

“Shit” said Dan, looking out of his window. The forest next to his house was covered in deep darkness already. Shadows of the night were falling on the soft hills in the background, caressing them slowly, as if inviting them to sleep. In the background, he could see the rest of the village, lazily preparing for the day to end. It might be nothing special, but for him it was the most beautiful sight he’d ever seen. And after ten long years living in London, it was a sight he welcomed with open arms. He finally felt at home again.

Unfortunately for Dan the night falling only meant one thing. He had wasted another day. The days where he could stay up all night writing, were long behind him. Now he’s just a man in denial about his age, struggling to stay awake past 10PM.

“*Shit, shit shit*” his thoughts beginning to come back to reality. “*I’m going to get fired if i keep writing shit like this*” The harsh light of the laptop made his wrinkles looker deeper, and his expression more serious. He tore out another half blank page of his notepad, and threw it on the floor. Dan started pacing around his office and with it, bad thoughts started buzzing in his head. The solution to his problem was obvious to him. “*But was it worth it?*” the memory of his bank account balance seemed to convince him. “*Fine*” he said, giving into his demons. He had this problem before. Many fruitless nights were spent agonising over what to write. Life of a writer isn’t an easy one, especially if you have a reputation to live up to, and the sad truth is - now you suck.

He wandered over to the wardrobe, and put his rain coat on. As he was leaving, he paused looking at a picture on the shelf next to him. The only picture displayed in his house. His most treasured possession - yet looking at it made him very sad. He felt his eyes, wise brown eyes, starting to water. Not allowing himself to fall deep in thought again, he turned around, letting out a sigh only a man who’s been through hell can recognise.

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“*Great*” he muttered under his breath, while wiping the rain water off his coat “*another beautiful day in England*”. The shop sign in front of him glistened in the darkness of the winter evening. Daniel knew all the corners of this sleepy little Devon village. Like the post office. Being a writer, he visited it very often, usually telling the staff about his latest story. He was famous back then, respected, admired almost. Those times, were unfortunately long behind him. In front of the post office, by the big oak tree, all the kids in the village used to meet on their bikes. He used to find them playing so endearing, but now he despises their loud screams of joy.

Immediately upon entering the shop, he saw what he came for. It probably only took him a few seconds to get to the right shelf, but for him it felt like eternity. With every step he took, he was more and more at conflict with himself. Staring at the shiny bottles in front of him, he carefully examined each one, with an eye of an expert. “*If you’re going to do something wrong, might as well do it right*”. It’s been a long time, since he last drank. Dan felt like a teenager about to take his first illegal sip, but this time it was better. It was like quenching a thirst, after being in the

desert. Like scratching an itch that's been bothering you all day. This is what he wants. This is what he needs. *"It's not big deal, people drink all the time"* he thought, as if to convince himself. The decision has been made.

Dan entertained the idea of just leaving the money on the counter, and taking the bottle home. This would be much easier than dealing with the judgmental looks of everyone in here. Because everybody will judge him. They all know the thing he's trying to forget, and with every look they give him, they make it harder to do so. *"It's not worth risking getting in trouble with the police again"*.

With that thought, he shuffled over to the counter, pulling his long white hair on his face, not daring to look directly at the shop lady. With a loud bang, he slammed the bottle on the counter. The shopkeeper, Stacy, turned around to greet him. He recognised her, and prayed to god she wouldn't recognise him.

"What can I do for you darling" she said with a smile on her face. A smile which quickly faded once she took a look at the person standing opposite her. *"Daniel? Is that you?"*

No reply.

"It's been so long..." She glanced down at the bottle on the counter *"Are you drinking again?"*
"Look, I don't need a lecture, just scan it and I will be leaving" he spat back at her *"Or would you rather i do it myself, so you can get back to gossiping, or whatever the hell you do all day"*
"Daniel please..." her sentence was cut short by Dan throwing change on the counter. Before Stacy could say anything else, he was walking out the door, with the bottle under his arm.

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"I can't believe his drinking again" Stacy thought. After all he's been through, she never expected to see his face again, not in this village. She remembers him coming to her shop with his wife and daughter. He always gave in to their cries, and bought them anything they wanted. It was no problem for him, a successful writer, he had the money. *"He seemed to love them so much, how could he have done it?"* It was the same question she'd been asking herself all those years. Stacy never quite made her mind up on this issue. The issue that rocked this beautiful village with so much controversy. Never really having an opinion on anything, she always adapted her views to those of her conversation partner. *"Maybe Dan was right"* she thought. She did like to gossip, but that meant she knew everybody's business, and that's why he was so rude to her. After all, it can't be nice, to know that everyone around you knows you've abused your daughter.