

Opening extract from
Run

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ONE

The Day That Changed Their Lives Forever

Shay Sullivan drove his black Mercedes car on a traffic free M25 with a smile on his tanned face. It was a Thursday evening in July, the sun was still shining. He had just had an Italian meal in St. Albans with Ruby Ward, the true love of his life. They had discreetly been seeing each other for three months.

Shay had recently formed a business partnership with Billy Gower. Billy was Ruby's mother's boyfriend and Shay knew that Billy would be unhappy regarding the relationship. The fifteen year age gap between Shay and Ruby would not be the real issue, Billy had his own hidden thoughts. It was common knowledge that Billy's feelings towards Ruby were not of the parental type.

As Shay drove, singing along to an Oasis CD, his in-car phone rang. Billy's name appeared as an incoming call on the screen, the C.D. muted automatically.

Shay answered the call, "Alright Billy?"

"Where you at?" said Billy in his usual abrupt tone.

"Driving home on the motorway," replied Shay.

"What, at this time!" Billy barked.

Shay laughed and said, "What's up? It's only 8pm." Shay knew instantly that Billy was onto them.

With that, Billy snapped, “Gotta go, I’ve got the old bill behind me,” and hung up.

Shay immediately called Ruby who by now was driving home on the M25, Pinner bound. “Ruby, be careful, I just had Billy on and I think he knows.”

“Oh no, he’s calling me now! I’ll call you back.” With that Ruby hung up to take Billy’s call.

Ruby and Shay had decided to meet for a meal as they had not seen each other for two weeks. Shay had been on holiday and they had missed each other madly. They had only been out for a couple of hours, yet for the entire time, Billy was constantly calling Ruby’s mobile. Ruby purposely ignored his calls but he was relentless.

Ruby nervously answered the call, “Where are you?” Barked Billy.

“I’m on my way home from Keely’s,” Ruby replied, as she exited the M25.

“No Ruby, where exactly are you now?” he boomed.

“I’m on the roundabout by the supermarket.”

Ruby exited the roundabout, she saw Billy in his Audi 4X4 driving at high speed on the other side of the road. Minutes later, she glanced into her rear view mirror and saw that Billy was now in pursuit of her. Ruby was still on the phone with Billy but she didn’t let on that she was aware of his pursuit.

Billy’s volume had increased significantly by now as he ordered, “Right, pull over now, into that lay-by!”

Ruby’s mind was filled with fear as she recalled what had happened the last time she was forced to pull over into a lay-by by the pursuing Billy.

Twelve months prior to this evening’s car chase, Billy had given Ruby no choice but to pull into a lay-by. Billy attacked Ruby through her open car window by grabbing her by the throat. He’d then removed her keys from the ignition and bent them. Another motorist, seeing Billy’s six foot two, twenty stone frame attacking

Ruby who was slender and eight stone; pulled into the lay-by to assist Ruby.

The kind motorist was no hard man but was clearly a gentleman and his presence led to Billy's immediate departure. He then left having ensured Ruby was safe.

A very shaken Ruby called her mother, Janice, who arrived promptly and drove Ruby home.

On this particular evening Ruby decided that she would not pull into a lay-by, she knew better.

Ruby asked, "Why do you want me to stop?"

"I want to talk to you before you get home!" snapped Billy.

"I'm not pulling into a lay-by, if you want to talk to me, you can talk to me at home!"

Billy hung up, though still hot on Ruby's heels.

Ruby called Shay as she said she would. Her voice quivered "He knows! He's following me home now! I can tell by his face he's about to explode. It's gonna kick off, I know it."

Shay assured Ruby that everything would be ok, "If you want me to come and get you later, I will."

"Would you really do that?" She asked.

"Yeah, of course I will, you've only gotta ring me and I'll be there."

Shay was not intimidated by Billy and had no fear of him whatsoever. He had always regarded him as nothing but a big bully. Shay and Billy had met through football and both were involved with the Chelsea Firm. Shay had been very active for many years and was well respected by many firms in the football underworld. Whilst in total opposition, Billy was a barker and not a biter.

