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They Always Get Back Together

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I'm lying here just thinking about things. I'm lying here on a beautiful summer night, too relaxed to get up and put on the lamps. Rubbing my toes together and looking at the roses; thirty-six in total, twelve to a vase. I learned today that thirty-six red roses means 'head over heels in love'.

Being in love is always a new experience. Every time. When I was very young I thought old people like my mother could never understand how I felt.

Anyone would think you'd invented it, she'd said.

But now I realise that actually, yes you do. You do invent it, every time it happens. Every love is a new invention no matter how old you are.

Outside, the streetlight blinks on and the Roberts' pull into their driveway next door. I lie listening to their kids shouting at each other and thundering up the stairs. I lie there until the scent of the roses becomes sickly and I know you'll be back soon, and I drift into the bathroom.

I think I used to be quite pretty. Isn't it shocking how quickly age takes over? And how completely; we don't get to keep anything. Cut yourself when you're older and even your blood seems more desperate to escape you. Everything slides, fades, sags, crumples or thins. You sleep less, you care less, you mean less.

Since meeting you I work hard to look after myself. Damage limitation. I never ever buy cheap clothes, creams or body lotions, rarely drink anything other than hot water and lemon. I cut meat and carbs from my diet, take five different supplements, yoga classes, aqua aerobics and long invigorating walks. My bank balance creaks more than I do.

Age is just a number, you said.

But I've always been a worrier; I told you that. I'm sorry for keeping on.

And you said *Relax*. Stop worrying. Just enjoy this.
So I did.
And here we are.

So we went to the beach, spur of the moment sort of thing. We went swimming together in the sea, shrieking like kids, rubbing each other's goose-bumped flesh with towels afterwards and sharing damp, salty kisses and a big bag of chips. Deliciously cliché.

And then the long drive home in traffic strung nose to tail like beads all the way, and the sun in my lap warm as a cat, and we were companionably quiet I thought, with just the radio on. Smooth FM.

This moment, this feeling – it's beautiful, isn't it? I said. Like the first of everything. The first date, the first kiss. It's like living our very own love story...isn't it?

And you looked at me. Slow down you said. Please. Slow down.

We had our first argument by text because you hung up on me. You didn't want anything more to do with me, you said.

I texted that you'd got it wrong – I hadn't meant I loved *you*. I meant I was loving the *moment*.

But if there's one thing in life I've learned, it's that you can't run away from your feelings.

I listen to your keys dropping on the hall table and the sound of your feet on the stairs. When you reach the creaky bit at the top I come out of the bathroom and you shout.

You really shout. *What the fuck are you doing here??*

You can't see my wrists yet. You can't see all the blood.

You see, I'm in love with you, and you don't want anything to do with me, so I think we can make this work. Because ours should be the greatest love story ever written. Because they always get back together in the end.