

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

The Daily Nebula

by Des Holden

“It's perfectly formed”

“One in a million”

Jeremy looked round the table. There was no friendship in the cold, flat stares. Colin, Editor-in-Chief hadn't even taken his coat off. He sniffed, then pushed a finger into his nostril, as though searching for a secret snot switch. Jeremy looked at the photo again.

“But you can't judge a book by its cover.”

“That's as lame as a three legged horse.” Said Dominic, Sports.

There was a moment's silence. Andrew, Religion and sub on Arts, wasn't going to speak. Jeremy needed to try again.

“You can't please everyone all the time.” He offered to the group.

Andrew snorted, but took the photo. “Ignorance is bliss.”

Jeremy relaxed as the round robin moved round.

“Thankfully, love is blind.”

Alan, Economics, was in fact blind but Jeremy couldn't remember him using the phrase before in their Monday morning warm up. Editor's desk rumour was he'd a soft spot for Mel. They all had soft spots.

“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing” Richard said. A generic cop out, Jeremy thought, and did his gaze linger insultingly on Colin?

The photo stopped in front of Wayne, photo editor and architect of the on-off page three content. More likely off with the dominos of press and corporate misogyny toppling. Say what you want about the politics of black dresses, but any dress, unless short and snapped with its occupant exiting a cab, was better than no dress at all.

“From the look of that I'd say a horse has closed its own door and maybe bolted it”. No one even smiled.

“A bird in my hand, even a big one, needn't worry about her bush.” Ned, Foreign Affairs, tried hard to *be* the cliché. Those who'd seen the photo knew it was Deviation, but no one ever challenged him. Different strokes for different folks.

“fuck off”, said Mel, Property, without rancour. She handed the photo back to Colin and Jeremy realised that was her cliché. Nice.

Colin held the 6 by 4 in both hands and looked at it as though he was alone.

“Walls have ears,” he said, “but as we're open plan you may not know. I'm leaving.”

“Hip Hip Today?” Asked Richard.

“Friday.”

He placed the photo on the table in front of him. An ordinary front door and pavement. On the pavement sat a large but otherwise ordinary turd. Dog rather than equine or avian in all probability.

“Always look on the bright side” said Alan

“Yeh, the grass is always greener.”

“Grass is overrated” said Wayne.

“What is grass?” Colin asked.

Outside the conference room the Thames was already choked with taxis, tour boats and freight. The embankment, narrow outside the building, funnelled joggers and fast walking office staff past slow moving Chinese and European tourists.

“Back to your desks. Give me copy” Colin said. They shuffled to their feet, the ritual of putting on their cynicism complete. Colin sat looking at his photo. Jeremy paused. “Happy birthday boss.”