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## The Bond

by Stuart Carruthers

The half-empty evening bus slowly turned into Gretton Road.

The graffiti decorated gable end of number twenty-two was the first thing you saw as you entered the Hill Top estate. Snarling teenagers prowled the deserted streets like hungry wolfs waiting for prey. Aisling held Pete's hand tightly. She wasn't scared of them.

No one was home.

Entering the kitchen, she switched the radio on and filled the kettle.

"Tea?"

"Yes please."

"Sit down I need to talk to you."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Pete we've only been seeing each other for a few weeks,,why would I?"

\*

Sharon and Jes were best friends. Inseparable since first meeting in junior school, they did everything together. Upon entering Daisy's café, they quickly identified who they

were there to meet. The girls were very confident for their age and this impressed John. After some needless small talk they got down to business.

“Where’s your friend?”

“Why?”

“I’ve got a message for her.”

“From who? We can pass it on.”

As they calmly continued the conversation John slid the package across the floor with his right foot. The girls knew the routine.

Without making it obvious to the other customers, Jes calmly leaned forward, lowered her right arm until she could feel the straps of the bag. After her bone like fingers had flicked through its contents, she lifted her head and winked at John.

“Another Tea?”

“Why not?”

“Make sure you tell Aisling I need to see her.”

\*

The black and white skyline matched the houses on Gretton Road.

Pete sat on the wall outside. He hated this part of town. There were no trees. Black tyre marks left by the local joyriders covered the grey concrete roads and pavements.

The wolves could sense his venerability.

Pete fixed his stare on the tall kid with the red bike. He was the gobby one. The blade inside his brother’s coat was ready. In the short period of time it took Aisling to gather her coat and bag from the house, Pete had dealt with the gobby kid on the bike.

He wasn’t interested in what the kid had to say. His eyes were fixed on his left hand. Jumping from his bike the tall ginger haired kid lunged with his left arm outstretched. Pete was already moving to his right. A single jab to his gut and it was all over.

Looking down on his victim Pete smiled and then wiped the blood-stained blade on the boy’s jumper. Turning to face his victim’s friends, they returned his stare for a few seconds before picking up their mate and heading off in the direction of the park.

Aisling stood motionless in the doorway. Pete walked up to her, took the bag from her hand and whispered into her ear. The front wheel on the red bike was still turning as they briskly walked passed and on towards the station.

