

Late Discovery

The grey, empty platform looked hostile. Her eyes scanned hurriedly as though her panic would come into a person, there to greet her. There was no one. She needed to move, this was her stop. This was her time. "Come on!" she thought "move!" Suddenly, in one rapid breath she grabbed the bags and jumped from the train.

Two minutes passed as her feet were fixed to the ground, her gaze transfixed to the back of the train. She waited for the train to disappear as though she needed to be sure. Certain that it had left. Her eyes closed as she felt a surge of relief. "Step one, complete" she thought.

The rain which had been making appearances throughout her train journey had now made itself known. Beating down on her neck, she barely flinched as the cold beads ran down her back. Sweeping her dark, thin hair from her face she carried her three bags to the cash point under the small shelter of the station.

Sliding her debit card from her battered purse her hand trembled as she looked down at her card. There she read her name over and over as her eyes blurred from the rain drops trickling into her open eyes. Kate Lynne Myers it read.

As Kate stood with her back turned she was unaware of the stranger watching on from inside the station café. She seemed consumed with something the stranger thought. She turned but not before hiding the money in the sleeve of her coat, an old habit which she hadn't gotten rid of. She looked up and caught the eye of the stranger who now sat looking at the woman in the rain. Their eyes met. Kate's eyes were bright blue, her pale skin and dark hair which was now clinging to her face. Quickly, Kate looked down at the floor seemingly alarmed by the stranger's gaze.

She moved her bags to the side of the road and tapped on the glass window of a taxi. "Where to love?" said the driver barely even looking up from his paper "Erm, to this address please. Do you know it?" Kate replied handing him a soaked bit of paper, now only barely readable "I na that road. Jump in pet" he said in a Geordie accent.

In the back of the cab Kate felt her hands warm as she listened to the driver complain politely about the sudden downfall of rain. "You brought a storm with you" he laughed. Kate smiled at him in the rear view mirror and began to feel comfortable for the first time that day. "So" he continued. "What's your name then?" Slightly shaky but without hesitation she replied "Kaitlin."

"Sorry love?"

She cleared her throat.

"Kaitlin." She repeated, smiling with surprise as though it were no longer her own voice she was speaking, "My name is Kaitlin Pitchford."

Nearly forty minutes passed and the small talk trailed off to the rumble of the car heater. Kaitlin felt her eyes shut as she struggled to stay awake. Half asleep she observed the driver through her squinted eyes. She watched how his hands rustled in the sweet packet and how he burped into his fist after every gulp of coffee.

The coffee smell filled the taxi as she allowed her mind to wander. She was at home, in the kitchen. It was morning and the kettle was boiling...

"Hello? Hi? That's thirty three quid."

The driver brought her back. She was there, finally. Taking the money from her sleeve, she didn't notice the driver's confused look as she smoothly revealed the roll of money. In wait of the change she was owed, Kaitlin peered through the glass out onto the street. She could see a red door. Number 26.

"Dodgy area here you know," said the driver flatly as he watched Kaitlin pick every last coin from his hand. "I've seen worse. Much worse." Her reply was serious and for the first time she looked the driver in the eye.

"Well goodbye Kaitlin." He said smiling, searching her face to see if she too was impressed that he remembered her name. Kaitlin smiled at hearing her name out loud and stepped out of the taxi.

She made her way down the garden path holding onto an envelope. She hadn't opened the envelope yet. She knew what was inside. It didn't have an address on the front or a letter inside, simply a key. It had been handed to her in a hurry, crumpled in the palm of the giver and delivered with a whisper.

She got to the door and placed down her bags looking behind her. She opened the envelope and took out the key. The metal felt cold and hard in her hands. She opened the door slowly.

"Hello?"

No one was there.

"Hello?" the no one didn't answer.

Satisfied she stepped into the house closing the door behind her. She stood for a moment observing the hallway. The staircase curved up towards the bedroom of the house, its handrail wooden. She turned back to lock the door and as quickly as she felt the door lock click she knew.

The hairs stood up on the back of her neck as the slow realisation brushed over her. Her eyes closed as she moved her head back in despair and acceptance of the pain that was about to follow. The crack of her skull echoed as cold metal hit the back of her head, her face slamming into the door. Her arms didn't attempt to break her fall as she hit the ground. Drowning into darkness she looked up at the black figure standing over her. He was smiling.

First Prize

Kazia Whittaker – St Ninian's High School