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## I'm in Love

by Ivor John

I'm in love with you and you don't want anything to do with me so I think we can make this work.

I could feel the sweat, starting to form on my back as I drove past the pylons and entered Brighton. I had made this trip more times than I could remember, but I always felt a combination of excitement and apprehension. I always found it difficult to tell those two emotions apart. This time, it was different, because of what had happened, I was more anxious than on those previous occasions.

I always parked in the carpark by the Tesco Store in New Church Road. Taking only the cash I needed, leaving my wallet and wedding ring wrapped in the cloth I used for cleaning the windscreen, pushed to the back of the glovebox. Nothing to identify me if my pockets were gone through.

It was a ten minute walk, two blocks, to Clarendon Villas, to the three storey Edwardian Building. In its day, a fine building but now clearly unloved. Textured paint flaking from the rendered walls. Double glazed casements instead of wooden sash windows. Outside a line of wheelie bins filled the crazy paved driveway. Several bicycles, in various states of repair, padlocked at an angle across the chain link fence at the side.

Going up to the door, as I had done so many times. The typed instruction 'Please Push Firmly' was crudely fixed with yellowing sellotape to a panel of doorbells. Some of them had names, over the numbers, 'Shah' 'Cuthbertson' proclaiming territorial ownership of the tawdry flats. Flat 7 had no name. Previously I would have phoned in advance, but this time, I couldn't. I had rung your number, numerous times Each time my call being picked up by the o2 answering service. I had probably called hundreds of times. I had tried calling from a different number, but you cut me off as soon as I spoke. I was aware that you could be occupied, that my calling on you may annoy you. But I couldn't leave it. Our relationship had been so good, we had so much future.

We met a few months ago when I replied to your advert in the Friday Ad. Despite how it may seem, I had never done this before. Of course I had seen other women. But never as young and as beautiful as you. Even despite the tawdry circumstances of your studio flat. The only room was dominated by the double bed. The overwhelming smell of damp, mixed with cigarettes. Beside the bed, a paper bag, labelled NHS Prescriptions, containing condoms. I paid you the agreed sum before being invited to take off my trousers and underwear, and laying them on a chair in the corner, Taking the money, which you counted and took into the small bathroom. I could see trackmarks on your thighs when you removed your jogging bottoms and dropped them the floor.

Afterwards, I felt dirty and overwhelmed with feelings of embarrassment. But also the buzz, the adrenalin rush from my transgressive behaviour. I called you again a few weeks later. Then it became weekly. As often as I could afford to, but I couldn't really afford to. My wife was asking why we seemed so short of money. I had to pretend they had made a mistake when final demands arrived for gas and electricity. But I couldn't stop seeing you.

I was surprised at how you responded when I told you how I felt, of my feelings for you. You told me that you were leaving the business, gave me the number of a friend of yours who could help me out. Of course I have never called her. You stopped answering the phone when I called. I saw you were still advertising, so why wouldn't you see me? My wife has gone to stay with her sister, she doesn't know about you Anna.

Anna I love you, but you don't want anything to do with me, so, I think, we can make this work.