

Sand And Locusts

Kira pushed the heavily laden trolley to room 507. She knocked hard on the door three times. "Housekeeping." No reply. Another two knocks. "Housekeeping," she called again, as she opened the door.

Champagne bottles and wilting roses. She grinned. *Lovers nest*. Stripping the bed with practiced speed, a used sachet of strawberry flavoured lube confirmed her theory.

Room 515. Twin beds, sandy footprints on the carpet, sticky prints over every surface. *Children!* There was no accompanying grin.

As Kira toiled she dreamed of her own holiday. *Only three days now*. First, the Maldives. A thatched hut over white sands and aqua waters. Then a five day safari through the Kruger National Park. Wedding bells in London and honeymoon on the Greek Islands. Throughout the back-breaking summer, saving for this wedding trip with her fiancée, Ian, kept her cheerful and sane. She glanced at the indent on her left ring finger, her diamond solitaire was safer kept at home.

The locusts have landed! Room 525 was stripped of every freebie down to the last sachet of equal. *Why not? I might do the same*. For the final time Kira heaved the trolley through the laundry door, unloaded cleaning products, used rags, rubbish and recyclables. Inside the staffroom the housekeeping crew gathered with hugs and well-wishes. She collected her final payslip from the smiling manager and headed home on golden wings.

Sorry

The note lay in the centre of the vacant room. *What?* Kira rushed into the bedroom. Empty. Kitchen the same. Shock hit like a wall. Back in the lounge, she collapsed onto the carpet. Picking up the paper, she turned it over. Nothing. Just the single word. Through the numbness and disbelief a thought struck.

Shaking fingers fumbled the phone from her bag. She stabbed in the digits for internet banking and waited while it accessed the joint travel account. Balance ZERO dollars. Her personal savings? Ditto. The phone slipped from her hand.

“Nohhhhh.....!” She rocked and keened. *This couldn't be happening!* Time elapsed and as a last ditch she called the travel agent.

“Kira, how unexpected.” The woman’s voice was cool. “How was your flight? Have you arrived in Hong Kong?”

“Hong Kong? What do you mean? We’re supposed to be flying to Male this Tuesday.”

The agent sounded confused. “But you cancelled that itinerary weeks ago in exchange for an open ticket to Hong Kong. I must say I was surprised.”

“Jane, I know nothing of this.”

“I don’t understand?”

“Ian’s gone. Everything’s gone...” Kira broke down.

Jane’s voice became serious. “Kira, do you have your passport?”

“No, nothing. I just got home from work. I’m still in my uniform. The house is completely stripped.”

“Listen Kira. You need to call the police immediately. I think you might be the victim of identity theft.”

“What?!”

“Kira, two people came in to change those travel arrangements. One was Ian. I swear the woman looked just like you.”

Numbness. Kira struggled to breathe.

“Oh and Kira, she was wearing your ring.”