Despite this, Shay did have a concern with regard to his own personal money that he had invested into the partnership with Billy. Billy had full control over the finances, which Shay now realised was a stupid mistake that would prove to have a damning knock on

effect. He knew he had unquestionably made the biggest mistake of his life by allowing Billy a partnership in his company.

The jetlag was starting to kick in as Shay drove heavy-eyed. He'd just returned from Mauritius that morning on a Virgin first class flight. Life could not be better for him; he was truly in love for the first time in his life, with Ruby. He loved everything about her, her good humour, maturity and intelligence, not to mention her incredible beauty; her tanned skin, blonde hair and amazing green eyes. In fact, his nickname for Ruby was 'Eyes' and he rarely called her by her actual name. Ruby too had a pet name for Shay, she affectionately referred to him as 'London' as he had a very strong London accent.

Shay was getting extremely tired by now and his eyes were like ten-tonne weights. He was struggling to drive, his mild jet lag had become a major tiredness. The fact that Shay knew in his heart that trouble was brewing was the only stimulant keeping him awake.

As Shay exited the M25 his car phone rang with Billy's name showing on the display.

Fully alert, he answered, "Hello."

An angry Billy barked, "Where the fuck have you been with my daughter?" Shay went to speak and was stopped as Billy continued his outburst, "I'm telling you now, you've crossed the wrong man this time! You're a dead man walking Sullivan! You think I'm fuck all, well, I tell you this for nothing Sullivan you're gonna be sliced up you prick!"

This time, Shay made sure he was heard. "What's the problem? We went out for something to eat! This isn't a seedy fling, we have feelings for each other."

Billy, infuriated boomed down the phone, "Feelings! She's my world, you can't have her! I'm telling you now, you're a dead man walking!" And hung up.

Shay continued his drive, he needed to sort this out. Maybe a toe to toe with Billy would do it? He had no doubt that in a one on

one he could do Billy damage. His years of boxing and many street encounters had gifted him with the tools and skills required.

Shay's concern would normally be that he had just been verbally abused and threatened; however, his concern at this moment in time was his money. Shay had put everything he had, both financially and mentally into the new business.

Maybe a diplomatic approach with Billy would be best, Billy would calm down over night and see sense, Shay thought. A profitable air conditioning business was at stake, which he ran very efficiently. No Shay would mean no business, as Billy's role was that of a sleeping partner and air conditioning was not his field.

The phone rang again, it was Billy, "You slag! Three months! Three fucking months behind my back! I tell you this Shay, you or anyone belonging to you won't get a penny out of the firm and that's a fact! You phone your son up now and tell him his dad is a dead man! In fact, tell him he ain't got a dad. I'm gonna open you up!"

This was not impressing Shay one bit. Shay had a nineteen year old son, Connor, who he adored. As father and sons go, they were and always had been very close.

"You couldn't open up a tins of beans, Billy. I don't know what your problem is. It's nothing to do with you, we'll talk about this tomorrow."

Whilst Billy continued to shout, Janice was crying and screaming in the background. Shay had only met Janice twice but got on well with her. He felt sorry for her as he knew she was terrified of Billy who managed his personal life by ruling with an iron fist.

Shay wondered how Ruby was, although he was sure she was safe.

As Shay parked his car he answered another incoming call

from Billy, “Tick tock Sullivan, we’re gonna kill you! Word on you is out already!” Billy abruptly ended his call.

We’re gonna kill you, thought Shay. Had Billy intentions of involving a firm? It was common knowledge that he was very close to a few well known organised criminal families. This could be a problem, maybe diplomacy or a right hook would not be enough in this instance.

Now inside his house, Shay’s tiredness was back with a vengeance and was overpowering. Strange as it may seem, all he wanted to do was sleep. He turned off his phone, showered and climbed into bed; falling asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

Ruby approached the florists at the top of her road feeling reassured by Shay’s words yet was filled with anxiety about what was to happen when she got home. She parked her black Audi TT on the driveway of her home and noticed that the front door was already open. Her mum had obviously been told by Billy that they were due home any minute. She turned off the ignition and grabbed her handbag. Still in the car, Ruby saw Billy approaching the cul-de-sac with a face that she recognised all too well.

