

A large car, 5.8 metres long, silver and shining clean, save for brake dust on the outer parts of its Means Business Diameter six spoke aluminium alloy wheels, sails into a large ex-coal mining community. It's still less than three years old but has travelled west and east along the M4 enough times for the machine to have covered the distance from this Earth to Col. Buzz Aldrin's footprints.

A three-pointed star signifying land, ocean, and an infinity of sky sits at the end of the bonnet. Underneath a big V6 is breathing through two turbos and fed by the sandy earth's finest. It pulls into the customer car park of a medium sized glass fronted building. A man dressed in Next's cheapest grey suit, too young to own a car of this calibre and type, exits.

The young man closes the car door behind him, taking care to use the handle so as not to leave finger marks on the glass or chrome of the frame. A light touch to the outer part of the handle itself and the car locks, wing mirrors folding, indicators flashing, and headlights beaming just in case it's night and there's a large drive to walk up. There isn't.

He crosses the car park, his shoes bought nearly new from a charity shop clack like high heels on the smooth black asphalt. He enters the glass fronted building up front, noting the handprints around the glass door's handle. He is business like. The man, Will, is at work. His office is the vehicle he's just locked.

Will is waiting. He's waiting in a Mercedes-Benz dealership that, although is named as the outlet principally dealing with the good city Bath, is in fact some way south of said nicely architected population centre. It's not some way south in a 'I will need to utilise my Locomotive-Class Mercedes-Benz', but you probably wouldn't want to walk there. Or probably cycle.

Up front, the dealership is garrisoned by rows of carefully parked new and nearly new four wheeled statements of wealth. Behind the glass front and inside the building are four or five highly optioned models in slightly different shades of white and black that either contrast or blend with the just off-white tiled floor.

A reception desk lies dead ahead to the casual or indeed professional entrant. Will is not a casual entrant. To him it is tall, circular, topped by a single white monitor and completely surrounds the receptionist in work-space. There is no obvious way in or out of this space. The whole construction appears to be made of glass. It is just far enough from the door that once greeted with smiles and/or a 'hello' anyone who comes in will have to wait an uncomfortably long couple of seconds before they are close enough to the desk to return the gesture without shouting in this hushed environment. The desk is stationed by a mature woman dressed in a pencil skirt, blouse with a frill, fine hair, and a delicate very small golden crucifix around her neck. She gives out the feeling that she has no real idea how she got here.

Will has indeed entered, has indeed been greeted, and has indeed, because of his unfamiliarity of this sort of situation, shouted "hello" across the acoustically encouraging space. You have to converse in a hushed way here; a soft voice for the hard surfaces. Everyone save an elderly gentleman who's purposely turned his hearing aid off during the financial section of the 'consultation' process of buying a new £30,000 'runabout' 'shopping car' has turned to look at Will. They all now instinctively know his place here.

The edges of this hard clean-room space are occasionally lined by glass cases containing Mercedes branded cups and tee shirts. A strange phenomena, Will thinks, because although they are dizzyingly expensive for what they are, and look very fine indeed, there is no way that one would buy any of these trinkets and not look like a complete *piece* in the company of one's peers.

Behind this, the large showroom leads into a circular waiting area that terminates with five ceiling to floor glass panels that give a view into the dealership's workshop and constitute an 'MOT viewing area'. This, in theory, gives the customer a reassurance that their hard worked for, or not, German grade mechanical badge of uber-menche status is being looked after by professionals. Professionals who don't do any kind of monkeying around.

This is a façade. Car mechanics is increasingly becoming a somewhat large and somewhat complicated subject dominated by two grades of people: The 1st class Pub Bore and the career mechanic. Nothing you can view through this glass wall can give the casual, or even the studied viewer any kind of scooby-doo as to what the actual is going on. Except, of course, the monkeying around part.

On the periphery of this rounded waiting room is an uncarpeted walkway with two doors leading off. Unfortunately, for the occupants of this room one of the doors, when used, makes a sort of sighing sound. A sort of sighing that sort of sounds like a man as he listens sympathetically to a friend, or most certainly at least, a loved one's problem. The result of this is that from any one individual's perspective, anybody (particularly male, middle aged) is a suspect.

