A Russellian pose. White pillars form an arch beneath the building, and frame two figures facing each other: one a messenger, one a receiver of strange news.

The one on the left has dark hair, is slim, wears olive trousers; his shirt, the palest blue, is made from that expensive kind of fabric that creases in nonchalant folds, elegant and dishevelled. An actor, an artist, he speaks with his hands.

The one on the right has a yellow jumper, jeans, and greying hair. Plump and solid. Bags—a black backpack, a computer case, and a bag that evokes no adjectives at all—are slung over his shoulder, weigh him down. A collector of information. He stands still, feet apart, arms crossed, slouched into his gut. Comforted with baggage, he listens as the blue shirt, a bloke he met at the film last week, gesticulates. A friend of Matthew’s, wasn’t it, doing screen studies and into scriptwriting. Couldn’t make out much he was saying: filmography, the shift of camera angles, the piercing quality of light and the emotive something-or-other. Talked a lot, excitable sort. He was right though, bloody good movie.
A
nnunciation pose. White pillars
form an arch beneath the building, and
frame two figures facing each other:
one a messenger, one a receiver of
strange news.

The one on the left has dark hair, is slim,
wears plaid trousers, his shirt, the palest
blue—is made from that expensive kind
of fabric that creases in nonchalant
folds, elegant and dishevelled. An actor,
artist, he speaks with his hands.

The one on the right has a yellow
sweater, jeans, and greying hair. Plum
and solid. Bags—a black backpack, a
computer case, and a bag that evokes
no adjectives at all—are slung over his
shoulder. He looks down. A collector
of information. He stands still, feet
apart, arms crossed, slouched into his
suit. Comforted with baggage, he listens
to the blue shirt, a biker he met at the
film last week gesticulates. A friend
of Matthew’s, wasn’t it, doing screen
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good movie.
The screen student goes on, his right hand pointing asking emphasising this is and this is and don’t you see how this is yes and what’s more. Fingers dancing, his left hand joins the right, hands fan and form an arc in the air, describe a small rainbow—all of this, nearby.

Gathering energy, his feet move sideways, agitated, step forward, emphatic.

The yellow jumper—what was his name now, can’t remember, never mind, it’ll come to me, seems interested, it’s a good idea—nods, sees the point—though he probably doesn’t understand, he’s doing—arms crossed and feet planted—economics, is it, finance, perhaps? Fuck, I don’t know the difference.

The scriptwriter in blue—a name, oh God, I never remember—encouraged nonetheless by such solid agreement, is excited now, exclaims, reaches to superlatives, to extremes, perhaps even to exaggeration. His arms, outstretched now, form an arc, a bigger rainbow, the promise in the sky

it’s possible you know it could be done enough money the right backer the right people with a vision it could be the biggest best most amazing can’t you see it...

Shocked, suddenly, by their outburst, a child’s energy without dignity, his hands retire to the olive pockets, blushing a little, his feet called to edgy quietness.

The yellow jumper—accountant maybe? name started with F, perhaps: Frank, Francis—sympathises with the shame of enthusiasm, turns to the side a little, looks down, stretches out his left foot, examines the shoe, brown and unpolished, scuffed and worn down at the side. Hoists the bags a little higher, crosses his arms again, reassuring.

His companion is comforted, the redness passing, but still subdued, shoulders a little hunched, head down, hesitates, a flutter of fingers. Silence.

But his feet are eager, want to speak, seek words—there was that other matter—step forward backward tap and shift and tap, great story, he would understand, would be interested—Frank, Fred, Ferdinand, ah, Fer-din-and, now that would be a great name for a character, those syllables, that cadence, that open ending... ‘and’... what? A play on words, a couple, Ferdinand and Mandy, more than they seem, a positive conjunction. Must make a note, tell Ferdy when it’s written. Words sinew lively up his spine, sentences span to shoulders, elbows, arms, hands sliding speaking from their pockets.

Right hand was me, there; left hand was her, there. We met as planned like this together two hands meeting greeting shaking. The World’s End, a club, not too bad, a band, I don’t know who, not too loud, a crowd, not too rough. We met. She knows Matthew, you know, my mate in drama, at the preview, he introduced us (ah, it’s coming back). Had a drink, bent the elbow. So, my right hand thought she seemed alright—shiny hair, big smile, bit overweight but alright—and met her halfway. Gently touched her back comrade Paul and the Queen, a deferential move, okay, she seemed okay. The palm outstretched to his fellow, Fred, Ferdinand, Ferdy, you know, it was above board, hey. We chatted, a flourish of wrist, another drink or two you know. I shouted, of course, cocktail of course, fuck they cost. The opened palm again. We got on well my hand knew its way to her waist her knee just nicely plump. Her thigh, a little plumper, answered I thought, called to me, you know they do.

Blue shirt’s elbow—something exotic, Enrico, was it, or Italian, perhaps, Leonardo, I think, probably not his real name, I mean he doesn’t look Italian, not even Mediterranean—entreats his fellow you know nudge nudge you’re a bloke right—though he does have that look, that ladies’-man mouth, those dark eyeshades—it was the thigh that led my hand on... Ferdinand of the yellow jumper shuffles, adjusts the bag, not sure where to stow this information.

Enrico—can we believe it?—Enrico’s matey shrugs, collapses, feet ready to run, escaping, avoiding. Her words were like a fist she grabbed a chair like this two hands stretched out in front, such words from that mouth, who would have thought, red lips, sweet smile, such swearing, every word I’ve heard and more... her muscles bunched, her arms swung back around and aimed at me. The narrative chair whistles through the air. Ferdinand blinks, it barely misses his ear, his nose

the sky is falling sky is falling

Enrico’s writer’s hands alive with sounds his forearms leap to shield his face, his back a string of nervous exclamation. His spine leans sideways, head ducks low, almost lopped off at the shoulders, really, barely managed to react, deflect and run. Only just escaped.

The story told, the danger passed, his feet—triumphant punctuation—find a bike rack, lift and rest one foot, an elbow sighing quietly on his knee. That was a close one, for survivors only. Leans close, the drama shared, a mate now.

You understand, Ferdy, they speak a different language.

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