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Time to Leave

by Stuart Carruthers

The news spread swiftly through the village.

Inside the small semi-detached house at the bottom of Brook Street everything was normal. Outside, however the barometer painted a chilling picture of the oncoming storm.

Betty and Michael Lighthouse had moved to Cliff View in 1948. They were a private couple and despite having lived in the village for over thirty years, very little was known about them.

Margaret Pew wasn't good at keeping secrets. It was by accident that she had found out who the Lighthouse's really were. Her late husband owned a radio receiver and following his death she stumbled onto a conversation that would change her life forever.

The small gathering in the community hall now waited in anticipation. By the time Mrs Pew entered the room the unexpected news had developed into a whole new story. Over the course of the next thirty minutes, she would explain in detail what she had heard the previous evening.

Angela stood motionless in the dark doorway to the rear of the hall. As soon as word reached the Gallagher's they would come looking for her parents. Slipping out the side entrance, the wind and rain had arrived as she walked briskly up the high street. She knew what to do.

The Ford Anglia lay hidden under a dust sheet in her parent's garage and the battered old suitcases stuffed full of papers in the cupboard next door. After a few minutes she entered the kitchen to find her parents asleep in their favourite chairs. In a calm voice she woke them and explained what they needed to do. She had prepared everything and would drive them to the safe house.

As the car slowly pulled out onto the deserted street, the storm clouds circled. Checking her rear view mirror, Angela could see Vincent Gallagher walking briskly in the direction of the town hall. He didn't look happy.