

Synopsis – The Angel

James, early 30s, is a charismatic but obsessive headhunter, spending the ten years since graduation either playing rugby, working or drinking heavily in pubs. The threat of redundancy has jeopardised his relationship with Emma, his status-conscious girlfriend. James goes on a day-long bender around London, during which he meets Kim – a struggling artist based in Hackney, with a Bohemian appearance and attitude.

Kim is owed money by her partner and James helps her break into his studio to take sculptures in lieu of the debt. They stay overnight in a hotel and, worrying about repercussions from the break-in, James invites Kim to stay at his house in a rural Buckinghamshire village. They sleep together but Kim discovers about Emma and returns to London, piqued.

James' local pub, 'The Angel', is threatened with closure but a group of village professionals and businessmen plan to buy it if someone local will run it. The investors include Gordon, Emma's divorced father, who is the local doctor.

James impetuously spends his redundancy buying the tenancy but, as a novice, must find a partner with some experience and a 'big personality'. Emma sneers at the suggestion. In desperation James asks Kim – she has done bar work and waitressing to finance her art. She agrees – for a generous amount of cash and her own living accommodation.

Despite a farcical pitch to the investors their bid is accepted. Initially Kim's forthrightness and alternative dress cause tension with the locals but she is quickly accepted. Her artistic influence improves the appeal of the pub bringing a more vibrant clientele. James's gastronomic plans prove over-ambitious but the two make the pub a modest success, against the odds. Their relationship is intense but remains platonic. Even so this riles Emma, who becomes jealous and foments friction.

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James encounters a number of obstacles that lead him to harbour suspicions about the investors' motives: perhaps the venture has been deliberately set up to fail? If so, it would prove the pub's non-viability and lead to its replacement by a lucrative housing development.

Gordon, the doctor, becomes infatuated with Kim and eventually sexually assaults her. Despite initial reticence she tells James, who becomes very protective and confronts Gordon. He decides to leave Emma for Kim and enrages Emma by telling her about the assault.

Kim becomes more settled, converting a pub outbuilding to a studio and discovering artistic and spiritual inspiration from the local landscape dotted with prehistoric sites.

Business is good but a suspicious fire guts the pub, Kim saves James but loses much of her artwork. James commits himself financially to rebuild the pub but Kim becomes unhappy and then disappears. James becomes depressed, realising it's Kim he wants rather than the pub. He tracks her down in the Tate Modern. She tells him she got pregnant, panicked and had an abortion – but feels guilty for not telling him. He is ashamed he was too obsessed with the business for her to confide in him. They are reconciled on the Millennium Bridge.

This is a journey of self-realisation in which people fall in love with both each other and a community.

521 words.