



Saving Mark

BY

SERENA HEATH

Some people I have to give a special thank you and shout out to;

Thanks to my Nanny for being the strongest woman in my life and teaching me to always stay strong. You are my best friend, I love you.

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Thanks to my Grandad, who has always been my father. Mark was truly blessed to have you.

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Thanks to Chris, my partner, for his patience and endless support while I wrote this book.

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Thanks to Jemma Hunt my lifelong best friend who always loves and supports me no matter what I am doing, and also Melissa Crawford, who's loved me endlessly and always been one of my biggest supporters. I love you both.

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And finally, here's to you Mark, thank you for being my uncle, my big brother and even my father figure when I needed you. I will never forget you and I hope to see you in heaven when it's my turn. I'll love you and carry you in my heart forever.

The Poem;

Death, what a funny little thing you are, taking a life what wasn't yours to take. Calling out to a soul you did not make.

Death, what a funny little thing you are, you are like time, as surely you will come, always expected, but never prepared for.

Death, what a funny little thing you are. You've created a hard time you see, for my family and me.

Death, what a funny little thing you are, You took him, but did you hold his hand? For him, what do you have planned?

Death, what a funny little thing you are, You called his time short but will you walk with him through to eternity? Will you let him come back, if only just to say goodbye to me?

- *Serena Heath.*

Chapter One.

My day begins like every day has for the last 4 years - I wake up, I use the toilet, I have my morning cigarette and I call my Nanny Hazel, who I had lovingly nicknamed 'Hadel' much to her annoyance.

This morning however, was much, much, different than our usual phone call.

"Morning Hadel!" I shout cheerfully through the phone when she finally answers.

"Mark's dead." Came her response.

"Mark's dead?!" I echoed, taking a long draw on my cigarette, "That's a pretty sick joke!"

There was a long silence as my Aunt Mandy took the phone off my Nanny who I could now hear sobbing in the background, I could sense there was something serious going on now.

"Serena, its true, Marks dead." Mandy whispered.

I couldn't speak any of the hundreds of replies whirling around in my head, so I simply hung up. I sat shaking on my favourite stool in the kitchen, the smell of my cigarette burning away filled my nostrils and made my stomach churn. The replies that had seconds before filled my head were replaced with feelings of guilt, disbelief and anger all at the same time. The feelings made me feel sick.

Overwhelmed by my emotions and without knowing what to say or do next, I felt tears sting my eyes, I knew there was no stopping it as I let the first tear escape my eye. I didn't even notice the noise of my sobs until my partner, Chris, had came in to see what was wrong, he wrapped his arm around my shaking shoulders and comforted me until I had stopped crying long enough to tell him the news.

I looked up at Chris, with tears still pricking my eyes and stared into his familiar face, trying to ground myself. His eyebrows were furrowed and his eyes were pleading, "What's wrong babe?" He said, searching my face for answers.

"Mark's died." I whispered, feeling my lips quiver and knowing my tears would soon fall again.

Chris stared at me, shock written all over his face. He didn't have a response to give me, simply arms to hold and comfort me.

Over the years, I had adopted two ways of dealing with grief and that was to either laugh at it or ignore it. In this case, I couldn't laugh, I had to try to ignore it and not let it consume me, at least block it out for a few hours. I wiped my eyes, lit up another cigarette and said,

"Let's go shopping. We need some stuff for dinner tonight. Tesco?"

Chris looked at me as if I were insane,

"Are you sure? Don't you think we should go down and at least check on your Nan?"

I rolled my eyes at him in response and lifted my coat, shopping bags and keys. You'd think after almost four years of being together he'd of understood what I'm trying to do right now.

"Tesco it is then..." He muttered, visibly concerned at how today was going to play out and when the news would actually hit me and sink in, as it inevitably would do soon. In the car I sat in silence, I couldn't stop thinking about my memories with Mark, even the most random insignificant ones. So much for trying to ignore it, right?

I let my mind wander and it brought me back to one of my birthdays as a child, perhaps aged 8, when Mark gave me his prosthetic ear as a gift. No surprise there, pretty much every child who ever knew him has fallen victim to the gift of a realistic ear in a box as a gift. The sounds of their own gasps and screams will probably haunt them forever. It was hilarious no matter how many times it was received. I chuckled out loud, forgetting myself, before remembering I'd probably never again in my life receive another ear for my birthday again.

"Lets go to nan's house", I said, "I need to see her."

Chris' shoulders visibly relaxed, glad that I was at the beginning of accepting what had happened.

As we pulled up outside nan's house, I could see through the window that a few of my close family members had already arrived. I hesitated before opening the door and walking on in as I usually would... Nothing would be business as usual today.

I didn't know what to say to anyone and I certainly wasn't good in serious situations. Do I need to remind you of my 'laugh at everything' response?

I stepped through the door and said my 'hellos' to everyone, we cried together, heard some favourite memories about Mark and said even more hellos as the rest of our family, friends and neighbours all gathered to be together.

"He took his tablets and overdosed" His wife Melanie said, trembling and with tears in her eyes, "I came in this morning and he was... Blue, black, purple? I don't know, he was just gone..." Her knees shook as she pulled out a chair to sit down on in Nans tiny, overcrowded kitchen.

My thoughts drifted to when Mark told us he was feeling very suicidal, few took him seriously.

I had reached out to him, invited him down for a coffee and a chance to talk things over, hoping to change his mindset. If I'm honest, I didn't even think he would of came but 12 on the dot and there he was! He even brought his own decaf coffee, telling me 'Tesco own brand is just the same, if not better, than Nescafe you know!' I laughed and made us our coffee.

We sat at the table where I had set out a variety of nuts and different things to snack on while we chatted, he ate none. He did however confide in me about what was on his mind - his health and how it was taking over his life, his low moods and how they were affecting his life and all of his relationships. He told me how he had planned to kill himself on Christmas eve, I managed somehow to talk him out of it. Now I'm grateful for those extra few days we all got with him.

I sat on the broken stool, it kept wobbling, I hated sitting on this one but still I let Mark sit on my usual seat. We chatted non stop from the moment he arrived until he left at around 4pm, we agreed we would meet more regularly and call each other when we felt down.

"He left a note" Melanie said standing up and breaking me out of my distant feeling memory, even though it had only happened around a week ago.

"Something like 'don't think of me as a quitter, I'm just taking a break. Love you all.' I can bring it down to show you..." She continued. I barely heard anything she said. I couldn't concentrate on anything.

More people with even more flowers were coming through the door now. I was feeling pretty overwhelmed again, I had to go get some air for a few minutes.

"I'm going out for a smoke." I announce as I grab for the back door and practically fall out of it.

No one follows me, they all must sense I just want to be alone. When I got outside, a few of my aunts and cousins were there, some crying together and some laughing and telling their favourite stories about times they spent with Mark together. I sat down silently and listened to the tail end of my aunts conversation...

"She kept his ear." My aunt Kerry stated, "She's keeping it to remember him by."

"His ear?!" My aunt Kim and I both echoed at the same time, horrified. Then it dawned on us, his fake ear.

"Oh my gosh, I thought you meant she had cut off his ear to keep!" I exclaimed, as I howled with laughter and Kim let out a soft giggle.

That's where my whole 'laugh it off' came into play. The whole garden fell silent and watched me. I laughed so hard until eventually, I broke down crying. About three people got uncomfortable and went back inside, that just made it all the more funnier to me.

The next 4 days were spent by my nanny's side, but there's only so many ways you can comfort someone who doesn't want to be hugged and just wants to be left alone with her thoughts. I had to be alone at some stage too, after all, Chris had to go back to work sometime.

On the Friday morning, I woke up with a headache from all the crying but still I arrived at my nan's house at the same time as my mum and had a coffee with the two of them while we waited for my Uncle Michael to pick us up and take us to the funeral parlour to see him.

He arrived all too quickly. It was too late to back out now.

After what felt like the longest drive ever, we finally got to the funeral parlour. I stood by the door, taking my time drawing on my cigarette, I had a feeling my nan was doing the same thing, both of us, biding our time before we went inside to say our last private goodbyes to Mark. My nan looked tired, withdrawn and seemed to find it hard to hold a conversation with any of us.

Michael was the first to open the door to the building, where we joined his wife Melanie as we stood in the waiting room while Marks childhood friend was in paying his respects.

Turns out making small talk while your waiting to see your uncles dead body is even more awkward than making small talk in a supermarket with the weirdo behind the counter, but I suppose to them I'm probably the weirdo behind the counter.

It made me think, why do we, as humans, always try to make small talk in such serious situations? On the inside we are screaming, but we don't even let it show... Why is that do you think? Is it because people don't like to be vulnerable? Is it because they fear appearing 'weak?'... I think that maybe if we let ourselves show our true emotions, it would help those who suffer to feel more normal.

Eventually when it was our turn to go in, my mum turned away and started to cry when they opened the door, clearly the reality of the situation sunk in and her knees started to give way. I knew she just needed a moment to get herself together before seeing her brother.

"Just go on in and close the door over please," I called out to Melanie, who was waiting for us in the doorway, while I placed my arms around my mothers shoulders.

Seeing her cry brought out my emotions and I let my own tears fall.

