

Snowdrops – creative writing



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

When would Reece be back? I sat on my bed and daydreamed, all the good times we had had together flashing through my mind, filling me up with the sensation I was flying. I came back to earth with a thud. Glancing at the clock only made me feel worse - half past eleven. Reece was usually home by ten. Sighing, still worried, I lay my head down on my pillow, just to rest my eyes for a few minutes...

And awoke with a jolt, to the rhythmic thudding of a heavy hand on the front door. For a split second, I held the thought that it could be Reece, complete with a totally reasonable, acceptable excuse, and he would hold me and everything would be alright again. That image vanished, when I realised Reece never knocked like that. Frozen with panic, I sat upright. The knocking continued. A sudden burst of courage took me totally unawares. Hurriedly, I pulled on my red dressing gown. Dashing down the stairs, I grabbed the keys to the door. Slowly, I advanced. With feline agility, I tip-toed to the door. With a shaky hand, I put the key in the key-hole. Deftly I turned the knob. Willing my suspicions to be erroneous, I peeped through the crack I had created between the door and the doorframe.

There, silhouetted against the eerie moon, stood a great figure, portentously broad and equally tall, the mere look of whom would worry all but the bravest. I slumped with relief.

'Hello Gwen.' I said, letting out the deep breath I didn't know I was holding.

Gwen was the village policeman, a gentle giant to all who knew him, but certainly one of the most intimidating men to meet in the street. This was down mainly to his incredible width, which prevented anyone walking either

side of him on a pavement. Talking to Gwen was like conversing with a ship, he was big, slow, and found it notoriously hard to change direction in a subject.

But why was he here?

'Hello, Sarah,' he said, not a hint of happiness in his voice.

'What's wrong? Why are you here?'

Gwen's face creased up. He was almost in tears. I had never seen him like this before, and I wasn't sure how to react.

'What's wrong, Gwen? Is someone hurt? Tell me, Gwen!'

By now, tears were rolling down Gwen's cheeks. I had no idea what was going on: I was totally confused.

'There's been an accident, Sarah,' Reece whispered, his voice hoarse.

'Reece, he, he's had an accident. He was speeding, he hit a lorry, he...'

'He what? What happened? Is he okay?' I screeched, frantic to know the answer. Gwen gulped.

'He passed away at half past ten. He was speeding on his motorcycle, he hit the back of a lorry. I - I'm sorry.'

I froze. He was speeding. Speeding to see me.

'What?' I whispered, 'No surely, there's a mistake. Reece can't be dead, it's just - no, no, this isn't right, it must be, I, I...' I stopped. I felt my body numb,

as the realisation took hold of me. He was gone, and I couldn't bring him back. The emptiness was overwhelming, like a dark pit had opened inside of me that sucked all my thoughts, memories, emotions into it, leaving me drained. Then it spat it all back out again, and the fullness was overwhelming. Anger, fear, grief, hate, it all spilled out with the tears that gushed from my eyes.

I slumped into Gwen's arms, as he took me through my house, the house that had seemed so warm and full of life only moments before, now cold, dark and foreboding. Down on my settee he sat me, all the time whispering . I needed to be alone. I told Gwen so, rudely, but being polite was the last thing on my mind. He left, and I wept.

Alone I sat out the night, unable to face sleeping alone. I was lost, I didn't know what to do or where to go. I knew I had to work tomorrow, there were hardly enough teachers at the school as it was, but I couldn't comprehend facing a single sensible adult, never mind a classroom full of children who scarcely knew the meaning of sad. By the time the early rays of spring sun hit my windowpane, I had made up my mind. I had a responsibility to the children, and I knew it was what Reece would have wanted. I had to teach the children.

At six o'clock, as per usual, I arose and got dressed from head to toe in black. The colour of death, but also a symbol of authority. There was no sleepiness in my morning schedule, yet I was not fully awake. I got ready lifelessly, listlessly. Breakfast was missed - I fasted on - and set off early to avoid the mixed looks from the locals dotted around the village.

