

'Doctor, heal thyself.'

'Oooh! Matron!'

'Oooh! yourself, Doctor.' Deborah ran her finger down Bernard's nose letting the tip rest on his lips. 'Besides, I'm *not* a matron, as you well know. I'm just a lowly receptionist at a tinsy-winsy village surgery located in...well, the middle of nowhere.'

Bernard made himself more comfortable. The back seat of a car - even a top of the range Mercedes - wasn't the ideal choice for what his mother would euphemistically have referred to as 'a bit of 'ows yer father'. But, needs must...

'Now look here, Mrs Dobbs, as I've said before, you're far too good to be a receptionist. You do have a *talent* for making people feel better. Well,' he allowed himself a roguish chuckle and made a grab for her midriff, 'you certainly make *me* feel better!'

'Stop it, at once, you naughty boy!' Deborah slapped away the offending hand and completed the task of buttoning up her blouse. 'Now, we had better be off. Stephen will be wondering, and so will your Sue. Let's get out of this infernal forest and head back to civilization.'

Pulling his 'it's not fair' face, Bernard reached for the door handle, suddenly clutching at his chest before slumping back into his seat with a groan.

'Bernie! What's wrong?'

'Not feeling too good, Debs. Y'know, old problem,' he grimaced. He pointed. 'Need my meds. In my bag.' In the moonlight, Deborah could just about see the colour drain from his face. 'Quick. Need them quick.'

Deborah rifled frantically through the old-fashioned doctor's bag.

'This one?'

'No.'

'This one, then?'

'No.'

'This?!'

'No!'

Bernard shook his head, loosened his collar, and struggled to breathe.

'But that's *it* Bernie! That's all there is!'

Sweat was starting to course down his face, his breathing becoming more and more laboured.

'Christ, Debs, if I don't get it in the next thirty minutes, I'll be a gonner.'

'Shall I ring 999? Get an ambulance?'

'No good. Too slow. Miles from the hospital. Sorry Debs - you're just going to have to drive.'

'Drive, Bernie? You *know* I can't drive! It's dark and, and...' she started to sob, 'I *can't* and I *won't*!'

Bernard groaned, slumping further into the footwell; beneath the heavy lids, his eyes were becoming glassier with every passing second.

‘So, what now Bernie?’ Deborah’s voice was now a soprano’s and close to becoming a high-pitched scream. ‘What are we going to do? Who *else* has your meds?’

Bernard twisted his body and looked up, imploring.

‘Only two people. Surgery, and Susan.’ His head slumped onto his chest. ‘Just give me my mobile.’

‘Oh! my God!’ Deborah’s eyes widened as she felt in his pocket and handed him the phone: the awful realisation slowly dawning.

With a shaking hand he opened his ‘Favourites’. There they were, top of the list: saved. They stared out accusingly as his finger hovered close to the bright glowing surface.

‘Surgery or Sue? Surgery or Sue?’

Finally, gingerly, his finger moved in the dark.

500 words