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Guilt In The End Will Find You

by Stuart Carruthers

Black streams of soot washed out onto the potholed road and down into the town, followed by a sound that changed their lives forever.

Maria shivered as the rain soaked into her pale skin. Her mind troubled with fear as it tried to understand the noise she'd just heard. Deep down she knew what it was and the consequences that could come her way.

Paul emerged from the dark coal sheds. Wiping his hands on his trousers, he briskly walked up to Maria. Without saying a word he grabbed her hand and pulled her in the direction of the town centre.

"Your hurting my hand!"

"Did you hear it?"

"Can you slow down? your hurting my hand."

"I've got to cover this up as soon as I can."

"Paul, Paul!" Maria tried in vain to get his attention, but Paul's adrenaline had taken over.

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The cold wet floor was their last resting place.

This definitely wasn't how they wanted it to end. As the lights came on in the town down the hill, the two young skinhead boys passed away in silence.

Over the coming hours their phones rang endlessly. On the other end of the line a mother's broken voice cried out in desperation.

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Clara waited patiently at the back of the queue. As she stood daydreaming, looking out through the shop window she suddenly spotted her friends.

"Where have they been?" she asked herself.

"£2.87, come on there's people waiting."

"Can I get a pack of papers please?"

"£3.10, do you know them?"

"Sorry?"

"He's trouble...they were following the Boyle brothers earlier."

"How much did you say? here is that enough?" Clara dropped her dirty coins on the counter top, as her friend disappeared around the corner.

"Who did you see them with?" she enquired as she stuffed her goods into her coat pocket.

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Maria ushered Paul into the Hilltop café. As they took their seats by the window, Paul pulled his coat down over his head and wiped the condensation from the window. Wrapping their hands around the hot cups of tea that appeared on the table, they sat in silence for the next half an hour. The smell of cooked meat and burnt toast engulfed the small café seating area. Working men came and went. Yet the young couple in the window seats didn't move. Suddenly their privacy was abruptly interrupted. Their guest wasn't welcome. The conversation was awkward and very much one-sided. But she wouldn't shut up. Paul couldn't look her in the eye. Carefully moving his legs under the table he tapped Maria's ankles and signalled with his eyes towards the door.

"We're going to Dan's flat, want to join us?"

"For what?"

"Nothing really, bored, its something to do," said Maria

"Look at the weather, its not stopped raining all day."

Paul grunted his displeasure. Maria stood and scraped her chair across the wet vinyl floor, the owner frowned her displeasure.

As they walked down into the town centre, no one paid much attention to the skinny teenagers as the horizontal rain soaked them to the bone. Suddenly Paul took a detour into the empty shopping arcade. Climbing over the piles of rubbish and wheel less shopping trollies, they suddenly found themselves in the empty shop that was once the bookmakers.

“What are we here for?” enquired Clara.

The light was poor and the smell of dead rats occupied Clara’s mind. In the silence that followed the demons that tortured Paul’s soul unleashed their anger on the blond haired girl from Maddisson street. Maria took a step backwards into the dark shadows, while her on-off boyfriend did what he had to do. She was too scared to say anything or help her old school friend.

“She saw us earlier with the skinheads,” noted Paul.

Maria’s hands shook violently. Struggling to take a cigarette from her inner coat pocket, Paul walked towards her, blood dripping from the kitchen knife in his left hand. Taking the lighter from her, he lit the cigarette, inhaled deeply and passed it on.

“Don’t bother covering this up, the rats will deal with her in time.”

It was dark by the time they emerged from the old shop. The streets were empty as the rain continued to fall on this forgotten troubled town.