

Bourne
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workshops

Night Journey

by Stuart Finegan

Panic was a vulture inside my body, trying to get out, pecking and flapping wildly at me. What was I doing? Why didn't I say goodbye? I stared at the floor, my lips dry, my heart was ready to explode. The driver didn't stop. From my crouched position on the floor I could just make out the odd town we passed through, the street lights, but only for a second, piercing the darkness of our bus. I could tell our driver was taking the back roads.

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In the still of night, breaking waves struck fear in our hearts. Strangers, with little possessions, waited nervously on wet sands. No one spoke a word. The tall Dutch man watched over us like a wolf watches over his pack. In his left hand his phone. Silent for now. The wind picked up. The lady tucked her baby deep inside her jacket. And we waited.

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"It's best you don't tell anyone. Wait till they're in bed before leaving. At the bus station look for the lady with the big hair and purple boots. Don't give her anything but your name. It's a long journey so take some food and drink. Remember no ID, or they will send you back."

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Climbing the broken steps into our carriage, it was the smell I tasted first. No lights. No sound drawn tattered curtains. Nowhere to sit but a wet dirty floor. A baby wouldn't stop crying. I knew no one. Of the few faces I could see, they looked exhausted, dirty and terrified.

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“They will look after you, but don’t trust them. When you arrive in the city don’t try and run away. Don’t make eye contact with them. It’s best you don’t make friends with anyone. No names. By Tuesday you’ll be safe please god. I have paid the deposit. The rest when you arrive safely. You won’t need any money for the journey, they’ll take it off you anyway.”