

Working through

Leslie Turnbull, age 58, widow, third meeting success, lovely curvy body.

Vanessa Seagrove, 31, daughter, second meeting, so much pain from her loss, great!

Tanya Kowolski, 40, granddaughter, after funeral, wow she was easy but not great.

Laura Thomas, 31, great granddaughter, before funeral!!, easy peasy but an amateur - not much grief.

Tamsin Price, 16, niece, met at funeral and success next day, surprisingly good, must have had something going with her uncle to have so much pent up feeling in her.

You get the gist. Mike's pace was hotting up. By spring he was racing towards his twenty mark. Surprisingly, he got the feeling that his targets were more receptive during the winter months. He was really looking forward to back up his theory over the next cold dark season. The proof of the pudding, so they say.

What he could tell, should he was to sit down with a boss for a performance review, was that he was getting better at it. The initial homework and preparation was a great help but the main asset in his task was himself. He was a natural talent. Unfortunately it was not something he could really add to his CV, below his three A grades. But if he analysed the transferable skills he was displaying then his CV would make him a good match for many lofty managerial roles.

Time management was a key skill. Listening was essential. Empathy (fake but convincing). Strategy (when to make a move). Staying trim (he went to the gym and moisturised). Body language reading. Body language given off. Fibs. Pragmatic lying. Whoppers. Memory (knowing when and why he lies). Logistics (being in the right place at the right time). Kissing (first kiss and follow ups, knowing what category of kisses needed by target). Decision making. Fucking. Forgetting.

All these skills were honed with practice. Except the ability to forget. Mike was a natural forgetter. Usually anyone with a heart would reminisce, smile at the happy memory of the smell of hair, an expression, an endearing mannerism or just the orgasm. Not Mike. Find em, @X*&! em..... forget em was his mantra, although he was loathe to admit a bit of misty-eyedness about Molly and Jean, as his first successes. The rest were as dead to him as the people they had loved and lost.

Of course one of the major tasks he had was to keep his activities secret from Marie. He invented a couple of friends with which to meet and he said he was going to the gym more often than he really did. Mike even invented a couple of aunts and uncles to visit. To do all this he had to know Marie's routine and her shift patterns and mention his phantom friends and family only as much as needed.

One more skill to add to the list. Luck. Things always seemed to turn out the way he wanted. His life with his small gang of mates in Bicton was what he wanted. Leaving school when he did was what he wanted, despite evidence of a brain that could take him out of Shropshire. Getting beaten up in the fashion store was what he wanted; he wanted to feel what it was like. Getting an older girlfriend was what he wanted. All these widows and daughters were what he wanted. He felt he was lucky enough to get everything he deserved. And he truly deserves everything he got, in his eyes, after the upbringing his mother gave him.

Alicia Khan, 45, daughter, five meetings, Bicton's best (he never noticed her before when he roamed the streets there with his mates).

Anabella Richmond, 27, granddaughter, six meetings, a real challenge and a real beauty and worth the wait.

He did all these women and nobody knew. These were his successes. His failures were acceptably low and proof that his marketing strategy was good.

He knew he had luck on his side, or somewhere thereabouts. That's the thing with luck, you don't always know that it's there for you.

On at least six occasions, a white plumber's Ford Escort van had waited outside the hospital main gate, ready to follow Mike to wherever he went. On all those occasions, he happened to dutifully go home to his partner, sometimes via the gym and sometimes direct, occasionally via the chippy or Tesco thus proving what a thoughtful and caring man he was to poor Marie. Mike was indeed a lucky devil. But sooner or later, as sure as eggs is eggs, Carl would definitely catch Mike sniffing around a sad looking woman.

So to summarise: life was a breeze, his hobby was fun, his luck was in.

Unfortunately for Mike, a funeral on Wednesday May 13th was about to buck the trend.