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Fugitives

by Vera Gajic

“People who travel are always fugitives. They have something to hide,” said George.

“Oh don’t be so old fashioned” said Cat, “that sounds like it comes straight from a Daphne Du Maurier novel. David is not a pirate or some sort of smuggler or a “fugitive” now you’re just clutching at straws.”

George looked hurt, his elaborate turns of phrase had appealed to Cat when they first met 18 years ago, she’d said it was like meeting someone from a Jane Austin novel and she hung on his every word. How sublime that period of his life had been, being adored by a beautiful young woman.

She considered the 15 year difference in their ages as a cause for celebration, that she’d found someone who could teach her about love, art and literature rather than the unkempt youths who pretended to study English literature at university but were only interested in the drugs, alcohol and women.

He’d decided to come back to do a Phd after his latest employer ‘let him go’. At least he’d got a guilt induced redundancy package that allowed him to study for 3 years. He never for a moment thought he would find the love of his life while delivering his obligatory weekly seminar to the undergraduates, but there she’d been in class and there again the following week, staying behind to talk to him and asking him to join

her for coffee. How natural it had seemed to impart his love of literature, particularly 19th century English novels to this eager pupil.

“Is that really all you have to say George, after 15 years together? Where are all your verbose hyperbolic arguments now? I’m sorry I know I should have warned you but you must have realised how unhappy I’ve become with our dreary repetitive life, having to spend all my time with you in the house I can’t take it anymore.”

“But darling everyone has to stay at home and live a dreary repetitive life, there’s a deadly virus out there.”

“There you go exaggerating again George you were living like this before lock-down. You’ve been staring at your computer screen for the last 10 years, editing the dreariest of the dreary self publishing novels, I don’t know how you stand it.”

“But Cat, what does it matter to you if I can glean immense satisfaction from improving people’s masterpieces into something they can be proud of.”

“That is not the point George. We don’t do anything interesting or exciting, I see all these people on Instagram dressing up and playing silly games and making films, being creative, pretending to be a work of art or joking, yes that’s it George having fun, you have no sense of humour.”

That hurt. How could she say he didn’t have a sense of humour, he often laughed. He loved Black Adder, they used to watch it together.

“But Cat don’t you think it is just lock-down getting to you, not me? How did you possibly meet this David and how are you going to get to Morocco now?”

“I met him on Instagram, I liked his lovely photos of the most incredible places and we started private messaging. He loves travelling, meeting people, open to every new experience and he wants to take me with him to have the biggest adventure.”

“Cat, you can’t just leave, you’re only allowed out of the house to go shopping or for a walk. Have you even met David?”

“Of course, we chat on facetime every evening.”

“Oh I see, that is why you have recently developed a severe case of constipation. I was getting concerned about the health of your bowels now I realise I should have been concerned about your mental health.”

“Ouch, I’m leaving you tomorrow and there is nothing you can do about it.”

“How do you propose to do that Cat?”

“I am taking the car I’m going to pick up David and drive to Spain and get the ferry to Morocco.”

“But it’s my car.”

“No it’s not, it’s our car and I’m taking it, you can have the flat.”

“Why the urgency Cat? What is he running away from?”

“From here George, from here.”

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“I thought you were packing?” said George as he braved going into the bedroom half an hour later.

Cat was in bed with the covers over her head.

“Go away.”

“Now tell me what’s happened Cat.”

“No.”

“Go on,” said George, “please,” as he started to slowly turn down the duvet

“David’s been arrested.”

“Really, now who would have thought” said George as he revealed the beautiful black lace all in one he’d bought for Cat’s last birthday from Ann Summers and leaned over and took the strap between his teeth as she gasped with excitement.

“That was very inventive, you nearly had me that time. I wonder what gave you that idea,” said George as he bit her ear and put handcuffs on her wrists.