In previous situations when either Ruby, her mum, brother or even work colleagues were due to experience Billy’s venom, he would always have the same appearance. He would always walk a certain way, walking as fast as his large heavy frame would allow him with both arms swinging just as quickly. His face would be bright red, his bottom jaw would protrude slightly and his eyes would bulge.

Most people would be petrified when seeing him like this; whether they were his target or purely just an onlooker. Billy’s mentality was that he deserved respect and that everyone who knew him should give him respect by the bucket load, although his way of gaining respect was to bully and frighten them; it was not respect that he was gaining, it was fear.

Ruby had been in so many situations where she was the target and the receiver of his verbal, mental and physical abuse, yet for some reason was not feeling her usual petrified-self, as she normally would. Maybe it was because she knew that Shay would be there for her no matter what or maybe because she had simply had enough of Billy's barbaric behaviour and wanted out anyway?

Ruby quickly got out of her car and ran into the house where she was met by her mum who already looked somewhat distressed.

"Ruby, where have you really been?" Janice asked.

"I told you, out with Keely," she protested.

Before the interrogation could continue any further, Billy had thundered into the house like a man possessed. Here we go, thought Ruby. She could see that he was gearing up for one almighty explosion.

"Where have you been Ruby and don't fucking lie to me! I know you haven't been with Keely so where have you been?"

Ruby knew that this was not a situation that could be diffused with a couple of convincing lies but was not yet prepared to tell them both the truth as she was still not quite sure just how much they actually knew.

In response to be being spoken to like something Billy had just stepped in, Ruby yelled, "Okay, okay! I wasn't with Keely, I was with a bloke that I've been seeing and I didn't want you two knowing about him yet. It's my business and nothing to do with you. I haven't got to tell you everything that happens in my life. Anyway, what gives you the right to be checking up on me? I'm an adult, not a child! I'm sick of you always interfering, you don't treat Charlie like it so why treat me like it!"

Billy's eyes were now on the verge of popping out of his head and his tone of voice changed a little. The volume was just as loud but instead of just barking at Ruby, he added an element of smugness. "Where's your phone then Ruby? Give me your fucking phone! If you're telling the truth you'll give me your phone!"

Ruby now felt sheer panic. She knew that if Billy did not know for sure about Shay, seeing her mobile phone would confirm any suspicions he may have had. Ruby held onto her handbag tightly as Billy went to grab it. She tried to get some distance from him by moving away into the lounge. This tactic proved ineffective as Billy was quickly behind her as he grabbed Ruby in another attempt to snatch her bag. She held her bag close to her chest, curled over and turned her back to him. This made it difficult for Billy to get to her bag but in turn made him more forceful.

At this point, Janice, who had so far not even uttered a word, tried to intervene, “Billy, stop it! Leave her alone, it’s not right!”

Words had no effect in this situation; like having a raging bear trying to rip your head off and you asking it nicely to sit and behave – it just doesn’t work. Janice then resorted to physically try and get in-between Billy and Ruby. Not surprisingly, this did not help either. Many times before, Ruby and her mum had tried to restrain Billy from whichever one of them he was attacking to no avail.

After a while of struggling, Ruby and her mum could no longer hold him off. He had Ruby’s bag. As Ruby watched him rummage for her mobile phone she knew that it was game over. In a state of utter panic, she grabbed her bunch of keys. She ran out to her car, got in and fumbled trying to get the key into the ignition, hastily reversed off of the driveway but with her legs shaking could not control the clutch properly and accidentally hit a neighbour’s garden wall. She put the car into first gear and looked up, only to see Billy standing in front of her car in an attempt to stop her from driving off. Standing there holding her mobile phone at arms length, he made it blatantly obvious that he was going through it.

“Get back in your house! No she hasn’t!” Billy shouted.

Who was he shouting at? She looked behind to see the couple whose garden wall she’d damaged were now outside complaining.

Billy repeated, “Go on, fuck off, get back in your house!”