For a few moments while we comforted one another, the only noise was the sound of our sobs, until after around five minutes, my mother raised her head and stuttered "um.. okay, I, I think I'm ready to go in now."

She wiped her eyes, "Are you ready too? Do you want to wait another minute?" I think she was trying to delay going in just as much as I was.

"No I'm ready. Let's go in." I said in a whisper.

I was so not ready to go in, in fact I would of been happier to turn and walk back to the car and leave this for another day, when I could prepare myself and feel a lot less fragile, but alas, there I was reaching for the door and allowing my mum to enter first, as if it's an act of respect by letting her go first when let's face it... I just was prolonging entering the room by any means I could. I walked in behind my mum and stood against the wall, staring at the floor. I didn't want to start crying and set everyone else off again. I didn't even want to look at his casket, just knowing he was in there was too much for me, never mind actually seeing him in there. I listened numbly as my family talked about

him, about funeral arrangements and about how different he looked in his coffin. I let my mind wander again,

... "Heeeeeeeey, Baby!" I listened to Mark sing karaoke at the local bar for Grandads 70th birthday party,

'He'll never make a singer, but he sure is damn entertaining' I thought to myself.

"Chantilly lace and a pretty face, and a ponytail, hangin' down!" He continued to sing in his nasally voice into the microphone, this was clearly his favourite party trick song, I could tell by the way he smiled and confidence leaped from him onto every person on the dancefloor. He was always so funny and full of life when he was in a good mood.

I noticed my family starting to file out of the room, I had to look up at Mark... I had to apologise. I promised I would be there for him and I made no effort since our last coffee and rant day in my house.

"Can I just have a moment to be alone with him?" I asked, half hoping my nan would say 'No, don't upset yourself more.'

But everyone responded by nodding their heads and exiting the room, leaving only Melanie sitting by his casket to object,

"Mel, a moment please?" I reasoned, "I have some things I need to say."

"Oh, umm.. Of course you can, but are you sure you want to be alone?" She replied.

"Yes, I'm sure." I lied as I watched her already starting to leave the room.

She lingered at the door for a moment, I could see her concern for me written across her face, she knew I hadn't even so much as looked at Mark in the casket and she didn't know how I'd react when I seen him alone.

"Well Mark," I began, still not looking at him, but instead playing with my thin blonde hair nervously as I looked at the wedding photos of him and his wife Melanie that were left beside the coffin, "I don't even know what to say, but I know I have to say something..." I said, talking myself into finding a place to begin to say my goodbyes.

Having no response from him felt like I was just talking to myself, which I pretty much was. It felt too strange, so I looked into the coffin for some sort of acknowledgement, which I obviously didn't get and from there I went into shock. I stroked his face, it was unnaturally cold, I grasped at his hand, hoping to feel the familiar heat that all living

people have. I kept exclaiming "I'm sorry" over and over again. I don't even know how many times I said it. I couldn't even bring myself to pray over his body. He looked so different, like a wax figure, his mouth was turned up in what I can only describe as a smug smile. He just looked as if at any moment he was going to walk into the room and shout "Is this what it would take for you to take my suicidal thoughts seriously?!" Oh, how I wish we had.

I must of lost track of time as my mum came in to check on me, as soon as I seen the door open I practically ran out, straight through the waiting room ignoring everyone and into the car park. I lit up another cigarette, but I barely even smoked it, choosing subconsciously to instead just watch it burn away while I sobbed.

The funeral was a blur... My friend Jemma came with Chris and I to pay our respects. She had practically grown up as a part of my family. Her dad was one of Mark's best and long time friends.

We all met in Mark's house for the funeral, his open coffin in the sitting room, I just stood staring at it and willing myself not to let the tears fall. Two people walked out, my aunt Mandy and Melanie, understandably overwhelmed by the whole situation.

Jemma knocked over a candle and broke it... No one even noticed, but she seemed upset over doing it. I guess she maybe just needed something else to fixate on as everyone's emotions were all over the place.

Chris carried his coffin, along with a few close family and friends. I walked along beside Jemma, between us we must of smoked a full packet of cigarettes that day. I didn't cry until his coffin was in the ground and I realised, that this was it for him. Mark was no more. Only his memory was left... And how long do memories last, really? Already I've forgot most of what happened at the funeral... How long could I realistically hold onto the memories I had with him? It was hard to believe all of the times we had spent together, the laughs we had shared, the help we gave each other would all soon be gone.

I doubled over and cried while Chris and Jemma took turns holding me and kept crying until most of the funeral party had paid their respects and left.

I wept.

Chapter two.

After the funeral, we all went back to nan's house for a few drinks and to reminisce together on our favourite stories about Mark. I was too drunk. I mostly sat in silence listening, nodding and drinking even more. Every story was making my head spin, it just didn't feel real to me.

"Do you remember his mustache back in the day?" One of my aunts recalled. I was too drunk to notice which.

"Oh my gosh! Yes! It was like a 70s porno mustache" Another laughed in response.

My stomach churned and at first I thought it was just the sadness washing through me but no, it was the alcohol. I was about to throw up. I stood up as calmly as I could so as not to let anyone know I was headed to the bathroom to expel what felt like about a weeks worth of alcohol and food made by caring neighbours.

I fumbled for the lock when I got into the bathroom and I heaved so badly I almost missed the toilet, swaying clumsily side to side in my drunken state. When I'd finally stopped throwing up, I managed to check my phone.

Five new messages from Chris it read.

Oh no, I'd better check them...

Babe are you okay?

When are you coming home?

Please let me know if your okay.

Your nanny has called me, she said I should come pick you up.

I'm on my way.

Now I'm getting pretty peeved off. My nan said he should come pick me up? Seriously? I'm 25 years old! Not 16 and drunk in a field! I called him.

"Why cant you all just leave me to it? I'm not a child, Chris!" I said through clenched teeth down the phone to him.

"I know that babe, I'm just worried about you. You've drank pretty much all day, every day this past week. I just want to know your okay." He said, concerned.

I hung up, feeling guilty for shouting at him but also still annoyed that no one would just leave me alone to gather my thoughts. I said my goodbyes to everyone and went outside into the street to wait for him. When he pulled up I got in to his car and cried and argued with him the whole way home. I just felt so angry with myself, I needed to let it out, but venting it all onto Chris' shoulders wasn't my best move. He was already worried enough and upset about how to approach this with our family. I'd imagine I would of had the same reaction if I was him. There's nothing out there to really prepare us for what to say or how to act when a loved one takes their own life, is there?

"I just need to be alone for a while! I could of just walked home and had some time to myself!" I insisted, stumbling out of the car and slamming the door shut.

"Okay, you know what, Serena? Go for your walk. Go chill out and come home when your ready." He replied clearly exasperated as talking to me was getting him nowhere. I just wasn't ready to listen.

I walked off, not even muttering a goodbye. I could feel him staring at me as I walked away from him. He was worried. I know that. But I'm upset. I need time to be alone. I didn't even know where I was walking to, I was drunk and alone and knew I needed to get somewhere more private to cry it out, rather than walking the streets attracting attention with my clear distress. I walked faster and faster through the alley way and stopped beside the playground, feeling like my legs were about to give way. Being overly emotional and super drunk is not good for going out for a power walk.

I seen two men walking towards me, hoods up and looking suspicious, I'm always nervous of being alone at night time. We always hear so many horror stories of young women being kidnapped or raped and I sure as hell didn't want to become a cautionary tale for unruly teens, I ran towards the woods across the road.

Once I passed the gates to the woods, there was a long stretch of a lane surrounded by trees and a makeshift path that lead into the clearing.

Might I just note here, I'm terrified of the dark... Also the noise of the hoover and stairs. Pathetic, I know but that's what happens after five too many horror movies.

I began walking along the makeshift path, tripping over twigs with my millions of thoughts making me unable to actually think straight about where I was going. I tripped over a fallen tree, cut my leg and just curled up into a ball crying. This was too much.

This is my fault. I caused this. He could of still been here if I'd of just been there for him. He needed me and I let him down. My whole family is going to hate me when they learn I didn't follow through on my promise to Mark.

My thoughts were driving me insane. I couldn't live with this guilt. I remember being told once in church that when we die, we must stand before God, knowing all the wrong things we have done in life. All our sins are laid out before us and we must explain them... Now, I can explain away sex before marriage - raging teenage hormones... I can also explain away drinking - mental health... I could find a way to justify or explain pretty much everything I've done, even though God already knows my reasons, but how could I stand before God and explain how I'd let my uncle die? I couldn't. I needed to die. I deserved to die. This was my fault. Deep down I knew it wasn't my fault, he had already decided on the when, the where, and the how he was going to do it. I doubt I'd have had the miracle of changing his mind twice but I was so overwhelmed that I wanted to die. I lay on the floor crying and praying for death to come to me.

Then, I heard running water... Is this a sign? I pray for death then I hear the running water? I stumbled up to my feet and followed the noise. I lay down beside the shallow river that the noise had brought me to and contemplated what it would be like to drown, if this was even enough water to actually kill myself in and if I really had the nerve to do it? No. I don't... I don't have the nerve. I don't have the strength to do it.

"I just need time to turn back!" I cried out in desperation to myself, frantically pulling my phone out of my pocket it was nearly out of battery at only 11% and I knew it would die any minute. I stared at the time and willed it to change back to the night before the first of January, to the only date I could stop Mark from doing what he did. It didn't change, obviously. I shook my head in despair.

