

SALVATION FOR APRIL

BY ALEX CAMERON & JOBY STEPHENS

CONCEPT

A self-obsessed fashionista who finally loses the Covent Garden styling boutique she has been using to fund her lavish lifestyle because of the “credit crunch” tries to kill herself and is unexpectedly rescued by the tramp she abuses every day. After waking up in hospital and learning he is gravely ill, she embarks on a desperate race across London to find him and save his life in return, and in doing so, sets off a chain reaction of events that forever changes the lives of everyone around her.

CHARACTERS

April Heartley

The story’s central character. A selfish 28 year old bulimic fashionista and IT girl who owns the Superla Fashion Boutique in Covent Garden, whilst doubling as an escort at night.

The Tramp

A mysterious and anonymous homeless man in his 50s who was once extremely wealthy but now has no possessions or family to speak of. His name is never known, nor his background, or where he lives or comes from.

Chris Stanton

April’s long-suffering, long-term 34 year old boyfriend who is wealthy and works for a small finance company on Euston Road. He is a mild-mannered, patient, organised, kind and understanding man whom April runs roughshod over constantly but he dotes on her and would do anything for her. April relentlessly cheats on him and abuses his unconditional love for her. Her “rock” and “balancing agent”.

Danni Leary

April’s 23 year old shop assistant who is more loyal and obliging than she should be. She comes in every day without fail hours before she should and breaks her back running the boutique for less money than she deserves. A beautiful, sensitive and kind person who spends most of her time clearing up April’s mistakes and indulgences.

David Jacobs

April’s impatient 42 year old accountant, and aiming to be her escort client. Never paid on time, never acknowledged, and a constant thorn in her side. Divorced, unattractive and easily frustrated because he only understands money. He also breaks his back trying to keep April afloat.

Thierry D'Angelo

An extraordinarily wealthy 53 year old property millionaire, and one of April's most active escorting clients. A jet-setting tycoon who never sees his wife and children who he treats as accessories living in a large country house in Hertfordshire. He is interested in April only so he can break into the London party scene.

Fabrizio Alano

A 45-year old fashion designer who is absurdly camp and runs a world-renowned boutique in Kensington. As April's hero, he is as superficial as he is nasty, only caring about himself and what press he gets in true prima donna style. He agreed to help April co-manage a show with because of own of her wealthy escorting clients paying him to do it.

Keira Osterley

An incredibly beautiful but easily-intimidated 25 year old office administrator timidly looking into becoming a fashion model, but working 9to5 for a TV production company in Soho.

LOCATIONS

- COVENT GARDEN, SOHO, EUSTON (STREETS)
- TUBE/BUS
- SUPERLA BOUTIQUE SHOP
- AUDITION STUDIO
- MEZZO BRASSERIE
- BAR 1
- BAR 2
- MAYFAIR PRIVATE CLUB
- FAST FOOD TAKEAWAY
- APRIL'S FLAT
- HOSPITAL
- FABRIZIO'S OFFICE
- KEIRA'S OFFICE
- CHRIS'S' OFFICE
- SOHO COFFEE BAR
- PASTRY CAFE
- BRIDGE & RIVERSIDE

ACT I – THE QUEENDOM FALLS AWAY

April Heartley is the 28-year old owner of the Superla Styling Boutique in London's trendy Covent Garden, a successful but ruthless young woman determined to be wealthy and be seen to be living the high life on the city's party circuit. To most of the world, she is a celebrity-obsessed, selfish, superficial fashionista who religiously keeps a strict calorie diary and sees her long-term bulimia as a perfectly reasonable way to keep herself skinny and attractive. To IT girl and compulsive liar April, appearance and attractiveness are everything, and anything less than perfect is a personal death sentence. She cares for no-one; the misfortune of others isn't particularly interesting and something she looks down on.

Her ambition has led to her setting up a new talent agency business specialising in skinny and 'heroin chic' fashion models for lifestyle and photo magazines. She has also inadvertently become a mentor to several young teenage girls who look up to her as a source of inspiration and validation, following her every word on dieting, treating men coldly and bitchiness towards other girls. Her long-suffering boyfriend, Chris, doesn't know about her sideline business of keeping wealthy men (so-called "sugar daddies") company as an escort to pay off her astronomical credit card debts, and how it was that escorting that gave her the money and favours she needed to start her shop.

