

Prologue

2016

Martin Lewis opened his eyes as he heard the letter box go. He groaned and looked at the clock, it was seven. Slowly, he swung his legs round and blinked as he tried to wake up. Heading downstairs, he picked up the letters, he looked through them; bill, bill, Decree Absolute, no doubt with the solicitor's bill attached to it. Suddenly, he saw a letter that made him freeze - it was handwritten, slowly, he ripped it open as he headed into the kitchen; he read the letter and then found that he had to sit down. Slowly his thoughts began to drift...

Chapter One

1998

St Ives looked intimidating with its big turrets and traditional iron gates. Martin Lewis looked up at it and felt a warm feeling; it was as if he had come home. At eighteen, it was his last year and then he could think about attending university.

'Hey Lewis!'

He smiled as he saw his two best friends, Robert and Gregory. 'Hey you two!'

'Have you heard the news?' Gregory asked as they headed inside.

'What news?'

'Mrs Hedging has finally left.'

'About time too, she looked like she was about to drop!'

'Robert!'

'Well it's true!'

Martin shook his head at his friend's uncouthness. 'Go on then brain-box, who do we have instead?'

'A Mrs Knight.'

Martin slammed his locker door shut. 'Right! Well let's not keep her waiting.' Suddenly a group of boys rushed past them giggling. 'Hey! *Walk!*' They slowed right down.

'Oh come on old sport, cut them some slack, you remember what it was like.'

'Yes! And you should be setting an example, we *are* prefects!'

'Alright! Alright!'

'Come on, we'll be late for what's her name.'

A few minutes later, they were sitting in the classroom, waiting, Martin felt a slight jolt of apprehension. Suddenly, the door opened.

'Brace yourself.' Gregory muttered.

'Good afternoon class, I'm Mrs Knight and I shall be your teacher and form tutor for the rest of the term.'

Martin stared at her, she was in her early fifties, tall and thin, she had eyes that seemed to sparkle.

'Martin Lewis?'

He was dimly aware of someone calling his name.

'Martin Lewis?'

He felt Gregory push him from behind. 'Oh, here Miss!' He ignored the giggles.

-

'What were you thinking about?' it was half-past five and they were in the prep room.

Martin loosened his tie. 'Nothing - just tired that's all.'

Robert grinned. 'You were thinking of her weren't you?'

'Who?' Martin looked alarmed, was he really that transparent?

'Nancy! I told you, you should ask her out.'

'I told you, I'm not interested!'

'You must have your eye on *someone*!'

Suddenly Robert looked up. 'Hey! You're not..?'

'What? No!'

'Then what's the problem?'

'No problem, I just haven't met the right girl yet.'

'Well let us know when you do so that we can plan your wedding!'

'Ha! Ha! Oh sod off, both of you!'

-

'How are you getting on with your class Eloise?'

Mrs Knight looked up and smiled. 'Very well, thank you George.'

The history teacher smiled. 'Good!'

'Yes, that boy, Martin Lewis, he's very bright.'

'Yes, his father has high hopes for him.'

She smiled. 'He seems a rather serious boy though, for his age.'

George laughed. 'I wouldn't complain too much about that if I were you, I mean, too often we're complaining that they're the opposite!'

-

'Oh come ON Lewis! It'll be fun!'

'No it won't and no I'm not coming, I don't fancy standing around in the cold watching a ball being kicked around.'

'It might be a laugh!'

'Enjoy yourselves!'

The two boys looked at each other and shook their heads.

Martin sighed and stood up, 'I'll see you off the premises, how's that?' As they passed the classrooms, he suddenly noticed Mrs Knight. 'I'll catch you up' He said to the others and approached her. 'Mrs Knight?'

She looked up suddenly and gave him that winning smile. 'All set for to-morrow?'

'You're going?'

'Of course! Get some fresh air.'

He smiled. 'I admire your enthusiasm but I fear it's a lost cause, we haven't won in years.'

'Well let's hope we do this time.'

-

That evening, in the common room, Martin glanced up and reflected on the day's events, he couldn't seem to shake Mrs Knight from his mind, she was unlike anyone he had ever met, yet he knew these feelings were stupid and that there wasn't a hope in hell of her feeling the same way, maybe he *could* do with the fresh air.

-

'Lewis? Oi! LEWIS!! Wake up!!'

'What?'

'Bus leaves in two hours!'

'Okay! Okay!'

Robert suddenly turned round. 'You *still* haven't said what made you change your mind.'

Martin gave him a look. 'Let's just go shall we?'

He had been right. It was, indeed, boring! He suddenly saw Mrs Knight and slowly sidled up next to her.

'Enjoying it Miss?'

'Are you? That's the most important thing.'

'Not really.'

She laughed. 'Oh come on, it has to be better than being stuck indoors doing lessons.'

'Marginally I suppose, but then again, so am watching paint dry!'

This was greeted by laughter. 'You're far too cynical for your age.'

'You show me a right way to behave Miss and I'll happily concede!' Another cheer went up and he clapped sarcastically. 'Oh well done! He got the ball in the net - hooray!'

She laughed a little more. 'It won't be long.'

'How do you know?'

'My nephew is a football fanatic, he's forever keeping me up to date, whether I want to hear it or not.'

Martin grinned. 'How old is he? Your nephew?'

'Twelve.'

'Right.'

'I know! I know!'

'I suppose he's going to play for a major team.'

'Well you've got to have-'

'Goals?'

She turned to him and grinned. 'Very amusing. Many a true word spoken in jest though.'

'I know.' He looked around and saw a drinks stand and started to move.

'Whoa, where are you going?'

'To get a drink.'

'Alright then.'

'Would you like one?'

'Um, I'll have a tea if it's possible.' She dug around in her pocket.

'Oh no, I'll get these.'

'No you won't! Here, that's for mine and I insist!' She smiled as she watched him go.

The football match soon came to an end (3-0) and they all started to head back.

When they reached the school, Mrs Knight couldn't resist turning to him. 'You survived then.'

'Yes! So it would seem.'

'See? Told you it wouldn't be so bad.'

'I suppose I should thank you.'

'No need I can assure you. I'm glad you enjoyed it.'

'You're not going to say "I told you so"?'

'Wouldn't dream of it.'

'Good night Miss.'

'Good night Martin.'

She watched him go and realised, with an awful feeling, that she had expected something to happen between them, no, more than that, it was like an attraction of some kind. She groaned, no, she was mistaken, she HAD to be.