

Yeah, yeah, it takes two

by Sara Crowley

I'm rushing from the office, wanting to catch the 6.05, skittering down grey, commuter-laden streets, and I turn into the plaza and see the stupid fucking dancing couple. They are usually only there Fridays and weekends, catching the tourists on their way into Covent Garden. Ooh, look at the dancers, look at the living statues, the jugglers, the fire-eaters, the mime artists. Are you impressed? Impressed by their cheap tricks? Well, toss 'em a coin, throw 'em a fish.

The audience, watching him drag her by her stiletto heels across the cobbles, stand riveted, as if it's summat special they are watching. It's not though. It's two Essex kids pretending to be Italiano - Vincente and Flavia from Strictly Come Dancing, not Sheila and Daz from fucking Ilford. I swerve around them, my heart thumping a little fast, needing to get to the station in, shit, only three minutes. Then I sneeze, stop, splutter into my hands. And look again. The female has a smear of vivid red lippy, and obviously fake eyelashes. But. There's something. And he's a tiny bit shorter than her, strong, and the way he holds her, turns her, twists her. And his hips swivel, and the music blares tinny, too bassy, but the beat, the tango, the drama, fills the air. My breath is frosted as I inhale, exhale, think about the train I'm going to miss.

There's some liberation in letting it go. What the fuck, yeah, check me, I'm reckless. And the guy, suddenly he's making me feel faintly sexy. Like I wish it were me he was groin thrusting into.

The younger people at work are all off out for a drink up. They invited me, they usually do. As per always I said no. Hubby's at home, and the kids, and I have "things to do" aka watch the telly, feed my fat face, not have sex with the husband. But here I am, train missed, and I'm feeling ready to tango. They're just round the corner in The Planets. They always go there. And I march to it, shouting into my mobile that I'm gonna be late, going for a drink. Col says fine, of course, have fun.

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Through the doors and into the steamy heat. I walk straight to the bar, faking confidence. A glass of Sauvignon blanc, and I should have asked for a pint of Kronenberg cos it's what all the youngsters drink but whatever. I spot them in the corner, and they cheer when they see me. I'm not sure if it's a sarcastic cheer, like maybe they hate me, but Alan squishes on up the bench and makes almost enough room for me, and Sally grins widely.

This is fun! It's been years since I just went out and blah blahed. Sean is very funny. I like Sean. Nick has bought me a giant glass of wine. How sweet. I sip the wine, and everyone is listening as I tell them about my watercolours. It's a hobby, but, well, I do have a couple of tiny seascapes in a local exhibition. They all seem real encouraging. Bless. I work with some great people.

I go to the bar and buy a large round of drinks, and a bag of crisps. It's a long time since I ate and the alcohol is going to my head. I feel a bit like the dancer as I weave my way in and out of chairs and tables. Col rings and I tell him I'm having a great old time. He's pleased. Enjoy, he says. You deserve it.

Sally sits in the middle of the group, and leans in to the men, and they watch her every move.

"I think Nick has a bit of a thing for Sally," I say to Sean.

"We've all got a bit of a thing for Sally," he replies.

Oh. That must be nice. I think that once upon a time, and maybe three stone and a decade ago, men used to find me rather attractive. Perhaps I was a Sally, only I probably didn't have the confidence to notice it. I don't need that sort of validation now, thank goodness. I'm happily married, thanks all the same.

Some of the lads and Sal head outside for a smoke. It's good you can't do that in the pub now. All that nicotine pollution. S'not good for you. I need the loo, and make my way across the floor, banging into chairs. Ha. Must be a bit drunk I reckon.

Where've they all gone? There's just spotty Bob left at the table. Dick is at the bar. Through the window I see a big huddle of 'em chatting and smoking. I sit down and ... washing over me, tears, a sudden gash of...lonely? Pity? I gotta go home. What's the point in

staying here? Nobody even seems to have noticed me. Dick returns to the table with a tray of pints. No glass of wine for me. Rightio. Message received loud and clear. S'okay. I got a hubby. Kids.

“Hi honey, I'm ho-o-me.”

Hee!

I stagger a little. Giggle. Walk up the stairs. Col is sprawled on the bed, one leg hooked outside the covers. He farts, a long, low rumble, and the room fills with the stink of it. I walk into the kid's bedroom, give 'em a sloppy kiss nuh-night. Go back downstairs, switch on my laptop, check the emails. None.

I wonder what those dancers are doing right now. Reckon they are having some filthy sex. I google the words “filthy sex”. God, I'm so lonely.