But April's being deliberately ignoring one extremely important issue – that she can't keep draining her company's business account to fund her own personal lifestyle.

It is March.

Our story starts one normal rush-hour weekday morning as April has left the tube in Central London and is briskly walking into Covent Garden to make sure she gets her first exercise in to burn 300 calories. Her journey to work is the same routine as she follows almost every day – secretly critiquing and judging how others have dressed themselves, cutting out the fashion sections of the free commuter newspapers, making entries in her calorie diary for what she has tried to eat on the way for breakfast, looking down on homeless people and ignoring Chris' attempts to wish her a good day.

She walks into her shop late in her expensive sunglasses and handbag, where her assistant Danni is faithfully waiting for her. Danni is clearly upset, and when April asks why, she explains that she broke up with her boyfriend the night before and her heart was broken. April laughs and ridicules her, in a display of spectacular insensitivity. Danni tries to recover and shows her an expensive bunch of flowers delivered that morning for April, with the label showing it was from one of her sugar daddy clients, with an invitation to join him for lunch that day. She goes to the toilet and throws up her breakfast.

When she re-enters the shop, 2 girls who have asked her for work experience walk in. They worship her every move and want her advice on what to wear that week, showing her a celebrity gossip magazine. April rudely tells them both to lose weight, to use the boys they are going out with and that boasts of her week ahead socialising on the city's party circuit. The girls dutifully note down her advice in a notepad. April tells them to get out.

April's first call of duty that day is to get to the model audition she has organised down the road at a photographic studio. After playing back answering machine messages from her accountant, Chris and an angry supplier, she begins planning out her calorie consumption plan for the day in her notepad. Danni asks her how her yearly planning is going, and April explains that she is fasting in March to

keep her weight down, but will start eating more healthily next month. After that she will celebrate. Danni wisely comments that it is “starvation for March, salvation for April, and celebration for May.”

April leaves the shop and heads to the audition studio, brushing aside the same homeless people she always does on the way. Several girls are nervously waiting outside as she strides through and talks to the studio owner and looks through CVs, making rude and critical remarks about each one. One by one the models pose and April abuses her powerful position and dismisses each one cruelly. The last of them is an outstandingly beautiful and sensitive girl, Keira, who is treated extremely viciously and leaves the audition in floods of tears.

After the morning auditions are over, April leaves and heads to the Mezzo Brasserie restaurant to meet one of her newest escorting clients, an extremely wealthy and sleazy man called Thierry. Over lunch he talks about how much he enjoyed the most recent night they spent together, that is heading to Cannes after he has had his yacht fixed and that he would like to see a lot more of April. It becomes clear that Thierry’s intentions are deeper than just company. During the conversation, text messages and a missed call from Chris arrive on April’s phone, but she coldly ignores them. She leaves the meal at the end to guiltily throw up her lunch, noting down her calorie consumption on the way.

As she leaves the restaurant to preside over the afternoon audition, a voicemail appears on her phone from her accountant, David. When she listens to it, he explains that he has had to come to the shop to find her as she has been ignoring his calls. Danni has given him directions to where the audition studio. She calls Danni and screams abuse at her for telling David where she is.

When David arrives at the studio, he is immensely stressed and looks very serious and confrontational. He doesn’t bother with asking for a quiet place but bluntly tells April they need to talk there and then – thankfully they are alone. David explains that at 9am that morning he was forced to put April’s company (and shop) into administration as he had continually warned, as her business bank manager had frozen the company account and overdraft. He explains that April’s chronic mismanagement, suppliers not being paid and the massive fall in sales from the “credit crunch” has made the business totally un-saveable.

April is silent, shocked and completely crushed as David explains that the shop has been locked up, the stock confiscated and all her accounts frozen. He leaves her with paperwork. April stands staring in disbelief. She slowly starts walking around Covent Garden, completely numb, with her phone ring constantly.

The loss of her income means the loss of all her lifestyle, and the crushing weight of her debts. All is lost. All she has is the money in her wallet and the key to her small flat. It’s important for her to avoid anyone she knows, and to maintain the same expensive and glamorous front so nobody knows anything of her situation or how she could be homeless and destitute in the coming weeks.

As with everything April does, she hides inside her little bubble of denial and finds her way later that afternoon to a discrete wine bar on a side street around the corner from her office, where she buys herself a bottle of wine and drinks it by herself. Chris calls and she slovenly talks to him, almost disinterested. When she has finished the bottle, she drunkenly walks out and goes into another one few doors down, crossing out all the entries in her calorie diary, indicating she is not planning to eat at all.

