

M25

It was hard to distinguish between day or night and the noise of the wipers fighting with the lashing rain, was keeping Alex perched high in the seat, trying desperately to make out where she was on the motorway.

Sam was unusually quiet, “Alex,” she whispered, “should we pull over to the next lay-by?”

“Shush, I’m trying to concentrate!” Alex said, as she continued following the taillights of the vehicle in front of her. She kept back as much as possible as it was difficult to make out the distance between them; visibility was very bad.

The M25 was now almost at a standstill inching along snakelike towards the Dartford Tunnel. She was at junction two and it was obvious this was going to take longer than she had anticipated.

“Alex, Sam tried again, “do you mind if we put the radio back on, the rain seems to be easing a little now?”

“What, oh yeah, might as well, looks like we’re stuck here for a while.” Alex reduced the speed of the wipers and switched the radio on. She looked at her friend and smiled when they caught the tail end of Chris Rea’s song “The road to Hell”

The knot in her stomach eased a bit as the speed of the traffic-jam picked up a little and she could see the toll signs ahead.

“God it’s been a long day, I just want to get indoors now and have a proper cup of tea,” Sam was back to chatting, “It’s true you know no matter where you go on holiday and how ever much you enjoy it, its still nice to come home. I wonder how long I’ll keep my tan this time, thank goodness it’s early in the year we’ll still be able to show it off with our summer clothes.”

Alex switched off from her friends chatter and concentrated on fighting her way to the right tollbooth in between the lorries and cars. She threw the money into the basket and drove towards the tunnel entrance; she hated tunnels and was always relieved when she could make out the light of the exit.

“Sam can you text Lisa and let her know we are on the A13 and we should be back in about forty-five minutes.”

“Yeah sure, oh sorry Alex I forgot, my phone needs charging, I’ve got no juice.”

“Oh well never mind I suppose they’ll be in bed by the time we get home, its been one delay after another. I wonder if Lisa has got over her break up with Jimmy, I asked Col to keep an eye on her whilst we were away.”

Alex manoeuvred her way through some heavy traffic, then the two women sang along to the familiar music on the car radio for a while.

“Do you know what?” Alex said to Sam after a while.

“ I never thought I’d say this but I really quite missed Col, I’m hoping the break might have done us some good. We were arguing a fair bit before you suggested we go on this trip, having a mate like you in the travel business does have its perks.”

“O gee thanks, yeah it was good fun wasn’t it. Lets hope I can keep my job, there have been quite a few redundancies in the company lately.”

“You could always come into the teaching profession with me Sam, you’d give the chatterboxes a run for their money.”

“Dear god no, never, I’d strangle the little darlings, I’ll just stick with what I know, I’ve been with the company a fair while so hopefully I’m safe!”

“Oh bloody hell here comes the rain again.” Alex turned the wipers on full speed as the torrential rain continued until they reached home. Sam dashed round the front of the car to open the door of the old Victorian terraced house where the friends shared accommodation. Alex removed the two cases from the boot of the car. Sam ran back to the car and took her own case whilst Alex grabbed hers and locked the car. The two women stood for a moment in the hallway dripping on the mosaic-tiled floor. They giggled and shivered, “lets get a cuppa, hope there is some milk in the fridge,” Sam stopped her mouth agape, “Oh bloody hell,” The colour drained from Alex’s face as they witnessed, Colin and Lisa wrapped in bath sheets hair askew staring down at them from the top of the stairs.

Lisa screamed and ran back into the bedroom.

Colin sat down on the top step and put his head in his hands, “I swear to god Alex this was not the way I wanted you to find out, we didn’t think you were back until tomorrow! We just kind of fell for each other, it’s the real deal Alley, I’m just so sorry you had to find out this way.”

Alex looked at her boyfriend and amazed herself at how composed she felt.

“I want you and my good friend Lisa, out of this house now, anything you can’t manage you can collect tomorrow from Sam.”

“Alex looked at Sam who nodded quickly.”

“I will be at work,” Alex continued, “goodbye and good luck you’re welcome to each other.”

Sam and Alex went into the kitchen and stayed there until Colin and Lisa left.

“Are you ok?” Sam asked.

“Surprisingly I feel liberated, I could never really trust him you know. She’s welcome to him.” The two women sat together drinking a good amount of their duty free gin and cried in companionship until dawn.