

Two and Two
by Eric Cecil

Two and two, she says. I'm unsure what she means. I cradle the phone against my shoulder, frowning into the black ring of its mouthpiece. What, I ask, is two and two? She sighs and tells me it's a double-double: One show in the afternoon and another at night, for two consecutive dates. Book it, she says. All of it. She hangs up.

I replace the phone on its cradle and step into the center of my new London apartment. I haven't yet furnished it. Its one notable feature is a thin, gray carpet, amorphous stains mapping most of its surface. This rough flooring spans the length of each room, pulling the bowed white walls to a coldwater kitchen and colorless bathroom at the far end of the flat.

Two and two.

A large man stirs in a plush brown easychair, now evident in a near corner. I'm surprised to see him. Embarrassed, even. He coughs.

You'll get used to the lingo, he says, removing a wet cigar from his mouth. You'll get used to her.

She seems fine.

She'll make you money, he says. He knuckles his beard, stands, lumbers into the kitchen. From there, he calls to me: You may not like her kind of music, but there's a need for it.

What kind of music does she make? I ask.

Does it matter? he says.

The width of his great back to me, he turns on the sink and stands there, hands on the counter. I look on as he watches the faucet run.