ACT II – RESCUED BY AN UNLIKELY SAVIOUR

It is now evening, and extremely cold. April is drunk, and deeply depressed. As she walks out of the bar, she trips over a loose paving stone and falls. A tramp offers her his hand to help her up, and when she looks up she realises it's the same tramp who has asked her for help every day on her way to work. April tries to dust herself down and make herself presentable, but fails. The tramp takes pity on her and sits her down on a nearby bench where he tries to clean her shoes and put everything back in her handbag. April is disgusted but has no energy to fight.

As they sit, the tramp asks what went wrong in her day and listens to her as she pities herself. He explains to her how he was a wealthy man who fell into homelessness because of selfish ways and self-adorption, ultimately where April is going. The tramp explains there is more to life and asks her some very tough, but wise, questions about her family, her feelings and the problems she has. He has a very strange gentle wisdom and as he talks, April begins to soften and take notice of what he has to say, against her own seemingly better judgement. What he says moves her, and his kindness to her despite her rudeness to him overwhelms her.

April eventually gets up and leaves the bench to travel to Mayfair to see Thierry at his private club. After fumbling through her bag for ID, the doormen let her through. She can't see her client and has her bank card rejected when trying to buy a drink. Thierry comes down the stairs and rejoins his group of suited rich friends at the bar. April drunkenly calls to him and attempts to join their group, and Thierry completely disowns her, claiming he doesn't know her and she must be some kind of local drunk or prostitute.

April is thrown out of the private club in shame, and makes her way home. She stops off at a fast food bar and gorges madly on greasy food, and is unable to throw it up because she has no energy to do so. As she walks through her front door, it doesn't shut properly and she throws her keys on the floor drunkenly and indifferently. She puts on the TV, which tunes into a reality TV show that would normally keep her captivated. She stares at the screen indifferently, and pours herself a huge vodka. She picks up the bottle of anti-depressants and slowly starts putting them rhythmically in her mouth one by one. After she has taken almost all of them she falls unconscious and lies in her own vomit.

At her front door, the tramp she had talked to earlier slowly enters through her front door in a suspicious but respectful way. As she left him, some of the contents of her purse had fallen under the bench and he had travelled across the city to return them to her after finding her address on her driving licence card. He pulls her wallet out of his pocket and gently puts on her hallway table. As he turns to leave, he stops and hesitates because of not being comfortable about the door being open. He calls out to see if anyone is there, and discovers her unconscious on the couch. He calls an ambulance.

Later that night in the early hours, April wakes up in a hospital cubicle, alone and terrified. A nurse comes in tries to calm her, explaining she is OK and that they had to give her a stomach pump because she had overdosed. Alone and confused, she asks how she got there.

She finds a note hidden under her arm. It is from the tramp. Just after she reads it, the doctor joins her in the cubicle.

The doctor explains what happened to her, and that she was found by a homeless man in her flat who watched over her in the ambulance and had protected her all night. When April asks where he is, the doctor looks and says he is nowhere to be found.

The doctor explains she must stay in at least for a few hours, but also if she knows the tramp. When she says begins to panic and question about how she was found in the flat, the doctor overrides her and says that he also treated the tramp when he noticed he himself was also exhibiting symptoms of a very serious disease. He dresses April down from her outrage, angrily telling her the tramp saved her life and condemning her selfishness. He suggests April think more about the man as his illness is so advanced that he will die in the next 2-3 days without medical help. They had tried to convince him to stay but he had refused.

April lies in the hospital cubicle for what seems like hours, thinking over her life and the last day. She begins to change and understand the tragedies that have made her the way she is. A counsellor on the ward specialising in mental health visits her and interviews her about her background, and she begins to talk about her bulimia and how she was raped when she was 17. The counsellor explains how and why she has become like she has. April resolves to change her life and gets up to leave as it is now early morning and the work day is beginning.

As she walks out of the hospital, she is blinded by the morning sunshine – a symbolic moment of seeing the light. She gets out her mobile phone from her folded up jacket and switches it off. It is full of messages from Chris and her accountant. Danni calls a few minutes later and reminds her that she has a previously-arranged meeting with a stylist in Kensington who was she was due to organise a fashion event with.

