

And Still They Drift

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Characters:

The man, mid-thirties, English.

The girl, a child, French.

I

A man sits cross-legged on the ground, far away, in the dark.

He shivers.

He sits on an orange and dusty looking patch of ground, clutching his arms to his chest.

Nothing, for a while, except the sound of the wind blowing all around him.

Slowly, the sound of chanting, screaming, and waves come through.

*He closes his eyes as the sounds worsen, growing in volume all the while until,
he looks up.*

The sound of screaming cuts out.

All we'd known was grey.

No yellows, no dust, just greens and browns and whites and rain and grey, for years.

Decades.

Generations.

That was England.

Britain.

He stands.

He looks lumpy, well fed.

We'd had food.

Bangers and mash,

fish and chips.

The orange of the desert gives way to reds and the blues and the whites.

We'd had petrol for the cars,

for the trains and the

buses and the

bikes and the

planes and we'd had work.

Lots of work.

I'd had work.

Pause.

Lots of work.

The colours swirl and crack to form jagged triangular edges, forming a flag.

Forming a jagged Union Jack.

In the light he looks broken, bloodied and bruised.

Against the flag a silhouette appears, skeletal and thin.

It waves at a crowd from behind a podium.

The island split.

Sank.

Started to fade and the food -

From underneath his lumpy jumper and trousers he takes out wires and bits of metal.

He puts them down onto the floor, amongst the jagged swirling lights.

He looks thinner now that the lumps are gone.

All of the jobs, all of the work: gone.

So we got angry, only, so did they.

So out came the guns and the mortars,
the tanks and the torture.

The silhouette shifts into a cityscape that soon topples and falls.

Crumbling buildings.

Cities.

All gone.

Hollow.

The flag rotates, the jagged triangular pieces twisting to form a boat, a plane and a train.

A crowd of men appears around him, arms crossed, grinning.

I met a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy.

He said he'd help take me to a place with work, lots of work.

He takes out more metallic pieces from underneath his clothes, thinning further.

A place with food, lots of food.

Not quite bangers.

Not quite mash.

But B'ssara.

A-sida.

Lab-labi, he said.

He wanted money.

All I had.

All gone.

Blue lines lap back and forth across the floor forming a small sea.

Then, the boat to Germany, where I met Hans.

I liked Hans.

He was like me.

We liked football.

We liked food.

He takes out the last of the objects hidden in his clothes.

They don't fit anymore.

He was hungry.

Wanted to go south.

So we met a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy.

Said he had a truck.

The lapping blue waves turn to a stretch of grey tarmac.

They turn to flicking yellow lines down the center of the road on which he stands.

Italy.

Pasta.

Pizza.

Not bangers.

Not mash.

More money.

From Hans and me.

All we had left.

All gone.

The bus was bumpy and full and we met Fernando and Pierre and Paddy.

I liked them.

They were like me.

They liked football and we talked about football, about our teams.

Barcelona and Bayern.

Marseille and Celtic and Preston.

We laughed.

We all liked food and we talked about food,

paella and wine and beer and bangers, with mash.

We dreamt about food.

The lines in the centre of the road suddenly bend and twirl.

Spaghetti surrounds him, strands upon strands of spaghetti.

Italy, a different camp.

The strands of spaghetti become wires, thick with sharp metal barbs.

We walked.

We met Claudio.

We liked Claudio.

He liked football.

He liked food.

He said he knew a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy who had a boat.

He said the guy would want money.

We got together, made a plan.

Brought out all the money we had.

Paid the man.

All gone.

Met the man.

Grin grin grin.

You'll be fine, he said.

We'll be fine, we said.

Get in the boat, he said.

So we got in the boat, the bouncing rubber boat.

He's silhouetted against the night sky.

Yellow twinkles of stars shine above.

It squeaked and

it rocked and

it rolled in the waves.

We were scared.

Didn't talk.

No football.

No food.

Packed tight.

Sitting still until they were thrown,

Hans, Paddy, Pierre, Fernando and Claudio,

by the waves.

They fell, drowned.

A moment.

I got to the shore alone.

No more talk of football.

No more talk of food.

The sky turns orange.

It's blinding.

He remains a silhouette, one among many.

There're men on the shore, by the fences.
After all that had been, after all that had gone,
they say:
Don't get comfortable,
and push me behind the bars.
Don't get comfortable.

A moment.

So I won't.

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