

Short story analysis essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Any spare change, Guvnor? ‘ the young girl cried, “ Any change to spare? ”

The gentleman pushed away her hand and hurried on, huddled in his frog jacket for protection against the wind like a tortoise huddles in its shell. It was cold and her ragged clothes did nothing to keep out the hard winter wind but she knew she must stay where she was. Long ago, she had learnt not to turn for home in such weather, but stand her ground.

It was easier to do that than to bear the brunt of her mother’s cane, always ready to come hurtling down on her back. Yes, it hurt much less to stay. He lay on his bed, near to death. Looking down at him Stu could hardly believe this was the man who had done so much in his youth. He had climbed Snowdon at 60, been one of the forefathers of photography, it was even rumoured he had leapt from a moving train in his twenties, although that was so long ago now, no one could recall it.

At the ripe old age of 94, he seemed only a shadow of his former self, dying of consumption, and helpless in his last years. Glancing down again, Stu noticed the elder was stirring. He lent down and helped him into a sitting position so the pillows could be plumped. When this was done Stuart Hargrove turned and sat, atisfied.

Now they could get down to business... Well, she had done her work for the day. As a reward for sitting in the cold from 5 until 9 Lana had received 5 farthings and a new polished button. Mother wouldn’t be happy but she couldn’t complain-Lana had stayed in her spot all day and not gone running back to West Street where they lived.

Anyway, Mother could go without her opium and whisky for a few days. As she turned off Main road, where she went every day to beg, her thoughts turned to her father. Read also Those Winter Sundays questions and answers Mother had left her home at fifteen to be with him, and they had married several weeks after that, in a beaten up caravan by the Thames.

By her mum's 17th birthday, Lana had been born and from then on her mother's happily married life had gone steeply downhill. Father couldn't cope with a baby. After he discovered the pregnancy he had stolen quietly away into the night, while her mother lay sleeping soundly. Mother had always blamed Lana for his departure, and had beaten, starved, neglected and sworn at her until her head swam. She didn't do it as much now though, because now she relied entirely on Lana to bring in the money. It wasn't fair, but Lana was prepared to be the breadwinner if it meant she wasn't hurt.

As she walked into the house she didn't notice her mother's body and the doctor until he came over to her. " Miss, I'm terribly sorry...

" " Listen carefully. " the old Baron croaked, his voice rusty and cracked with sleep. " I am going to tell you a story. What I tell you must never be repeated to any one else. " Stu leaned closer, becoming interested in the story despite his professional approach.

When I was 20, I married a beautiful woman from the neighbouring village. We were very much in love and remained so for the duration of our marriage. About a year into the marriage we were blessed with our own little bundle of joy, which we named Mari. Alas, my dear wife died bringing Mari into the world, but Mari and I managed fine on our own. " However, when

she began to mature, I was no longer the idol of her world, as she began to discover the opposite sex. When she was fifteen she fell in love with a young man, just turned 17 or 18.

He was an undesirable boy, full of himself, and I could easily see he cared not for Mari. We fought, and Mari ran away with him, to London I believe. She never returned. The only reason I tell you this now is because you are a lawyer-and the one I have chosen to find my daughter. I trust you will bring her back to me in all haste, for as my time draws to an end on this Earth, I find myself longing for happier days and wish to make amends. She is in my will as my sole benefactor so I urge you to find her.

.. please. " She was dead? The torment she had suffered all those years was finally gone. She chewed her luxurious long brown hair thoughtfully. Although some part of her must be leaping for joy and her newfound freedom, all she felt in her heart was a dull aching.

Her head was pounding rhythmically and her hands shook whilst she the daughter, paid tribute to the mother. She reminisced. How her mother in a good mood had once played Mud Pies with her, scuffling in the dirt until it was so late they could no longer see the hands in front of their face. Then, the way her mother had gradually become dependant on opium and alcohol.

Sometimes she was in the opium dens all night. She could even recall the sadness on her mother's face as she realised she had no money to support the habit and the grim determination as she set out to become a prostitute. She looked once at the yard where she had spent so long and subsequently

walked away without glancing back. Good bye Mother,' she whispered as she left. `Goodbye Mother Mari.

