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Switch

It was Thursday; Thursday two for one and Shell wanted to see Bunyo at the cinema. Bunyo. Tom knew even before he had read the blurb for the film that it was going to be a bum numbingly slow, eye wrenchingly tearful, soul drenching chick flick of a film. He shuffled uncomfortably into the queue at the Megaplex behind a group of giggling teenage girls who were gazing up at the rippling muscles of the leading man. BUNYO: THE MAN WHO LOVED TOO MUCH screamed the headline at awaiting audience. The poster depicted a bulky man with his hand crushing a petite blonde around the waist as he sulkily looked into the distance. The blonde had a child in her arms which was staring at the man with muscles lovingly like a lost sheepdog. Tom harrumped at the image causing Shell to give him a look.

"You don't have to watch this one" she said diplomatically.

Tom knew that this was code for 'you'd better watch this or you're sleeping on the sofa' so he put his arm around her lovingly and said.

"No babe, it's alright been looking forward to this one"

Shell rolled her eyes and walked up to the cashier forcefully with her money in her hands and a determined look on her face. 'Please be full' Tom prayed silently. Unluckily for Tom, they had plenty of room.

After the charade of popcorn, drinks, pick a mix and hot dogs Tom's wallet felt surprisingly lighter for this supposedly cheap date. They both meandered quietly down the soft carpeted hallway to screen 11 and picked seats near the back where no one else was sitting. Tom's heavy frame heaved itself into a seat as he stuffed his legs into the tiny leg room of the isle. He grunted unhappily as Shell wound her legs

between his in a loving gesture which only restricted his movement further. 'It's like being a battery cage' he thought moodily.

The next 20 or so minutes consisted of a constant battering of advertisements and trailers for 'up and coming' films. This consisted of (amongst other un notable examples) an action guts blazing Stallone masterpiece, a weepy angst ridden supernatural thriller and a rah-rah skirt, pom pom, glitter fest school based musical. Then the screen turned black as serious white writing hit the screen reminding the patrons that piracy was BAD and BAD people got in BIG trouble. So... no one had better be filming the film they were about to see. Tom failed to see what nut job could be bothered to film what was sure to be an awful film.

Then, the curtains drew back quickly, the fanfare began and the familiar studio logos began to play as the music boomed. BUNYO streaked across the screen in golden letters as a silhouette of the lead filled the screen like a looming phantom. "It began in the fall of 1938..." an American drawl announced and the film had begun.

Ten minutes passed, ten mind numbing minutes crawled by like a struggling swimming against an impossible tide. Tom fought bravely to stay awake, each eye lid dropping like a weighted anchor. The warm darkness surrounded him and rocked him near to sleep.

Suddenly there was a creak and the door to the auditorium tore open as a couple rushed into the dark, fumbling for their seats as the glaring audience stared on at the interruption. The man was dressed in a tight white shirt with a blue tie, black suit trousers and smart black shoes. His short brown hair was slicked to his forehead and his fists were clenched like a boxer. They fought their way through the onslaught of dirty looks

to the back row, each footstep with popcorn crunching underneath as the girl stopped next to Shell. Shell just picked her feet up and swung to the left, not wishing to miss a single minute of the heartthrob on the screen. Tom rose solemnly to his feet as the girl muttered sorry as she passed him, the man stumbled clumsily through the aisle and came to rest next to Tom's seat. The man flumped down and stretched his arms over the two arm rests leisurely as Tom shuffled in the tiny seat.

An hour and half later Tom breathed a heavy sigh of relief as the credits began to roll up the screen and the lights came on. Shell sniffed loudly and wiped her tears on the sleeve of his jumper which was already soaking.

"It's alright love" he said sympathetically, hugging her tightly. She sniffed again and turned towards the toilets to tidy her streaking make up. Tom grabbed his jacket from the seat, stretched his cramped legs and strode to the cooling outside air. It's well lit around the cinema, well trodden paths of drunken youths piling out of 'The Dog and Duck' across the complex, yelling swears and singing the wrong lyrics to songs... "Dancing queen feel the meat on the tangerine!" They never bothered him, he was like that once when he was a kid, skipping out on the parents and drinking till morning. They'd worry themselves stupid wondering if he'd be home that night or not. Tom always feels a bit guilty thinking about it now, knowing the twisted knot of worry in his stomach.

Shell appeared behind him hugging him round the middle with a gentle kiss on his cheek.

"I wouldn't mind seeing that film again y'know, was pretty good!" she said enthusiastically.

"I'll wait for it on DVD" Tom joked.

* * *

Shell had gone to bed straightaway when they got in and left Tom to his own devices for the rest of the evening. He opened a beer, fired up the laptop and sat down with Match Of The Day as he slowly unwinded, kicking his legs out on the sofa.