Ruby revved the car. Billy goaded her to accelerate forward

whilst he remained standing in front of the car. She accelerated forward and forced Billy to jump out of the way. She wheel-spun out of the cul-de-sac and reached for her packet of cigarettes that she had left on the passenger seat. Taking long hard drags on her cigarette, Ruby's shaking eased and she started to think. She was heading in the direction of the next town yet had no destination or plan in mind. With no money, no phone, nothing but a packet of cigarettes and a car that was running on fumes, she knew she had to go back and face the music. When able, Ruby pulled over, turned around and reluctantly headed back to the war zone.

Again, Ruby arrived to find the front door was open. She quickly removed her car key from the big bunch of key rings and shoved it down the front of her jeans, hoping that if Billy snatched her keys that he would not notice the car key was missing.

Before even getting inside the house, Ruby could hear Billy screaming and shouting at Shay on the phone, "Shay you prick! You're fucking dead, do you hear me, a dead man walking! I don't give a shit, I'm telling you that you're fucking dead!"

Ruby's arrival at the house caused Billy to end his call, his venom now immediately aimed at Ruby. Billy's appearance was now at his well known second stage of rage. He was starting to foam at the mouth, causing him to spit in his victim's face as he screamed at them. His lips turned very pale as the abuse started to flow. Billy shoved Ruby towards the stairs. With a slap of the back of his hand to her head, he knocked her off of her feet and she fell onto the stairs.

"Right, get up them stairs and pack your bags you stupid little whore, this time you ain't coming back!" shouted Billy.

Ruby ran up the stairs and burst into her bedroom. It had always been her haven, her own little Graceland where she could shut the door and be by herself. She was an Elvis fanatic and her bedroom definitely depicted this from floor to ceiling. Knowing that

she may never see her Elvis Presley sanctuary again, she despondently grabbed her Elvis Presley holdall and threw it onto the bed. It was quite a small bag so Ruby grabbed her gym bag as well. She turned her gym bag upside down and shook it so that the contents fell out onto the cream carpet. Ruby stood and scanned the room. Numb and unable to think straight, she hesitated about what to pack first.

Ruby's mum entered her room with tears streaming down her face. She was obviously very upset and begged Ruby for answers, "Why have you done this Ruby, why him?"

Ruby felt sorry for her mum who looked so child-like and devastated. She was sorry that she had hurt her mum who she loved very much but was not sorry for her relationship with Shay. As her mum weakly continued to ask more questions, Ruby started to pack. Trying to block out her mum's guilt trip, she concentrated on making sure that she had the necessities. In her head, she ran through her daily routine to help her remember what she needed. She went to the bathroom and got her toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash, shampoo, conditioner and hurriedly went back to her bedroom to throw everything into one of the bags. Ruby turned to her dressing table; hurriedly grabbed what she needed and stuffed it into a bag, as if carrying out a robbery.

Whilst doing so, Billy burst into her bedroom. He screamed and shouted, now with questions of his own along with the odd insult thrown in for good measure. "How long's it been going on? Have you slept with him? You dirty little slag! Do you really think that he thinks that much of you? I tell you what, you don't know the half of what he gets up to! He's banging silly little tarts like you all over the place!"

Janice had now ran next door to the bathroom and Ruby could clearly hear her wrenching into the toilet.

Billy saw Janice's departure as an opportunity. Like a bull with horns, he forcefully pressed his hot, red forehead into Ruby's. As she watched the whites of his eyes become bigger and bigger, Billy

continued to rant through his gritted teeth, “I tell you what, I give it three months and then he’ll drop you! You’ve fucked yourself now! And I tell you this for nothing, as God is my witness I promise that I’ll do time for the pair of you! That shooter in the safe at work will put an end to that piece of shit. Pack your bags and get out of my house you little slag, but you go to him and I’ll shoot the fucking pair of you. Where’s your car key?”

Ruby took a step back and then gave him the bunch of key rings silently praying that he would not notice that the car key was missing.

“And where’s the Log Book?” screamed Billy.

Ruby blinked as spit flew in her face and muttered in response that it was at the club, in the office. With that, Billy slammed the bedroom door back into the wall as he left the room and went down the stairs. Within minutes, he was back in her bedroom, breathless and demanding the car key.

Shit, thought Ruby. Now she wouldn’t have a car, despite the fact that it was hers, in her name and wasn’t his to confiscate.

