

The Wrong Road

Why me? Why now?

These questions are running through my mind, along with several other choice words, as I sit in my car glaring at the sheep in front of me.

In truth, I am more annoyed with myself for mistrusting the Sat Nav and taking a left turn earlier than it was advising. So this is how I find myself on an unfamiliar narrow country lane, running late for Charlie's wedding.

I've known Charlie for years. We grew up together sharing classes in term time and childhood adventures outside of school. Although we went to Uni in different cities, we managed to keep our close friendship despite the distance.

At some point in my teenage years I realised that I was in love with him, but circumstances and fear of ruining our friendship stopped me from pursuing Charlie romantically. We both dated other people but they were nothing serious until Kris arrived on the scene. Kris the confident; Kris the cultured; Kris the (according to the shared opinion of our share circle of friends) complete and utter killjoy. Nonetheless, Kris is the one that Charlie has decided that he wants to spend the rest of his life with.

The sheep are still gazing stupidly back at me. My blasts on the horn and yelling "Mint Sauce" out of the window are to no avail. The woolly beasts stubbornly remain in the middle of the lane.

I glance at the clock on the dash board and let forth a growl of frustration. I should be at the venue by now helping to set everything up.

When Charlie first told me that he was getting married, it did, very briefly, flit through my consciousness to try to change his mind. It wasn't an idea that took root though. If I feared telling him that I loved him, I was even more scared of breaking our friendship by arguing with him over Kris. If they love each other, if Kris makes him happy, I should not interfere. I just need to be the steadfast friend that I have always been... even if that does mean helping with the wedding arrangements.

The minutes are ticking by and I am still stuck going nowhere. At this rate, if those ovine roadblocks don't move, I'm going to miss the whole ceremony! Glancing in the rear view mirror, I am profoundly grateful that there are no other vehicles behind me yet.

Something has to change. I can't sit here forever, in my slightly too tight new shoes, cursing the unkindness of fate. I have to move.

Suddenly, just as I am about to get out of the car, something startles the sheep. I look up to see what has spooked them. For a moment, I think that the stress of being lost and late has made me hallucinate. Over on the left hand side of the lane, Charlie is clambering over a stile.

In his kilt (something to do with Kris's Scottish ancestry), Charlie looks like a wayward cast member from Brigadoon. I blink to make sure that I am really seeing him before I roll down the window.

"Umm, aren't you supposed to be somewhere else Charlie?"

He turns, slightly startled, and spots me. A wry smile makes its way across his face.

I continue to try to make conversation. "Do you need a lift?"

Charlie nods before ambling over, opening the car door and clambering into the passenger seat.

Checking again that the road behind us is still clear, I persist in trying to find out what is going on.

"Are you OK Charlie? What's happened?"

He looks at me with his beautiful malt whisky coloured eyes. Charlie sighs, grimaces and then decides to speak. "I couldn't do it. I couldn't go through with the wedding. Over the past few weeks I've realised that I don't even want to continue being with Kris."

Shocked, I try to allay his fears. "Are you sure that this isn't just last minute nerves? Have you talked with Kris about this?"

Letting out a controlled deep breath Charlie nodded. "Yeah, I'm sure. I talked with Kris just before I left on my 'ramble'. It's over."

Too many thoughts and words jumble through my mind. In the end, the reality of the clear lane sparks my next words. Putting on my best impression of Parker from Thunderbirds I say "Where to Milord?"

Charlie barks with laughter, gestures to the road ahead and commands "Home, James".