

## Karma

There she is, dead, at the bottom of the Thames.

It all began a few weeks ago. It was her first time in London and she couldn't have been more excited. Florence arrived at London Heathrow airport on a Sunday morning. It was cold yet she enjoyed the atmosphere. The trees were orange and it was pouring. This was the reason she moved to London. The weather was everything she could wish for. It was her dream for as long as she could remember, and to realize that her dream finally came true and she now lived here brought tears to her eyes. She fetched her luggage and took a taxi to her new home. After she arrived and looked at the beautiful home she had worked so hard for, she started unpacking some belongings only taking a break to drink a cup of tea in her future reading nook and finish decorating late in the same night.

The following morning, Florence decided to explore her neighbourhood a bit. She discovered a small café around the corner that sold her favourite drink. She knew she would go there every morning to drink a hot pumpkin spice latte after tasting the owners' recipe for the first time. She talked with the landlady who was a lovely old lady named Edith. "All of these are family recipes. You can taste the love," she said with a wholesome smile on her face. Edith didn't have any children and lived alone in an apartment right over the café. Her long white hair was up in a bun and she wore a red vintage dress and a dark green apron that fitted in perfectly with the atmosphere of her café. Florence decided to say goodbye and leave to go to the underground station to take the next Tube to London city. Edith yelled after her to invite her to supper this evening. As she didn't have any groceries at home and she enjoyed spending time with Edith, Florence accepted thankfully.

It took her 40 minutes to arrive in the city which she spent listening to music and building her soundscape as she always did.

The last step out of the underground station, her first look, her first gasp. She was astonished. She walked through the streets and saw Big Ben as beautiful as it is.

After that, the Buckingham Palace, the London Eye, and the Tower Bridge. She walked for hours and didn't care that her feet started feeling sore. Suddenly a weird feeling occurred. Is someone following her? A man in a dark coat with a black hat seems to follow her every step. She turned into a dark alley and pressed her whole body against the wall. All her muscles tensed. Her body was filled with fear and she glided down the wall to crouch on the wall. Did her past follow her to London? "No, this cannot be happening", she said out loud. Florence held her head in her hands and started crying. Her long red hair fell over her head. Out of nowhere, she heard a deep voice. "Do you need help? Are you okay?" A man stepped closer. Florence lifted her head and saw a tall guy reaching for her arm. She took his hand and he lifted her. They stared into each other's eyes and after some time of realizing what just happened, she pulled away and looked in the other direction. Turning back she answered, "I'm okay." After looking around and clearing her throat, Florence glanced at the guy. "I'm Callum," he said. "Can I take you for a cup of tea? Or coffee, that doesn't matter. I just want to make sure that you are all right." This was the last thing she wanted to do right now. "I guess it can't hurt to discover a new place," she replied. They talked for an hour and drank tea. On her way home to London Ealing, she thought that something was off, but maybe it was just that she could not understand why a handsome man would be interested in her. Florence made her way back to Edith just in time for supper. While eating together Florence

told Edith about Callum. "He is too nice for me," she said while finishing her toast with baked beans. "Oh, stop it my dear. Have some self-respect. If a guy like that wants you, then don't hesitate, you only live once." Florence wasn't convinced yet but she knew that Edith was right.

Two weeks later she found herself in the arms of Callum walking over London Bridge. The past week, she tried to get as much information as possible about Callum, his friends, family, and his past but even after two weeks, the only thing Florence got were excuses and at most some useless bits and pieces. Deep down in her gut, she knew something was off but decided to ignore it. As soon as they passed the middle of the bridge, Callum stopped.

Florence turned around and witnessed his death stare which made her shiver. "What's wrong?" she asked with a concerned laugh in her voice. Callum walked slowly – very slowly – towards her. He looked her straight in the eyes and started pulling her towards the railing.

He started smiling creepily and it was freaking Florence out. She tried to free herself from his hand but he was too strong. He lifted her up and now the only thing preventing her from falling was his decision. "You think you deserve any of this?" "What? What are you talking about? Stop it! You are scaring me." Callum laughed. "Just because you leave and move here, you thought you could erase everything that happened? You killed my family." Callum pushed her even harder. "You killed my friends and their friends. Do you seriously think you can just murder an entire village for fun and get away with it? No... this is justice. I'm doing this for them. A serial killer does not deserve anything. Rot in hell!" And with that, he pushed her completely over the ledge causing Florence to fall into the Thames.

(Patricia Sommer, EF)