

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

We first met at a bookshop

by Richard Wilding

The shop was small, and so was “A House For Mr Biswas,” which happened to be the first book I picked up when I saw her coming in the from the rain, her hair like Andi McDowell’s at the end of Four Weddings. I thought then I had never seen such a beautiful girl. It was lunchtime on our shared third day at the bank, and it was raining and I was wearing the suit I had bought from Next. It was dark grey with a thin white stripe and the thing I liked about it best was the purple piping on the inside pockets. I always liked that suit and I wore it on and off (well, on more than off, clearly) for my entire time at the bank, even though the trousers wore very thin under the crotch so that after a while I had to make certain that I never sat with my legs apart, especially in the more important meetings.

I had noticed her immediately, and because we were both part of the new intake of graduates - on the same management scheme - we had been introduced on our first day. I didn’t see a great deal of intelligence in her eyes, a fact soon proven to me when I discovered the “University” she’d been to and the course that she’d taken. I didn’t realise you could get a degree in sports journalism. It’s like getting a degree in walking, or making breakfast.

I don’t think she followed me into the bookshop even if it might have looked like that to a casual observer. Or not exactly a casual observer as they’d have had to have watched me leave the bank at lunchtime and turn left on the high street and then watch her follow after me, twenty seconds or so later, and then they’d have had to have followed both of us as I turned right and then left into the shopping centre and she followed, staying the exact distance behind me as when I’d started. That’s not casual observation, is it? That’s stalking. Anyway, *I* hadn’t followed *her*.

She came into the bookshop, clacking the last few yards on her high heels to get out of the rain which had taken a sudden turn for the heavier. She moseyed around the best-sellers display. I stood slightly out of eyeshot, next the L-N shelves.

I noticed her pick up High Fidelity. She read the back cover, squished up her nose and instead picked up *The Golden Compass* which I knew she would because she didn't have a proper degree and adults with degrees in children's subjects are drawn to children's fiction *whereas* adults with degrees in proper subjects read proper authors. To my surprise, however, she put it down and walking around the stack of Buy One Get Another Half Price paperbacks, she picked up Bill Bryson's "Notes From A Small Island," which seemed to hold her attention.