

4:15 a.m.

Elton was shivering so much he could hardly hold the ladder. Nigel climbed the rungs, holding a pair of garden shears in one frozen hand. Kit watched from the garage door. Daisy was inside the garage, her arms wrapped tightly around her, head buried in the collar of her leather jacket. All four of them were frozen.

The exterior lamps shone dimly through the filter of falling snow, giving a weak light that Nigel augmented with a torch he carried in his mouth.

The ladder was propped up against the side of Steepfall. Telephone wires emerged at the corner of the house and ran at roof height to the garage. From there, Kit knew, they connected with an underground pipe that ran to the main road. Severing the cables here would cut the entire property off from telephone contact. It was just a precaution, but Nigel had insisted, and Kit had found ladder and shears in the garage.

Nigel took his left hand off the ladder, balancing cautiously, and held the shears in both hands. He leaned forward, caught a cable between the blades, pressed the handles, and dropped the shears.

Nigel cursed, and the torch fell from his mouth

The shears landed inches from Elton, who let out a yell of shock.

"Hush!" Kit said in a stage whisper.

How is he feeling about all this?

P242

Chapter Thirty: 4:15am (pps242-248)

The gang enter Steepfall

AZ: More interior monologues, fantasies, remorse for Kit

EF: Make it clear here that their plan is to go get the Nissan Patrol from Lukey & Lori's house, and that only Kit can lead them to it.

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P243

IT 1.11 'falling down with exhaustion' sounds a bit wordy. How about simply 'and they were all exhausted'?

KS - Kit realised that Daddy must have let Luke and Lorri take the Nissan Patrol home...Did Kit not pass Luke and Lorri's on the way out, and surely would have seen the vehicle? - I remember at some point reference being made to lights on in Luke and Lorri's cottage - I may well have imagined this.

“He could have killed me!” Elton protested.

“You’ll wake everyone!”

Nigel came down the ladder, retrieved the torch and the shears, and went up the ladder again.

Kit had figured out where the Nissan Patrol had gone. Daddy must have let Luke and Lori borrow it to go home in last night, fearing that the Toyota would get stuck in the snow. They might come back in it at eight o’clock, the time they normally started work—but most likely they would stay at home until the weather improved.

Kit and the others had talked about making their way to Luke and Lori’s house and taking the car; but they were not sure they would get there. They had already walked a mile through the blizzard, and they were all falling down with exhaustion. Kit had almost lost his way looking for Steepfall. They could die of exposure before they found the Nissan.

Is the snow still falling as hard as it was?
That meant they had no option but to stay here and wait for the weather to improve. And, to make sure no one could find out that they were here, they were cutting off the phones.

This time, Nigel succeeded in cutting the lines. As he came down the ladder, Kit picked up the loose ends, twisted the wires into a bundle, and draped them against the garage wall where they were less conspicuous.

Nigel returned to the garage. Elton came in after him, carrying the ladder, and dropped it. It clanged on the concrete floor. “Try not to make so much noise!” Kit said.

Elton looked around the bare brick walls. “We can’t stay here.”

Kit said: “It’s better in here than out there.”

“We’re cold and wet and there’s no heat. We’ll die.”

P244

IT 1.16 Doesn't Miranda know that Kit has gone out. She knows he's left abruptly (p163), doesn't she, but perhaps not that he's actually left the house?

EF – last para: Is Daisy supposed to be “stupid”

Nigel said: "He's right."

"We'll run the engines of the cars," Kit said. "That will warm the place."

"Don't be stupid," Elton said. "The fumes will kill us long before the heat warms us."

"We could drive the Toyota outside and sit in it."

Daisy said: "Fuck that. I want a cup of tea and hot food and a dram. I'm going in the house."

Try to expand on this
 "No!" said Kit. He was horrified by the thought of these three in his family home, especially Daisy.

Elton said: "I'm with her. Let's go into the house."

move like bitten regret
 Kit wished he had not told them how to cut off the phones. He said: "But how would I explain you?"

"They'll all be asleep anyway."

"And if it's still snowing when they get up?"

Nigel said: "Here's what you say. You don't know us. You met us on the road. Our car was stuck in a snowdrift, and you took pity on us and brought us back here."

"They don't even realise I've left the house—they think I'm in there, in bed!"

"Say you went out for a drink."

Elton said: "Or to meet a girl."

Daisy said: "How old are you, anyway? You need to ask Daddy before you can go out at night?"
She's mean and violent, but when have we established that she's stupid?