With trembling thumbs I unlocked my phone, opened my alarm clock app and stared at it. I know this won't change anything... But I could at least pretend for five minutes, he's still here... I thought as I turned the date back to the 31st of December and the time back to 4.30pm in the afternoon, right before Melanie got home from work. I imagined that would be around the time he would of started his overdose. The doctors did say he must of been taking multiple tablets throughout the day.

Just as I changed the time to what I wanted it to be, nausea swept over me and my phone died. I screamed in frustration and rammed my phone back into my pocket. The universe couldn't even let me have my five minutes of make believe. It just made it clear in my head, there's nothing that could be done. Screw this.

I started to walk home but as I got outside my house and seen the lights on, I knew Chris would be waiting up for me and I just wasn't ready to face anyone. It was only 10pm... I could take a bus somewhere.

I got on the next bus available even though I didn't have a location in mind as to where I'd get off. I just needed to try to escape my thoughts.

"Where to?" Said the bus driver.

"Last stop" I replied sadly, passing my money to him and walking up the bus to a seat without waiting for my change.

Thankfully as it was a late bus, hardly anyone was on it apart from an elderly woman, roughly in her 80s, with a dog. It was a small yorkshire terrier and as much as she was loving the dog, the dog clearly didn't love her back. It growled at every noise she made and barked at any movement on the bus. I slouched down in my seat to escape the glare of the tiny dog grateful to find a charging port for my phone. I charged it until it got enough percentage for me to use it, but I was too distracted to even check any notifications or calls.

After about twenty minutes of the journey, I noticed the woman had gotten off the bus and I decided to sit upright to see where I was. I glanced out of the window and I noticed I was just coming in to Bangor. Marks house was about two stops away... I decided to get off here, I pressed the stop button and stood up, surprised to see I was almost totally sobered up.

I thanked the bus driver and stepped off the bus into the night, which was surprisingly light for the time of the night it was, easily putting one foot in front of the other and enjoying the walk to Marks house. I didn't know what I had planned to say to Melanie when I arrived on her doorstep, I couldn't explain why I had randomly came to her house when I rarely had before. Perhaps I just wanted to check on her? She'd understand anyway. We had a good relationship and she knew I was close to Mark. As I walked... I noticed the sky becoming much lighter, more people out walking and the street lights turned on. The walk from the bus stop to Marks house does not take that long... Am I still drunk? Did I black out? I thought to myself feeling my panic rise. It's day time? It was night time mere moments ago!

It was bizarre! I stopped to look around and every one was out getting their shopping, coming home from work and beginning to prepare dinner. People must have thought I

was planning to burgle them, I'd stopped to look through almost every window on the way past. What in the world had happened? I've clearly had a stroke or something here! I picked up my pace and began to run to Marks house, rushing past people and tripping up four kerbs along the way.

I opened the gate and walked across the stones, in their front garden to look in the front window to see if Melanie was at home yet or if she had maybe stayed elsewhere. It must of been hard to go home to an empty house when there was once so much love inside.

I felt the stones crunch noisily under my shoes as I walked across and stopped when I thought I'd heard a man talking.

Just the tv, she must definitely be in then!

Instead of pressing the buzzer to her flat to get her to come and open the door for me, I decided to go on over to the window to knock and get her attention. Their flat window was handy as it was the bottom floor flat and the window was practically flush with the ground. If it was open, it was big enough for me to just step through into their sitting room.

I couldn't see well into the sitting room because of the glare of the sun so I leaned on the window sill putting my hands over my forehead to shade my eyes from the glare and squinted to see who was in before knocking the window. A man banged on the window hard and laughed loudly as I fell to the ground in surprise, he opened the window and shouted out,

"Hey stranger! You don't come here often!" His familiar voice boomed as he stretched his hand out of the window to help me up and I grasped his firm hand, laughing at myself for my dramatic tumble.

I looked up to shout something back to him about him being the real stranger and when I looked at him, all my bodily hair stood on end, my knees shook and I let out a blood curdling scream.

It was Mark.

Chapter three.

When I look back to him, he's gone.

I have gone mad. I've clearly had a breakdown. What the hell was in my drink? I think I'm -

"That was some scream, Serena, what's wrong? Is everything okay?" Mark questioned, walking out of the front door to the flats and interrupting my revelation that, ghee, I don't know, I'M INSANE?

"Mark... I umm..." I stuttered through my sentence, "What are you doing here?"

"I live here... What are you doing here? You never called first, has something happened?" He questioned again.

More questions... Shouldn't it be me asking the questions? I thought his body looked like a wax work, not real... Was the funeral fake? Was that a fake body?! This is sick. I felt anger burn in me.

"Yes, what happened was that you had died!" I shouted at him, I feeling dizzy with confusion.

"What?" He said, perplexed, "Serena love, you really don't look well. Come on inside. Talk to me." He said softly while reaching for my arm. "I'll make you a decaf coffee, it's my turn to stick the kettle on anyway"

I walked into his sitting room looking around, there was no sign of his funeral, no sympathy cards, the silver vase was empty of the lilies Melanie had received from her well wishing work friends and the candle that Jemma had broken on the day of his funeral still sat proudly atop of the mantelpiece. There was no grief. What there was however, was his empty can of juice, his Xbox game on pause (clearly in the middle of a game) and a stew cooking in the kitchen.

This was totally surreal.

I definitely have went mad... Did I imagine him dying? Could it of been a dream because of our last conversation about him wishing to die?

"One cup of decaf for my deranged niece" he joked, passing me the cup, "so are you gonna tell me what's got you so jumpy?"

I took the cup out of his hand, carefully trying not to touch his hand again. I was terrified of feeling the coldness on his hand again, a coldness that only death can bring. I looked at the clock and noticed that the time was 4.58pm, I felt even more crazy when I see that. It was 10.45pm when I got off the bus.

I look around once more, as if double checking the room for a sign of his death before I take a seat on his red leather corner sofa, which I remember wasn't a corner sofa on the day of his funeral, it was separated into two sofas so his coffin could fit right along the window where I am sat now. This feels so eerie. He watches me carefully as if I may break at any moment.

"Deranged niece could be the right term to describe me right now. Hear me out, because I'm about to sound totally crazy, okay?" I started, tears stinging my eyes.

"Okay, no judgement here like, but you're starting to really weird me out."

"Well, either I have had the most vivid, strangest dream ever, or I've officially gone crazy." I muttered.

"We all thought you'd be the one in the family to go crazy, so that makes perfect sense to me." Mark joked again, for a guy who was suicidal he made a lot of jokes and had a lot of fun in him. I suppose that's a common side effect to the 'pretend I'm fine' mentality that so many suicidal people adopt in order to stop loved ones from worrying. The only thing different about his smile lately, was that it didn't reach his eyes quite like it used to.

"Can we be serious for two minutes Mark, please?" I snapped back, I instantly felt regret for being so rude to him, especially after seeing what life would be like without him.

I'm saddened that it took something so serious for me to realise how much I truly appreciated him. Shouldn't I have appreciated him those four times he helped me move house in the past? What about the time he fixed my heating? Or the time he loaned me money? We shouldn't have to miss someone just to appreciate them in our lives. We should appreciate and show our appreciation while they are still alive.

"Sorry for snapping, but for my own sanity it's important that I make sense of all of this, so no more interruptions, okay?" He nodded his response, made a zipped lip motion and he cupped his hand over his false ear to show me he was listening.

I rolled my eyes in response, he could never resist joking and trying to annoy people. I continued on regardless and told him all about how earlier tonight (...or this afternoon?) I was at his funeral and how I came here on the bus and it changed back to daytime.

"Okay, so it sounds like you've either had a really realistic dream or you've time travelled. The fact you think this happened at night time, tells me your freaky dream was last night and you came here when you woke up, what else could it be? What could you of possibly done to defy time? If your dream does come true, just remember, I'm not gone. I'll just be taking a break." He tried to reason with me, to help calm me down.

"Oh my life!!" I squealed, thinking I'd finally understood what happened. "My phone!! I changed time!" I lifted my phone out of my pocket and thrust it into his hands, he looked even more puzzled than before.

"Look at the date, Mark! I set the date and time back to 31st December at 4.30pm!" I exclaimed, frustrated that he wasn't seeing this with me.

"That's because the date is 31st of December and that's the correct time so everything seems pretty normal to me."

"No look," I clicked on my clock app again and like before I put it forward to the last date and time it was. The 9th of January, 2019, 10pm.

I instantly felt nausea sweep over me. *I fell.*

When I woke up it was dark. The place was cold and I was on a wooden floor. I instinctively lifted my phone, 1am on 10th of January 2019.

Wow... Freaky time. Why is my floor so cold? Is this wooden flooring? I don't have any wooden floor in my house.

I shone the light from my phone around the room only to find that I was still in Marks sitting room. The sofas are parted again, there are sympathy cards everywhere, the lillies are back in the silver vase and the space on the mantelpiece where the previously

broken candle was had a bare space in its place. Grief was the theme of the house once again.

I sit up clutching my head, I have a headache from hell and I feel drunk again. The room is spinning. At the sight of the lilies, I ignore my sick feeling and jump up feeling more confused than sick, I check my phone again and see 17 missed calls. All from Chris and my nanny. Oh crap... I need to call him.

