

Pocket Money Purse

The grey path before her swam in and out of focus, she just needed to get to the other side of the park. Amy started to swallow more frequently, her mouth dry from smoking weed, a scented aftertaste like a sickly violet sweet, mingled with the dryness. Clinging to a tree trunk, Amy rested her forehead on the cool bark, sweat trickled down her back. The musty woodland smell filled her nostrils. Not far and she'd be home. Home? A room in a hostel, so small that if she stood next to her single bed, she could touch both walls without her feet leaving the sticky vinyl floor. Amy was reluctant to use the shared bathroom.

Something glinted in the late evening sun. Amy screwed her eyes up to see what was concealed in the bushes. Unsteadily she walked forwards and it became clearer, something red glaring from the green foliage. Looking around the park, Amy couldn't see anyone else. She picked up the object, it was a red purse with an 'S' shape metal clasp, like one she'd had as a child for her pocket money. She tucked herself further into the bushes, her dirty fingernails fumbling with the clip. The purse sprung open and revealed a roll of notes fastened with an elastic band, it reminded her of a mini Swiss roll. She had no idea how much was there, over £100 she guessed. She shoved the money into the pocket of her jeans. Enough to pay for some more grass, maybe she could get some solid cannabis? She felt the rush of excitement knowing this find would see her through several fixes. The only other thing in the purse was a brass front door key, but no clues as to who owned the purse. Anonymous, perfect, no need to feel guilty. It was a gift! She tossed the empty purse further into the woods and tucked the key into her other pocket with no idea why.

As Amy walked away, she took one more look over her shoulder. Then she saw it, a black shopping trolley lying on its side, one silver wheel protruding like an arm waving from the sea. Her eyes followed the outline of the trolley; ghostly white fingers, wrapped around the handle. A blue headscarf lay in the grass, like a small pond in a forest. Amy froze, she had to go back. Feeling the key in her pocket, she slowly walked forward. Amy was shaking as she saw the woman's lifeless body laying on the earth, her open handbag by her side. She wore a navy raincoat, her grey hair flat against her head. Lifeless. Picking up the bag, Amy rifled through it. She found a bus pass with the woman's name and address.

Amy smiled, no need to go back to the hostel tonight, she hoped she had the key to an empty house, and a bathroom to herself.

490 words