

You loved your last book...but what  
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new  
books to keep you inspired and entertained.

---

**Opening Extract from...**

# **Postcards from the Heart**

Written by Ella Griffin

Published by Orion Books

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.  
Please print off and read at your leisure.

---

*Postcards from  
the Heart*



ELLA GRIFFIN



First published in Great Britain in 2011 by Orion Books,  
an imprint of The Orion Publishing Group Ltd  
Orion House, 5 Upper Saint Martin's Lane  
London WC2H 9EA

An Hachette UK Company

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © Ella Griffin 2011

The moral right of Ella Griffin to be identified as the author  
of this work has been asserted in accordance with  
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be  
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted  
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the  
prior permission of both the copyright owner and  
the above publisher of this book.

All the characters in this book are fictitious, and any resemblance to  
actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is  
available from the British Library.

ISBN (Hardback) 978 1 4091 2238 8

ISBN (Export Trade Paperback) 978 1 4091 2239 5

Typeset at The Spartan Press Ltd,  
Lymington, Hants

Printed in Great Britain by  
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

The Orion Publishing Group's policy is to use papers that  
are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made  
from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and  
manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the  
environmental regulations of the country of origin.

# *Part One*





It was only nine in the morning but every other man on Grafton Street was carrying flowers. Saffy loved the way Valentine's Day brought out the romantic in the most unlikely people. Like the grumpy-looking businessman clutching a bunch of lilies who was snapping instructions into his mobile phone outside Bewley's. And the goth in the Infected Malignity sweatshirt she caught taking a sneaky sniff of the single red rose he'd just bought from the flower stall on the corner of Duke Street.

Whatever Greg sent her, she knew it wouldn't involve a red rose. Roses were what everybody else did on Valentine's Day. Greg liked to do things differently. In the past he'd sent her flowering cacti and plumes of black orchids and, last year, an enormous Venus fly trap. It was actually quite pretty but there weren't many flies around in February and it had died after Saffy fed it some smoked salmon from a bagel.

Komodo's philosophy, 'Expect the Unexpected' was scrawled on a wall in reception below a massive steel cut-out of the agency logo – a flesh-eating lizard. It was remarkably life-like and it scared everyone, except Ciara, the receptionist, who couldn't see it because she was sitting beneath it. But today, Saffy didn't even notice it because taking up most of the huge reception desk was the most gorgeous bouquet of roses she'd ever seen, and Ciara was waving her over. Her peroxide head appeared, briefly, over the gleaming alps of tissue paper and cellophane.

'Saffy!' she gasped, waving her sp inhaler. 'Can you get these bloody flowers out of here before I . . . ?' She ducked down to answer the phone. 'Hhhello, Komodo Advertising,' she wheezed. 'Can I hhhhelp you?'

Saffy grinned. Greg hadn't sent a single red rose. He'd sent what looked like at least three dozen. She hurried over, leaned down and breathed in their sweet, peppery scent. There was a

tiny white envelope tucked in between the velvety crimson heads.

The spinhaler shot up again. ‘Hhhold on! The roses are for Marsh. Probably from Marsh. She’s the only person who loves herself enough.’ Ciara pointed at an even larger bouquet that was lurking in the corner behind her desk. ‘Those are for you. I think I’m allergic to the hhhhuge hhhairy purple one.’

‘Got a secret admirer?’ Simon smirked when Saffy struggled past him on the way to her office lugging the flowers. ‘Is it Tim Burton?’

‘Hey, Babe! What are you wearing?’

Even after six years, something in Saffy softly imploded when she heard that voice. Greg could make the instructions for an IKEA flat-pack sound sexy. When he used to do radio ads, before he got too famous, the Advertising Standards Authority had once received forty-seven complaints that his disclaimer on a bank ad – ‘interest rates may rise as well as fall’ – was too suggestive.

She looked down at her fitted white shirt and grey pinstriped DKNY trousers. She was wearing her favourite Kurt Geiger court shoes but Greg didn’t like her in heels, not unless she was sitting or lying down.

‘Can I tell you what I’m *not* wearing? It might be a bit more exciting.’

He laughed. ‘Tell you what, tell me what you’re going to wear when I take you out to dinner tonight instead.’

They hadn’t gone out on Valentine’s night in years. It was hard to do the whole romantic staring-into-each-other’s-eyes thing when most of the women in the room were trying to stare into Greg’s eyes too and the ones that weren’t were taking pictures of him on their camera phones.

‘You sure you don’t just want to stay at home and eat scallops and drink a nice bottle of wine?’ There was some Prosecco chilling in the fridge and she’d sprinkled handfuls of silk rose petals on the bed before she left this morning.

‘I’m sure. So dress up. Okay?’

Saffy smiled. ‘Okay.’ If she worked through lunch she could

leave early and have her hair blow-dried and pick up her cream dress from the dry cleaner's.

'Hey, did you get my flowers?'

'Oh God, sorry! I did. Thank you! They're absolutely um . . .'

She stared at the bouquet, searching for the right word – searching for any word, really. The centrepiece was a purple thistle roughly the size of a baby's head. It was surrounded by a menacing thicket of birds of paradise and what looked like an entire vegetable patch of ornamental cabbages.

'They're um . . . amazing. I love them.'

'Yeah? Well, the whole "dozen red roses" Valentine's thing's such a cliché. I told the guy at the flower place to push the boathouse.'

Greg had a habit of getting common sayings confused. Somehow he managed to twist them so that they made a weird kind of sense. Like 'the blonde leading the blonde' and the truly inspired 'putting the car before the horse'.

'Well,' Saffy said truthfully, 'he *really* went overboard.'

