

Extract – *Delilah Now Trending* by Pamela Power

For the first time in what felt like months, Lilah slept properly that night. A deep, dreamless sleep. The next day she felt like a new person. She couldn't stop thinking of Sam, replaying every little thing about their encounters she could remember. Reading far too much into his every comment, like a lovesick teenager. *Get a grip, Lilah, just now you'll be writing Delilah Jones on your books with a big heart.* Actually, Delilah Jones had a good ring to it ... *Stop it! Stop it!* She was standing in the kitchen (how she got there, she couldn't remember) tapping her forehead vehemently when she looked up and saw Henry staring at her and shaking his head.

'If this is the madness of menopause, then I am very glad I'm a man. Don't you ever check your phone?'

Lilah sighed and took her phone out of her pocket. 'Sorry, I just woke up. What are you doing here?'

'Just wanted to find out how you are, what the next step is in terms of Daisy's case, if we can call it that ...' He trailed off when he realised Lilah's eyes were still glued to her phone. 'Sorry if I'm boring you.'

'You're not, you're so not. I just got a message from Sam.'

'Okay.' Henry looked a bit baffled.

'He's asked me out to dinner.'

'What? Give me that!' He held out his hand.

Delilah shook her head. 'No, it's personal.' They wrestled with the phone for a few moments before Henry tickled her and Lilah gave in. 'Fine. Read it.'

*'Have dinner with me? And this time don't get so drunk that you forget everything I tell you. Smiley face.'*

'I didn't mean for you to read it out loud, but o-kay.'

Henry smirked. 'He is so flirting with you! Cute message.'

'It is, isn't it?' Lilah couldn't seem to stop grinning.

'You're into him, aren't you?'

'He's a nice guy.'

Henry immediately went into bossy mode. 'Okay, Delilah, do not fuck this up. What's that facial hair looking like?' He pulled her chin towards him and started examining it. 'Hmm. Eyebrows could be shaped ... and, sweet Lord, that one hair on your chin ...' He grabbed the offending hair between his fingernails and plucked it out.

'Ow, Henry! God!'

He let go of her face and looked her over. 'And the bikini line? How's that doing right now? Is it like Sleeping Beauty's forest that's been growing for a hundred years?'

She put her hand over his mouth. 'Enough! Ew. Friends can be too close.'

'Sort out the bikini line. Go for a facial.'

'It's just dinner.'

'Well, don't say I didn't offer my expertise. Now, let's talk about Daisy.'

'Actually, I need to talk about what I'm going to do about Christopher.'

'You're going to do nothing about Christopher. Read my lips: Christopher is no longer your problem. Not. Your. Problem. Capisce?'

'But what about poor Chrissie?'

'Oh? So she's poor Chrissie now? At the risk of repeating myself ...'

'He's still Daisy's father.'

‘I am not going to discuss this with you any further. Just stay the fuck away from Chrissie and Christopher’s mess, do you hear me?’

‘Yes, Daddy.’

‘Let’s talk about Daisy. Now that she’s awake, has the ugly child spoken yet or what?’

Lilah began to laugh. She put her arms around Henry. ‘I do love you.’

‘I know.’ He hugged her back.

Later that day, Lilah felt strong enough to face going to the local shops. Henry was right, she did need to tame her bikini line, and Daisy was dying to get something to wear to Jack’s birthday party, although she was trying to act cool about it. Lilah had butterflies in her stomach at the thought of bumping into anyone from the school. She heaved a sigh of relief when they went into the little boutique and the owner – a mother from school – was nowhere to be seen. There was a girl they didn’t know at the counter.

Lilah turned to Daisy. ‘I just need to pop to the salon, sweetie. Are you going to be okay?’

‘I’ll be fine. I mean, it’s not like urgent for me to find something new to wear to the party ...’ She was nervous, Lilah could tell.

‘But you would like to look good. I get it. You got your card?’

Daisy held up her wallet.

As Lilah walked out of the shop, she bumped into Rog the Lech.

‘Hello, Rog,’ she said, coolly.

He hesitated for a second before he flung his arm around Lilah and gave her a kiss on the cheek. ‘How are you? I’ve been wondering how you’ve been holding up.’

‘Really? Then you should’ve called – I mean, if you really wanted to know.’

‘I know.’ He looked sheepish. ‘I guess I just didn’t know what to say.’

‘Oh, well, at least you’re honest. Nice to see you, Rog.’ She started walking away.

‘Lilah, don’t be like that. It’s not easy, this whole situation. You know Beth and Emily are best friends. She would’ve cut off my nuts if I’d called you.’

Lilah half-turned and cocked an eyebrow at him. ‘You still have nuts? I thought Emily kept them in her pocket.’

‘No, they’re right here. Come. Feel.’ He pointed to his crotch and grinned.

‘Bye, Rog.’

She popped into the salon to see if they could fit her in for a bikini wax. They didn’t have good news for her.

‘What do you mean Tuesday two weeks’ time? I need it done now,’ Lilah said, trying to keep the hysteria out of her voice.

The receptionist transferred her gum to her other cheek and shook her head. ‘Sorry, but Christmas holidays are coming up – everyone’s heading to the beach so we’re full up. I can put you on the cancellation list but that’s it.’

‘Don’t worry. I’ll sort something out.’ Lilah walked around aimlessly for a while, wondering if she should try and get an appointment at the other beauty salon in the village with the beautician commonly known as The Butcher, but she valued the tender skin of her

groin area too much. She would just have to wax her own bikini line, so she headed to the chemist.

There was a vast range of waxing products – some made with lavender oil, others with special lotion to prevent ingrown hairs. She didn't know where to begin. Then she saw Daisy crossing the road, heading towards the chemist, and she grabbed the nearest box of cold wax strips and headed to the tills. Lilah only ever got bikini waxes before they went to the beach. Daisy would know something was up, and Lilah didn't feel ready to discuss it with her. Considering she had never dated anyone seriously since she'd split up with Christopher, she didn't want her daughter to be freaked out. She called to Daisy as the cashier put the waxing strips into a brown paper bag: 'Dayze! Over here.' Daisy entered the chemist. Lilah gestured to the packet in Daisy's hand. 'Did you find something?'

'Yes. And it looks really nice on.'

'So, tell me, is Jack only turning twelve now?'

'No. Actually he's in grade seven ...' Daisy avoided her mother's eyes.

'He's a year older than you?' As far as Lilah knew, grade sevens did not date grade sixes.

'Six months, actually. His birthday was in July. His mother just hasn't got around to having a party for him yet.'

'Sounds like a woman after my own heart,' said Lilah.

'Jack says she's completely kooky. Never remembers to pack them lunch or fetch them from school.'

'Them?'

'Him and his little brother. And I think there's an older sister, too.'

'Three kids. That's nice ... I just hope no one's going to victimise you at this party, Dayze.'

Daisy raised her chin. 'If they do, I'll sort them out. I know I didn't push Rosie. Whoever did is the one who should be worried.'

Lilah hadn't thought of it like that, and she felt the familiar burny sensation back in her chest.