



Stories for the Train

Tales on the go

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The Moonlight of Tryfan

By Alan Goodchild

The question of whose fault it was seemed irrelevant and bloody annoying to John at the time. He shouldn't have sworn at him though. He could have said, 'well it wasn't mine' or just, 'It was hers,' but Mr Parks caught him off guard with such a pointless, sarcastic question, so he threw a few fucks in where he shouldn't have and grabbed him over the desk. He did apologise to the brief, but in truth the solicitor's willingness to fight John's corner had gone in that angry second, and John feared that the two hundred quid an hour was less likely to purchase the outcome he'd hoped for. He was right, it didn't, that's sort of why he's up here, closer to that big silver moon than he's been in years, up a mountain, a big one that he knows, in Wales. It's called Tryfan and it looks down on the Ogwyn valley in Snowdonia, we holidayed here once, happily, a long time ago.

It's a mountain with a proper summit, a peak, the fifteenth highest in England and he's up here for a reason; to jump off it to his death, I know he is. I could try to stop him, tell him how much his family will miss him, how his kids will cry, how his mother would turn in her grave, even that his mates would have to find a replacement in the darts team; how could he? But I won't, because he didn't help me.

It was twelve years ago that my brother John saw me go, let me go. I was younger than him, just sixteen. We were out with a group of lads from the Broadwater estate. Tottenham were playing Arsenal, the fans hated each other, so it was one where John said I needed some protection. He smuggled the knives from the kitchen drawer under Mum's nose that day, while I kept her talking. It was exciting and we all showed our pieces when we met at the top of White Hart lane. We won 3-2 and the police separated us after the game by making the home fans wait a half hour. We came out in the quiet and headed home, it was about a mile down the road when it happened.

Big lads, all rushing out of the door of the pub, girls too. The fight was inside, nothing to do with us, windows were smashed and there was glass all around. John and the boys ran off, but I was hit on the head by something. It bled a lot, I panicked, and I pulled the knife out to protect myself, like John said I should.

It was a girl that did it, did me I mean, my age I guess, hard face, in my chest, loads of blood then nothing. The last face I saw was my brother John, he was swearing at me and pulling me up by my shirt, screaming; 'stay here you wanker!' So, I have, all his life since then, stayed with him. Watching him.

John is a violent man and his ex-wife fully bears the scars of seven years of marriage. Alys divorced John quite rightly, and she's taken everything he has, got the kids too. Many times, I wanted to help but we can't you know, not physically I mean, but I've learned that we can in other ways. We can plant thoughts, cause feelings and stuff, especially at night when he sleeps. I've made him regret his life big time and I've got him feeling like there's no point in going on. I don't want Alys or the kids upset by seeing him go, so I put this idea into his head. I dreamed, for him, that falling from a high point by

accident was no suicide or admission of guilt. I suggested his mates would see it as bad luck, falling while climbing, doing a man's thing in the mountains, and he took it, he really took it, so we're here, tonight.

The moon looks even bigger now all the sunlight has gone; he is very calm, and the wind has dropped to nothing. He stands and sets his small rucksack down on the rock, from it he pulls a hip flask and a small booklet. I was never old enough to drink. He pulls a torch from his pocket and shines it on the cover. I've not seen this one before. He cries as he glugs some foul-smelling fluid, he has trouble getting it down and his hands shake as he struggles to look at the pages, there are photos, photos of me. I see through his eyes like I've never seen before.

'I loved you,' he wretched to the small picture of a smiling Gary, a younger me, snot and tears hit the page, then he kissed the plastic and held it to his cheek as his body shook, violently.

'Why did you let her kill me then?' I shouted, I couldn't stop my own tears, my voice was shrill and child-like.

'I didn't mean to!' Blood splattered from his mouth.

His reply struck me as hard and as shocking as the knife did back then. 'You can't hear me?' I said, terrified. He stood, then he looked directly at me.

'I can hear you now Gary and I am so very sorry mate.'

He moved forward away from the crumpled body on the floor and my big brother hugged me for the first time ever. We sobbed for our wasted lives in the sorrowful moonlight of Tryfan, our spiritual peaceful holiday home, together again.