

## **DISORDER**

### **Introduction to plot**

EVE is a social worker who specializes in helping OCD hoarders. Daily facing mountains of stuff, chaotic, filthy lives, and no desire to change, has sucked all empathy out of Eve. She's hauled in by her boss, reminded these people have mental health problems. She apologizes and goes back to work. But she's not really sorry. She's got enough problems on her own plate and knows she is also stuck – as stuck as her clients. With her job on the line, Eve is given RUBY STOR to visit. Ruby's lived alone for forty years. At first, Ruby appears an easy target but before long the battle between them is on. But something about Ruby touches Eve. What lies behind her hoard? If she can help Ruby sort it, just maybe she can also help herself.

### **Story outline**

A group of female social workers are out on the town. Overweight, drunk EVE (34) is the heart and soul of the party. She and best mate SALLY (32) crack jokes. A SOBER COLLEAGUE brings up Eve's disciplinary action at work. Eve's quick to send it up. The group loves her quick wit.

Eve's ex, ALAN (35) marches in during Eve's delicate morning hangover. Their break-up is relatively recent and he's still not collected everything. TAYLOR (11), Eve and Alan's daughter, is an undisciplined and chaotic child. Eve struggles to control her. Taylor yells she wants to move in with Dad. Eve refuses.

Later, Eve kneels scrubbing her father's kitchen floor. CARL (66) is a fragile narcissist. Later, emotionally exhausted and physically spent, Eve is overcome with muscle cramps whilst peeing.

Eve sits facing her bosses. She has cut corners, taken liberties and she thinks she's a law unto herself. Eve attempts her usual humour but is shut up quickly with a warning.

Later Eve hands Taylor over to Alan for the weekend. She is short-tempered and her blood sugar is out of control. Diabetes is discussed in whispers by Alan's new partner SUSAN (30). Eve denies it but in truth she hasn't been tested. Eve pleads with Susan not to tell Alan.

Eve drops off food for her demanding Carl. Depressed she arrives and leaves without defending herself against him.

At work Eve's told she now has to prove herself or lose her job. Eve confides in Sally about feeling down. She doesn't have the energy time to do anything for herself.

What is the point anyway? She can't make a difference. She's annoyed she has to pee all the time. Eve agrees she will go to the doctor tomorrow, but she doesn't.

Susan has told Alan about Eve's probable diabetes. Alan tells Eve she needs to get herself looked at. Scolding Taylor wasn't necessary. Taylor will stay with him for now; Eve's not in the right state for anything. Later on Eve calls Taylor but Taylor won't connect, and says Susan's much 'nicer'. Eve's consoled on the doorstep by Sally; she's urged not to jeopardize her job, she needs it.

A reluctant Eve stands staring at a problem she doesn't want. It's a house and inside lives a severe hoarder RUBY, 60. Mess has piled up around it and inside against the windows. Eve's on the phone to work, learning this is a job no one wants. The NEIGHBOURS are up in arms. Eve searches around the back, it's very unhygienic.

Ruby pelts eggs towards Eve as she examines the mess outside. Eve spies PHOENIX, 26, a support volunteer at a Repair Organization that helps hoarders re-build their homes. He warns Eve other social workers haven't survived. He needs to stand in his hiding place to avoid being hit by her shrapnel. He talks up to Ruby's window believing he's making headway in helping her (he's not). Ruby yells from window gap how that *twat of a man-boy Buddha* is out to kill her.

Eve casually talks about a 42-day Environmental Agency order as she looks through Ruby's letterbox: Ruby must clear out or lose the house. Ruby hisses Eve's another informant, collecting useless facts, she's a tool in a system that's got no answers. Eve tells Phoenix that she agrees with Ruby. Ruby says she's heard of Eve's reputation. She can see she's a fat loser, a fat ugly loser who should be burnt in the town square. Hardened, Eve hurls back a harsh retort. Inside Ruby laughs, liking Eve's style. Ruby throws another back. Eve trumps it better. The women have met their match in one another. Eve knocks on the Neighbour's door, requesting they move some junk to 'flush' out the support volunteer (Phoenix) who's making Ruby worse.

That night Eve leaves a message for Taylor, 'please come home' and comfort eats in front of mindless TV. She wakes on the sofa thirsty, drinks water, feeling dizzy.