It infuriated Kit to be condescended to by someone as stupid as Daisy. "It's a question of what they'll believe, you brain-dead gorgon," he said. "Who would be daft enough to go out in a snowstorm and drive miles just for a drink, when there's plenty of

booze in the house anyway?"

Daisy said: "Maybe someone who would be daft enough to lose a quarter of a million pounds and keep gambling."

Nigel said: "You'll think of a plausible story, Kit. Let's get inside, before our fucking feet drop off."

"You left your disguises behind in the van. My family will see your real faces."

"It doesn't matter. They'll think we're just unfortunate stranded motorists. If they hear about the Hibernian Telecom gang, they'll realise that we don't match the descriptions"

How much courage must he draw in to stand against them?

"I don't like it, I don't want you in that house."

"We're not asking your permission. If you don't show us the way, we'll find it ourselves."

What they did not understand, Kit thought desperately, was that his family were all very smart. Nigel, Elton and Daisy would have to work hard to fool them. "You don't look like a group of innocent people who got stranded."

"What do you mean?" Elton said.

"You're not the average Scottish family," Kit told him. "Nigel's a Londoner, you're black, and Daisy's a bloody psychopath. My sisters may notice that."

"We'll just be polite and not say much."

"That's a good idea. Any rough stuff and the game will be up."

"Of course. We want them to believe we're harmless."

"Especially Daisy." Kit turned to her. "You keep your hands to yourself."

Nigel backed Kit. "Yeah, Daisy," he said. "Try not to give the bloody game away. Act like a girl, just for a couple of hours, okay?"

P246

IT 1.5 'benison' This is an unusual word, isn't it ? Would 'blessing' do?

"Yeah, yeah," she said.

Kit realised that at some point during the conversation he had given in. He sighed.

"Come on, then."

He led them around the house to the back door. It was unlocked, as always.

When he entered the boot lobby warm air washed over him like a benison.

Behind him, he heard Elton say: "Oh, God, that's better."

Kit turned and said: "Keep your voices down, please!" He felt like a schoolteacher trying to quieten heedless children in a museum. "The longer they stay asleep, the easier it will be for us, can't you see that?"

He passed through the lobby and into the kitchen. "Be nice, Nelson," he said quietly.

"These are friends."

The others followed him in. Nigel bent down and patted Nelson, and the dog wagged its tail.

They took off their wet coats. Nigel stood the burgundy briefcase on the kitchen table.

"Put the kettle on, Kit," he said.

Kit turned on the small TV set on the kitchen counter. He found a news channel.

While waiting for a weather forecast, he filled the kettle.

A pretty girl on the screen said: "An unexpected change in the prevailing wind has brought a surprise blizzard to most of Scotland."

Elton muttered: "You can say that again." He pulled off soaking wet socks.

The newsreader spoke in a seductive tone, as if she were inviting the viewer back to her place for a nightcap. "In some parts, more than twelve inches of snow fell in as many hours."

Whereas the others feel relief, Kit feels on tenterhooks that they'll betray him. He might almost want to lie down and die.

P247

EF – 1st line: Elton again. KF: Is this knob joke in character?

"I'll give you twelve inches in some parts," Elton said

The newsreader told of car accidents, blocked roads, and abandoned vehicles. "Never mind that," Kit said to the television set. "When's it going to stop?" He put out mugs, a sugar bowl, and a jug of milk. Nigel, Daisy and Elton sat around the scrubbed-pine table, just like family.

The kettle boiled. Kit made a pot of tea and a cafetiere of coffee and put them on the table.

A weather forecaster appeared in front of a chart. "During the course of the morning, the blizzard will die away as quickly as it came," he said. "The thaw could begin as early as midday."

"Great," Nigel said, banging his fist triumphantly on the table. "We can still make it." He poured coffee and added milk and sugar.

Kit said: "We should leave as soon as it's light. The servants live only a mile or so away. We'll get the Nissan and drive to the airfield."

Nigel sipped his coffee. "By the cringe, that's better," he said. "Lazarus must have felt like this when he was raised from the dead."

Daisy stood up. She opened the door to the dining room and peered into the gloom. "What room is this?"

Kit said: "Where do you think you're going?"

"I need a shot of booze in this tea." She turned on the light and went in.

The other door opened, and Kit's father walked in from the hall, wearing grey pajamas and a black dressing-gown. "Good morning," he said. "What's all this?"

"Ah, Daddy," said Kit. "Let me explain."

Daisy came in from the dining room holding a bottle of Glenmorangie in her gloved hand.

Daddy raised his eyebrows at her. "Do you want a glass of whisky?" he said.

"No, thanks," she replied. "I've got a whole bottle here."