

Late one night in London

RR O'Neill

Character list

Hampson: school teacher middle aged man

Jarrood: Year 10 boy

Callum: Year 10 boy

(Jarrod and Callum are best friends)

Dex: Twenty two year old drug dealer (brother of Callum)

Masez: Eighteen year old club promoter

Middle aged crime boss and his two enforcers

Late One Night in London

Hampson was right, that's all he can think of, a voice going round and round in his head, like a fly inside a bottle. Fat necked, belly over his too tight trousers, hair dyed, total divvy Hampson, was right.

'You're not thick, so why do you act like such an idiot?' That's what Hampson said on a regular basis and Jarrod had just brushed it off, knowing that Hampson was wrong, he wasn't acting like an idiot he just wasn't interested in school, he'd simply worked out that school was pointless, especially for him, he had bigger and better plans. The trip to London would be the start of his new life, he'd never been to London before, he'd lied about that, he'd lied about a lot of things, and now standing in this car park at 4 O'clock in the morning he realised that was an idiot thing to do. He also realised that if he was at home safely tucked up in bed with that poster of Taylor Swift staring down at him, it would be an ordinary day and he would be up and in school within four hours, ready to do battle with Hampson again; instead of in the car park, shivering with both cold and fear.

His thoughts kept going back to Hampson's words, round and round like a never ending loop, then onto to his mum and his little sister then back to Hampson, sweaty div, Hampson the world's worst English teacher, but for all that Jarrod knew who was the real div was.

Then he hears a cry of pain from Dex and that brings him back into the present, and then his mind almost instantly shuts it out and moves back to how it all started, with him and Callum. Doing a few detention stints together, they thought they were so bad-ass, the big men, they boasted about it to anyone who'd listen. The detention was so easy that they were often able to send texts as they did it, Callum sent one to his brother Dex about it and then Jarrod sent one too. The texts became a regular thing and Dex became a bit of a hero to the boys, telling them all the amazing things that were happening in London. Then they started having conversations with Dex, every time one of the teachers popped out for something, that was even better as the boys could not only see, but also hear him on speaker phone. Dex's life was amazing, his car, his girlfriends, life was too short just for one girlfriend. Then Dex asked them if they fancied a trip to London? Of course they did, but neither of them had the money, how much was it going to cost them was the boys first question.

Answer. Nothing, Dex would pay for everything, train tickets, food and when they got down there he'd take them to a club, they could have something to drink, introduce them to some ladies maybe have something a little extra if they knew what he meant. Neither of them did, but they didn't want to admit it, they were way too cool for that. They both had to ask their parents of course even though they thought they were big men, they were still technically and legally children. Parental approval came quite easily, Jarrod very cleverly told his parents he'd been saving money up and Dex knew someone who could get them youth tickets for less than £10 and he'd be helping Jarrod out because he was missing his brother and Dex was quite lonely in London, and he'd bring a present back for his little sister and probably lots more things too which he'd forgotten now, but it worked, his mum said it was a great idea, even put in a request for two days off school, which the school were more than happy to give those particular boys.

Dex had sent the tickets as promised and even some meal gift card things for Nando's, which they would have when they got to Birmingham. That was the first thing that should have set the alarm bells ringing and it did a little bit, but as they boarded the train in Leeds, Callum told him that Dex must have just got cheaper and better tickets by going via Birmingham. They watched the countryside, towns and motorways rush by as they sat talked and laughed about the other mugs who were still in school, especially Hampson the dickhead. When they got to Birmingham they had just over an hour before they got their next train which would take them on to London.

They boys were starving and soon found their way to the Nando's, Jarrod started to walk in keen to get stuck into some piri-piri chicken, but Callum stopped him saying that they had to meet a friend of Dex's first who had something for them to take to London. Callum didn't know what this friend of his brother's looked like, but apparently as long as they stood outside Nando's the man would know them. They waited 10 minutes and no one showed up, Callum was just about to phone Dex, when a man who had been sitting on a low wall facing the Nando's came over and asked them if they were from Dex, they said they were and the man gave them a sports bag, took a picture of them with his phone, when Jarrod asked the man why he was taking a photo of them he simply said 'evidence' and walked swiftly away. Jarrod's alarm bells went off again, but were soon quietened by the smell of the Piri Piri chicken and Callum telling him that his brother had a lot of weird friends, and that one probably had some kind of OCD or Asperger's or summat, as he hauled the sports bag onto his back. They were shown to a table ordered and then tucked into the most food they'd ever eaten at Nando's. Dex had given them a £50 voucher, Jarrod couldn't believe it. This was the life.

Another sound, a sharp crack, and now Dex was being held up by the men, blood was streaming down his face and dripping onto the floor, the man with the piece of wood wasn't screaming he was controlled, calm almost relaxed, which made it all the more scary. Jarrod looked across at Callum who was crying softly, the tears just bubbling out of him like a mountain spring.