Phoenix's angry that his 'corner' has been filled. He was making headway. Eve says Eve's insane and beyond help. Unlike Phoenix she's not pelted with debris. With plastic gloves and boots on Eve inspects out back. She mutters how she'd leave this damn job if she could. She gets another dizzy spell and cramps so sits. Ruby spits down from above, saying 'fat Eve' must've been left (by a partner) as she's clearly unlovable. This hits a nerve. Eve falls silent. Ouch. Hidden from view, Eve has stopped in the rubble, she's silently weeping.

Ruby steps outside whiskey bottle in hand. It's an apology: Eve best to be rid of the damaged folk like her. Everything inside is her own fucking business no one else's. Eve joins Ruby as they share a spliff. They sit letting their heads buzz and find

common ground in their despair. Stoned, they end up laughing about the thrush Eve keeps getting and what Ruby did to the other social workers.

That night Eve goes out again, and gets really drunk. Eve admits to Sally that having her Dad show her affection when she was little was a rare thing; she craved it. She still does, and turns into this rag doll near him, with no power. The two women talk about abandonment, and how, once learnt, we do it to ourselves. Sally asks what the doctor said. Eve admits she hasn't yet gone... At home, Eve gorges on a take away.

Carl's birthday. Eve brings a present and card. She asks him to open them but the footie is on, he's busy. She waits. He opens them in half time then they're left on the floor. Father and daughter sit in silence watching the game. Eve hates football.

Eve's on phone to Taylor, trying to make light of things, and describes the vaccination against Leptospirosis she's had. Taylor asks why Dad left. Eve says some things get shoved into '*a quiet place*' and stay there, and fester. That causes damage. Taylor asks why did that happen? Eve hesitates, '*...because it felt too hard to tackle it head on*'. Taylor is angry, saying her Mum's lazy, blaming her.

Phoenix compliments how Eve looks today. Eve tells him to stop being 'so ridiculous'. Withdrawn and quiet, Ruby lets Eve inside. Eve is alarmed at severity of the hazardous conditions. Eve watches Ruby move items to and fro. Just need to be placed together, like a jigsaw Ruby says. For the first time Eve sees Ruby's vulnerability. Her heart goes out to her. She plays along, helping Ruby shift items from one useless place to another. Ruby softens. They get stoned together again and Ruby reveals escapades and sexual encounters from her youth, bringing out flamboyant accessories with outrageous stories. Eve ends up in fits of laughter.

But whilst Ruby parades garments, Eve spies a rat. Under her current disciplinary case, Eve is being observed, allowing rats to return and Weil's disease to occur would be deemed neglectful. Ruby won't go near injections. Any forceful tactic makes Ruby dig in more. As the last drop of whiskey is fed to Eve she opens up about her own life. She's been through a few shit years; she let things slide. She's got to get herself checked out: there are consequences to ignoring things. The honesty backfires, Ruby feels manipulated. Is this about getting her on side? Bloody sly bugger! Drunken and stoned she throws Eve out. Eve yells she's never coming back. Ruby's a witch.

Eve stands contemplating her scales for ages; then she stands on them. They're thrown out the window, smashing on the patio. Neighbours turn on lights, dogs bark.

Eve glares, numb, as she sits opposite the Doctor. She's told she has type 2 Diabetes. It's a stark reality – she could lose a limb.

An ASSISTANT is shoving an environmental agency order through Ruby's door for Eve whilst she sits introverted in her car. Phoenix knocks on its window. He's not heard

from or seen Ruby for days. Eve's not in the mood; she's got bigger problems of her own. Irritated she winds up the window. Phoenix pleads Ruby has no one, no one apart from them. Eve says that's her fault. He says but he doesn't believe it is her fault, there's stuff in Ruby that's 'stuck' and he knows Eve sees it too. Eve states Ruby will be forcibly extracted from the house after the 42-days order is over and drives off.

Tearful about her insulin kit laid out on her Dad's workbench, Eve needs some support. Carl can't give it. Eve confesses she wishes Mum were alive still.

At night, on the phone, Eve struggles to explain her diabetic condition to Taylor. Taylor asks if she'll die. Eve promises that she won't.

The hospital rings. Ruby has leptospirosis. Eve curses herself.

