

*Rachel*

I am finally at my hotel. I booked a twin room knowing that I would upgrade it as soon as I checked in. Patrick is happy thinking I'm with Charlotte and his mother is delighted to have Abigail.

The hotel is gorgeous: small, exclusive and discreet. With time to kill before Jack is due, I decide to run a bath. It takes time to create the woman I am when I'm with him and today I can luxuriate over the process. As I pour in my new expensive bath oil, I consider that Jack has only seen this carefully constructed version of me. Poor Patrick takes the brunt of another me and I'm sorry for that. I'm realistic enough to know that Jack and I will have a sell-by date, especially after the last few weeks, but the thought of life without him is too dull for me to end things. Do I really want to throw away everything Patrick can offer me for the one thing he can't? Sometimes the only way I can manage the guilt is to break it down into pieces of blame so small I can swallow them without truth. My phone rings and I answer without looking, assuming that it's Jack.

'Hi! I thought I'd give you a quick ring. Everything okay? How's shopping going?'

'Hi Patrick! It's been fine but actually I'm in the bath, we're heading out soon.'

'Good, like I said, let your hair down, go mad with the credit card.'

Really? Anger swamps uncertainty. Am I some sort of 1950s housewife who should be grateful for some shopping time? I fight to inhale my scream. It would seem I do want to throw everything away.

'Rachel? Did you hear me?'

'Yes.'