

## *The Meeting*

"Plonker!"

"You what?"

"Genius!"

"What do you mean? Which is it?"

"Both. You are, Martin, without doubt a real genius and an absolute plonker. Equal measure. Genius and plonker; plonker and ge..."

"That's not rational. Explain yourself, David, or I'm going."

"I will. See this manuscript? Your manuscript. Love it; absolutely love it. I can honestly say, Martin, I have never, ever read such an original work. The way you write, the way you conjure up ideas, the way you let the reader think he knows where you are going and then dump them, your use of made-up words that somehow I knew exactly what they meant ..."

"So that's the plonker bit then."

"Oh ha, ha! Martin, you are a genius of a writer. The plonker bit is that you have wasted so many years keeping your talent hidden. What are you? 80?"

"85."

"Well then. I shouldn't be talking to you like this. Disrespectful of me. But Martin, I am so frustrated, so frustrated I can't tell you."

"Why?"

"Because I want to publish your book. I want to publish it now. And I can see it as such a great film."

"So, what's the problem? If you want to publish it and I want you to publ..."

"The problem is I can't. It doesn't fit our list. In fact it doesn't fit anything. It's too short and it's completely off the wall. Our marketing people wouldn't have a clue how to get hold of it. I'd get fired."

"I'll take it back then. There's no point in wasting time any more. It's the one thing I probably haven't got, David."

"Whose fault is that then? How long ago did you write it?"

"1963."

"It is just so sad. Was it a one off? Did you give up?"

"No."

"No! What else have you got?"

"Nine others."

"Nine! Like this?"

"I suppose so."

"Sometimes, just sometimes, everybody has to do something mad. There is, Martin, a way out. I believe passionately in this. I believe in you, Martin, though you might not think so from the way I spoke to you."

"You are rambling."

"I'm playing for time. I'm standing on a cliff edge and I'm scared of heights. I need to jump. Give me a second. OK, I've jumped. I'm going to resign and set up on my own. I'll be your publisher. If you're willing."

"Now who's the plonker, David."

"Plonkers together then. OK?"