The phone barely rings for a second before his hysterical voice comes on the other end of the line.

"Where the hell are you?! I've been worried sick! I've called everyone and no one has seen you!" He demands.

"Look, I'm okay. I promise. I just took a bus, I wasn't ready to come home, can you please come get me? I'm in Bangor." I answered, praying he would change from angry Chris and back into his usual calm, self.

My prayers were answered, his voice softened to his usual calm tone instantly after hearing my voice and knowing I'm okay.

"Okay babe, I'll come get you. Where will I meet you?"

I arranged to meet him away from Marks house. I didn't want him to know about any of this nor did I want to worry him any further by having to have me committed for insanity. I walked over to Marks front door so I could leave and make it over to our meeting place in time so it looked to Chris like I had been there already and hadn't run suspiciously from somewhere else. My head was already spinning and I didn't need anymore questions.

As I put my hand on the door handle, it wouldn't go down. It was locked. I ran frantically from room to room looking for his keys, as I opened the bedroom door, I seen Mel lying asleep on the bed surrounded by Marks shirts.

How did she not notice me here?

I open the sitting room window, thankful they dont have key locks on the handles and throw myself out landing on my elbows on the jagged stones. I run across the road and through an alleyway to bring me outside a long ago closed down video rental store. Chris is already waiting.

"Babe, you need to sleep. You look awful! Why haven't you answered your phone?" He questioned me as I slip quietly into the passenger seat and slouch down clutching my head and covering my elbow as blood seeps through my jumper.

I didn't need him to see the blood. It would probably give him heart failure to think I'd been attacked or something. Instead I tell him I got on a bus and walked around Bangor to a bar, met with a friend to have a few drinks and take my mind off things. He swallows my lie and reaches his hand across to squeeze my knee in reassurance that he believes my lie. How much guilt can I carry around with me until I explode? Is this why I've had this breakdown?

The next day I called into nanny's house again, I walked on in the back door as usual, trying to make things go back to normal as much as they could and start making myself a coffee quietly and catch the tail end of the conversation on her phone call to Auntie Kim.

"Yes, Mel is alright today," I hear her saying, "She told me she had went home for around 7pm and was asleep by 8.30pm, I'm glad she got the sleep, it'll do her good. This will be a long month for us all."

Mel was in the house last night by 7pm...? But I arrived there last night and she wasn't there? Did I break in? I definitely didn't dream it as I woke up in Marks house. I doubt I could of slept walked onto a bus and made my way to Bangor in one piece in a dream like state.

Nanny must of seen the confused look on my face as she held her hand over the phone and mouthed "are you okay?" at me.

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just going out for a smoke." I whispered back.

"...Alright bye then Kim, call me later. Love you." She said into the phone ending her call with Kim. " I'll come out for a smoke with you."

I walked out the back and sat at the garden table and chairs, five minutes and half a cigarette passed before she finally came through the backdoor to join me.

"I thought you'd want to see this." She nervously passed me a small piece of paper that was folded so many times it looked like it had been read over and over again. I opened it and froze... It was his note.

Don't think of me as a quitter, I'm just taking a break. My mind flashed back to last night when he said 'remember, I'll just be taking a break.'

I dropped the note to the floor and stared at it in disbelief.

"I know, it's upsetting. What does that even mean, I'll be taking a break? He talks like he'll come back or something!" Her lip quivered and she looked away as she spoke, she looked back to me after a moment and half shouted "Serena! Hello is anyone in? Why are you being so weird? It's as if your on mute lately!"

"Sorry, am I not allowed to be upset?!" I shouted back as a warning to back off.

She opened her mouth as if to protest the way I had spoken back to her but softly wrapped her arms around me and instead wept into my shoulder. I was too confused to even cry, so I just wrapped my arms around her and stared into the gate way as if some way, somehow, Mark was going to walk through and tell us all to wise up and move on. He didn't.

Chapter four.

When I got home, I went straight up to lie on my bed and use my laptop to research signs and symptoms of mental breakdowns. I couldn't find anything to back up the idea of a breakdown. I couldn't find any clue as to how I could make sense of what happened last night so out of curiosity I typed in Time Travel and instantly the search engine revealed hundreds of articles about time travel, from fiction books, myths, Back To The Future and finally I stumbled across an article from some space science website.

Is time travel really possible? Scientists explore the past and future...

Sounds like a load of junk but maybe it'll help me get off for a much needed nap.

Time travel may be theoretically possible, but it is beyond our current technological capabilities.

... It went on to explain all these different theories that could mean that we could actually time travel if we had the technology to do so. It is possible.

Could I have actually time travelled? I thought to myself.

I instantly lifted my phone and stared at the clock... That's how I've done it twice before, it must mean it'll work again? I could go back to anytime at all and be there for Mark. It was worth a try right? When would he need me to be there for him...

"When he was dying!" I exclaim out loud to myself. "He was alone when he died!!"

I jumped off the bed and thrust my feet into my shoes, running so fast out the door I had to turn back for my coat.

I walked up his pathway cautiously, remembering what happened the last time I was here.

Ok so, if I am here when I set the time and date, then that means I won't have to waste time travelling to him like I did last time. I thought, trying to piece together what needed to be done and put some sort of plan into place.

I glanced quickly through the window, everything was still sitting in the living room as it was, post funeral. Melanie must of been simply sleeping and leaving here. She couldn't of been living in the house, alone, with only her memories to comfort her. I know I certainly couldn't have done it.

I pressed the buzzer number to someone else's flat and mumbled something about a delivery and they let me in without even questioning the delivery. I ran to Marks front door before I raised suspicion. I found the spare key that Melanie hid inside the soil of a nearby succulent plant and wrapped my hand around his door handle and froze. Did I really want to do this? If this works, this is some seriously deep stuff... No, I have to do this for Mark. I pushed the door open and stepped inside the empty flat. It was cold, the heating hasn't been on for over a week while the body was kept there to keep it from decomposing early. It hasn't been turned on since then either.

I rubbed my arms to try and gain some heat while I sat on his sofa, the coldness from the leather didn't help and the only difference with this visit, was that Mark wasn't sat on the sofa across from me.

Time to start.

I lifted my phone out of my pocket, laughing at the absurd situation I got myself into while I started to change the date to the 1st of January 2019, when I got to the time I paused.

What if this actually works? What the hell is going to happen? How can I explain to him why I'm here?

I gathered up the courage to walk into his room where he was found and when I got to his bedroom door, I turned the time back to 1.30am, that should give me enough time to be with him while it happened. Nausea waved over me once again.

Its working.

When I opened his bedroom door, the first thing I seen was his body lying on top of the bed, he slowly turned his head to look at me, dropping his phone out of his hand with a message left open on the screen.

"What are you doing?" He mumbled.

He didn't look well enough to even have the strength to put a complete sentence together. He looked withdrawn and weak. He had given up. Not like Mark at all, he had always looked so tall to me and muscley after all the years of bodybuilding in his early 30s, now here he lay 49 years old, small and pale.

"I needed to see you. I have to tell you a few things" I said to him, standing tall and trying not to show my tears. I didn't want to scare him anymore than he already probably was.

He didn't reply, he simply held his hand out to me and turned his head to face the TV where his Xbox game was paused. He was always playing the Xbox, was this all the motivation he had left to do in his last days? I sat down carefully on the side of the bed and lifted my legs to lie down beside him, taking his hand and holding it softly against my chest and rested my head on his shoulder. I looked up to see a single tear fall from his eye. Was that relief? Was he glad to have someone with him while he passed to the other side? We remained in silence, both not knowing what to say to the other but yet both silently understanding what was going on.

"Mark, you're not alone here. I'm with you. I don't understand why you have done this, but I understand what your doing. I'm here with you" I whispered to him as I let the tears freely fall from my own eyes, "I need you to know how loved you are. You won't understand this, but I've already been to your funeral. I have seen everyone's tears, I have seen people overwhelmed with emotion and unable to speak to anyone without crying for days after. I wish I could of helped you but I'm here now for you."

He blinked, as if taking in this information without even needing to question how I knew all of this stuff and nodded his head slowly.

"I love you too, kid." He replied slowly, squeezing my hand so lightly that it was as if he struggled to squeeze it at all.

I snuggled into his shoulder more and held his hand with both of my hands. We lay for a while in silence, I couldn't think of anything comforting to say. I looked up at his face trying to find his emotions, he looked numb. He didn't have regret, fear or sadness across his face. There was simply no emotion to be found. I felt consumed by sadness seeing him this way.

2.30am rolled by, we were still in silence. I finally decided to sit up and talk to him to take his mind off what was about to come. I'd helped take friends minds off things while they were having their blood drawn, because they were scared of needles. I have talked to friends to take their minds off their problems. But off all the things I've ever tried to take someone's mind off, I had never imagined I'd have to take someone's mind off impending death. I felt heartbroken.

"Do you remember my wedding day?" I started, "I wanted Grandad to walk me down the aisle, but he'd just had that operation and he could barely walk so you jumped at the chance to do it? Before I even said yes, there you were, standing at the door holding my arm. I kept fussing about my dress but you told me it was beautiful and I was beautiful..."