Eve sits on Ruby's hospital bed. Ruby is turned away, her eyes forcefully closed. Eve is sorry. She gets caught up in herself. It was wrong Phoenix had to break in but at least he found Ruby before it was too late. Ruby hurls abuse. Eve gives it back; they both smile. There's affection there. They understand each other. Eve's phone goes. It's her Boss. Eve ignores it. She's not ready for a bollocking. Ruby pokes Eve's fat belly '*...if that's not hoarding I don't know what is'...* Eve watches Ruby being wheeled off. She looks up at her own reflection. Ruby's right of course.

Eve pins a thank you note up for Phoenix. She's arrived with a PEST CONTROL EXPERT. Stacks of newspapers belonging to Ruby block aisles, their date sparks Eve's curiosity. Phoenix arrives. So Eve cares now? Eve admits she gets pushed to the edge and – wham – she gives up. Phoenix says she has to change that; she has to hold on tighter.

Eve tries to change. When Carl lays into her Eve musters up courage to answer back. Carl's retaliates; shocked at her indolence saying Eve is as useless and fat as her mother was. Eve leaves mid chore, bucket and mop abandoned. PASSERSBY spy Eve on a far side of the graveyard yelling at a grave, in tears. Eve is telling her Mum how she never stood up to him. Eve copied. '*We've got to be there for one another, you weren't!!*' She yells she's not useless.

Eve sits having a cig exploring the pages of old, cold worn newspapers. She's surprised to find a repeated theme: a coach crash in the Alps, four decades ago. From her hospital bed Ruby is pressed to sort the mess out. She needs time. Eve says Ruby's had years. There's junk from floor to ceiling, next to no walkways, most rooms can't be accessed. Ruby confesses she's in such a muddle with it all. She's sorry, about the belly comment; she's okay with Eve's 'hoarding'. Eve says she isn't, not anymore. As Ruby drifts off Ruby agrees Eve can do what she has to in the house.

Clearance work on Ruby's house starts immediately: her stuff is going to be moved to a warehouse to temporarily to get round the order. Eve stands overseeing activities. Her Boss phones again. Eve doesn't answer.

Eve is buying new scales. Two TEENAGERS in the queue whisper about her breaking them. Later, beer in hand Eve stands beside the new scales. She drinks up, gets on them, shocked, and then gets off. Her gaze goes to the mirror. Emotions are high but there's determination there. Packet foods are thrown away. Fresh items arrives, the fridge is stocked with greens. The fruit bowl is filled. Chicken, fish and bottles of water appear. Eve sits exhausted and dazed after her splurge. Rubbish bags of junk food and items sit around her feet. She picks up the phone and finally asks to be put through to her Boss.

Eve sits facing her Boss. He isn't too happy with Ruby's hospitalisation and is about to sign Eve off the case but Eve speaks up. Ruby is stuck inside herself - not that bloody house. Any box ticking antics will not save her. For the first time in bloody ages, Eve's finding she *cares*. She can see someone in a knot and knows she can make a difference. She has to act. He can do what he bloody likes.

Eve squeezes through rubble to tell Phoenix Ruby's got a fixation on a coach-load of dead people. It's an impossible task, but Eve has to figure out why. Phoenix flatters her. Real men don't see the size he says; they see the woman. She's a good soul, a natural beauty. This disarms Eve. There's a growing attraction between them.

Eve starts to jog, before long she keels over and lies flat on her back in the long grass, watching real runners pass by. Eve deliberately misses her bus to work and walks instead. She eats healthily; although her new meals are over all too soon. Taylor comes home for a few days, still wanting to live with Dad. There's tension between Alan and Eve and they argue, for the first time, about custody. Eve finds Taylor snacking on high calorie items, hidden in a bag. Eve tells Susan: *I'll make sure that girl is going to grow up giving a shit about herself and where the hell she's going*".

Eve and Phoenix sit together reading old newspapers about the coach tragedy. The culprit, a coach driver, was a married man. His coach was loaded with families, adults, children and pensioners. He was sober with no medical conditions. Items Ruby's collected have a repeating pattern: they're children's toys and jackets and shoes as if for the deceased.

Eve visits the warehouse. Eve stares across items, stacked together into thematic piles. Phoenix arrives. He thinks Eve fears she is like Ruby. They both care for mad Ruby. Something needs unlocking. Phoenix flatters Eve again, making her blush.

