

## A STORY IN THE SAND

Their three single tents are pitched in a shallow semi-circle on the beach.

'I'm not sharing with you, David,' says Lizzie. 'You know how you snore.'

'Whatever you say,' says David.

Aidan had told them he might be bringing someone with him, but he didn't and arrived alone.

'No problem,' says David.

'That's fine,' says Lizzie.

David splits the driftwood they've collected for the campfire with his sharp, short-handled camping axe. Lizzie peels potatoes and Aidan opens a bottle of *rioja*. While David grills sausages and lamb chops, Lizzie and Aidan take their wine to the rocks to watch the setting sun.

'Supper's ready!' says David.

Lizzie and Aidan take a last look at the horizon's silver rim and return to the campfire.

The bottle is empty. The fire has burnt down to a dull glow.

'Time to turn in,' says David. 'Don't worry. I'll clear up.'

He sprinkles handfuls of sand over the dead and dying embers.

The sun is rising higher in the sky. Soft snoring comes from David's tent. Barefoot, Lizzie stands outside her tent, watching the wavelets slide crabwise across the unblemished sand.

By high tide we'll be gone, she thinks. Our camping gear packed away. Driving home. Me and David to our little terrace house. Aidan to his cool city studio.

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Looking down, it takes a moment for Lizzie to register what she's seeing: two crisp, clear sets of footprints in the sand: a pathway from her tent to Aidan's and from Aidan's tent to hers.

A sharp jolt of panic.

Calm, Lizzie, she thinks.

Carefully, methodically, she begins to scuff and smooth the sand between the two tents.

There. All done.

Lizzie hasn't heard the snoring stop. She hasn't seen David, watching her through his tent-flap, testing the edge of his short-handled camping axe.