

The Suitcase. A tale of mystery and imagination.

“Sorry Jen, the car’s playing up again. The damned thing won’t start.”

“Honestly Pete, I don’t know why you keep bugging about with that useless piece of junk. It always plays up just when we need it. That’s it, there’s no way I trust that thing to get to get us to Cornwall next month.”

Pete knew that he had to do something and quickly or else all the plans he had made for three weeks of sun, sand, surfing and... well, you know, would be down the drain. He was a twenty-one-year-old engineer with a shock of shoulder length tousled light ginger hair and a disarming grin. Usually found in blue jeans and a tan suede jacket, Pete was hardly a fashion icon. His easy-going nature and ability to talk his way out of tricky situations had always managed to keep him out of trouble but this time it wasn’t going to work. How to get a car? That was the problem. After a lot of deliberation and pleading with the Bank he decided to try and hire one. Thank Providence for the interweb, where all dreams can be realised... for a price.

He found a place with a Hyundai i30 hybrid for a hefty price tag, but hey, as we all know, hire cars go twice as fast and carry twice the load of ordinary cars. Sorted then.

Finally, the day came to pick up the car and the man from Enterprise turned up to collect him. With the formalities out of the way, Pete set off for Jenny’s parents’ house to collect the luggage and they hastily chucked the cases and bags into the boot and headed off towards the M25, the M3 and the west. Next stop Newquay. Wah-hey!

Jenny was nineteen, a tall, slim girl with a light brown bob with a fringe and hazel eyes. Dressed in a flowery yellow sun dress and wide straw hat, Pete thought she looked a picture. Her eyes sparkled as she chattered away excitedly, laughing and joking. A far cry, Pete thought, from her dour, mean-spirited parents, who rarely managed to crack a smile.

They stopped for a pit stop at Maccy D’s in Andover and later they found a small restaurant in Honiton for lunch. Late afternoon they arrived a bit frazzled in Newquay. The hotel room was large, light and airy and well decorated. It overlooked the greensward and the sea and in the distance was the island with its iconic art gallery on top. They set about unloading the car.

Jenny said, “Sorry Pete but I couldn’t manage your blue suitcase, could you fetch it, do you think?”

“What blue suitcase, I don’t have a blue suitcase.” said Pete.

“Well, whose is the little case tucked in the corner of the boot, then?” said Jenny.

“Who knows? Maybe somebody left it in there from before.” shrugged Pete.

“Well go and get it and we’ll have a look. Maybe it’s some naughty underwear.” said Jenny with a glint in her eye.

Pete went to fetch the case.

“Oh damn, it’s locked and we don’t know the combination.” said Jenny.

“Not a problem, we just run through the numbers from 1 to 999 until it opens. Hopefully both locks should be the same.” Pete replied. “Take about ten minutes but we’d best make a note of the setting, just in case.”

“Why?” said Jenny.

“Just in case... You never know what might be in there or who it belongs to.” replied Pete

They soon had the catches undone and Pete lifted the lid.

“Oh my God!” He exclaimed, and the colour drained from his face.

“What is it?!” Jenny said.

“It... it’s a gun and a green velvet case and there’s a polaroid photo. A man with a hole in his face and a blood stain on his shirt. Oh God no! There’s a polythene bag with a finger with a ring on it inside.” Pete’s voice quaked and dropped to a whisper.

“It’s a hit, proof of death.” His voice was now a whimper.

Jenny reached in and took the green case. She opened it to behold the largest emerald and diamond necklace she had ever seen.

“Well, now we know the reason.” She said as she hurriedly snapped the case shut and quickly put everything back inside the suitcase and shut the lid. Pete reset the digits to their original numbers.

“Well, what are we going to do with it?” asked Jenny. “We’ll have to take it to the police.”

“Don’t be daft.” said Pete. “Whoever ordered this is obviously very powerful and they probably have connections in the Old Bill. They’re probably looking for us right now, they’ll have the car number and we’ve been through dozens of ANPR cameras. We obviously can’t leave it here, so the only thing we can do is to hold on to it until we get back and hope whoever owns it gets it back and decides not to kill us.”

“Drive around with it for three weeks? That’s gross!” exclaimed Jenny.

“Well, we dare not throw it in the sea. Any other ideas?” said Pete. “I suggest we just try and have a damn good holiday, well, the best we can.”

With that, they drove around Cornwall and did all the touristy things. They saw the sights, ate the food and drank the beer. After three days they found themselves in a

small, quiet bay near Padstow. June is usually quiet around those parts, so they drew into the car park. As they walked to the beach they noticed a small pub nearby.

“That’ll be handy for lunchtime.” thought Pete. They played on the beach until lunchtime and after lunch they wandered back to the beach. About five o’clock they got back to the car and on opening the boot, the case was gone. In its place was a brown envelope with a note and one thousand pounds in twenty-pound notes. The note read “*Thank you for looking after my goods, take this for your inconvenience and your silence. Now go your way in peace and I will trouble you no more.*”

“How....?” Said Jenny.

“Don’t ask.” warned Pete. “Just kiss it, put it in your pocket and hope for the best.”

After that, the holiday became a lot more relaxed and the cash helped. They ate too much, drank too much and were too much. They agreed never to talk of it again, hopefully to enjoy a long stay on this planet.