



“Coping With Loss” & “Clissold Park”

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Coping With Loss

Fuck Rooney. Fuck Cole. Fuck England.

Stan's Seat came to a slipping stop outside of Prashant's SuperDrink Off-Licence at the junction of Bethune Road.

Fuck Tina.

The rain was out of the blue. The day had started perfect, warm, sunny and England set up to stuff the Germans. Now it was raining and England were fucked.

A woman, fat and pretty in Pringle and Burberry, crossed behind him. She gave the car a hard stare through the rain and disappeared.

People came and went, turned up, made a judgement of you and vanished. Tina had done that to him, he had loved her but she had judged him and found him wanting. How could you cope with that?

And fucking England didn't care, they had too much money, they were taking the piss.

He got out of the car.

The off-licence was a cube. It was as if a concrete block had been dropped, hollowed out and called an off-licence.

In its small, barred window a single illuminated sign read: beer.

He went in.

A customer was calculating with a member of staff how much alcohol he could buy with the money in his pocket.

“Keep some by, Johnny,” called an older man from the back of the shop.

Johnny looked up from his coins. “Why?” he asked.

Yeah, fucking why. That's what England makes you ask. Them and Tina.

Stan stepped up to the counter, stood next to Johnny who was six inches shorter, his hair ropes of grease, his face puckered, a funnel for alcohol.

You couldn't help but see that.

“Catch the football?” Johnny's smile was missing teeth.

“No,” lied Stan.

“Just as well, they were shit, even Lampard and he's world class.”

Lampard – world class? That fuck's father was a better player than him and he was crap.

The shop assistant turned to Stan. “Yeah?” He wore a cross of St. George pin.

Stan had worn his lucky England shirt to watch the game but he had no luck any more. He loved England, and Tina. He didn't expect them to be on top of the world every time but to try, show some fucking willing.

“Whisky,” said Stan.

Just some passion.

The Germans, bloody Nazis but at least they seemed to care. It meant something to them like it didn't anymore to England, like it didn't to Tina.

“Cider,” said Johnny.

“What?”

“That's the value drink, penny for penny,” he nodded at that, said: “I used to be Martini for the sophistication.”

Like Stan was interested.

Johnny smiled: “But cider set me straight and the price, right every time.”

Cider wasn't that a girl's drink, come to that wasn't Martini?

“Bells, Teachers?” asked the assistant.

“Teachers.”

Stan made his choice and a bottle was produced. Good that, to say what you want and have it given to you.

He turned to leave.

“Nasty out there,” said Johnny.

“It’s coming down,” said the assistant and shrugged at something seen before.

Stan stepped out.

The rain was heavier, wetting him like Tina had been wet, at her best, in their bed.

He crossed to his car, holding the bottle of whisky by the neck like a club.

Fuck England.

Clissold Park

Clissold Park is wet and empty. The promise of dawn is a noose of light around the neck of the world and I remember Clare in the garden of last night all curves and hollows and wetness and reaching for me.

The wind moves over Clissold Park like Clare’s hand over my skin, quick between my legs.

I come up dirty with her, reeking of her, beautiful with her.

Trees sway like dancers, their branches entwine, sticky like lovers.

Autumn squats on Clissold Park, heavy with memory, dripping cum onto spent earth.

She opens her mouth: Yes.

She opens her legs: Yes.

And for a moment there is the promise that the night in me and in her might finally come to an end.

Like this night in Clissold Park ends.