

Blood Staines Never Come Out

Part I

Madeleine was stinging holes in the white satin bed sheet, making the stencil for a giant snowflake. She paused and relit the joint. Lady, the golden Labrador, was staring at her with uncertainty from the passage.

A sports car pulled up outside. Lady growled. So did Madeleine. They knew by the drum of the engine it was Jazz. When he appeared at the door there would be nothing to say. He would wear a sorry look, body sagging like a suit hung on wires, a tall man made shorter.

She returned to her task, pin-pricking the sheet around the stretch of creamy stains, a jagged archipelago veined with a curling strand of black hair. Jazz normally choose blondes. Like Lady.

Madeleine had known what he was like when she moved in. But it was his idea, his intense blue eyes and promises that had swept away the shadows, reclaimed her bags from the dust deserts above the wardrobe. When she had come to pack it had surprised her how little she was taking. She travelled light. She was still the present. An unknown place

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The door slammed. Lady barked. Jazz ran two at a time up the stairs. Madeleine was bent over her work: prick, prick, completing the design.

'I was going to cut the crotch out of all your trousers, but I couldn't find the scissors,' she remarked, not looking up.

'Maddy...'

'You don't know what to say, do you?'

'It was just...'

He ran out of words and she turned with arched brows. 'See.' She puffed on the joint. 'You made a promise, Jazz.'

She was looking into his ocean eyes; they were misty like milk turned sour. She loved the hollow of his cheeks, the rail tacks traversing his brow, his long fingers that drew photographs from trays of chemicals, flapping now like empty gloves.