

**Pedro Lenz**

***The Goalie Is Me***

*The following is the opening section of the novel. The 'Joke' is the nickname of the prison from which the narrator has been released.*

It aw started long afore that. Ah kid jist as well make oot but: it aw started that wan evenin, a few days eftir they let me ootae the Joke.

Boot ten in the evenin, it wis. Hawf past, mibbe. An' see the wind? The wind widda cut right through ye, fuckin freezin it wis. Fog Valley. It November an' aw. Ma heart wis like a soakin-wet face-cloth, it wis that heavy.

So ah takes masel intae Maison's, fancied a wee coffee ah did, wi brandy in it.

The dosh they gi'e ye when ye leave the nick ah'd awready blown awready, naw that ah kidda telt ye whit oan.

So there ah wis: fuck-all dosh, desperate furra coffee but, wi brandy in it, furra bit o company an' aw, a cunt or two tae talk tae.

Ahm tellin ye, arent ah? Ma pockets wur empty, part frae a few fags, a few coins. Things wur a bit tight, like. Tighter than tight, tae be honest. Waitin on money some cunt owed me, ah wis. Try sayin that but when yir fresh ootae the nick. *Ahm owed a whack o money, ah jist dont hiv it yet.*

Impresses nae cunt, that.

So ah goes intae Maison's, like ah say, an' order a coffee wi brandy.

Regula asks hiv ah the money fur it?

Naw a bad question, ah admit.

Dae me a favour, Regi, ah gi'e it, spare me the patter, bring me o'er the coffee jist an' we'll take it frae there.

Total patter-merchant ur whit, she goes - an' goes an' fetches it.

She's like that, when she comes back: Ah didnae pit it through, an' she looks at me thon wey - ah dunno whit wey, masel. Diffrint, anyhoo, diffrint frae usual, wi a bit mair longin in her eyes, or summit. Ahv nae idea whit like it is fur other guys, see me but? that kinda thing warms ma heart - toasts ma insides, it dis - a woman like Regi lookin at me like that.

Thanks, Regi, love. Ye'll get yir reward in heaven. The money an' aw some time.

Gi'e her peace wi that kinda patter, she gi'es it next, an' ahm no to start gettin used tae it eether, cos if Pesche finds oot she didnae pit it through, all hell'll break loose so it will. I know masel, sure, whit like he can be.

She's brilliant, Regula, ye hiv tae hand it tae her, she looks oot fur us, jist takes it intae her heid no to pit summit through, nae cunt'll know, sure, an' anyhoo: Pesche, the gaffer'll be the last wan tae notice. Goalie here, meanwhile, his his coffee an' that's aw that matters.

I'd known furra long time she his a big heart, Regula. That evenin there but, ah started tae like her a loatae other ways too.

It's strange, that. Dead strange. Ye've kent a woman fur years an' no thought nuthin of it, an' suddenly, christ, suddenly she's goat summit. She *his*: she's suddenly goat summit that's goat unner yir skin, suddenly ye like her, like. Explain that wan tae me! That particular evenin, ahd a loatae questions tae answer, tae be honest. Suddenly but, wan single question, jist, intristit me - an' that wis: wis there any chance at aw, like, in this here lifetime, that me an' Regula kid become an item mibbe?

Regula, love, ah gave it, kin ah ask ye a wee favour? Kid ye slip me a fifty tae Monday? Whit it is is: ahm owed a load ae money, jist hivnae got it actually yet. A wee cash-flow problem. Ye ken hoo it is -

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