' As she bowed her head she spotted a figure across the road glance once in her direction, interestedly. As she passed from under a street lamp into the darkness of the now deserted Main Road, the last thing she saw was an expression of utter surprise and heard him call out to her. She was too tired to think anything of it then. So, here he was. After a long journey from Scotland, over many hills and dales, finally he was in London, amongst the lit streetlamps and busy crowds, which were always headed somewhere and nowhere. After uch research he had found a possible contact and that was where he was going now.

Drawing up to the wooden, rotting door, he smelt the familiar sweet fumes of the opium and choked, unused to the strength of the drug. Back in Scotland there were many dens like these, but self-respecting men like himself steered clean away from them. In times of many brutal killings, you never could be too sure, especially here in London...

He shuddered and with a deep breath, knocked... After wandering around for what seemed like an eternity, finally Lana had ended up here again, at her mother's death place and her home ntil several hours earlier. It was dark now, and even more bitterly cold than earlier.

She would stay here-it was safe, familiar and she didn't want to walk any further anyway. Crawling under the splintered slats of wood that made up the fence, she lay down on the stone cobbles and slipped into a restless sleep. Well, that had been informative. After several hours of discussion, in

which the smells almost overpowered him and in which he was twice offered a taste of the local laudanum, a friendly philanthropist had finally told him that she had died earlier that night, leaving an only child of 14. Although his mission was over, he felt he owed as much to the dear Baron to bring him the next best thing, his grand daughter. As he walked down to the address he had been given, he saw a young girl walking away in the opposite direction.

Her clothes were black and ragged, and her face much the same. As she passed under a flickering streetlamp he caught a glance of dusty, mellow coloured hair, a rich brown like hazels or chestnuts. He saw utter misery written on her face as she looked up, caught his eye and disappeared into the gloom. In a flash, he remembered how the man described Mari's daughter-petite, auburn coloured hair and a wild, hunted look. He shouted but he was too late-she was gone.

She awoke with a start, uncertain for a moment of where she was or what had happened in the day lit hours of yesterday. It was early morning now, and the first wisps of grey smoke were creeping across the horizon from the nearby factories. She climbed to her feet and pulled on the jacket she had been using as a pillow. There wasn't any point in working today-it was Sunday and everyone would be in church or eating a hot, cooked meal before going to sleep to digest the meal. Instead she would go to her favourite place, the river.

She loved to sit there whenever she had a moment to herself and watch the water flowing, always flowing. It was amazing to think how many seas it had

travelled and how many years it had flowed. Daylight, and the start of a new day. Stu yawned and sat up.

In his inn room he had a fine view of London and could see for miles around. He got out of the lumpy bed and staggered over to view the new day and its inhabitants. The girl sat by the river, trailing her fingers in the water. Twice in two days he had seen her and he wasn't going to miss the opportunity again. He pulled on his frog coat, stuck a piece of toast in his mouth and ran.

She saw him coming from a distance. She was certain she had seen him before but couldn't think where. He drew closer...

What could he say? No words could express his relief at finding her. He opened his mouth. "Madam, you are a millionaire. Please accompany me to Scotland to meet your grandfather.

"There was an unearthly silence, then the girl smiled and slipped her hand into his. It was wonderful. Lana smiled in happiness. He led the quiet girl into the room, smiling within him and openly showing it. The girl talked little enough but she was the Baron's granddaughter and that was satisfactory.

Now, they were together. He would leave them for a while then collect his pay. He hated to think of money at a time like this but times were hard and he needed the money. Her hair caught his eyes as he left. It was her only quality, that flowing golden hair. "So Lana" the old man sighed.

"We finally meet." Frowning the girl opened her mouth, but then decided against it, and instead smiled a dimpled beam. Lana sat quietly in her usual spot. The death of her mother had haken her but she was getting on with life

and trying the best she could to earn a living-not for two this time, but for one. Any spare change, Guvnor? " She pleaded, arms outstretched. " Any change to spare? " Oh, this wasn't the life for her.

If only she had someone to turn to, to run and bury her head in, like a kindly grandpa. But things like that happened only in fairy tales-didn't they? She had overheard a man on the bridge yesterday, talking to a girl similar to herself, the only difference being the contrasting hair. He had named her a millionaire, but surely that was just a joke? Still, it was just what she needed.