Enough has been moved to start sanitizing the house. Eve welcomes Ruby home with news that the environmental agency has lifted their order to evict. But it falls on deaf ears. Ruby's cold, disorientated and introverted. Her home has been invaded. At the

warehouse Ruby glares across everything. Phoenix whispers Ruby doesn't know she had this much. Ruby yells '*nothing can be thrown away*'. She needs it all taken back. She heads off furious. Eve locks up the warehouse. A REMOVAL MAN tells her they didn't get to empty that hidden attic area – in the top loft. Eve says she'll do it.

Ruby has her claws out and won't let Eve inside. She says she can see in her absence Eve and Buddha-boy have joined forces against her. Eve's lost weight and Ruby bets Eve is fucking him already. Ruby's defensiveness is brutal. Eve is not wanted. Gifts from Eve smash across the concrete in front of her.

A CLEANER is now doing Carl's flat. Eve pays her more than he's happy with. Carl doesn't like the change in Eve. Eve's answering back. Unable to control her reveals Carl's vulnerability.

Eve is fired up. She's decided she wants Taylor back. But Taylor likes Dad's new house. She has riding lessons to finish. She's got a bigger bedroom. She's allowed to do what she wants. Eve doesn't give her *anything*.

Eve sits opposite a solicitor. What rights does she have? How can she get custody? Eve says she never wanted it to get to this. It was an amicable split with Alan. As Taylor has gotten older she's blamed Eve. She knows Eve let the communication slide when she was with Alan. Eve was overworked, got ratty, she was ill and didn't know it. She wasn't giving anything to herself, and treated Taylor the same.

Phoenix and Eve are in the pub. The drink goes straight to Eve's head. Phoenix says what they've done is poked a red-hot lead pipe deep into Ruby's wound. Ruby's hard exterior and soft interior is familiar to Eve. Her vulnerability is tangible. Eve tells him he's a twat, full of psycho-trash. But it's all flirtation. They giggle. As the evening moves on, undercurrents grow intimate. Soon they're touching, and out in the car park they kiss. He tells her whatever size she is he'll like her, for who she is.

Ruby doesn't take her pills and is taken back to hospital and kept in. Orders are that Eve is not allowed near her. Eve uses this time to break into Ruby's house. At midnight she heads to the loft. The glass smash gets neighbours calling the police. Eve crawls, torch in hand, drunk through the panelled attic area, whilst the police explore downstairs. They leave finding nothing. As the morning light first streams in through the skylight Eve's found adoption papers. Ruby had a son, a boy, a few months after the coach crash. She calls Phoenix, waking him at 4.30am.

Phoenix is not happy with Eve. She'll lose her job. Who's going to tell? asks Eve. His problem is he doesn't care. The same problem with the whole system, no one cares enough to make a difference. Phoenix wants to talk about what happened in the car park, and their kiss. Eve says she can't sort herself out - she can't take him on too.

Ruby returns home from hospital. Eve attempts reconciliation using whiskey, telling crude jokes and insulting Phoenix, but gets nothing back. After days of trying, Eve

loses her patience and finally uses directness. Through Ruby's letterbox she predicts what'll happen next. This trash pad will be filled up; a new Environmental Order will be slapped on it. Eve won't be around to give a shit. Ruby needs to go find her birth son, adopted now, to save her arse because he is real family, Eve is not so she can fuck off and die alone. As soon as this outburst comes Eve regrets it. Ruby roars outside. The ladies' confrontation is the largest yet. They have to be split up by Phoenix. Eve leaves, vowing never to return.

A few weeks tick away. Ruby struggles with where she's been left. The poked wound is hurting. She feels hollowed out and muddled. Threats from the warehouse come flooding in, her stuff needs throwing out.

Eve's gone down dress sizes. New clothes replace old ones. The change makes an impression on Taylor. Is there a man? Eve insists no, god forbid. They laugh. Eve's happy to see Taylor light up. She's much better at dealing with her daughter now. But it's not enough to persuade her to come home. Eve and Alan start their custody battle for Taylor. Taylor is close to the age where she can decide for herself. Susan hints Taylor wants to remain with Dad. Eve should prepare herself. Eve's gripped with fear.

