If you have any sense you should get yourself to bed," said the manager.

“But I ain’t tired,” said Joey, “and I deserve a bit of fun after tonight.”

Elijah wasn’t going to argue. “Well it’s up to you, I’m not wet-nursing yers. Just be careful you don’t get yerself in the Sunday papers for the wrong reasons,” and he left Joey to his own devices.

Joey sat on a corner seat in the lounge area of the hotel which was deserted at this time of night and for the first time felt slightly flat. He didn’t want to go clubbing on his own and was left without an audience to fuel his ego, but just as he was about to make his way to his room a group of four lads came into the hotel having obviously been to the fight and immediately recognised Joey.

They descended on him wanting autographs and asking questions. “What’re you having Joey, err kid?” said one in a strong Midlands’ accent.

Joey politely rejected any alcohol. “Erm, just an orange juice will be fine, thanks very much,” reverting back to his Liverpool roots. He was clearly among friends now. So for the next hour Joey sat holding court with his followers hanging on every word. By 1.00a.m., they had also started to run out of steam and to the strains of “what an ace guy... great bloke,” and other worthy platitudes, once again left Joey on his own.

He sat there quietly finishing yet another orange juice contemplating the evening, he was starting to relax now, the adrenaline gradually wearing off and tiredness was beginning to creep over him when he became aware of someone else looking in his direction.

She would be in her late twenties/early thirties and was sat in one of the sofas on the other side of the lounge, sipping a glass of white wine and looking very sophisticated. He hadn’t noticed her before and was trying not to stare but Joey was transfixed. Her dark hair shone against her pale, almost alabaster complexion. Joey took it all in, the red lips and perfect eye make-up, a black low cut cocktail dress, stockings, high heels. Up until this moment Joey had shown no interest in women and at twenty was still a virgin. Coach Jarvis had noticed and remarked to Elijah he thought Joey might be homosexual. All of Joey’s time had been spent surrounded by men or boys, training and perfecting his art, nothing had been allowed to get in the way.

He caught her gaze again. She was looking under her eye-lids head slightly bowed directly at him. Joey quickly looked away almost guiltily not really knowing what to do but any decision was taken away from

him as she got up and walked towards him. He noticed how she almost glided across the room, elegant, graceful. A couple on an adjacent sofa were the only other occupants in the lounge and they were completely engrossed in each other to notice any drama being played out around them.

“Hello,” she said in a low voice with no discernible accent. “Can I join you?”

“Sure,” said Joey having difficulty in getting his words out.

“You were good tonight,” she said sitting next to him closer than was normally necessary.

“You were there?” he asked.

“Yeah, but you wouldn’t have seen me I was right at the back. I wasn’t on that bout... A first round knock-out, congratulations, you must be pleased. My name is Corrine.”

“Pleased to meet you, Corrine.” Joey tried to shake her hand but she was so close it was a bit awkward.

For about twenty minutes she talked to Joey; told him she was a model and worked in London and was back in her home town working for the promoter. Joey was unable to speak, his natural shyness had reappeared.

“Look, I don’t want to appear forward or anything but given the press attention, you may want to continue our conversation somewhere more private. There’re reporters everywhere looking for gossip.”

Joey looked around at the almost deserted lounge.

“Where had you got in mind?” he asked naively.

“We could go to your room if you like,” said Corrine.

“Aye ok,” said Joey and he led the way to the lift.

They got in and he pressed the button for the top floor suites. There was an uneasy silence as the lift travelled upwards.

Ping... the lift reached the seventh floor and the doors opened. Joey led the way to his suite, room 706, and opened the door. As four star hotels go this was a luxury room and a separate bedroom led off the

main lounge area. He opened the door and went in but before he could compose himself she had wrapped her hands around his neck and pulled him into a passionate kiss. His initial reaction was to break away but there was an urgency from her, an intensity that was intoxicating and he responded.

She took the lead and starting unzipping her dress while he looked on. Joey could feel a sense of panic, a lack of control that he was not used to. Events were moving too quickly and he was totally out of his depth. They reached the king-sized bed, her expensive dress languishing on the floor in the door way. She turned round and faced him. She stood there in just a small pair of knickers and stockings. Joey took in the amazing sight and felt a mixture of excitement and nervousness. She moved towards him and pushed his jacket off his shoulders and started undoing his shirt.

The panic was replaced by fear. He wanted to run but something stopped him. Corrine clearly knew what she was doing and she could sense his unease. Joey was by now visibly shaking. She needed to take control.

“Just relax,” she said kissing him again. “There’s no rush.”

She helped him take off his trousers leaving him lying on the bed in just his shorts. She joined him on the bed and moved beside him.

“You have an amazing body,” she said, admiring his sculptured physique. She leant forward so Joey could kiss her breasts, feeding him one, then the other. She started to breathe deeply as her own passion started to rise. She took his hand and placed it between her legs and Joey responded by gently caressing her. The affect was immediate and Corrine could see that Joey was now fully aroused. She quickly removed her knickers and helped Joey ease his shorts down. Lowering herself slowly onto him she could control their love-making but as the pace increased Joey let out a groan and she felt his orgasm.

Joey lay there not knowing what to say. He was totally outside his comfort zone. Corrine spoke first.

“Was that your first time?” she asked.

He was uncertain how to answer the question.

“Why do you say that?” asked Joey.

“Just wondered,” said Corrine.

He hesitated before continuing. “I’ve never had time for girls, too busy training,” he said honestly.

“We shall have to see about that won’t we? You can’t spend your life living like a monk. It’s not natural.”

“My coach says I have to concentrate on my training. He says there will be plenty of time for that when I’m champion,” replied Joey.

“Yes, but what do you think, Joey? It’s your life. I’d’ve thought that having a girlfriend would help your conditioning. Don’t you get frustrated?”

“Yeah, but I take it out on the punch-bag, or my opponent,” replied Joey.

“Isn’t this better than a punch-bag,” replied Corrine as she started massaging Joey back to life. Joey groaned in pleasure. Corrine kissed him again and this time Joey took charge. It was an increasingly physical, carnal encounter as if all his frustrations were being unleashed. He pumped into her with greater intensity, and then Corrine gave a high pitched yelp as Joey reached his own climax and they both lay on the bed exhausted.