She could hear voices in the background. Greg was on the set of *The Station*, a daytime soap about a team of Dublin fire-fighters. There was the wise older one and the troubled young one and the gay one and the pneumatic female one. Greg was Mac Malone, the heroic one, the one who was plastered across most teenage girls' bedroom walls.

'Listen, Saff, I'm probably going to be shooting till at least seven and I've booked the restaurant for eight so I'll see you there. And there's something I want to ask you tonight, something pretty important . . . hang on—' He broke off. 'Dude, I'm on the phone here . . . Well, tell her I'll be there in a minute. And tell her I'm not carrying that whale down that ladder . . . Yeah? Well, one of the stunt guys will have to do it. Sorry, Babe. What was I saying?'

'You were saying you've got something to ask me . . .'

'Yeah,' he said, his voice dropping a delicious half-octave. 'I do have something to ask you—'

There was a scuffle and another voice came on the line. 'This is Robert, the first AD. I've got something to ask you, too. Can you call back when there isn't a half-naked woman in a pregnant

suit hanging off a shagging hundred-foot ladder waiting for Mr Gleeson to do his bloody job?’

Saffy tried to focus on writing an Avondale Foods contact report but her mind had other ideas and they didn’t involve cheese. Greg had something to ask her. What *was* it? Her heart bumped against her ribcage like a trapped balloon. Could *it* possibly be *it*? She smiled at the giant thistle for a bit. She stood up and went over to sniff one of the dinky little pink cabbages. It smelled, unexpectedly, of cabbage. Then she sat back down at her desk. This was ridiculous. She was the most level-headed person she knew and she was not going to get carried away.

Greg had something to ask her, that was all. He asked her things all the time. Last night, when they were watching 24, he’d asked her if you could have a general anaesthetic when you had a tattoo, whether she thought Kiefer Sutherland used Botox and why dogs didn’t have bellybuttons.

She forced herself back to the contact report and, when it was finished, she hit Send. She was allowing herself another sneaky peek at the flowers then she suddenly realised that she had forgotten to spell-check.

She had referred to the client, Harry as ‘Hairy’. Twice. And put ‘client to pervert’ instead of ‘revert’ and typed her name (her *own* name) as *Sassy*. Luckily the email was still in her outbox and she managed to cancel it. But it was a close call.

She shoved the flowers out of sight behind her filing cabinet and shoved Greg out of her mind. If she got all her contact reports done in the next two hours she’d let herself think about him again at lunchtime. She froze. *Lunchtime!* She had completely forgotten that she was supposed to meet her mother for lunch. She couldn’t put her off again. She hadn’t seen her since Christmas.

The poster was bright red with polite white type. *If love is the answer, can you rephrase the bloody question?* It wasn’t exactly a good sign but at least it was an improvement on yesterday’s version: *Do I look like a fucking people person?*

Ant, Komodo’s Creative Director, refused to speak directly to



anyone at the agency except his Art Director, Vicky. The rest of them had to guess his mood from the gnomic messages that appeared on the door of their office every day. Actually, there wasn't too much guesswork involved. His mood was generally bad but he hadn't been hired for his social skills.

Anthony Savage had written 'The geeks shall inherit the earth' viral for Compushop. And the Axis Tyres radio ads that used out-takes from politicians' speeches with the endline, 'Get a grip'. And the road safety posters with portraits of a beautiful paraplegic girl and the line, 'You drink therefore I am.' His work was advertising gold.

The office was divided in two by a line of black gaffer tape that ran along the carpet, up the wall and across the ceiling. Vicky's half was a temple to the Goddess 'Girly'. Her computer was festooned with flower lights. Her desk was littered with make-up and scented candles and pots of sparkly pens and folders with fun fur covers. The floor was barely visible under piles of books and magazines.

Ant's half contained Ant himself, his desk, his chair and his waste-paper basket. The only objects on his desk were his computer and a box of Smints. The only things on the floor were his Camper shoes, lined up with mathematical precision, exactly parallel to his chair.

'Hey, Saffy.' Vicky was eating Hula Hoops off her fingers. She was wearing a red leotard and a long white trailly skirt with stripy red-and-black tights and biker boots. Vicky was about thirty-five years too old to dress like a five-year-old but somehow she made it work.

'Hi, guys. Just wondering how you're getting on with the cheese print? No pressure . . .'

Ant didn't even bother to look up from his Sudoku. He was in his thirties with a shaved head and a small, round, permanently pinched face that made him look like a cross between an old man and a bad-tempered baby. He was dressed, as always, in black and he wasn't eating anything. The only thing Saffy had ever seen Ant put into his mouth apart from Smints and Guinness was a roll-up.

'Tell the suit to fuck off and die,' he muttered to Vicky.

‘Easy, Tiger!’ Vicky stood up and brushed some Hula Hoop crumbs from her long dark hair. ‘Saffy is our friend, remember?’

She spread some marker roughs out over the clutter on her desk. Saffy stared at them. There was no way she could show these to the Avondale client. In one, she could just make out what appeared to be the face of Jesus carved from a lump of cheese. The headline was: *Avondale. The Face of Cheeses.*

In another, Jesus was holding a cheese sandwich and a mug of tea under the line: *Avondale. A Last Supper to Remember.*

There were more. The worst one had a beaming Jesus with a piece of bread on the end of skewer. *Avondale. What Would Jesus Fondue?*

Komodo had a reputation for unconventional work and the agency philosophy was ‘expect the unexpected’, but this was taking it a bit literally.

‘Guys,’ she said carefully, ‘I can see where you’re coming from with the Jesus/cheeses thing but—’

Vicky cut her off with a ‘trust me’ smile. She always managed to rein Ant in just enough to get the work approved. ‘We’re just throwing ideas around. We’ll keep going. We’ll have loads more options to show you on Monday.’

‘This isn’t an advertising agency,’ Ant hissed. ‘It’s hell with fluorescent lighting.’