Finally although Ruby loathes Phoenix she asks him to take her to the warehouse. She sits amongst her items, reflecting. She sleeps, whiskey bottle in hand, hidden in her junk. She returns often, finding her own way there and sinking into the mess. She suffers anxiety attacks. Days pass. Sally acts as replacement for Eve but Ruby refuses to comply.

From the warehouse office Ruby calls Phoenix. He's a total ponce but she's ready to talk. She hates that it'll be to him. *'Life deals us cruel blows'* she mutters.

Phoenix knocks on Eve's front door. He's taken back by the change in her. They talk about the custody battle. Eve's clearly drained by it but she's being strong. Phoenix says Ruby is ready to talk. He knows Eve wouldn't want to miss this. After all, she *cares*.

Eve steps into the warehouse with Phoenix. Ruby's surprised to see Eve so changed. Eve explains she'd been hiding, not wanting to give a shit – because to give a shit means caring and that actually hurts. It's exposure. The padding she built up protected her. Ruby tells them she had her boy in secret. She left for a year to have him so no one would know he existed. She left home, afraid and alone at 18. She gave birth alone and abandoned him, so that he would never know who he was. They follow Ruby through aisles of junk. Eve grasps Phoenix's hand, guessing who the boy's father was.

Ruby, Eve and Phoenix stop to glare down at newspaper pictures of the coach driver. Ruby asks what if her boy became the splitting image of his father and one day someone asked him why his Dad killed fifty-one innocent people? Because no

relative of a victim found out why this sober, married man turned deliberately left, hurtling down a steep precipice, scattering their love ones bodies in a ball of flames. No one knew this married man had a secret upper-class mistress who fell pregnant by him but who brutalized her. She'd have to confess that his father had made threats if she took his unborn child away. But the threats, Ruby says, were ignored. It's her fault that she didn't take them seriously.

Eve embraces Ruby: it's not her fault. How could she have known? says Eve. She promises she didn't mean her own threats said through the letterbox. She is here for Ruby.

Later, when they drop Ruby off she whispers to Eve. *'Are you fucking that twat'*? Eve answers no. Does she want to? Eve answers yes, probably. Phoenix's face lights up. Eve's quick to insult him appropriately not to give him hope. Eve hugs and kisses Ruby goodbye.

A corner's been turned. Lying in bed after sex Eve and Phoenix talk. Ruby's suffering penance. She has been ever since the crash, ever since she gave birth. She needs release. They talk about whether the families of the victims would want blood if they found out the truth. Eve's not sure but she knows Ruby would not be able to lie to her son. She hasn't got it in her. Even though she is a cantankerous sod she has a wholesome heart. That's what is making her stuck.

Time has passed. Eve tells Taylor that she's got to go away for few days. Taylor says she doesn't want Mum to go; she's lonely. No one's helping her with her homework anymore and Susan feels fake. Eve congratulates Taylor on her awareness.

Eve and Carl sit eating lunch. Eve's sat taller and bolder. He's distracted. *'Is there a new man?'* Eve's quick to say that none of anything is about a man, or any men. He mumbles a complaint. Eve stops him, mid way: if he continues she'll leave. They eat, in silence.

Eve sets off to track down Ruby's son with only basic information. Phoenix says sorry to Ruby that he couldn't stop Eve from taking off. Tension is rising. Ruby knew Eve would want to go looking.

Eve lodges in a B&B in a small seaside town. There's a beautiful view of the sea. She visits the police station where forty years ago a newborn child was left with just a note and a baby blue mitten. Stepping inside with the baby's photo, she presents it and the other blue mitten.

Eve is on the phone to Taylor, explaining she's trying to find someone who was abandoned. They talk honestly about abandonment. Eve promises she'll never ever treat Taylor badly again. She was too unhappy with herself to make life happy for Taylor. Taylor asks to visit her old room. Sally babysits and Taylor lounges across her old bed.

Tensions have bubbled over. Ruby's kicking off as Phoenix tries to persuade her some junk has no purpose whatsoever. Ruby throws items and is abusive. Ruby's nightmare: FLASHBACK. 18-year-old Ruby is alone, at night, giving birth under a bridge. She screams in pain. The motorway above her roars, taking the screams of labour away. Present day Ruby wakes buried in rubble. Phoenix holds her telling her it ok. She is like a child, needing his help.

A message arrives for Eve when she arrives back from a jog. The boy has been found.

