

Amnesia (extract)

‘Anyway, he’s not my lover. I’ve told him it’s over.’

Kathryn.

I can remember clearly the moment I thought I should kill Kathryn. Things like that tend to stick in your mind. It was a Friday, the day before her birthday party. She’d taken the day off and I’d agreed to take a break from my writing so we could spend most of the day together. We were reading bits of the paper over breakfast, occasionally discussing an article or an opinion, pinching remnants of a shared croissant and some toast from each other’s plates when a text message came through on her phone. She’d been sitting on one of the high stools around the breakfast bar and turned to look at me. To this day, I can still visualise the shocked and frightened expression on her face - ashen, made more noticeable by the absence of any make up and without a spec of colour. I had never seen her look so pale, almost ghostly, as though someone had died.

‘My phone, Guy? Where is it?’ Kathryn was standing up, pushing the papers around in a wild and anxious manner, feeling everywhere for the device. She turned to face me. I was looking at a stranger - demented and torn.

‘Where the hell is the bloody thing?’ she yelled.

Kathryn was a warm outward type of person, not one for having secrets and always wanting to talk about things; whereas I was more inward and happy with my own company - a trait, Kathryn had told me, she found attractive. ‘You always listen when I want to offload something, my sweet,’ she’d said once after we’d drunk a bottle of wine while she’d told me how difficult Leonard had been at work that day. In contrast, on that particular Friday morning her actions were bizarre, completely out of character, verging on hostile.

‘I don’t know, but calm down. It’s here somewhere.’ I started to sift through the pile of bills and unopened letters in the corner of the room in case it was buried beneath them.

‘What’s the big deal anyway? It’s only a phone. When did you last use it?’

Kathryn shot me a glance, her blue eyes, normally so bright and radiant, seemed full of fear and hatred. ‘Guy, I don’t fucking know, do I?’

‘Hey. What the hells up?’ I touched her hand. She immediately withdrew, pulled the tie of her wrap around her waist, turned away and started to run down the hall wearing nothing on her feet. I watched as she neared the front door, flung it open and raced out to her car, parked on the forecourt

‘Kathryn. It’s not out there; it’s somewhere in the house, probably here in the kitchen.’ I thought she was crazy. The text had sounded close to where we’d been sitting. What the hell was she doing running to her car?

At the time, I had no idea what caused Kathryn’s sudden unexplainable behaviour; clearly it was something serious and at odds with our earlier actions together. We’d woken at eight-thirty, made love and, over a shared bath, discussed the day. We agreed to do some shopping, have a late lunch in Kathryn’s favourite restaurant and then split up. She was due to meet her father later at Heathrow and take him to her sister’s where the three of them would spend the night. I was

going to pick up something for my supper, watch the rugby and then write another chapter of my book.

Looking back, I believe the next few minutes changed my life forever. If they hadn't happened as they did, I guess I wouldn't be telling this story. From the far end of the breakfast bar, tucked behind the fruit bowl, Kathryn's phone flashed and beeped to indicate another message. It had been hidden by the discarded sections of the newspaper, piled up by Kathryn on top of it. I reached forward to pick it up, unfamiliar with its keypad and layout, and mistakenly pressed the wrong key. The large screen flashed into life. I couldn't fail to read the message:

HI HON. COME AS EARLY AS YOU CAN TONIGHT. WE HAVE THE APARTMENT TO OURSELVES. CAN'T WAIT. XXX LEONARD