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Going Back

by Ivor John

It had been several years since he had been here, in this place, twelve he thought, but he was a poor historian. A comment he had seen written on the notes the psychologist had made during an assessment. It hadn't said that in the typed up document he received a few days later via his GP, with a repeat prescription for Fluoxetine.

He had met Lisa at a party. He hadn't wanted to go, preferring to spend the evening at home, watching football on TV. It wasn't that he disliked company, in fact he often felt very lonely, but he felt very anxious about social events. Never knowing what to say, or what people wanted to hear, he often said things which seemed to upset people.

He was fit, a Bricky, he always found work on sites. His work made him strong, muscular, and as he always worked outside, he had a natural tan. He was a good looking man. He could easily cope with on-site banter. He understood the rules of that. Neither did it matter if he mistakenly said something offensive. They would say something like, 'You're a fucking wind up Lee'. It was all very superficial and that was fine. His sweaty days of scaffolding and cement passed easily.

He lived alone in a one bedroomed flat, which he had on a mortgage. He had all he needed, but it was sparse, lacking in unnecessary, as he saw it, ornaments or decoration. It was functional and basic.

He could see that Lisa was looking at him. She was standing across the lounge in a small group, holding a homemade cocktail and a small plate of olives. The group were engaged in conversation but she kept looking round at him. Even he noticed. Despite that, he would never have approached her. But she came over to him. Tight jeans, trainers and a white cotton blouse. Waste length mousey hair. She was very pretty he thought.

“Hi,” she had said, “I don’t think I have seen you before, do you normally hang with this crowd?”

They had spent the rest of the evening together. He had quickly enjoyed being with Lisa. A few days later, he had invited her to his flat for a meal. His flat was always clean, but he made sure it was spotless, bought a vase and some chrysanthemums. He cooked pasta, and a sauce he had bought from Tesco, along with garlic bread. Violette for pudding and a bottle of Asti Spumante.

Lisa stayed the night. He’d had girlfriends before, but not like this, never who had stayed the night. Taking their clothes off together and making love, laughing, enjoying. They slept together for a while, holding each other in a tight embrace. In the morning they had shared a shower, laughing and spraying each other with shower gel

A few days later Lisa moved some things into the flat and stayed there with him. They enjoyed life, she worked in an office administrator and with his money, they were comfortable in his small flat.

They spoke about a holiday together, Lee had never been on a holiday, not since his mother had died. Never with a girlfriend. They chose a week in Sorrento. It had been marvellous. The warmth in the air, beautiful scent of flowers in the evening as they wandered in the exotic piazzas.

He hadn’t noticed at first, that she did not seem as happy as he was. That was until she told him, quite matter of factly, “Lee, you’re a lovely guy, but this isn’t really working for me anymore.”

He couldn’t have imagined that he could move so quickly from such happiness. He hoped she would change her mind before they went home. Buying her meals, ice creams, visiting museums. They even made love together again.

When they got back home, Lisa gathered her few things from the flat, kissed him and left. He hadn’t seen or heard anything of her since.

He knew it had been a mistake to come back to Sorrento in the beautiful bay of Naples. The last place where he knew such happiness. He was wallowing in his memories, but memory is a thing you forget with. He wished he could forget, but he knew he never would.