"And I wasn't sure if I was more proud to walk my niece down the aisle or that I was walking my 'sister' down the aisle... You'd always been like my little sister to me" He interrupted me.

I smiled at him in response and leaned over to kiss him on the forehead. We would never usually be so sentimental but if ever there was a time to show your true feelings for someone, this was clearly it.

His lips quivered as I noticed his breathing getting faster as if gasping for a breath. He coughed, but it sounded more like someone clearing their throat.

"We all love you Mark, none of us want this. We want you. If you had of reached out to us tonight, I can assure you every person you know would of been here breaking down your door to take you to a hospital and get you well again." I said, starting to panic as I knew what could happen any minute now and I didn't know how I would cope with it, but it was too late to back out now. I couldn't leave him. The least I can do for him is simply be here with him.

"I will save you. I promise. I will find a way. I've came back to you twice now, I can do it again. I'll start from the moment you became depressed. I'll go back to every moment in

your life that ever upset you and I'll stop this from happening!" I said, more to myself than to him.

Yes that's what I'll do! I'll give him the happiest life and he'll never do this!

His eyes met mine for what felt like a lifetime before I noticed them begin to look glazed over and his usually red flushed face was completely draining of colour. I looked down his chest and seen the shade of grey that only death can bring to a body slowly begin to creep up past his upper chest, past his throat and finally take over his face. I screamed knowing that the image would forever be with me.

He was gone.

Again.

Chapter five.

I ran out of the room and fell into the sitting room, I was next to hysterical. I needed to calm myself down.

Why didn't I just call an ambulance?! Why didn't I think of that first? Why didn't I just go further back in the day to stop him from even starting to take the overdose? What if I can't travel back again and I've wasted my last chance?!

I had so many questions for myself.

I lay on the cool wooden floor and looked around, thinking inwardly about the details of the room, each colour, each detail and each thing to calm myself down. Slowly I began to feel less hysterical and more grounded.

"No matter if I called an ambulance or came earlier, he would of just done it a different day. His mind was set. What I need to do is just what I said I'd do. Go back and erase all his upsets, to make his past so good his depression can't sink in and this doesn't happen." I said quietly, reasoning to myself.

I stood up and walked aimlessly around the room and found a note on the cream kitchen counter beside the microwave.

Mark - my dad is unwell again, so I'll be staying with him tonight, dinner is in the micro. - Mel. xxx

I walk over to the microwave and open it to look inside, there was a green plastic tupperware box full of leftovers from his stew the day before, untouched. He hasn't ate all day... At the sight of food I felt my stomach grumble and noticed I hadn't ate all day. I swiftly put the box of leftovers back in the microwave and slammed the door closed. I need to get out of here.

I set the spare key back where I found it and ran down the hall and out the front door. I kept running until I got outside the old video store again and started to change the time on my phone back to my own time. Is this nausea gonna be so strong everytime I do this? The brightness of the instant daytime hurt my eyes, the sound of a car horn

blasting alerted me that in my panic I didn't even notice myself standing in the middle of the road until it hit me. Not the car, the idea. Don't get me wrong, if I was any slower the car definitely would of hit me. I remembered a story of Nans, about Marks birth. I decided to go there.

Trying to remember the details in my state of panic was hard, but I lifted my phone and quickly punched in the numbers, 28th September, 1971, I waited until I got to the place to enter the time.

The bus pulled up outside Dundonald Hospital. It seemed poetic that I be there for his birth just as I was there for his death.

I punched in the numbers, 10.15am. Nausea washed over me.

Its working.

When I reached the hospitals sliding door, it was stiff. I practically had to slide it open myself. I noticed a lot of differences, from the colours on the walls to the hairstyles of the staff - most of them were curly and I haven't seen so many beehives since doing history in school. The song **Hey girl, don't bother me**, by Tams was playing practically on a loop as it was the single of the week. *Wow. This really is the beginning of the 70s. I'm in a different era!* I looked out of place in my ripped jeans and cropped top, I need to change. I found a small supplies closet and pulled out a box with spare nurses uniform. I pulled the white uniform up over my hips and onto my chest and buttoned it up. It was a bit tight but I had to make do. I was wasting time. I walked briskly up the hall to find someone to point me in the right direction to where my nan would be giving birth.

"You look a tad lost, Miss!" Shouted a male nurse from across the hall, "You new or somethin'?" He had an accent not from here, he sounded almost English.

"Umm.. Yes I'm new." I replied, trying to sound 70s-ish... If that was even a thing. "I've been assigned to the name Heath, in the maternity ward, but I feel a bit foolish 'cause I can't even remember how to get there now! I just started yesterday."

"I'll walk you there! I pass there on my rounds anyway." He started walking with speed up the hall. I had to practically run to keep up with the pace that came so naturally to him.

"Don't worry, you'll get used to the speed!" He laughed watching me struggle to keep alongside him, "Most of your day here will be spent rushing from one ward to the next." He thankfully slowed down a little to help me catch up.

After five minutes of walking, I heard familiar grunts and screams, made so familiar by watching *one born every minute*. I was here.

"Right, this is you, now go find your patient!" He said as he hurried off up yet another long hallway turning when he got to the end of the hallway to shout back, "Have a good first day!"

I tried to walk with purpose along the ward, making it seem like I knew what I was doing and like I belonged there before I raised suspicion, until I reached a door painted white with a piece of A4 paper reading 'Heath' in blue ink. I prayed this was the right Heath.

I opened the door as if I was supposed to be in the room and I seen her, definitely the right Heath. She was 27 years old, she looked young, I'd never seen her looking so fresh faced. The fine lines around her eyes were almost invisible far from being wrinkles just yet, her hair was longer and brunette. Her blonde highlights were gone. Yet aside from all of this, I recognised her instantly. I wanted to throw myself into my nan's arms and sob, her all about what I had seen and done, but I couldn't. I wasn't even born yet. My existence hadn't even been thought of right now, not even my mothers had been.

I lifted her chart and pretended to read through, I couldn't understand the scribbles from the doctors or most of the abbreviations but from what I could make out, everything seemed to be going as normal. I sat down beside her and took her hand making out I was just feeling for her pulse.

"Well Hadel, how are you doing?" I said cheerfully.

"Hazel, and I'm doing alright. Just in a great bit of pain. The doctor said he would be back within an hour?" She replied.

"Yeah, but I'm a nurse." I said jokingly with a smirk. "I'm just here to give you a bit of support if you need some. Happy to stay a while and chat to take your mind off things if you'd like?"

"I never had this type of good care with my last few!" She laughed.

"Well, it's here for you now, if you'd like it." I smiled, trying to be as nurselike as possible.

I stayed and chatted with her throughout her contractions until she began pushing. Our friendly conversation had seemed to take her mind off it all a great deal. While she first began pushing, I was there, holding her hand. I had pressed a bell for the 'real' professional nurses to join us when my nan wasn't looking and after half an hour two nurses joined us in the room, and told me to stand down by her feet and watch for the baby to crown.

I have no idea what I'm doing, this was such a bad idea.

After over an hour of pushing, Mark finally fell into the midwife's arms. I was the one to cut his cord just as my Grandad and Great Granny Mary walked into the room. But even though I was allowed to cut his cord, I barely got time to look at him properly as the midwife holds him so close to herself.

"Welcome to the world little one" I said lovingly as the midwife placed a hat on his head and passed Mark onto my nan's chest. "Congratulations Hazel. Hes beautiful." I continued, gazing lovingly at the sight of them.

"I need to take him off to be checked over." Says the midwife, who snatches him off my nan almost as quickly as she put him there and abruptly left the room, taking newborn Mark out the door with her.

When she returns, she looks flustered as she laid him on his side on nan's chest and muttered,

"He's only got one ear, you can just lie him on his side so nobody will notice." She again leaves the room, without even explaining or giving anybody time to process the information.

Nanny rolled him over and checked,

"Oh my gosh!" She exclaimed, "She's right... He only has one ear..." She trailed off as she started to cry, I think the tears were more to do with being overwhelmed than his abnormality.

"He's still perfect" Granny Mary said leaning over to kiss his forehead and then my Nans forehead. "And you done a fantastic job. I'm proud of you."

I wish I'd known my Granny Mary more, she was such a loving woman. The love between these two was so clear. It was so beautiful to witness instead of just hearing about it through stories.

It seemed as though they had forgotten I was in the room, so wrapped up in their newest little bundle of joy, I whispered my goodbyes to no one in particular, wishing I could stay but instead had to leave the room.

"Oh there you are! Do you think you could cover Sandras shift? She's late and we have a woman in here who's 9 cm dilated!" A nurse came hurrying across the ward to me, clearly rushed off her feet with the amount of births today.

"Yes, of course, just let me go and clean my hands and I'll be in!" I lied.

I'm so out of here! I thought to myself, as I power walked back to the closet where my clothes were left.

Thank god I can remember the way. This place is so different! It seems like all the wards have changed over the years. The signage definitely isn't as straightforward as it is in 2019.

Chapter six.

I'm back in my room, trying to figure out how I can time travel backwards but also include the place. A few days ago I didn't even believe time travel was possible, but it happened so easily...

So easy...

If it's as easy as changing the time and date on my phone, it should be as easy as changing the location on my phone too.