Strangely, she was still calm and fixed on packing her bags, not even shedding a tear despite the fact that she is being kicked out of her house where she had lived since birth, on the order of her mum’s boyfriend who had been there only six years.

Ruby started to pack a couple of tops and a pair of jeans into a bag when she heard Billy again downstairs. “You’ve ruined this family, Shay, and I’m gonna make sure you fucking suffer. We’re gonna find you and cut you into pieces! If you think you’re getting any money out of the firm you can think again!”

This abuse filled phone call was a bit shorter than the first one she had heard but just as venomous.

Ruby bustled down the stairs with her two bags, handbag and one of her leather jackets. She went straight to the kitchen to get a couple of items of washed clothes that were still wet and jammed them into her bag. Ruby walked towards the front door and was

stopped by the tyrant who ordered her to stay put. Within seconds, he was on the phone again but this time to one of Shay's employees.

"Alright Simon, listen I need to get hold of Shay, do you know where he lives?"

Simon obviously didn't know where Shay lived as Billy did not hang about in calling another employee to ask the same question. Nobody could tell Billy where Shay lived. Unable to get the information he wanted, Billy pushed Ruby out of the front door and kicked her in the back as she went causing her to fall out onto the driveway.

Unbeknown to Ruby, she had literally just been kicked out of her home and her family's lives forever.

It was nine thirty pm and still reasonably light outdoors. Luckily, the weather was good as Ruby was on foot heading god knows where and struggling with her bags. Her hands were full so she was unable to use her phone. Ruby power walked out of the cul-de-sac and through the town to some garages that were set out of sight, hid there and dropped her bags. Her feet were throbbing from having had her heeled boots on since seven am that morning so she sat down on one of her bags to rest her feet and lit a cigarette. Ruby fumbled for her phone to call Shay as he was all she could think of. The call connected and went straight to answer phone. She called again and again and again and still only got his answer phone machine. She felt a rush of horror. Why was he not answering? Had he washed his hands of her? Had Billy got to him and hurt him? Whilst smoking another cigarette, Ruby decided to text Shay. She told him that she had been kicked out, that she was sorry for what had happened and that she loved him.

Now she needed to get out of the area and quick.

She rang Keely, her alibi for that night and many occasions before. Keely's phone was also going straight to answer phone. Ruby started to panic a little. She urgently sent Keely a text briefly explaining her dilemma and asked Keely to call back ASAP.

Ruby had a couple of close friends at work, close enough for her to feel she could trust them with the knowledge of her and Shay's relationship. She rang Bungle, one of her friends from work. Bungle worked in the office with Ruby and was pleased for Ruby and Shay when Ruby had told him a few weeks ago that they were together. Bungle was a nickname, based on the character from *Rainbow*, a children's television show; he had been known as Bungle since he was a teenager. Ruby wanted to call him to tell him what had happened before the jungle drums started and hoped that he may be able to help her.

He was shocked at what had happened and suggested that Ruby stay in a hotel for the night under a false name. He offered to arrange this for her but she said that she would sort it out herself. She thanked him and said she would be in touch.

Ruby now had a plan and some sort of direction. She called a local taxi firm and booked a cab under the name of Louise; she was told it would be about twenty minutes.

Ruby sat and chain-smoked, waiting for "*Helloooooo Baby...*", The Big Bopper's Chantilly Lace to blast out of her phone. Ruby had set this song as Shay's caller I.D. for when he rang her. Ruby waited and waited for The Big Bopper to burst into song but it never happened.

Sitting idle, waiting for the taxi, Ruby tried to stop herself from thinking the worst. The very thought that Shay would now finish with her hurt her far more deeply than the fact that her life was fitted into two bags and that her own mum did nothing to help her.

Ruby loved Shay more than life itself, an emotion that she had never felt before. She'd always had a pessimistic outlook on love and relationships due to the fact that the relationships she had been brought up around had all been very sour. Her dad left bitterly years ago and Billy had turned out to be evil personified. Despite a very difficult childhood and love seeming to be just a word that is used

a lot in films, Ruby knew that what she felt for Shay really was love and she loved everything about him.

