I felt like a gumshoe in a film noir, stalking the rain slick streets of the capital.

I´d been stood up yet again and rather than return to face the four walls of my

pokey flat and my own company, I elected to tramp the streets. But the streets

were also empty.

It was long after midnight.

I passed an apartment house. All the lights on the side facing me were out.

All except one, near the top.

A face, backlit by a flickering candle, seemed to be scanning the streets, perhaps

anxiously looking for a loved one.

As the sky cracked open spewing out another deluge, the face in the window

turned and I could feel her staring at me.

Into me.

It was a woman. No question. Something about the angle of the face and the fact

that she was conducting this apparently forlorn vigil.

‘But who´d be out in this? Apart from me.’

In hindsight I should have seen that as a warning. Or a blessing.

‘I know I´m stating the obvious, but there´s no photo in that.’ I said, as I

entered her flat for the first time, indicating the postcard sized frame hanging

just inside the front door.

‘Yet. And that´s the whole point.’ She gave me an all knowing look.

‘Say cheese.’

I blinked as the flash exploded in my eyes.

The next time I went round, there was a picture of me behind the glass with a

startled expression on my face.

‘That´s not very flattering.’ I said.

She laughed, airily.

But she could see the uncertainty in my eyes. She could see it behind my eyes.

I plodded the empty, shiny, rain soaked streets, longing for her but daunted

at the prospect of seeing her, until I finally found myself at her apartment block

and saw her outline in her shadowy lit bedroom window, like a sentinel.

It hadn´t stopped raining since …….before I met her.

I´d known this day was coming, but I was able to live with the knowledge.

She was worth it.

My feelings were confirmed the moment I stepped into the lift.

It was like a change in the way the air moulded itself around me.

The lift seemed to take even longer to get going than usual, the accompanying

clanking, metallic noises had a haunting echo to them and it seemed to hesitate

before beginning its wearisome journey up to her flat on the 7th floor.

As though offering me a last chance.

If I felt uneasy, why didn´t I back out?

I told you, she was worth it.

I rang the bell. I could hear music blaring from within, The Stones, ‘Gimme

Shelter’, then it stopped and the door swung open and there she was, a crooked

smile creasing her face.

And she was naked.

But she didn´t kiss me. She always had up to now, when she opened the door to

me. I don´t mean a tongue job, but just a quick affectionate peck on the cheek.

And the frame was empty. I knew it would be.

I walked in following her languidly retreating bottom, feeling uneasy but at the

same time slavering with anticipation.

I found her in the bedroom, studying her naked body disapprovingly in the full

length mirror on the wardrobe door and pulling testily at the flesh on her waist.

I dropped to the floor and studied her. I`d seen it all before, but I couldn´t

tear my eyes away from her.

She padded slowly over to her music centre, pressed a button and, just as the

unmistakable intro to ‘Tumbling Dice’ leaked out of the speakers, she turned

on her heel and strutted over to the mirror and gave it her all with a slow,

lascivious, raunchy bump ‘n’ grind.

I´d never seen her so unrestrained.

But although I was enjoying it, the disquiet was building in the pit of my

stomach.

I wanted to join her, but I couldn´t.

‘You need to open up a bit. Let yourself go.’ She shouted breathlessly.

‘You know, I´m not the outgoing type.’ I answered, meekly.

‘It would do you good.’

She carried on swiveling her hips, her hands slowly and purposefully caressing

her body.

‘Maybe you could give me some lessons.’ I answered, becoming aroused but, at

the same time, more nervous.

‘That would be a labour of love.’ She turned her back to me and thrust out her

deliciously formed buttocks.

There was something practiced about the way she was moving, calculating.

‘Labour being the operative word.’ I said.

‘Why are you so down on yourself?’

‘Experience.’

‘You´re a nice bloke. I like you. A lot.’ She shouted.

‘Not enough to visit my flat.’

‘I don´t feel comfortable in a strange bed.’ She pouted.

‘I `d be in it with you.’

She looked at me, I thought, condescendingly.

It was then that I noticed on her bedside table a large frame containing a

collection of about ten photographs, all of men, all my age or younger.

They all bore that same caught in the headlights expression that I´d earlier seen

frozen on my photographed face.

And right in the centre, my own captured image.

An unseeing and haunted audience.

She was still dancing, ‘Tumbling Dice’ had given way to ‘Brown Sugar’ and

she´d upped the energy output of her performance, her eyes were closed and she

was punching the air, I could see a light sheen of sweat on her body.

It was like she was psyching herself up for something.

She´d taken over the room, her usual lemon clean smell had been submerged by

the odour of her sweat which had increased the room temperature to a muggy

level.

She was scaring me.