I selected a random date I'd heard my Nan telling me about from when my aunts and uncles were young, nothing important, nothing significant. Just a nice day of the kids playing in the garden and my Nan getting a few hours peace.

I changed my location first, 38 Springhill Terrace, Rugeley, England. Then I changed the date, 15th of June, 1975, and finally a random time, 3pm.

I instantly felt the nausea, I closed my eyes and began to heave, when I opened my eyes I was throwing up into a hedge in a random street where a small blonde child of around 3-4 years old, dressed in blue shorts and a cream sweater vest was walking towards me. Their garden was the perfect size for children to play in, I can now see why they have such happy memories here.

"Lady ok?" He said a short distance from me. It took me a few moments to realise, but I recognised him from the photos. This was Mark.

It worked.

"Are you sick? Shall I call my mum?" Said an older child who came from the other side of the small front garden, I recognised him too. My uncle Michael.

Even though I'd seen so many of both of my uncle's childhood photos, I still felt overwhelmed to see them both so young. I'd always looked up to them both and it was bizarre to see them so tiny, so innocent and so... Cute.

"Hey wee honey, I'm fine! I just had a yucky tummy." I said cheerfully back. I didn't want them to worry and call out any adults who would be alarmed I was in their garden... Throwing up in front of small children...

"That's our dog," said Mark pointing to a large German Shepherd dog lying in the garden, "I'm teaching her how to play fetch with me. Want to play?"

"Yeah sure, kiddo!" I replied, standing up now and trying to recover as quickly as I could. I walked towards the dog and it got up with its tail wagging, ready to play.

"Fetch Deb!" Said Mark as he threw a stick across the garden, accidentally hitting Michael on the back who turned around to scowl at Mark.

"Mark, I'm telling! Mum said not to throw things!" He shouted as he run back inside to get his mum, my nan. It's so weird seeing them argue like this, if only they knew how close they would be in the future.

Mark sat on the floor looking upset with himself for hurting Michael, I sat on the floor beside him,

"It's okay, I'll explain it was just an accident. Don't worry." I said, touching his shoulder gently. He smiled in response and sat quiet, waiting to be told off.

"Mark!" Nan shouted out the door, looking really peeved off, "Get here now!"

She abruptly stopped when she seen me sitting in the garden beside Mark, I stood up and walked towards her and began to explain the situation.

"It was an accident, promise!" I laughed, holding my hands up. "I was just passing by the garden and seen him throw it and it just seemed to go in the opposite direction than he threw it."

Nan laughed too, good, I've managed to spare Mark a good telling off! Mark smiled at me and give me a hug before running back inside with the dog following close behind.

"Thanks for that." She laughed back. "Accidents happen all too often with these boys! Hey, don't I know you?"

I practically shrunk into myself when I heard her question.

"No, I-I don't think you do..." I stuttered, unsure of how to explain it away. Of course she recognised me, I was there when Mark was born. Hopefully she just doesn't put it together and realise I'm the same person.

"No, I've definitely met you somewhere before, you look so familiar! Do you live around here?"

"Oh, no, I'm just visiting a friend a few streets away, she's not long moved in. I'm only here for two days then I'm back off again. Nice to meet you anyway!" I said quickly as I reached for the gate and walked off down the street.

When I reached the end of the street, I looked back and she was still standing by the gate, looking at me as if trying to rack her brains to think where she knew me from. I stopped behind a large bush and changed my time and place back to my own. I threw up, again. This is going to be seriously draining using this way of travel.

So now that I know this works, I need to figure out the places I need to actually be in order to be able to help Mark and stop his death.

I called Nan and discussed everything to do with Mark to try and find out the when and where of where I needed to go to help him. I wrote down everything she told me. I filled a notebook. The names of his dogs, everywhere he lived, what type of clothes he wore, the friends he had, the arguments he had with them, we even discussed his past girlfriends. She told me he had always been well mannered, always happy to help and a generally happy person. Out of everything we talked about, nothing seemed to be of any great significance that could of impacted his mental health, except his illness. He had arthritis in his knee, which caused him a great deal of pain, on top of a few other issues but the real issue, it seemed to me, was the medication he was on. I researched his medication into the early hours of the morning and was shocked that he was left on the medication despite the side effects and the fact that the side effects were very obviously getting so serious for him.

Side Effects May Include;

Suicidal thoughts.

Confusion.

Abnormality in thinking.

Depression.

Anxiety.

Sleep problems.

Nervousness.

And the list just went on and on...

This was nothing to do with his past, in this case. This was all about what was going on in the present time. Within months of getting diagnosed with his illness, he began going quickly downhill.

I know what to do now.

Chapter Seven.

Why didn't I think of this before?

In Marks case it wasn't his life that had depressed him, upset him at times maybe, but it was his medication, his illness and getting stuck in that hole he was just left in with no one helping him.

No matter how far back I go into his life, there's nothing I can change that will fix what he does. I have to help him while he's still alive.

I call a taxi and urge it to go faster to get over to his flat. There was no way I would be using the location on my phone to get there, I couldn't stand the nausea anymore, especially so many times in the one day. I didn't have anything left to throw up. When I get out of the taxi I throw the driver two twenty pound notes and don't bother to wait for the change, I run up the path way and don't stop to look in the front window to see if its Melanie's day off work or not. I don't care. I won't have time to explain myself, I just have to get into the sitting room and set my date and I'll of disappeared. I reach into the plant where the spare key is kept and storm into Marks flat.

Melanie is there.

"Hey love, didn't know you were coming?" She questioned, then when she seen me ignoring her and walking on into the sitting room in a rush, she started following me and trying to get me to speak to her. I didn't have time to explain.

She pulled my arm and I couldn't respond to her. I just had to do what I had to do. Save Mark.

"I love you aunty Melanie" I said, as I pushed in the date and time, and watched as her jaw dropped when she seen me disappearing.

31st December, 4.30pm.

Melanie disappeared and Mark appeared in front of me looking upset.

"How did you even get in here?" He says angrily clenching his jaw as he reaches over and pushes empty tablet packets off the coffee table and tries to kick them under the sofa hoping I wouldn't notice them. "I didn't even hear you come in! Don't you dare enter

my home without even knocking! Who do you think you are?" His anger was clearly not aimed at me. It was because he had been stopped in the middle of his overdose. He didn't want anyone to know.

"Mark stop. Just stop. You need help and your getting it now." I say, ignoring his anger. Nothing will put me off now.

"I don't need help. I just need to be left alone to get on with this." He protested, standing up from the sofa and lifting his medicine box, then pushing past me roughly to walk into the bathroom. I couldn't think of another way to stop him, so I followed him and knocked the box out of his hand, spilling its contents all over the floor to stall him so I had time to speak with him, to calm him down. Time to change his mind. He tries to lower himself to the floor and his knee locks, he can't. He's in too much pain. He starts to cry and tremble. I wrap my arms around him and pull him to the sofa, crying at the sight of him.

"Please just let me help you. Please. I can help you, you just need to let me. Help me to help you, please." I beg him.

He nods agreeingly. "Okay... Help me." He closes his eyes in relief as if I've just offered him a winning scratch card.

This is what he needed, someone to stop him.

I lie him down on the sofa and call an ambulance to have him checked over for whatever he has already taken.

While waiting for the ambulance to arrive, I go to pick up his medicine box, tablets and empty packets to see what he has already taken, I'm shocked to realise he's already taken a lot more than I thought he would of by now. I pack him an overnight bag of a spare change of clothes, toiletries and some snack food he had in the front of the cupboards, for the hospital. They will definitely need to keep him in overnight.

Within fifteen minutes the ambulance is with us, I quickly run outside and call them in.

"He seems quite confused at the moment, slow to respond and not putting up much of a fight about anything" I started rattling off to one of the paramedics as he looked through the empty packets and another paramedic tried to talk to Mark.

"Can you tell me your name please?" He said, using a torch to search Marks eyes.

"Yeah..." Mark trailed off, trying to respond but seeming to have trouble concentrating on what was actually being said. His eyes kept flickering closed as he travelled in and out of consciousness. It was hard to watch.

"We need to take him in now, will you be coming with him?" Said the paramedic leaning over Mark.

"Yes, I'll be coming with him. I've packed him an overnight bag to bring just incase, is it okay if I bring it with us now?" I said to no one in particular, as everyone was already out the door, rushing to the ambulance. I pulled the bag along behind me and ran to the ambulance not even stopping to lock the front door. Nothing mattered aside from getting there on time now. Nothing mattered apart from saving Mark.

The journey to the hospital seemed to last for ages as I held Mark's hand and tried to keep him alert by talking to him. I talked to him about colours, names, street signs, simple things he could easily understand in his state and keep his mind thinking. I couldn't lose him now. We were so close. Beside me a paramedic scribbled all the details I can think of to tell him off the top of my head, on to a chart.

I really hope this works.

Chapter Eight.

The hospital feels cold. I feel sick with worry. I wished I'd put a jumper on. I don't know whether to call our family or not, I'm nervous of telling them, I know if I don't they will all be furious with me but they will be upset either way once they hear this news, so I decide to go make the call, first on the list is Nan. I can call her and she will call everyone else to let them know too. Just as I stand up to make my calls, I hear a mans voice call out to me;

"Heath?"

"Yes, yes that's me!" I shout to him as I scramble across the blue chairs towards him.

