

SAMPLE CHAPTER

from

Dealer to Healer - A Modern Tale of a Fucked Up Male

DEALER WITH IT 2008

We crossed the border into Belgium. It was 3 am, and we were looking for somewhere to camp and get some sleep for a few hours. The roads were completely deserted, and the only light came from the headlights of the car we were driving. It seemed like thick forest flanked either side of us. In the distance we saw two red lights coming closer and closer. Finally, we were close enough to realise it was a police car.

I drove tentatively behind, not knowing what the speed limit was on this road, in this country. I travelled at a similar speed to that of the officials in front. The police car seemed to be getting slower and slower. Tired and scared, we were all struggling to make sense of what was happening as the police car slowed to an almost stop.

I decided we should go past them, so moving the car into the opposite lane, I pulled away from them slowly. As we did, I increased my speed little by little, still unaware of the country's speed limit. We got further and further away from them, and their car got smaller and smaller. A gasp of relief emitted from each one of our chests and we careered forward, away from the law.

The next thing we knew, two white lights were getting closer and closer to us. We made out it was the police again and we all panicked.

The police sat behind us for about ten minutes, our anxiety growing. Groans of, 'What are we going to do, Liam?' bombarded my eardrums.

The blue and red lights flashed on, and a doomed sinking feeling flickered through my whole body as the panicky heads of my accomplices darted from me to the police car, from me to the police car.

The flashing lights became my cue to pull over. I told everyone in the car to let me do the talking and that if worst came to worst, to say they knew nothing about it.

The officer slowly approached the car as I wound down the window in the fashion my mind had been trained to do from all the American movies I'd seen. His torch flashed into the back seat, copying all the American movies he had seen, and then it was on me.

He asked me where we were from.

I said, "England".

He asked me where we were going.

I said, 'Spain'.

He asks me what we were doing in Belgium.

I said, 'We are meeting a friend tomorrow in Bruges, and we want to find a campsite to sleep in tonight.'

He told us they would all be shut.

I said, 'We just need somewhere to put up a tent then.'

He then asked to see my driving licence and the insurance and registration details for the car.

I was not insured, and I didn't own the car. I passed him my driver's licence, and Little Blonde, who was sitting next to me reached into the glovebox for the paperwork. She was, thankfully, on the insurance, but the car was registered to a Mohammed Chowdery.

I said as little as possible and gave the police officer the papers. He went to the back of our car and talked to his colleague. We could hear him talking on his radio in a foreign language, so we had no idea of what was being said. Panicked whispers bounced around the car, and I told everyone it was going to be fine.

As one officer was on the radio, the other asked me to pop the boot. My heart sank. Everyone's hearts sank. We were fucked, or more to the point, I was fucked, and getting to the music festival in Spain now seemed unimaginable.

The officer looked in the boot, and I inquisitively looked through the rear-view mirror, trying to see what he was up to and whether he was taking anything out. I could see looks of horror saturated across the faces of my three friends in the back.

Guilt squeezed my heart.

I tried to remain calm, but the chances of coming out of this unscathed seemed as remote as the woodland surrounding us.

The other officer had a driving licence in my name and the registration details of the car in the name of an Asian man who was nowhere to be seen. In my head, this in itself justified further investigation and was a definite breaking of the law. I was not insured to drive this car, I didn't own it, and I was driving illegally in a foreign country. I knew in England I would immediately have been arrested.

He stopped talking on the radio and started a discussion with his colleague, then he turned and walked back towards my unwound window. Each step added another hundred beats per minute to my heart rate. I was ready to be taken to the station for further investigations, for the boot of the car to be searched and for my friends in the car to be answering questions their relatively protected lives may not be able to deal with.

All kinds of scenarios were going through my mind. Would I have to serve my time in a Belgium prison, or would I be sent back to England to serve my time, and what would give me the best chances of not being bummed?

The officer took his last step. His hand goes on the window trim of the door, he turned to face me as his other hand passed me back the paperwork.

He said: 'This is fine'.

I felt like I had misheard him.

In my mind, I was shaking my head in disbelief a little, quickly replaying his words again and again in my head. *He said 'this is fine'???*

Baffled, I took the papers handed them to Little Blonde next to me and looked back at the officer. He told us the speed limits of the road and then pointed us in the direction of a campsite and wished us a safe trip.

We all thanked him profusely.

Adrenaline pushed and pushed up my body until we drove off. A huge sigh of relief exploded from within me. It felt as if my body weight had halved by releasing all the tension that had built up.

Giddily, with an air of trepidation, we said things like, 'Oh my God', 'I can't believe that' and, 'Shit, wow! *Oh my God, oh my God* was repeatedly spat into hands that were clasped around our mouths as if some other entity was saying them and we were trying to keep the words from spilling out, as law-abiding atheists.

We arrived in the most picturesque of villages which, in a way, soothed the plethora of emotions we had just been through.

We found the campsite the kind police officer had pointed us towards. It wasn't open, and the chain had been put across the entrance. We decided to break in and set up camp. We only put up two tents; Little Blonde and Rena take one, and I'm left to share with Mr Japan and The Communist. The Communist is my ex-girlfriend, and Mr Japan is a friend I met at the festival in Spain the previous year. They'd had sex with each other the previous night in the same room as me dad, and now I was sharing a tent with them, and it felt a bit weird.

The next day we awoke to hear families and foreign chatter all around us. We took in our surroundings in the daylight, tried to escape without paying, but some people looked at us weird, so we did.

We arrived in Bruges where we were supposed to be meeting Mohammed, taking in the beautiful historic city and finding ourselves having lunch in one of its many squares. Little Blonde was our Mohammed connection, and we found out he wasn't having much luck getting into the country on a Bangladeshi passport.

We reflected on the intensity of the previous evening and how lucky we'd been. We were repeatedly replaying the events, trying to figure out why they hadn't seized us and the car. We came to the conclusion it must have just been too confusing or too much work for them, and we had given them a good vibe, so they let us go.

As we approached France, we ended up in a huge traffic jam.

We moved slowly towards a border control. Europe didn't have border controls between member countries anymore, and I was in shock at what I was seeing.

As we got closer and closer, we could see that cars on the other side were being searched and completely emptied. Terror filled me; it was less than twenty-four hours ago, this same terror had filled me, but now it seemed amplified. Bags and cases were being taken from the cars in front of us. They were thoroughly emptied and scrutinised. We were all in a complete panic, again I told everyone to stay calm. Inside I was far from calm. Every muscle in my body was fully tensed, knowing again that if what was happening to the cars just in front happened to us we were in a chasm of trouble. Potentially I would be spending time in a French prison.

My mind drifted as I wondered if I would be able to achieve one of my life goals of speaking that beautiful language. After a few years of being surrounded by beautiful linguistic-emitting convicts, surely I would pick it up.

Back in the room, the cars between us and the border guards were gradually disappearing. Seven, six, five, four, three, two... All the cars were let through to continue their journey. The tension was too much. We were all on the edge of our seats, sweat was dripping down my forehead, and thankfully it was a very hot day, so this could disguise my panic. Seven, six, five, four, three, two, one. The car in front stopped and its occupants handed over their passports. We watched intently. Little Blonde had our passports ready and was waiting to hand them in. The guards looked suspiciously into the car in front, which had four Asian males inside. They were asked to pull over, and we watched as the four men were taken aside to have their car searched.

We approached, awaiting our destiny.

The guard glanced at our passports...