Then they got onto the train with the sports bag along with their bags, weirdly it was the same make and shape as the one Callum had, which actually made sense if it was his brother's, maybe he'd bought them for all his friends and family. The journey to London was great they were both excited about what was going to happen, Callum thought he might be able to go to a lap dancing club and they did a google search on his phone and looked at them while making comments about some of the women they saw on the websites, much to the disgust of the woman passengers sat opposite them, this just made them laugh even more. They passed Wembley stadium and within 10 minutes they were in Euston station. Jarrod asked if Dex would be meeting them, Callum told him he was too busy working

Why had he been such an idiot why did he not realise that it was all wrong, all dodgy? Hampson was right, he didn't know which was worse being in this situation or having to admit that Hampson was right, and for some strange reason, fear, anxiety? He started to laugh a high pitched laugh, like a girl and the three men and Callum looked at him and he knew then he was going to die, he looked at Callum and he noticed a wet patch on the front of his jeans and he realised that his bladder had given way.

From Euston they got a taxi and sat looking out of the window taking in the sights, the buildings, the cars and the girls. The taxi probably took them on a bit of a long way round to make extra money that's what someone had told him. It didn't matter though because Dex was paying. As the taxi pulled away they checked the address that Dex had given them, it was definitely the right building they rang the bell and a woman buzzed them up. She turned out to be a stunning dark haired girl called Masez, who told them Dex would be back in 20 minutes and to put their stuff in the bedroom they'd be sharing. When they got into the bedroom, they both looked at each other high fived. 'Did you see her!' they both said almost at the same time. The girl was gorgeous she must have been about 19 and looked like someone out of a music video, man they were living it large now. They looked out of the bedroom window and saw rows and rows of houses, high rise apartment blocks, buses, traffic and more traffic, people of all kinds, rushing about, having coffee on little tables perched on the pavement outside of tiny café's.

They unpacked their clothes from their bags. When Jarrod pulled out the new toiletry bag his mum had bought for him he felt a twinge of guilt, he smiled when he remembered her saying 'you have to be smart in London you might get to meet the queen,' she was only half joking, but knowing she didn't really have any spare money that made him feel guilty again. They went into the main room of the flat and tried not to stare at the model girl who told them to help themselves to a drink from the fridge, which was full of beer and soft drinks, they both decided to stick to a diet cola, as they both knew what idiots they were when they drank, and making a fool of themselves in front of this girl was not an option. Callum tried to take a sneaky photo of her with his phone, but what they both really wanted was a photo of them with her to show everyone back at school. These dreams were interrupted by Dex bursting through the door he did not look to be a happy person, shouting at someone on his phone and then seeing the boys went back outside to finish the call and came back in all smiling and hugging and welcoming them to his apartment and London, then asking them about their journey 'any problems?'

Then he took the bag off them and went away with it, Callum shouting after him 'we didn't look in it or anything'; even though I wanted to Jarrod thought. Whatever was in the bag Dex was happy with it, as he came back into the room from his bedroom, all smiles, patting them on their backs and giving them a twenty pound note each.

Showered, dressed and fed on delivered meals from a local take away and with a couple of beers inside them the boys were ready for their big night out in London, they had built their hopes and dreams on it being the best night of their lives, and it didn't disappoint, at first. The mini cab driver phoned to say he was outside and the boys and the model went down and got into the car. Dex sat in the front beside the driver the boys sat in the back with the model, Jarrod could not believe he was sat next to such a girl-woman, the smell of her perfume, the look of her skin, he felt like touching her arm but knew it was wrong, he wanted to tell her he loved her. He smiled to himself realising that the beer he'd had in the flat was starting to take effect.

The mini-cab stopped and they all got out, Dex paying the driver. Dex had told the boys the whole night was on him and they wouldn't be paying for a thing. There was a queue of people outside the club with the usual big necked giant bouncers letting some of them in and some of them being turned away.

Jarrold started to panic, did he really look 18? What if the fake ID that he and Callum had both bought off the internet were seen as just that, fake, by the bouncers? He'd have plenty of time to get his story straight though while waiting in the queue. He was starting to walk towards the end of the line when Dex shouted and waved him back smiling and patting him on the back then laughing as the bouncers waved Dex, him Callum and the model through, giving them a VIP pass each, Dex shaking hands and slapping backs with the bouncers and slipping what Jarrold thought was money into one of the bouncers' hands. So that's how it works thought Jarrold.

