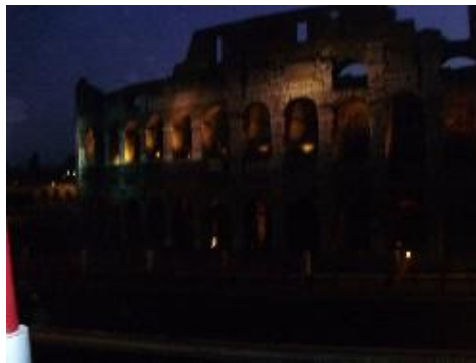


Rome, Dominics demise!

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Rome, Dominic's demise! A personal look at how a night partying in Italy's capital just wasn't enough for Dom, told through the eyes of his ever suffering travel buddy!



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Dom was gone, he had disembarked the bus and the last thing he said to me was â I'm not finished yet!â

The flight back to London was no longer a priority in his liquidised brain and he refused to give up the session we had promised ourselves would be a quiet one. I don't remember the time at this point but our plane was leaving Rome at about 7am-ish, I remember this much and now we were a man down.

I took a deep breath and pressed the red button to signal the driver to stop, I was going to have to find him. The doors opened and I stepped off the bus into the warm air. The other passengers who we'd spent the night bar crawling around Rome with were watching us like we were an act for their amusement, our chanting that got the crowds rowdy and annoyed, our excessive shot downing, our almost fighting and our premature leave because Dom refused to give it up made it a memorable one for all involved. The bus pulled away carrying with it the comfortable sounds of our fellow drinkers and their drunken ride back, leaving me stood there wondering which direction to go in. I remember wandering off in a general direction thinking I might bump into my mad friend, I tried to run because I knew we had a flight to catch, but this didn't last. My injured leg got worse as the search wore on, my boozy painkiller was wearing off and sweating out of me, trying to keep a sense of urgency about the situation was taking its toll. I crossed roads, cut through alleyways, went under bridges, changed directions and generally ran around sweaty, in pain and pissed off with Dom, achieving nothing. I came to the conclusion I wasn't going to find him and I should save myself, find the hotel, go to the airport and leave, Dom would have hopefully come to his senses by then and made his own way, meeting me at the airport for a giggle at our stupidity. I walked and walked and had no idea where I was, which direction I had to go in or anything, I was literally hoping to find a landmark or a street name I recognised as I had the hotel card in my pocket with the address on. Nowhere was there any taxis or any sign of other people, I don't know why the streets were so empty but I got frustrated to the point of shouting at myself and nearly sitting on the pavement to blubber. My saviour turned up in a car, I don't remember what type of car, colour, make or even what the driver looked like, just that he literally saved me. He pulled up beside me and beckoned me towards the car window, I stumbled over to be greeted by a barrage of German, I showed him the hotel card and he gestured me to jump in. In normality I wouldn't have accepted a lift off a stranger who couldn't speak English, in the middle of the night but this wasn't normal, I was half-cut, stuck in the middle of Italy's capital, missing a friend and hours away from being stranded. It was quite a dire situation. Inside that car I would now pay to see footage of what was said between us, we each used hand gestures, noises and broken words to communicate. I think it was unmistakable that I was a pissed tourist stuck in Rome trying to find my hotel, but him, it took me ages to figure out what his diagrams and random words meant. Basically, what I got from him was that he was a Christian who wanted to help people, fair play to him as he helped me without any unwanted drama and got me to where I needed to be. I thanked him and I clambered out of his car on to the street my hotel was on, conveniently enough across the road from the Train Station. A German Christian driving around Rome helping intoxicated and lost tourists, strange. I got into the hotel by using the intercom outside, I managed to persuade the night shift clerk I was a guest and I was buzzed in. As dreaded, Dom was nowhere to be seen and his kit was still laid out as he'd left it before we went out to meet the bar crawl. My arm caste still lay on my bed, cut, dirty looking and discarded. I packed up what belonged to me, and got ready to leave. I found Dom's passport and told the reception what had happened, they agreed to hold onto it until he turned up, I had no time to waste. I left the hotel and found a taxi outside the train station, I told him where I was going and the next thing I remember is waking up outside the airport, confused and being nudged by an Italian to wake up. It was still dark. I knew I looked a mess, still wearing my dancing kit and half cut, so before I entered the airport I put on my sunglasses, as if they would somehow make me less drunk, or that they were a protective shield against judgement. Somehow, I checked in without any question of my sobriety

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and got to the departure lounge, still checking around me for Dom's miraculous return, but no, he wasn't to fly with me that morning. I boarded the plane and ended up seated next to a young couple, probably not much older than me. I'd like to say I conversed with them and we had a pleasant flight but I literally boarded and woke up in London. The seat belt light had been turned off and everyone around me was rushing to get their bags from the over head lockers, my mouth was wide open, sunglasses still perched on my nose and a trail of spit down my chin. The couple were sat patiently waiting and looking at me to wake up so they could do the same. I was in clip, confused, hungover and in shock, I started flapping trying to remove myself from my seat as quick as I could to mask my embarrassment. I'd clearly fell asleep, mouth wide open in all its glory, probably snoring as I do when I'm drunk and slept the full flight away, embarrassing myself all the way looking like one of the Euro bums we were so happy to mock. I regret nothing.