It didn't work. As I walked through the centre of the village, I could feel the eyes upon my, burning through the headscarf I hid underneath. Quickly and determinedly, I headed up the small dirt track that lead to the school. The emptiness was still there, lurking threateningly at the back of my mind. Consciously pushing it even further back, I braced myself for the day ahead.

Needless to say, that day wasn't my proudest as a teacher. As I walked into the classroom half an hour later than normal, the staring eyes of the naïve children almost reduced me to tears a second time. A sympathetic look from the young blonde teacher did nothing to console me, but I stayed strong - for Reece, and for the children. Taking a deep breath, putting on the nicest, sweetest voice I could muster, I addressed the children.

'Hello, boys and girls.'

'Hello Miss Webster,' they reply, chirpy as always. A lump welled in my throat, I began to sway again, so I grabbed the desk for support and took another deep breath.

'Now, today boys and girls, we'll be drawing pictures of our favourite things for outside. Does everyone have something they like best?' Every head nodded.

'Good. Peter, please give everyone a pencil. Glenys, can you give everyone a piece of paper please. Thank you.'

As the two young kids set off to perform their duties, swollen with pride at being chosen by the teacher to do a job.

I sat on the edge on my old chair at the front of the classroom. The room was silent, save for the scribbling of pencils on paper and occasional unintelligible murmur from a child, hard at work. My mind drifted, back to Reece.

His face drifted to the forefront of my mind, his features already beginning to haze as I used only my memory to imagine him. Just as I got his face into full focus, the emptiness that had been lying in wait at the rear of my mind crept forward, looming behind the smiling face. I tried to push it back, but there was nothing to push. His face melted away, the blankness washed over him like the sea rushing over drawings in the sand. It hit me a second time: I was alone.

I jolted out of my seat, startled back into reality. I saw the upset look on the face of the little boy, QQQQQ who had come to show me the picture he had drawn. A robin. Fitting, I thought. Robins didn't migrate to the warmth with the other birds when winter came: Robins faced the harsh, bleak, cold winter alone. I felt I must do the same. I knelt down, plucked the picture from his hand and pinned it on the wall. I looked over at the old clock hung high on the wall, and saw it was break time. I excused the children as pleasantly as I could muster, and followed them out to the school playground.

I stood for twenty minutes under the cold spring sun, and called for the children to come back in. Watching over them as they re-entered the school, one of the other teachers, Mrs Jones, a busybody by all means, in her late fifties, scurried towards me.

'How're you coping, dearie?' she enquired, her caring tone easy to see through. I could do no more than nod.

'Well the funeral's today, at half-past midday. Men only, of course, but they should pass right by on old Luther way.'

The funeral. It had completely passed me by, and I felt ashamed for it.

Traditional Welsh funeral of course, no female attendees, but perhaps if I could find a reasonable excuse...

The snowdrops.

Of course, I had promised the children that I would show them the beautiful spring flowers. If I timed it right, the procession would pass right by.

'Thank you, Mrs Jones,' I replied with a nod, as I entered the classroom. It was quarter to twelve. Half an hour. I pulled out the big story book from the bookshelf, and called around all the children as I sat down with it. Normally, I would put my heart and soul into reading aloud to the children, but today they were completely preoccupied, so my voice was flat and monotonous. The children were disappointed, but I had too much on my mind to attempt to remedy their disillusionment.

I glanced up at the clock every five minutes, as the big hand turned slowly around on the wall. My whole body was tense, my throat was dry, my voice rasping. At twelve fifteen, I slammed the book shut, stood up, and led the children briskly through the chill outside air, hand in hand, to the bottom of the school grounds, where the snowdrops grew.

As I watched their amazed faces stare in astonishment at the little white specks of purity, I could not help but long to be a child again, youthful and kept away from the harsh realities of life. Then I heard the bittersweet funeral

chant, deep, dark and hauntingly beautiful, and my hands clutched at the little white gate leading to the road. My eyes blurred over and I cried, cried for all the good times and the bad times, wept in longing and loneliness, knowing I was destined to live my life incomplete.