

Small Regrets

Karline Smith

‘Guy, listen to me!’ Sophie said, dangling her tenth cigarette in one hand, cradling her third glass of wine with the other. Sophie knew she was already involved, just through hearing his story earlier at the restaurant. He had witnessed a murder. ‘You have to get it back.’

‘How?’ Guy wailed helplessly.

‘The company will be in ruins. And your career. Guy, you could be implicated in this... unfortunate shooting. You have to get that laptop back.’

Sophie’s bedroom was almost completely dark with spots of dim light, void of any sounds but their voices.

Guy sat huddled on her huge king-size four-poster bed, a pathetic bag of creased, smoky clothing from the fire he’d escaped, his left wrist wrapped in plaster. Staring emptily at rows of designer shoes, drowning between her cushions, he looked as if he were in another room.

Guy passed his hand over his face.

‘I need... need a line. It... helps me, y’know, concentrate.’

‘I warned you not to go overboard with that stuff. Look, just listen to me for now, OK?’ Sophie closed her eyes as thoughts and solutions to Guy’s dilemma

skimmed across her brain. 'You said you sometimes get blow from those kids in this *gang*, right?' He nodded vacantly, looking into a corner. 'Do you know where any of them live?'

Guy perked up.

'Yeah, Ty-Rico.'

'Maybe the kid with the laptop is there...'

'Do you think he'd be that stupid?'

Sophie resisted the temptation to remark on Guy's own foolishness, but it wasn't easy.

'Well, even if he didn't go there, maybe this Tyrone kid knows where he might be..... Or pay him a tenner.'

'Ten pounds to grass his friend up...?'

'Buy him a fucking ticket to Disneyland, I don't know. Just get that laptop back, tonight, do you hear me?'

Guy's mobile rang and he saw the name of the laptop's real owner. Panic strangled his vocal cords.

'What should I do? Should I tell him I'm trying to get it back?'

Sophie glared at him, blowing out smoke rapidly.

'Yes, and then he would ask *how* you know where to get it from, and then he would figure out, wouldn't he, *how* you conspired with those kids to steal the laptop in the first place, and *how* because of you he shot one and the other got away.'

'I see your point.'

Sophie suffocated her sarcastic response, snatching the phone from Guy, switching it off and putting it into her handbag.

‘Take my car.’

Peeping through a slit in the blinds, Sophie saw Guy head off in the dark blue Audi. Then she noticed a car on the opposite side of the road sneak in behind Guy, like a shadow. Sophie felt a pressure on her chest, like the weight of someone’s foot bearing down...

Guy was being followed!

Shaking, she retrieved her mobile off the coffee table and dialled Guy’s number. When the voicemail kicked in, Sophie remembered.

Guy’s phone was switched off in her handbag.

Karline Smith

Born to Jamaican parents who came to Manchester in the sixties, Karline Smith was raised in Longsight, Manchester. She is the author of the dark and compelling crime novels, *Moss Side Massive*, and *Full Crew*. Both books received excellent reviews from the *Times Literary Supplement* and *City Life* magazine. Her third novel, *Goosebumps and Butterflies Are Fairy Tales*, a quirky, contemporary romance novel, was published in 2018. She currently works as a full time Training Coordinator while writing a fourth novel, and a collection of commissioned short stories.

She is also the author of four published short stories: ‘Letters to Andy Cole’ in *The City Life Book of Manchester Short Stories* (Penguin); ‘Promise’ in *Brit Pulp!* (Sceptre: Hodder & Stoughton); ‘Dirty Evil Greed’ in *M.O. Crimes of Practice*

(Comma Press); and 'The Whistling Bird' in *Resist: Stories of Uprising* (Comma Press).

Karline loves all things literature-related and loves to share this passion with everyone.

A recording of this story can be found at **writersmosaic.org.uk**

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