

THE TELEPHONE

The telephone rings yet again, as it had countless times before, but again Charlie tries to ignore it and waits to see if the caller leaves a message, but again there is no message and yet again he wonders who it is calling him and what should he do next.

Charlie worked as a runner for a local drugs dealer known as the Boss. Usually his work was restricted to small time £100 and £200 deals, but three days ago things changed, and they changed in a way that Charlie could never have imagined.

On that day Charlie had to collect ten thousand pounds for his boss, he had never seen £10K, he'd never even seen a thousand pounds, all the money he had ever had had come from the Boss and that was just enough for him to live on and occasionally treat his Mum. So to be handed £10K was far too much of a temptation to walk away from, but that was as far as his thinking had taken him.

Sitting in a little dingy hotel room in Forest Gate he looks at the pile of money on the bed and thinks of all the things he can now buy for himself, all he has to do was to get away, a long way away.

Then, as if on cue, the telephone rings yet again and wakes him from his dreams. He watches it ring but is too scared to answer it and hopes whoever it is leaves a message, but again he is disappointed and he returns to his dreams and worries.

Eventually hunger replaces anxiety and he decides to pay another visit to the burger bar for yet another burger dripping with fat and a plate of cold chips that he thinks were probably left over from the day before.

At his table the waitress approaches and says 'Oh 'allo, you again, getting regular ain't you, live local do yer?'. But he ignores her questions, shakes his head, orders his burger and looks at the telephone lying on the table hoping it doesn't ring whilst he's in the café.

Back in his hotel room he removes the cash from under the bed where he had hidden it and puts it on the pillow so that he can keep an eye on it.

As he removes the telephone from his pocket it rings yet again. Still he has no idea who it is and again he refused to answer it but again no message is left, and he returns to his thoughts.

He worries that if his boss ever catches up with him, his life won't be worth too much, but he also knows that if he goes on the run 10 thousand pounds won't last very long and then what would he do to survive.

So he tells himself that the next time the telephone rings he will answer it and if it is the boss he'll promise to return the money and beg for his life, but the telephone remains quiet.

Then just as he begins to doze off it rings and this time he answers it. 'Oh, allo Mum, yes of course I'm ok. No, I just decided to go to Clacton for a few days rest. No, I'll be home at the weekend and I'll pop over. Course I promise, Yer Mum I love you too. Bye Mum.'

Filled with a brave new attitude he decides to go back and see his boss, give him what's left of the money and beg, even cry if he must, for his life. He picks up the cash and leaves the room and rushes from the hotel and heads back towards Clapton, the boss and whatever else awaits him.

When he gets to the Boss's place he is met by Jimmy, one of the other runners. 'Allo Charlie' says Jimmy, 'where you bin, he's been looking for you, says you've got his money'

Charlie explains to Jimmy what's happened and asks if he can see the Boss and Jimmy takes him into the office and stands just behind him waiting to see what the Boss will say.

'Allo Charlie my boy,' says the boss, 'ow are yer, what you bin up to with me money then?'

'Sorry Boss' says Charlie 'I fink I ad a breakdown. I don't really know what 'appened, but I've got yer money 'ere, only spent a bit but I'll pay yer back Boss, honest I will.'

'Charlie' says the Boss 'don't worry my boy', and he gives Charlie a big hug. 'Yer 'ere now. That's all that matters'. The boss then takes the money and puts it on his desk and turns to Jimmy and says 'Jimmy, take Charlie out and give him a drink, he looks like he needs it.' Charlie then follows Jimmy and they go through to another room while the Boss returns to his chair. As he sits back and relaxes his telephone rings and he picks it up. 'Oh, allo Mum, how are you. Yer, course I'm ok, just busy at work.' Just then the noise of a single gunshot rings out. 'Noise Mum, what noise? No, Mum I didn't hear anything, must be the telephone.'