"I really fancy a fag" he said aloud to himself. When Shell was out or in bed Tom always talked to himself, he found it calming. He pulled his jacket off the back of his dining room chair and riffled through the pockets for his dark blue cigarette pack. The fag pocket was empty.

Tom scowled to himself silently cursing Shell for swiping his cigarettes, she was giving up! Or so she said... Tom turned the jacket over and placed his hand in the other pocket and felt a crisp, small square of paper. He pulled it out and turned it over in his hands. It was a Euromillon's lottery ticket for the draw tonight, the raised pink ink was punctuated by black numbers which someone had hand picked. He looked confused at the ticket trying to search his memory for when he had brought it.

It then dawned on him, no it hit him like a heavy iron sledgehammer, crushing him into disbelief. He grabbed the jacket turning it over and over and over examining every inch of the dark brown suede, every cuff collar and button.

"This isn't my jacket" he exclaimed breathlessly.

His mind raced back to the cinema, the late man that sat next to him. Was he wearing a similar coat? Was this his Euromillon's ticket? More to the point' he thought happily. 'Has it won anything?' Tom continued to search for clues of the mystery owner of the jacket. There was nothing, it was identical in everyway except for the Euromillon's ticket in the right hand pocket.

Tom clicked onto the Euromillions website and waited as it loaded painfully slowly. As it did he traced over the numbers that presented themselves on the ticket, wishing them to be the ones worth £166 million. 7...13...48...34...21...3...22.

SORRY THERE IS A DELAY IN LOADING IN YOUR PAGE DUE TO HIGH DEMAND. PLEASE TRY AGAIN LATER.

"Everyone in the country will be trying to access this page" Tom muttered angrily. The hysteria had been increasing to a fever pitch all week in the tabloids, on the news, in the hairdressers, the doctors and the offices.

"166 million" they all exclaimed. "Prize like that could change a life!" His palms began to sweat as he thought about the prospect of winning so much money. Then the guilt tripped into his thoughts like a black demon, worming its way into his guts. He thought about the man in the cinema, the man who had his tatty jacket, the man whose ticket this was.

He argued noisily internally with himself about his right to own the ticket and its applicable reward. "It's his fault for losing it!" he reasoned. "He'd do the same if it were the other way round!"

Tom paced about the flat awaiting the website to load in a heated stupor of guilt and excitement. The laptop whirred, buzzed and blitzed the information in anticipation but the high volume of hits prevented access to the golden answers Tom needed. He took another glug of beer, opened another tab on the computer and typed in 'www.myblog.com'. The vibrant red and yellow colours of the webpage bloomed into view and requested his username and password. He started typing...

13TH JULY

I have a dilemma mates so I'm writing this blog to see if anyone has any advice. What if you found a lotto tix? And it was worth millions wud u try to give it back or wud you keep it?

Tom left it at that and signed off with a smiley face, he then paced back to the fridge and took out another beer to quench his increasing thirst. He walked back to the laptop and noticed a bleeping icon that indicated he had comment...

Jimlfixit12 says:

Keep it mate! Stuff him!

The next comment said:

Flowergirl22z says:

It's morally wrong to keep it, donate to charity and cleanse ur soul!

Like a tidal wave the comments continued to drown his computer screen as the comments became more and more threatening. People threatening his life for the ticket, people condemning him for keeping it, comments urging him to keep it and comments begging him to send any money their way. Big screaming titles GIVE ME THE CASH OR EVERYONE U LUV DIES started to cascade down his screen. Tom felt ill, he thought of Shell, he thought of his mum, his baby sister... DO THE RIGHT THING PASS IT BACK TO MOTHER NATURE another one popped up. In an hour there was over 350 comments on the blog, and in two hours there was over a thousand. The Euro ticket still lay next to the laptop.

Tom crept into the bedroom to look at Shell, she was entangled in the duvet covers with her head underneath the lilac pillows in an ungraceful position. He smiled wearily and quietly shut the door, creeping on the hallway and back into the living room. He paced with turmoil in his mind, mulling over the comments of his blog and still awaiting the website to load. In his mind he imagined Shell on the beach at some exotic location, her tan no longer fake and a monkey butler serving the drinks as they laughed in the pool. He imagined the private jet, not having to work again and the children in private school. The walls of the flat had never felt so small.

He stopped abruptly in a fit of anxiety and grabbed the ticket from the top of the laptop. He grasped it firmly in his fingers and tore it in half with a satisfying rip. He closed the laptop and threw the halves of the ticket into the kitchen bin, throwing the jacket in as well as he passed. He slipped into the bedroom silently and removed his black jeans, his blue top and his black trainers expertly in the dark. Climbing into bed next to Shell he smiled to himself happily, he did not want millions. He just wanted the peace that came from lying in bed next to someone you love. He kissed Shell lightly on the head and rolled over to sleep soundly.