Once in the club; which looked like a place from CSI Miami, a Jayzee video or a scene from the Fast and the Furious, Callum and Jarrold' favourite films. Dex led them into a raised area marked VIP, where there was a table and chairs and a sofa waiting for them, people came up to talk to Dex, he seemed a very popular guy. They hung out with Dex's friends, and then he hooked them up with a couple of girls introducing them as 'my little brother and his boyfriend,' laughing as he did it, didn't matter because the girls took them out on the floor and danced with them. They both could not quite believe this and looked over at each other with mile-wide smiles on their faces, they had some more drinks, more dances, Callum even got a snog with one of the girls, Jarrold hoped he would too before the end of the night. The music, the drinks, the girls, the smells, the sounds, the whole thing was like the best drug ever. If this was London Jarrold wanted it, he wanted it badly, in fact as soon as he got back home he was going to make plans on how he could come back, maybe as Dex's apprentice, in whatever Dex's business was. The boys went back to the VIP area they were having far too much fun to check their phones, see the time or any other crap on them like facebook, or instagram, who wants to know that some lame kid from school has gone to some lame pub, or party back home when they are here doing this. Dex is smiling people keep coming up to him shaking hands, Jarrold realises that it's not just money, its respect, Dex has got respect.

More drinks more dancing, more people coming up to Dex, then the boys see him on his phone for the first time and he's shouting into it and then throwing it and nearly missing the model before it lands on the floor. He sends the model to tell the boys that they are going, the boys want to stay, the model tells them that staying is not an option and not to get on the wrong side of Dex, especially as he is already very pissed off, Callum knows what Dex can be like so tells Jarrod to do as he says. Jarrod does not want to leave the club, he has kissed girl a model type girl not as good looking as Dex's model, but way better than any girl at school. If he stays in the club maybe she'll be his girlfriend, he knows that he must go, he tells the girl she's just waves and starts dancing with someone else.

They walk out of the club and stand waiting, Jarrod supposes for the mini-cab to pick them up and take them home, this night has ended very abruptly, they stand in silence knowing instinctively that they should not say anything. A big car with blackened windows stops, two very big men get out, they stand beside Dex, he looks like he's getting ready to run but changes his mind when one of the men puts his hand on his shoulder. Callum looks at Dex and then at the men, in a voice that's mixed with anger and fear says 'what's going on Dex?..Dex?'

Dex tells the men to leave Callum and Jarrod out of it, the men turn and look at the model and tell her to 'do one,' she doesn't have to be told twice and click clacks down the street as fast as her very high shoes will allow. Soon the big men Dex, Jarrod and Callum are sat in the car, nothing is said.

Jarrood thinks back to school again, why does his mind always flip to school, he hates the place can't wait to get away from it, so why does his mind go back there. He looks at Callum who looks as scared as he feels and he reaches out his hand and Callum holds it, the two friends are holding hands like they used to do when they were in reception class at primary school, they both know that they would never hold hands like this in real life, but this isn't real life any more, and it's not a dream so what is it? Jarrood asks himself for the twentieth time. Imagine the other boys in his class or the whole school for that matter seeing them now, holding hands, they'd never hear the end of it, or the word gay, as in 'it's so gay, how gay is that, you must be gay....'

Jarrood doesn't care because it's comforting it reminds him of school. Thinking of school again, but school is safe that's why he keeps thinking of school. His thoughts are interrupted by the car coming to a stop and them being pulled out and then shoved into what looks like a storage unit. There's dim light, a concrete floor and a man waiting for them, he's not big like the two who are pushing them into the unit, but he has a look of danger and very cold eyes. He looks at Dex and smiles, but it's not a real smile its part of his act, Jarrood has seen this in the movies he wonders did gangsters act like this and then the movies copied, or was it the other way around. He knows this script has seen it many times the main gangster, sorry the boss taunts the victim, Dex in this case, and plays with him like a cat with a mouse before killing him.

Jarrood looks across at Callum.

Jarrood's thinking of the movies and it is helping him to cope with the situation. Callum is not dealing with it well he's shaking slightly and looks close to tears. Boss man looks at Jarrood perhaps wondering why he isn't as scared as Callum. Dex says 'let them two go they don't know anything, they're only kids'. The man looks at Callum and Jarrood and then back to Dex and says 'no can do they were there, Birmingham your connection. Why did you do it Dex, you had everything, I looked after you didn't I, you had nothing when you came here and this is how you repay me.'

Dex is just about to say something and the boss man slaps him right across the face as hard as he can, the sound of the smack bounces off the walls and echoes around the room.

Dex's legs give way but the men hold him up, 'I can't stand people letting me down the man' says now smiling, 'it's a question of honour if you let me down after all I've done for you what message will that send to others eh?.. eh?'

Dex looks as though he's about to speak when the boss man slaps him again even harder, now there's a mixture of blood and saliva trickling from Dex's mouth.

In spite of telling himself not to, Jarrod starts to cry he only realises it when he sees his tears making dents in the dust on the concrete floor. His mind takes him out of the room and into school, he's sitting at his desk he's turning round he's ignoring a teacher, he wishes he was back there.

The End