She arrives for the meeting in Kensington a wreck, with everyone telling her how skinny and attractive she looks because of it. She goes into a meeting with Fabrizio, a high-profile (and very gay) fashion mogul. As they talk, April can't connect with him and begins to be more and more disgusted with his talk of how important superficial things are, and how cruel and judgemental he sounds. She sees herself properly and the world she lives in. He suggests calling the show "chrysalis" and based it around the theme of butterflies, a coded reference to what is now happening to April herself. She has changed. She cuts the meeting short after he tells her he doesn't want anything to do with her because she has now lost her shop and is a no-one, and she walks out determined to find the tramp who saved her, in order to save his life.

But she also makes another key resolution – that for today, she will make right all the things she has ruined. For every wrong she has done, she will do a bigger good.

After looking at her watch, she realises she has absolutely no idea where to find the tramp, and that there will be no hope after dark. He may not have until tomorrow with the night being as cold as it is/

She is suddenly in a race against time. But she has to do it.

ACT III – THE CHAIN-REACTION RACE TO SAVE

April boards the tube, and heads back to Covent Garden to where she first met the tramp. She passes an empty-faced array of fashion types looking indifferent like zombies. This time she sees the world as it really is. She walks into the side street was drinking in, but it is empty. As she approaches the end of the road, she sees a homeless man and his dog. She describes the tramp to them and asks them where he is, and all he can tell her is that he was there last night but had left to return the contents of some woman's purse when all those around him told him not to bother. He tells they are worried as he collapsed a few hours before he met April, but refused to go to hospital.

Wanting to help him but not knowing what to give, she walks across the street to a small newsagent and buys several sachets of food for his dog. He accepts with surprise, not thinking anyone could do such kindness without him begging for it. She looks around confused, not knowing what to do next. He explains to her that there are a number of places the homeless people there hang around in and sleep on cold nights, which she notes down on her mobile.

As she walks past a corner clothes shop, she sees a homeless man on a bench with a dark coat. She runs over to him, putting her hand on his shoulder so he turns round in shock. It's not the tramp. She apologises and walks away swiftly.

As she wanders around the streets aimlessly searching, her mobile phone rings and it is Chris, who is deeply worried about her after not being able to get hold of her at the shop. April tries to reassure him but cannot help but break out in floods of tears. She agrees to come to his office in Euston, expecting him to be very angry. As she walks back to the tube, she passes the audition studio and walks inside. In the hall way she finds her notes from the previous day, and rummages through them until she find the CV of the girl she reduced to tears, Keira. She notes that where Keira works in the day is on the way to Chris' office, and decides to visit her in Soho first.

She walks through several streets before reaching the Keira's road in Soho, and stops at a flower seller. She explains that she has no money to buy a bunch of flowers but asks him for kindness in giving her a single stem so she may make a wrong right. He strangely agrees, kisses her on the cheek and just as she approaches the office, she sees Keira crossing the road to go to a sandwich shop, looking scared, bruised and depressed. She stops her in the middle of the road, and gives her the flower, apologising and explaining that she was wrong because the girl is the most beautiful she has seen in years. She fills her with faith and confidence whilst comforting her, as the girl begins to smile and cry. They embrace.

CUT TO: The homeless man who April bought the dog food for shares it with 2 other friends who have dogs to keep them company. One of the dogs walks off and approaches a lady on a cafe table, making her smile after she has been angrily frustrated on her phone. The woman smiles at the waiter serving her whilst petting the dog. The waiter goes inside with a smile, taking a call and happily greeting the person on the line.

As April leaves and carries on down the road, she sees a man sitting on a table alone at an alfresco coffee shop looking deeply sad. Hesitating for a second, she walks over to him, bends down on her knees to come to table height, takes his hand, and comforts him by saying that whatever is wrong, he is worth more than the problem and not to give up. He smiles and kisses her on the cheek.

April becomes extremely weak from all the emotion she has displayed and hesitantly pushes herself into a pastry shop to find something to raise her blood sugar so she can keep going. Knowing she has

hardly any money left, she forces herself to eat a cheese croissant, and as she walks outside, she has to deliberately keep the food down, in a symbolic event of struggling to do the right thing. It is too much for her and she sits down on the pavement, she breaks into tears, overwhelmed by the day and all she has done. She starts looking through her mobile to consider where the tramp might be as she still has no idea where to go. She doesn't know how she will keep going.