Will is trying to hide his sideways glances and occasionally looks up from the book he is reading to fake a view at the wall-mounted television currently beaming a repeat of *To The Manor Born* with the intention of utilising millions of years of life saving evolution-grown peripheral vision to find the culprit. He's already certain that it is not something regular like a mechanism as he's been counting the time between 'sighs'.

As the sighing goes on, the atmosphere in this room is becoming more and more suspicious. Walking breezily, and fully aware of the door's sound, but not fully aware of why everyone seems vaguely but increasingly suspicious is a young woman.

Emma is her name and she's all clickity clack shoes, fizz fuzz of nylon under part nylon figure hugging skirt; professional and probing, cleaning tables and delivering service reports, making sure the coffee machine is stocked with the chime of stacked Mercedes branded crockery that looks great here, but would most definitely make you look 'simple' in 'polite' company.

Excluding Will, Emma has attracted the possibly lecherous attention of at least two of the males and one sure, one not so sure of the females. The not so sure female is idealistically opposed to attraction between two individuals who share the same genitalia. She will never let this go, and will never know freedom from her, or more accurately, her father's views. She finds herself unable to stop looking at either the young woman's bum or her brightly coloured lips. She carefully traps a part of the inside of her bottom lip in between her canines and subtly squeezes until she tastes iron, then fakes a small guffaw at the television.

One of the remaining three is particularly attracted to the sound of the Emma's shoes, imagining as this individual is, the sound of those shoes walking around said individual as she casually informs said individual of how despicable, how downright faecal said individual is, before handing, or more accurately stamping out a punishment fit for only the naughtiest, the most downright faecal of individuals. This individual is sat cross-legged, hiding a strong warmth between said individual's legs.

Will has most definitely noticed Emma and has begun a pitch battle between the part of his brain that instantly viewed Emma through the lens of objectification and the part of him that he's been nurturing since he had his first real contact with the members of the opposite sex in his late teens. That part of him had discovered to general horror that a surprisingly high percentage of those young women had already experienced some kind of damaging sexual experience with a man who didn't even get as far as ignoring a 'no'.

All of the people in this room sport mobile telecommunication devices. Thirty percent of these devices are made by small women and children in China, and have a prominent logo on the back. One of the individuals in this room has an objectively irritating text tone featuring a high pitched voice shouting 'incoming!' followed by the sound of something like a squadron of cartoon jets flying overhead, then a high pitched laugh. This regular and objectively irritating tone along with the irregular sighing sound and the growing electromagnetic heart beat frequency of the individual who can't stop thinking about the feel of stilettos on one's back *and* the addition of enough caffeine to fell a (insert large mammal) has made Will feel nervous.

He's been studying the same page on vocal commentaries in *How To Be An Advanced Driver* for an hour or so, all parts of him clamped down by distractions. The movement to his right of the mechanics driving cars in and out of bays, and the smell of several expensively perfumed people as they walk by keeps his lizard brain's darting attention.

The rest of him is held down by the odd looks one of the women to his left and up a bit keeps giving Emma; The Mystery Of The Sighing Man, and the constant want to eat all of the cakes offered next to the coffee machine despite not even liking cake that much *plus* the visual noise coming from the large wall mounted television whose programming is very definitely set to 'daytime' (repeat of *Hi-de-Hi!*).

His pointy shoes and grey suit help to blend him into the furniture here, but he is, underneath all of this, an imposter in this upper-middle class setting. His voice sounds well resolved enough in a P's and Q's way, but this is a specific trait of the confluence nature and nurture that form Will as a being in the world.

Save for two individuals who are just now walking through the front doors with an interesting idea of how to lift a brand new £60,000 car right from underneath the dealer's nasal passages, Will is neither moneyed nor 'well bred' in the sense that most of those around him are.

And so, after waiting for 342 minutes we join Will relaying the service details of one Mercedes S-Class to his employer while trying to look like he knows what he's doing and maintaining a standard of dignity throughout the phone call where the reception is fading in and out ("Hello, hello?") and where by finishing the phone call, signing the service sheet and shaking Steve, the service manager's hand, he walks outside and *into* the clear pale winter sun taking his place in the driver's seat of the S-class discovering that not only has someone very nearly shat their particular grots leaving a strong faecal smell where once was wood and plastic and leather but that also that quite possibly the very same individual has turned the integrated 'infotainment' system off.

