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Wind Rush

by Des Holden

The door hissed open and two young people, a boy and a girl blew into the warm. The door slid shut and he shrugged his Harrington jacket from over their heads. They flopped into seats by the vending machine. The sign above showed ten minutes until the Gatwick train. Outside it was cold. I rechecked my app, thirty percent chance of snow. In April. Outside a lone lamppost illuminated a useless circle of platform. The new arrivals dripped on the concrete floor, heads together. She wore green school uniform. The smoke as he vaped mixed with the steam from wet clothes.

Opposite me the old woman picked her paper carrier bag from the floor and set it on her knees. She rummaged, moving things around, peering from different angles until she pulled out a bag of sweets. She offered them to her companion, an old man in a grey mac. They were both completely dry. He took the sweet but the wrapper was difficult and revealed his tremor. She took it back, unwound the paper and put the sweet to his lips. She put her bag back at her feet.

“We’re running away,” the challenge came from the fog of vapour and the girl punched his arm.

“We’re running away too” the old man said, round his sweet. His Parkinson's made his voice deep and slow. His red tie was neatly knotted and his shirt collar done up. The tannoy announced the imminent Brighton train.

I touched my passport in my inside pocket for the fifth or sixth time since leaving work. “Where to?” I asked.

“To the sunshine. Back to Trinidad. We’ve never been back and we don't want to leave it too late.” He cocked his head. “The train’s here.”

I looked out through the glass but nothing had changed. The pool of light on the platform swam a little drunkenly in the wind.

“He worked on the trains for forty years. Never had a day sick.” The woman said, squeezing his hand where it rested, on his knee.

Light parcelled as windows replaced the dark outside and the young couple got up.

“We’re not really running away,” the girl said to the old couple. He’s my brother. We’re going to see his mates in a band. There’s no need to ring the police.”

The door slid open and they walked back into the rain, huddled again under his jacket. I stood as well, but the older couple stayed where they were.

“Aren't you coming?” I asked. “Do you need any help?”

“No. Maybe we’ll take the next one.”

“It's another half an hour, even if it's not cancelled.”

“It won't be cancelled,” the man said, “the punctuality of the late evening trains is very good.”

The young people were beyond the lamp post and too far from the edge of the platform and the slowing train to be seen.

“It's the thought of running away we enjoy,” the woman said. She picked her bag up and began to rummage once more.