

28th October, 2005

THE SCAPEGOAT

DEAR DIARY, I've just got off the phone with Andrea. The last few days have been a bit of a rollercoaster for her. I've known Andrea all my life. We were next door neighbours as babies and went to Primary school together.

Recently, Andrea has had an awful time of it relationship-wise. Her boyfriend Peter attempted suicide while they were on holiday together in Greece. This kind of drama normally happens in films! When they happen to ordinary people you know, it's all a bit unbelievable.

Andrea and Peter have been together for about five years and they've had their ups and downs – the downs happened during the last couple of years. They split for a year when things got really bad but they got back together and going to Greece was supposed to be a good way for them to reconnect. It turned out that Peter was full of demons which were creating inner turmoil for him. Before he and Andrea split up, he started seeing someone else. He changed his mind about this someone else and wanted to get back with Andrea but this someone else didn't have anywhere to go and felt that she ought to stay with Peter and Peter, it turns out, was too chicken to tell both his someone else and Andrea the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But the truth certainly came out and it exploded right up in everyone's faces.

On top of the lack of truth, Peter was under a lot of stress because of his business, he was also told he was loosing the sight in one eye and all this was happening the year of his dreaded 40th birthday.

Andrea said that he was acting really weird on holiday and spent one memorable night pacing up and down going over his life and all the mistakes he'd made. He was talking about being punished for being dishonest and also started to experience panic attacks.

Unbeknown to Andrea, while they were on holiday, he made a lot of phone calls to people back home making apologies for some of the things he had done in his life and saying some sort of goodbye.

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The day that the sh*t hit the fan, Andrea and Peter had planned to go out for a beach picnic but Peter was really antsy and complaining of feeling ill. He said he was going to take something for his headache and have a lie down. When Andrea went to check on Peter, his breathing was laboured and he was dribbling. He lay beside a bottle of Southern Comfort and the Paracetamol container was on the bedside cabinet and every last tablet was gone. All hell broke loose after that. Peter was rushed to hospital, his stomach was pumped and Andrea organised a flight home.

Peter said he was sorry for putting her through hell and that he wanted to take his life because he'd done some terrible things in his life and the guilt was killing him. He said he felt as if his life wouldn't be worth living with partial sight because it would mean loosing his business and the inability to live his life in the way he wanted to. He said the panic attacks were increasing and he felt like he was in a very dark place and was compelled by his inner voice to take his life.

Within an hour of Peter and Andrea returning from holiday to Peter's house, Peter's eldest sister Marva came round and decided to take charge. She said to Andrea that she thought it best that as "next of kin" she would now look after Peter and Andrea should go away and get on with her life! Next of kin? Get on with my life? Andrea thought this to be a bit extreme and maybe a knee jerk reaction. But so said, so done. It turned out that Peter's friends and family blamed Andrea for Peter's attempted suicide. A few days later, Andrea went to see Peter while he was staying with his brother Paul for rest and relaxation and his family closed ranks on her!

It started with Marva asking what you doing here? He doesn't want to see you. Peter said it's OK; I do want to see her. Paul's house was full of people visiting Peter – everyone seemed to have been invited except Andrea. She turned up, the uninvited guest. Some of Peter's friends who Andrea has known for the past five years were also cold towards her. The only two friends of Peter's who remained neutral were Jake and Leon. Jake told Andrea that people were asking him if Andrea had Peter's credit cards and did Andrea have a key to Peter's house. They wanted to change his locks and close his account just in case Andrea for some reason wanted to steal from him!

Marva took Andrea to one side with Peter's friend Frederick and told her that they thought it would be better if Andrea did not return. Frederick said we think you're bad for Peter and we think this love triangle that he's in is the reason why he tried to take his life! Andrea

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didn't know she was one angle of a "triangle". Andrea asked Frederick and Marva to explain but they said they'd rather not as they stood there shoulder-to-shoulder as a united front.

Andrea said that Peter's ex girlfriend Sara, the mother of his son decided that she would take on the role of Peter's girlfriend, even though they broke up many years ago and Sara had a fiancé. In fact, Sara and Marva haven't been the best of friends but now they had a good reason to stand together like sisters in their unified dislike of Andrea. Marva and Sara were in the kitchen stirring pots together. One was giving Peter his depression medication while the other was passing him a glass of water. One would hand him a tissue, Peter would blow his nose and the other would take away the bogey. They were wearing matching Marigolds wiping down surfaces and making themselves useful. They were in and out of rooms holding trays serving refreshments, making everyone except Andrea feel at home. In fact Andrea was walked past 100 times like she was a ghost. Was she a ghost because this surreal moment was just like being at a wake.

Andrea couldn't stand to be there anymore. It was hard to believe that she was so close to this man for at least five years of her life doing everything couples do – sharing their life and now the Robinson family had reduced her to a duppy who didn't belong anymore.

Later on that evening, Peter's mother called Andrea and told her that it wasn't anything personal. Everyone just needed to find out why Peter had decided to take his life and to keep away for the time being. But it's not personal!

I hate Peter Robinson right now. He broke my friend's heart more than once and I could kill him for that. It was him who wanted a change of scene. When Andrea decided to get on with her life, Peter declared his undying – undying, how ironic – love for her and wanted them to make a go of things. It was Peter who suggested that they go on holiday together to patch things up and start again. It was Peter who didn't speak out when the world was on his shoulder, it was Peter who broke Andrea's heart because he couldn't resist the smell of knicker-bacon and it was Peter who decided to take his life. Andrea's dad said he could think of at least fifty successful ways of taking one's life and Peter should have called him and he would have been happy to explain!

Andrea has been used as a scapegoat and instead of Robinson & Co. blaming Peter for what he did to himself, they blamed Andrea.

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I feel sorry that Peter's troubles got so enormous that he chose to take his life. Actually, that's a damn lie. I don't feel sorry for Peter at all. He's a grown arsed man hiding behind his family like a precious little seven year old who can't cope with being a responsible adult. My compassion goes to Andrea. Peter means absolutely nothing to me.

I'm disappointed with the key members of the Robinson family who should know better than to take their fears out on one innocent woman who didn't deserve the hell that she was put through because the man she loved didn't know what he wanted from life and he probably still doesn't and probably never will.

What has happened to Andrea has left a real bitter taste in my mouth that not even Corsodyl could rinse out.

August Mayfield