I assume by his clothing attire he is Mark's doctor. He is tall, tanned and slightly plump, with flicks of grey streaks through his short brown hair. He carries a clipboard and has writing all over his hands. He looked stressed and tired, like he could severely do with a nap.

"Just to let you know, we have pumped Mark's stomach, he is stable and it would appear as if it has worked well. Now however before he wakes up, we should discuss a mental health intervention team to call in and speak to him. Do you think he would consider a stay in our unit?" He replied.

"Yes, I think I could talk to him and make him at least consider it... Can I go in now?" I said.

"Not right now, he is still asleep and I think it's important he catches up on his sleep, he's had a rough night and will need his energy. As soon as he wakes up, I'll send a nurse out for you." He said, already walking off down the hall, the way he came. I had so many other questions to ask this doctor, but he made it clear that he didn't have time to stay and answer them for me.

Alright, time to make the calls!

"Hello?" Answered my Nan, after the phone seemed to ring for a few minutes.

"Hey Nan, it's Serena," I started off, "I don't really know how to say this, but Mark is in the hospital. He took an overdose, I called an ambulance for him and he's going to be

fine, but you should come up as soon as you can. He'll be awake soon. I know he'll want to see you as soon as he gets up."

"Oh my... I'm on my way." She replied, hanging up.

I could imagine her frantically calling my uncle Michael to arrange a lift to the hospital, rushing about the house worrying and making more phone calls while she waited. Forgetting her coat while she left in her state of panic.

I got a coffee from the gift shop on my way back to my seat to wait for Mark waking up, I hadn't slept all night while I waited up for any sort of news about him. I needed to know this has worked before I even consider sleep. I sit down and pick up a magazine, trying to give myself something to take my mind off things until I can see him. It doesn't work. I can barely even focus on the words. Everything is blurry to me. I sit and look around the room watching people come and go.

"My appointment was at 8am this morning! I am only twenty minutes late!" A blonde woman carrying a red clutch handbag screeches at the receptionist on the ward.

"I'm sorry, the hospital is a busy place and the Doctors can only allocate a certain amount of time to each appointment" replies the receptionist trying to remain calm. "If the doctor was to see you now, the next appointment would run late and it would mess up the appointments for the whole day!"

I listened to them argue back and forth for another few moments until I grew bored and my mind wandered off to next person waiting.

A woman in her mid 30s with blonde hair, a smart skirt suit and high heels holding a clipboard was sitting close by. She looked uncomfortable waiting. I watched her walk over to the reception when the other woman left.

"Hi there, I'm here to talk with a Mr, Mark Heath?" She spoke, looking to her paperwork and showing some sort of badge.

"Yes, I'll call a doctor out now to discuss with you." The receptionist replied.

The woman thanked her and walked back to her seat. I followed her, and tapped her on her arm to get her attention.

"Hi, your looking for Mark? Sorry, are you a friend of his or a doctor or something?" I asked.

"Oh, you must be a relative of Marks?" She replied questioningly. I nodded confused in response. "I'm Catherine. I'm a mental health worker on the ward, I came down to discuss with Mark if he would consider staying in rather than discharging himself."

"Oh that's so great you came down so soon," I say, "Sorry, my names Serena, I'm his niece. Nice to meet you Catherine. I'd really appreciate it if you could help talk him into staying on the ward. I'm worried he won't want to stay and we'll end up back here again... If he agrees, how long would he stay a patient for?"

I shift my weight from one foot to the next nervously, I don't feel right discussing Mark like this. It should be his mother or his wife. But I suppose they would ask her the same questions as me anyway, so I may as well take as much information from her as I can while I wait for them to arrive.

"Probably only between a week to a fortnight. Not too long I'm afraid, but it could be enough to help him through the next short while, for his family to make arrangements for him not to be alone at home." She explained. "We have an excellent therapy team who will help him connect with his close family. Support from his loved ones would truly be the best thing for him right now."

"Well, let's hope he will stay so we can get started on some therapy for him as soon as possible..." I trailed off, seeing my nan and Michael arriving through the sliding door. "That's his Mother, Hazel, coming in just now, if you'd prefer to discuss more in depth with her?"

I introduced them both and we all sat down together to talk about his options, when a nurse walked in and announced he was awake. We scrambled to our feet to follow her, when we got outside of the room, she said "He has asked to see his Niece Serena first, please."

I stepped forward, looking at my nan awkwardly as I walked into the room, he was propped up on the bed, waiting impatiently for me.

"I remember." He said quietly without looking at me.

Chapter Nine.

"I remember it all." He said turning slowly to face me.

"What do you mean...?" I questioned, trying to act like I didn't have a clue what he was on about.

I couldn't tell if he was annoyed, upset or just curious. His emotions seemed off, like he was on auto mode.

"No, Serena, I know what you did for me. How did you do it? I thought it was weird how you just appeared in a dream. I remember you in my life. As a child, you, exactly you just as you look right now, spoke to me in the garden. A few days ago you just randomly appeared in the middle of my sitting room..." He trailed off sounding confused before continuing again with more confidence. He didn't want me to shrug it off as just a dream, "You were there when I died..."

I didn't know what to reply. I didn't want to worsen his moods by making him think he had gone crazy, I didn't want to downplay it as a dream he had, because I wanted him to know that he did die. This is how it all started. I wanted him to see that part of his life he missed out on, how we all missed him, how it deeply impacted us, how greatly I wanted to save him, that I literally travelled through time to do so.

"I did appear... You did die with me." I began to explain it all to him, when a small red headed nurse entered the room.

"Hi Mark, how are you feeling? My name is Sian, I'm looking after you until my shift ends at 5, you have some visitors outside, are you ready to see them?" She said softly but cheerfully, checking his charts.

"Send them in..." He muttered, without breaking eye contact with me. "Serena and I can discuss this later."

I sighed with relief as the nurse opened the door for my nan and Michael to come in. They rushed in, my nan looking sick with worry and Michael instantly appearing by his side to envelope him in a big hug. Mark started to cry. This would give me time to figure out how to explain it all without confusing him. A chance to actually get my thoughts

together. I lifted my phone out and looked at the date, 1st of January, 2019. Then the time, 9.15am. I did it. He lived! Now just to put a plan in place to keep him alive.

I excused myself from the room, saying I needed to go to the toilet, so I could have five minutes alone.

How did he remember?

As soon as I stepped into the waiting area, I seen over half my family members standing up each with their own unique look of worry. My aunt Kerry was first to approach me.

"When can we go in to see him?" She asked.

"Umm, I'm not sure to be honest. He's in with nan and Michael right now and there is a doctor waiting to speak with him when they are done, maybe wait til nan comes out and she can let everyone know more details?" I replied back.

As soon as I was done everyone started to bombard me with questions,

"How did you find him?"

"What has the doctors said so far?"

"Is he awake now?"

"Okay, you all really need to wait until his Doctor comes back out! But yes, he's awake. I called in to visit him at his house and seen the tablet packets so I called an ambulance. The doctor has said he is stable now, but needs to arrange some aftercare to be put into place. He'll probably be staying for a week or two on the mental health ward. I think that's was best for him right now." I shouted over the top of all the oncoming questions.

The only person I noticed who wasn't there, was Melanie. Has no one called her?

"I'm going outside for a smoke, I'll be back in shortly, if you hear anything at all, please call me and I'll come straight back up!" I announced as I left the waiting area and made my way outside of the hospital.

The cold January air hit me with a force when I stepped outside. Melanie was sat outside alone on a bench, crying to herself. I walked over, sat down beside her lighting up my cigarette and draped one arm around her shoulder to comfort her, without speaking. We sat like that until I had finished smoking.

"Do you want to walk in with me or do you need another few moments?" I asked her gently.

"I think I need another few minutes... Would you mind waiting with me?" She pleaded with me.

"Of course I will." I said putting my arm back around her and telling her all I knew from the doctors. "He's going to be fine Mel. We just need to keep a serious eye on him when he comes out again."

"Thanks hun, I know... I just feel so awful for leaving him alone." She started to well up again.

"Honestly, it's not your fault at all, Melanie. He will be fine, but right now, you just need to be there for him. Come on, your his wife you can get in to see him straight away. It'll make you feel so much better." I said taking her hand and standing up. She stood up beside me, wiping her eyes on her already damp from tears sleeve.

"Okay, let's go." She said smiling at me. We held hands the whole way to Mark's room and I opened the door for her.

When she went inside, I held it open slightly to listen. I swear I'm not usually so nosey, I was just concerned for them both. I wanted to know if Mark would finally show his emotions to her, to finally tell how he was feeling and to give me a sign he was beginning to try and fight for his life.

"Babe... What did you do?" Mel said bursting into tears and falling onto the bed with him.

"I don't know... I thought it was all I could do. I can't live feeling like this anymore." He said back to her through tears of his own.

"Mark, what would I of done without you though?"

"I just need you to know how much I love you... I didn't do this to hurt you, or because I don't love you anymore. Mel, I love you with all my heart. It breaks my heart that I can't do romantic things for you, that I can't take you on dates and treat you like the wonderful partner that you are. I'm so sorry. I'm constantly in pain and it brings me down so much... You deserve so much better than what I can give you. I love you." He told her.

