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The Green Death

by Daniel Judd

"We can no longer be friends, I can no longer trust you."

No, not a childish retort in the playground but a lost soul opening up his lost luggage. Can opened, deadly vipers unleashed.

I'd made a mistake but like all good sons I'd admitted to it. The trouble with life, as you get older it actually gets harder and there's no one book to guide you. I knew he suffered from depression, but unlike the ex he had a job and seemed to function between the hours of 9am-3pm. He was not, as far as I was aware, a member of a top secret pilot scheme for a government daylight saving eco initiative.

Love is blindness, but nothing is perfect. His kitchen could do with fire and acid to get rid of that possibly deadly, alien green grime. And no love could instill any desire to watch not a second more of Ru Paul's effing Drag Race, but in hindsight that was probably his clumsy polite way of saying 'go home, you've had your fun'.

The only sign there might be a problem - bar the creeping menace and the splits and tongue pops clips - was the confession he hardly left Brighton, but I dismissed this as an excuse not to catch the number 12 bus to Eastbourne. After all, 'nothing ever happens here', a cliché that no amount of council-drafted slogans and fancy pavement could erase. It would be about ten years before he'd see the benefits.

The half-price housing and the benefits of a seat in a pub that served a decent Harvey's, the steady stream of cover bands being a hit, miss or maybe at the bandstand... Maybe not.

How had we met? A message to come round up after some two years had passed since a mild flirtation and a shy goodbye. A drunken night with the now ex, new friendships forged, the excitement he might need somewhere to crash, dashed when a brother eventually returned his texts.

Here they were some 4 months later, not going out. I'd adapted to the grime, grown accustomed to his insistence on a shirt and tie for sex and felt safe in his fixer-upper, cut off from the rest of the world.

The simplicity of our arrangement, pleasantly contrasted with the deadly grime that was continuing its slow creep across the world. The confusion that just couldn't be shrugged off compounded by a friend's sudden death. Sepsis.

But real life like a virus is always there, waking or sleeping ready to bite. And sometimes it burns.

A picture shared after a gap of some impossibly long three weeks, showing him painfully thin. The panic. The being stuck in London and not having a chapter on it. Not having a clue what to do.... And the contacting a mutual therapist friend to keep an eye out. Telling him. The betrayal.

It was the end of an affair, for that's all it was. A knee-jerk reaction to Paul's death, a friend so full of life, a constant companion. An earpiercer, a coach and a daft old sod. Always there with a glass of 'splishy-splashy' and a line of wit, wisdom or something else. Fucked up like the rest of us. A life worth mourning and yet a life truly lived. It was time to start doing the same. Living.

"More wine anyone?"