She makes her way to see Chris, expecting to be shouted at and hurt. He sees her coming down the street through the office window and walks strongly out to greet her, throwing his arms around her. She breaks down in floods of tears, and they sit on a set of concrete steps just off the main road. She confesses she has lied to him, ignored him and that he deserves to be with someone better. After a long silence Chris tells her that he knew from the beginning and that he loves her no matter how awful she has been. She is uncontrollably upset and moved by his love and explains all of the night's events and her quest to find the tramp. Chris offers to help and goes into the office to get his jacket. He suggests taking the second half of her list of possible locations and starts making calls on his mobile to circulate the description of the tramp to all the soup kitchens and homeless charities he can get hold of.

CUT TO: Keira, the model, buys a flower from the same flower-seller that April approached to give to a man in her office who she is clearly falling for. As she walks into the office he looks very angry, and although she is scared, Keira gives him the flower in a gentle, tender moment, which shocks and moves him. As he walks into a meeting room, he forgets what he was going to shout at the people there, smiling and encouraging them instead. A girl on the meeting table who looks frightened smiles with relief.

April boards a bus to make it easier to see people on the street, and as it is driving along, she sees a man who looks exactly like the tramp. She harasses the driver to stop and runs off, only to find it is not the man she is looking for. The bus drives off, and a minute later, she bumps into one of her industry friends. Asking why she looks so panicked, April explains she is looking for a man who is homeless that she desperately needs to find. The friend is appalled and disgusted. In the middle of the conversation, April leaves and walks away briskly, deeply angry.

Her mobile rings. It's Chris explaining he has looked all around the north area of Central London with no success. April realises time is running out.

April approaches 2 policemen on the corner of the road, and explains that she is trying to find a homeless man. They radio in a missing person report with his description but tell her there is nothing they can do.

CUT TO: The man April comforted in the cafe is walking back towards the office when he sees a girl sitting down on a set of steps who has started crying after hanging up the phone. He double-takes, but walks over to her and sits down next to her. As she talks to him, he puts her arm around her to comfort her. He has found the woman he is going to eventually marry.

She boards another bus towards the river, and stops in a main street whilst heading to Charing Cross train station. Frantically looking everywhere she sees the man on every corner, but it's not him. She takes a subway underpass into the hallway under the station that is "homeless city". As she passes tramp after tramp, he is nowhere to be found. She stops to talk to a badly-beaten young girl and asks if she has seen the man she describes. The girl is clearly ill, and April asks what happened to her. She explains she had been raped twice that week, once by a businessman, once by a drunk. April takes all the money she has and gives it to her, and marches her out of the underpass to a nearby policeman.

She argues and fights with him to take the girl to the hospital. It is then that the girl remembers seeing the tramp earlier that day, and he was unsteady on his feet, looking very ill.

Chris rings again on April's mobile, this time with a lead. He explains that a soup kitchen near to the train station April is at saw the tramp a few hours earlier. They mentioned that he wasn't able to eat properly and had looked to have walked down the riverside. April lams the phone down and starts to run towards the riverside road. She jogs down the pavement parallel to the water.

She comes to a bridge and stops to regain her breath. Looking over the river she stares out into the distance, about to give up. As she turns to keep going, she sees a dark mound behind a tree on the grassy river bank about 50ft away. Getting faster and faster, she bounds towards it, slowly revealing it to be a man.

When she arrives, it is the tramp. She throws her arms around him seeing how cold and ill he looks. He is unable to get up or move and is breathing heavily. She tells him she has been trying to find him everywhere and that he has to get to a hospital because he is desperately ill. He hardly recognises her, but says it is too late for medical attention. He lays there, alone. No family or friends to be with him or care for him. April's heart breaks and tells him she came to find him and save him as he saved her. He looks at her wisely with a comforting smile, but telling her that it's OK and she should be at peace. April holds herself back from throwing up, a symbolic act of trying to hold in what she is feeling.

In the last moments, she lies with the Tramp in her arms. April says, fighting back the tears at the unnecessary and senselessness of the loss, "I don't understand."

The tramp replies, in forced breaths. "No, you don't. The reason i was placed here, was not for you to save me, but so you could save yourself."

He gently breathes in and dies. April is left holding the man in her arms, desperately trying to call an ambulance on her mobile as the camera pulls back to show the wider picture of the riverside from above.