I stood by the door with tears of my own... This is exactly what he told me in the kitchen that time he came around for coffee. I can't believe he genuinely thinks he's not good enough. I'm glad he's finally opening up. Maybe opening up about his true feelings will help him begin to heal.

"Baby you're more than good to me... You may be grumpy, but you do make me happy. We need to work on this together. Just accept the help." Mel said back to him, relieved to hear he did still love her and care about her. I was glad they were both feeling happier.

I closed the door to give them their privacy and walked back to the waiting room to join everyone.

Chapter ten.

The therapy room for Marks last session had pale blue walls, the seats were laid out in a circle, just enough chairs for his close family to join him for his last session. I sat down on one of the empty, alongside his siblings, Michael, Mandy, Kim, Kerry, my mum and my nan and grandad and Catherine, his therapist, filling the other chairs. The idea of these sessions was to bring everyone together to show him how much support he had from his family.

"Alright," Starts Catherine, "In our last group session we had your family tell you how they feel about you, now I think for our ending session, you should openly tell your family how you feel about them. Are you okay with that?"

"Yes, that sounds like a good enough ending session for me!" Smiled Mark.

He's smiling. This is his sixth smile this week. I love seeing him smile.

"Shall we start off with the easiest? Your parents? You can tell them individually or you can tell them as a pair. What you say and how much you say is totally up to you. All that's needed is for you to be open and honest with them." Catherine told him.

"Wow, well this is nerve wracking." Mark laughed.

He laughed... I smiled to myself, it's so good to see him laugh, even if it is just nervous laughter.

"I've wrote out a letter for you all, I hope it makes sense," He continued. "To my mum and dad, I'm sorry. I want to explain why I distanced myself from you both, I was so set on doing... What I done... And I knew that my family was the only thing holding me back, I knew if I didn't find a way to distance myself from you both, from all of you really, I couldn't of done it and I thought it was what I wanted, needed, to escape my own mind. I love you both, endlessly and I'm so grateful for all you've done for me. " He paused a moment to fight his tears.

"Mark, crying is fine, it's best to let out your real emotions right now, it will help your family to understand how you truly feel." Catherine said, taking his hand and squeezing it to encourage him to continue.

"Michael," He said clearing his throat. "Michael, you make me happy that I only have one brother, because the bond we have is like no other. It's so precious to me and I hope you know how much I love and respect you, I love you, my big bro."

Michael started to cry with Mark and got up from his seat to hug him, Catherine stood up to give him her seat so they could sit beside each other, they sat together silently for a few moments, thinking about what they almost lost. Watching them made me cry too, I love their bond and I wish I had that with my brothers too. Life really is too short, isn't it?

"I love you too, wee bro." Michael said through his tears.

"Kim," Mark said, continuing his letter after a few moments with Michael. "Kim, your so kind hearted, generous and it's something I'll always remember about you. You have so many great qualities and I hope one day I'll take those qualities into my own life. I'd love to follow your lead in all you do. I love you, sis."

Kim lifted a tissue out and dried her eyes. She had been crying since she walked in. He was right, I've always loved Kims kind qualities. I have so much respect for my aunt Kim.

"Kerry, where can I start?" I looked to Kerry who I was sitting beside and took her hand, I felt her shaking with nerves already.

"No matter how many times we have fallen out, I know you've always been there for me, you truly care. I love how close we used to be, and I hope after all of this we can get back to that soon. I will always love and cherish you and hold you dear to my heart. I love you."

Kerry let go of my hand to wipe her eyes with her shaking hands, Kim leaned across from her chair to pass her a tissue. Again, he was right, Kerry always cares about her family so much no matter what. She's loyal. I love her for that. The kind of woman that no matter what happened she would always answer the phone to you and help you with whatever you needed.

"Mandy" He laughed, "Over the years we've shared many things, especially a good laugh together. I'm so grateful for you just for being yourself. You've never been anything but you and I'm so proud to call you my sister. You've taught me to stay true to myself and even though recently I've lost myself, I can always look to you for strength. I love you, sis." It was now Mandys turn to give him a hug and tell him she loved him too.

I felt my tears begin to slip down my cheeks again. Mandy was such a fun, caring and loving person. Watching them embrace warmed my heart. I love Mandy and her fun nature, she was always so good to be around and could cheer anybody up.

"Nicky, the last of our tribe and the pest of the clan. The baby sisters are always the most annoying aren't they?" He laughed as all my aunts agreed, my mum laughed until she cried, Mandy gave her a light hug.

"Alright be quiet now so you can hear what other things Mark has to say about you to your face this time" She said jokingly, everyone laughed again. I think nervous laughter was pretty much the theme for the day.

"Anyway!" He cleared his throat. "No matter how annoying you've been as a child, I'm proud of the person you've become. You've come such a long way and I'm pleased to see how much you've turned your life around. While you may have been looking up to me while we grew up, I now look up to you in amazement at how far you've come along. I love you so much, baby sis. While we're on the topic of Nicky, I'd like to say a thank you to Serena. I don't need to say what for, we both know. Thank you for my second chance. I love you."

I simply smiled in response to him, everyone would think it was simply for finding him in time to call the ambulance, but we both knew it was more than that. If I'd have opened my mouth to reply to him, I knew I wouldn't have been able to control my tears.

We all stayed to have coffee and chatted amongst ourselves, some of us even following Mark's lead and being brave enough to say how we really felt to each other. I found a few spare minutes to chat alone with Mark and I grabbed at it, I explained how I time travelled to him and we spoke in depth about how I found him.

"I'd love for you to teach me so when I feel better, I could help others the way you helped me." Mark said.

"And I'd love to teach you." I said smiling at him.

We were interrupted by Catherine telling us that was all for today and Mark could go home and begin his healing journey with his family.

"I feel Mark has done fantastic here with us and I'll continue to hope he does so well at home with you all, you each now have my card with my number so if you have any

questions or concerns, you can call anytime and I can do my best to help. Mark, you know if you ever feel you need to be placed back in here that you need only call me and I'll arrange everything for you. Although I do hope you'll not need to come back." She said with a wink.

We all filed out of the room leaving Mark to thank her for all her help and say his goodbyes to everyone before leaving to come out to Michael who was waiting with Melanie to give him a lift home.

We all promised to call in to see him everyday and to call him as often as we could.

Mark and I spent the next few months visiting each other, having our decaf coffee and travelling back and forth to help our family and friends.

We made a pretty epic team, it was fun to spend so much time with Mark.

Chapter Eleven.

One Year Later...

"This past year has been such an intense journey and I wouldn't of been here if it wasn't for my niece Serena calling the help when I needed it and for my family staying close by my side every day for the past year. It's been the hardest time through my life, but I have overcome it and I hope that my story will help give you hope and give those who have lost someone to suicide a sense of comfort, knowing you are not to blame."

As I watched Mark talking into the microphone, finishing telling his story to a crowd full of people at a mental health awareness event, I felt so proud of him. I stood up alongside my family clapping for him.

Over the last year, I've been teaching Mark how to time travel and we've been secretly helping our family with their past depression. We stopped one of my cousins from self harming, another from getting into an abusive relationship and we also went back so I could get to know my Granny Mary.

The time we spent travelling together gave us such a special bond. It was our secret. He has gained a new passion, helping others.

After the event so many people came to him wishing him the best of luck on the rest of his journey, thanking him for having the courage to speak out and tell his story.

Someone at the end of the line of well-wishers caught my eye.

An old man, who looked like my grandad, but too different to be him. He wore trousers and a checked shirt with smart brown shoes but what really caught my eye as I walked past him, was his necklace. It was a steel dog tag necklace, it looked the same as the one my nan bought for Mark last christmas, only difference was it looked older. The man caught me staring at it and read it to me,

"To my son, Never forget that I love you, life is filled with hard times and good times. Learn from everything you can and be the man I know you can be." He winked at me and told me he's very happy. I recognise that voice...

"Emm, I'm glad your so happy..." I told him, confused by the whole situation.

He laughed and replied "I'll see you, in the future." He quickly took out his phone and took off his ear as he disappeared.

It was Mark.

Chapter twelve - The Truth.

Mark didn't survive. I couldn't travel back in time to save him, no matter how much I wished I could. The first chapter is factual. He died of suicide.

The time I spent in the woods was true. I tried to change time back on my phone, I cried and prayed with such a passion that I could go back in time... It didn't work.

The idea of this book came to me in a dream I had after I went for the walk up the woods, I dreamt it did work and that I saved mark. Writing out how he survived and how his life potentially could of been, was the hardest I had to write, I'm filled with guilt over not being there for him as I had promised. I decided to tell this story to help others struggling with suicidal thoughts and perhaps even give them hope that with the right support and help, it can get better.

Chapter ten, the therapy session, is what I would imagine Mark would tell his brother, sisters, my nan and grandad. I hope it gives them some comfort reading those words. I love you all.

To all of you who have lost a loved one to suicide my love, thoughts and prayers are with you. I pray Saving Mark helps you heal in some way.

People are always wishing for more time, but for what? You are blessed with enough time to do what is important. If you were given more time than you need, then the precious moments you have with your loved ones wouldn't mean as much, would they?

The time we spend with those who we love is how they know we love them. We do not waste time with people, we choose to spend our time on them. That's beautiful. Spend your precious gift wisely.

- Serena.