I sloped around London Gatwick Airport like some sort of rock 'n ' roll hand me down, with my sunglasses on, stinking of booze, hungover , sucked dry and half dead still wearing my sesh kit from the previous night. I attempted to get myself a train ticket back to the North but was completely depleted of funds, I had nothing in my pockets and my bank card was being declined. The train fare was expensive though, about ninety Sterling. I sat on top of my no longer brand new red, sixty litre backpack, against a drinks machine, unplugged it and plugged my phone charger in. I needed a plan and I was feeling desperate. I noticed there was a coach station in the airport so I decided to give it a look, train fares are extortionate anyway so maybe I could afford a coach fare, hopefully. I found the coach terminal and asked how much for a bus to Middlesbrough, thirty. I give my card over the desk, praying in my head, nervous of the almost inevitable embarrassment that was coming with the line of people growing behind me watching it all.

â OK your bus leaves at....., here's your ticket!â

Without giving it away to the crowd, I was mentally doing back flips around the airport, I grabbed my card and somehow resisted kissing the person behind the desk.

â How long is the journey please?â

â Eight hours.â

My new found morale was lost again, I had no water, no money and an eight hour bus journey back to the North. At least I wasn't Dom, stuck in Rome, I did feel bad but it wasn't like I hadn't tried, I had searched for hours round an unfamiliar city, on a limp, at risk of my own flight, the awkward bastard! I'd still heard nothing from him and his number was still going straight to answer.

I got on the bus and lo and behold it was ram packed, everyone could probably smell the night life of Rome seeping from my pores, my unbrushed teeth and my desperation as I carried my big red bag and a sore head. I took a seat and ended up aisle seat next to an old lady. Nice enough as she was, asking where I'd been and making small talk of it, I wasn't interested, as soon as it was polite enough too, sunglasses still perched on my nose, I wrapped a t-shirt around my face and tried to sleep the journey away. It dragged, it was hot, sweaty and I was sick of breathing bad air. My head bobbed around to the bumps in the road and my mouth was wide open as usual, I always sleep like this for some reason, hence the t-shirt, to save me from judging eyes when I'm at my most glamorous, this has become standard procedure on my travels now. I arrived in Teesside and managed to scrounge a lift to my Mam's house. I was in no mood for story telling yet and I still didn't know what had happened to Dom as his phone was still switched off.

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A few hours passed and I'd milked a bit of restless hangover sleep, eventually I got the call;

â Helloâ

â Dom? Are you winding me up? Where are you?â

â Rome mate, you left me.â

â Mate I looked everywhere, you're an absolute nightmare.â

â I'm still in the hotel and I cant get back, I've got no money.â

â Really? How are you in the hotel?â

â The bloke said I can stay until I sort something out, what am I gonna do?""Are you serious?â

â Yeah mate, I'm in absolute clip, no money, no food.â

â I had to leave, you disappeared again, are you really still there?â

â Na, am at home.â Dom laughed.

â You absolute dick.â

Dom had snapped out of his intoxicated trance a few hours after he'd wandered off on his own little adventure and realised he had a flight to catch. By the time he'd got his stuff, picked up his passport and got to the airport, he was already hours late and still steaming. He purchased another ticket for the next flight around midday, giving him chance to sober up and eat. He'd eventually got home and found amusement in telling me he was still a lost boy in Rome, he kept it up for a good five minutes before he came clean. It wasn't all doom and gloom though, he'd managed to get a few good snaps on his phone of the Roman Colosseum, a similar thing happened in the capital of Germany a year later when he would stumble on a section of the Berlin Wall and claim himself some more snaps. What went through this man's head at these moments was beyond me except his relentless pursuit of the heaving and the never ending need to keep the party going even if that meant wandering off into the unknown and potentially dodgy. A flick switches in his brain and off he goes, French accents, drunk photography, evil possessions, it all happens. I could imagine him, scurrying around the rooftops and canals of Venice, feeding on tourists, a devourer, a cannibal living on human flesh and whiskey, no money or fresh clothes, passport well passed expiry, doing anything he could just so he didn't have to stop and go home.

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