We watch Thomas, 40, sit opposite Eve from outside a glass-fronted seaside café. She hands him the other mitten. Its emotional for him. Eve talks, he listens intently. Eve brings out a newspaper. He cautiously reads. Eve sits back, watching. We cut inside, CLOSE on Thomas, holding both mittens. He asks if Ruby is okay? No, says Eve, she isn't. She's been stuck carrying this for years. They agree it wasn't her fault. No one had answers. Any answers would have lead back to you *"she's been protecting you from a fear she's gripped onto for dear life"*. The irony is Thomas manages a wastage company. He's been gifted with the best life can offer. He'd hate to think of his biological mother suffering.

Phoenix has barricaded himself in the warehouse office. Ruby's yelling no one is moving a bloody thing. She wants Eve here now. On phone Phoenix tells Eve he doesn't think Ruby is up for this. Eve reckons Ruby is stronger than she thinks she is. Thomas is coming back with her. If they can get Ruby ready, then she'll see his father in Thomas – but no one else will.

Back in bed together there's more affection between Eve and Phoenix. He admits that falling for her isn't a very safe option. She knows she's hard work but nothing is worthwhile unless it's hard.

Taylor is being brave. She's telling Susan and Alan that it's Mum who she's going to live with. Stunned Alan and Susan remind her of all the benefits of being in their big house. She's had so much. Taylor tells them it's not that. She thinks things are not natural here; stuff is being shoved away and not talked about. She sees it. They can't see it, but she can.

Eve walks up the drive to Ruby's house, holding a whiskey bottle, and two glasses. Ruby moves around inside, knocking over junk to get a good view. She's excited to see Eve. Without greeting one another they return to their old routine and sit on the doorstep and light up, clinking glasses. The spliff is dragged deep. On her exhale Ruby says she'd be proud to have a daughter like Eve. Eve asks if Phoenix has been any use. Ruby says but he's been okay. Ruby guesses Eve's falling for him – she can sense it. Eve huffs. Ruby says not to hold stuff in, to let it out and they both laugh. Silence. Ruby initiates the tougher conversation, asking Eve if she found 'him'. Eve nods. A wave of panic flows through Ruby. Is he okay? Eve looks at her. Does Ruby mean: Is her son a madman like his father? No, says Eve, Thomas is completely normal. When Ruby repeats her son's name 'Thomas', she's shaking. That protective

layer is coming off Eve says, as she puts her coat around Ruby and tells her she has grandchildren, BILLY and LENA, 4 and 7 and a daughter-in-law, REBECCA.

Ruby is having her hair done in a cheap saloon. From the waiting car, Phoenix comments how Ruby has dressed up in a Sunday best and he's proud of her. Eve checks her watch, Thomas will be there at the warehouse now, what if he's put off? What'll happen to Ruby if he's gone when they arrive? Phoenix says he's 'listening to her fears'. Eve tells him to sod off.

They drive in silence. Ruby in the back is introverted, not answering questions. They pull up at the warehouse. Its big doors are open and vehicles are there. Phoenix gets out. Eve gets out. Ruby doesn't. She can't do this. Eve leans in saying it's up to Ruby now; Eve's done her bit. Eve leaves Ruby sat with the side doors open, the wind blowing through.

Inside the warehouse Phoenix greets Thomas and Rebecca. Eve joins them urging them to give Ruby time. Thomas says he'll help, free of charge to move this all to the skip. Eve and Phoenix sigh - one step at a time! The kids are racing up and down the aisles watching a car stood, isolated but with the doors open.

Inside Ruby sits frozen, unable to pluck up courage when two tiny faces peer around the sides of opposite open passenger doors. Billy and Lena hold toys taken from Ruby's collection. They say they've found loads of these, inside the building. They want to show her. Ruby plays the fool insisting she doesn't believe them; they're lying, the warehouse is empty. They laugh saying no, its true. Ruby digs her heels in more and the kids love it.

Phoenix and Eve step away to let the family meet. Squeals of children's laughter help relax the adults. Thomas steps out the warehouse as Ruby steps out the car. He introduces himself. She looks up in awe; he's a handsome fellow. He apologizes for his kids but it's fine, she says, she's one herself. From a distance, Eve holds tightly onto Phoenix. He kisses Eve, saying she's marvelous. They both agree what they're watching now is the only way to shift the mess.