She´d done all the running from the beginning. Looking back now it was as

though she´d picked me out.

To be honest, I´d never questioned our getting together. I ´d been in the pub one

night, my natural habitat. Alone, my usual status. When she just appeared at my

side, a glass of rosé in her hand.

It just seemed almost pre-ordained. There she was, going on about my blue eyes.

Lots of women do that, but when they get beyond the eyes…..their interest sort

of wanes.

But she was different, she hung around longer. I began to allow myself the

luxury of hoping this could become a long term relationship.

Nothing was ever too much for her. She would have and, to be honest, did

everything for and to me. I thought I´d died and gone to heaven.

But that compliance slowly gave way, so slowly I never realized it, to a form of

dominance. She called the shots and it suited me. No decisions to make, none,

not a single one, until I became totally dependent on her.

Stealthily, she had attained a position of near omnipotence.

The music had stopped.

She turned around to face me. She´d never been so totally relaxed in her

nakedness. Never.

Something had changed.

She ran her fingers, through the rivulets of sweat, all over her body, lingering

seductively at some points. She shook her head back and some strands of her

hair remained plastered to her cheeks. Gradually her breathing slowed down.

She had changed.

I could feel my fear burrowing under my skin.

‘Do you like what you see?’

‘You know I do.’

She cocked her finger and beckoned.

‘Come here.’ She ordered.

I knew if I obeyed, things would never be the same again. In fact, whatever I did

or didn´t do, things would never be the same again.

The temperature had dropped. A cool current of air had entered the room,

sweeping away everything that had been.

An ominous feeling was rising in my guts.

‘You come to me.’ I said. Only it didn´t sound too impressive, more like a

pitiless whine.

‘You know that isn´t going to happen. Come on.’ She sounded like my old

headmistress.

Her nakedness had given her a power. A freedom.

Inhibitions? Forget it.

She may have had them once. Hadn´t she?

But she sure as hell didn´t have them now.

I´d never been so scared in my life.

Not even, when as a child of about ten, I´d stared down an Alsatian. It had

cornered my best friend. We´d been somewhere we shouldn´t have been. The

overgrown garden, to us a jungle, of an abandoned house. It had of course held a

mystery for us. A tumbledown, eerie house just bursting with atmosphere and

legends and a garden of untold treasures and adventures.

It had been our only hope.

Its panting had filled my ears, it had been the only sound in my world. I could

smell its warm, foul breath on me, strings of saliva swinging from its mouth, and

its dead eyes just boring into me.

They say you shouldn´t look into an angry dog`s eyes. When it´s your only

hope, you´ll do it, or else you´ve already given up.

When I was a child I had more bottle than I did then with her.

I could look into her eyes, though I rarely, if ever, liked what I saw.

I went to her. She had her arms open and a mocking, haughty look about her.

She wrapped her arms around me, pulling me in deeper and deeper. Her breath

was cold on my cheek.

‘Now there´s just a you shaped hole in the world outside. Nobody can see it,

except me.’ She whispered huskily into my ear.

She laughed. It wasn´t really a laugh, I don´t know what it was, a noise that I

guessed denoted pleasure and then she squeezed me, until it hurt. I didn´t say

anything. I didn´t want to give her the pleasure of knowing she was hurting me.

But, of course, she knew that anyway.

We fell back onto the bed, she was on top of me, nearly smothering me. I must

have momentarily passed out.

I came to. I´d probably only been out for less than a minute, but I felt strangely

clear headed.

She was sitting on the floor wrapped in a thick, white, fluffy dressing gown,

sipping a glass of rosé.

‘You know, I feel like I´ve been on the way here forever.’ I said. It felt as

though I´d given credence to something that had been lurking in my

subconscious.

‘You have. Welcome home.’ She had a smug look on her face.

I hoped I was dreaming. And I´d never wake up again.

I didn´t want to. Whether I was awake or asleep, I could feel the sense of dread

creeping through my veins like a deadly virus.

Then she gently summoned me to stand up and slowly undressed me. Making

every button and zip count.

When I was naked she pushed me back on to the bed and in one graceful

movement let her dressing gown fall to the floor and stepped out of it like from a

cocoon and came to me.

She had a glass of rosé in her hand.

I wasn´t a wine drinker, never had been. But this would be different. I sipped it

tentatively and glanced at her. She urged me to take a good swallow. I did.

She took the glass and I lay back on the bed. She knelt over me and I could see

myself in her eyes, and I raised my arms up to take her.

This time it would be different. It would be for her not for me.

But that would still be better than anything I´d experienced before her.

And it was. Much better. The best ever.

And just as I came, she breathed into my ear, ‘You´re mine.’ And I was.

Just like the others before me.