Shay's voice had been the first thing that gained Ruby's attention. It was deep, gravelly and he had a strong London accent. They had spent a lot of time on the phone through work before they had even met. She knew that Shay could look the complete opposite to the way his voice made him sound but this didn't bother her. The day she met him, she was quietly very pleased with what she saw. The first thing that stood out was his extremely well styled dark hair, complemented with narrow, modish sideburns. In contrast to his dark hair were his piercing blue, smiling eyes. He had the type of build that she found attractive in a man; around six foot tall with very broad shoulders. Not only did he have the face and the stature, he knew how to dress too. All this matched a personality and a sense of humour that Ruby could not help falling in love with. To top it all off, Shay made Ruby feel loved. To love someone is one thing, but for that love to be reciprocated is an entirely different thing. For this reason, the fact that she was in her late twenties and Shay was in his early forties was not an issue for her.

All Ruby wanted was a phone call just so she knew that the man she loved still loved her.

Ruby's phone rang but it was not *The Big Bopper*, it was *The Jam*, the ring tone for all other incoming calls. It was Keely calling. Ruby answered and explained what had happened. Keely also knew about Ruby's secret relationship and also knew her family very well, including Billy's erratic and barbaric behaviour. Keely told Ruby to stay put and that she would come and collect her. She knew exactly where Ruby was as she had lived in the same Middlesex town since a child up to around five years ago.

Ruby peered over a hedge waiting for Keely to arrive, but as Ruby tried to keep the twigs from scratching her face she saw the taxi she ordered pull up.

Shit, thought Ruby, as the taxi parked at the entrance of the garages. How would Keely pull in to get her?

Seconds later Keely arrived indicating to get to the garages. The taxi moved enough to let her through. Keely jumped out and threw Ruby's bags into the boot and told her to get in the back of the car as Keely's friend, Natalie, was in the front. Ruby told both of them in more detail about what had happened.

Keely was far from impressed to say the least. Natalie also expressed her disgust as she too knew Ruby's family and had even been a victim of Billy's abuse some years ago.

Natalie was dropped off home and Ruby got into the front seat next to Keely. Ruby needed to stop and buy some cigarettes and asked if Keely could stop at a petrol station before going to the hotel. Whilst driving to the hotel, Keely became more and more wound up by Billy's actions. She was rather fiery and ranted about how she wouldn't be frightened if Billy was to turn up on her doorstep and that she would have a go at doing him some damage if she found out he laid a finger on Ruby again. Keely didn't say these things to amuse Ruby but Ruby couldn't help but grin at little Keely and her big threats.

At the hotel, Keely helped to get Ruby's bags and gave her a tight, reassuring hug; making Ruby promise to keep in touch. Keely sat in her car and made sure that Ruby got safely into the hotel's reception before she left.

Ruby approached the lady sitting at the reception. She was still a bit shaken and on a different planet, planet Shay. She asked if she could get a room for the night and luckily enough, there was a vacancy. The receptionist started to go through the formal booking-in process. Ruby stuttered whilst trying to explain that she didn't want to book in under her real name. Once it was very apparent to the receptionist that Ruby was distressed and frightened, she suggested a false name for her to book-in under. Once the payment

details had been sorted out, the sympathetic receptionist gave Ruby the card to her room.

She didn't have to go far to get to the room and was relieved that it was on the ground floor. It was a new building, and the room was basic but clean. She dumped her bags on the floor and put the kettle on; her mouth felt like an ashtray and she was thirsty. Whilst she waited for the kettle to boil, she got out her damp clothes and hung them over the radiators to dry. Ruby glared at her phone willing it to ring as she made herself a coffee. She went outside where she sat in the car park so she could have two or three more cigarettes.

Ruby, with her box of cigarettes, was in and out of the hotel like a yoyo over the next couple of hours.

At two o'clock the next morning there was a new receptionist on shift. She stopped Ruby on her way back in and told her that she didn't like the thought of her sitting outside in the car park at that time of the morning. She told her that if she opened the window in her room and smoked by it, the smoke alarms wouldn't go off. Ruby was thankful and appreciated her kindness and concern.

Instead of getting some rest and going to bed, Ruby sat by that window for the next five hours going back over what had happened and tormenting herself with the idea that Shay had changed his mind about their relationship.