This leaves Will with a dilemma. Does Will, your protagonist for this story go back to his somewhat demanding but also reasonable employers with what could be a broken 'infotainment' system having not fifty minutes before been in the **exact** place where said system could have been repaired? Or, does he go back inside and ask someone for help looking in the process like a complete tool, or piece, or some sort of simile or metaphor or euphemism for a flaccid penis?

Rock, hard place.

He starts to try the buttons. Mercedes, having only partially gone down the route of minimising clutter, still garnish their cabins/cockpits/interiors with an arbitrary arrangement of controls. Will starts with the 'radio' and 'media' buttons moving onto the volume controls and mute buttons located on the steering wheel. Finding no small victory he moves onto the more serious looking buttons for the rest of the cars functions hoping this will jump-start the car's interactive brain. As he goes on, and predictably for someone making a Scafell Pike out of a soil pile, his button selection starts to lose any kind of logical order. The result of this is that sport mode is engaged and disengaged that the rear blind is lowered and then risen, that the rear headrests are lowered then folded back out (except the centre one, of which to Will's relief not a single employee of the company he works for can rectify) and that the start/stop system is both toggled on and off. It doesn't escape Will that the employees and the clientele of the shiny Mercedes dealership can probably see all of this activity.

Will is in A Position.

He decides that the lesser of the afore mentioned rock and hard places is to go in and talk to a Steve, the service manager.

So, confidence very much slipping through his fingers he steps out of the leather drivers chair, walks past the rows of new cars, walks through the double doors, walks past the glass cabinets with the expensive cups and water bottles, walks past the optioned up to the nines showroom models and calls attention to himself with a perfectly English, "Sorry... excuse me, I appear to be in a position."

"What can I help you with?"

"Well, I've just got into the car, and well, I'm new to this job, and the infotainment system isn't working. I can't seem to work out how to turn it back on."

"I see. Let me have a look."

Will and Steve the service manager, walk outside.

Will opens the thick heavy driver's door, takes his seat, points to the problem, tries a few buttons (two on the suggestion of Steve the service manager) then shrugs and laughs. Not a good laugh, but a fake nervous laugh that Will employs specifically for two situations:

1. Situations like this.
2. Drunk, in a loud sick stained, sticky floored club, and someone Will has met has made a joke, but because of the loud, sick stained nature of the venue, the joke cannot be heard, so just to keep all parties happy, a laugh is required.

Steve the service manager does not join him in the laugh, but asks to swap places. Will obliges. Steve the service manager takes his seat, presses a few buttons, causing Some Relief to Will, and then finding the appropriate sequence to Everyone's Relief, the infotainment starts up with a Mercedes-Benz badge on

the display and the soft silky voice of Radio 6Music DJ Mary Anne Hobbs sounding genetically engineered (she may well have been) to talk into a microphone.

Will laughs again, saying “thank goodness” and “I’m sorry, I’m sure it was something really simple”, while not actually asking what the specific button or sequence was. He has, however, noted where Steve The Service Manager’s hand was when all life was restored. Steve the service manager, to his credit, says something nice about the complexity of the cars and how after working for a year with these vehicles he still doesn’t know where most of the settings are.

Steve the service manager thinks about this later as he settles in his home roughly three clicks away with a cup of tea and wonders whether or not that this was the right thing to say to the ‘client’ (not ‘customer’) but then thinks on as the television distracts him with the perfectly beautiful lips of a former country music star, now turned pop overlord and Galaxy-Class Popstar and wonders what she would look like in the uncompromising position of...

Back in the now, Will shakes Steve’s hand. Steve walks inside. Will pulls away, exits the dealership and using a large helping of throttle warps out of town in a way that seems improbable for a car so large.

The moment, the whole thing, begins to pass. Will settles in for the forty clicks of hills, valleys and ultimately vehicle-choked Bristol. He thinks about the button. Taking care not to veer off the road and potentially taking out a whole village or some such (a very real threat in something this large and heavy), he looks down at the centre console. Printed in bold, white capital letters on the button the technician had found is a simple two-lettered word of proto-Germanic decent.

Will begins to laugh.