

Bourne toWrite...

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People Rarely Look

by Nancy Bertenshaw

People rarely look the way you expect them to, even when you have seen pictures. One, Bruce, she couldn't believe. Gorgeous looking, same interests: walking, reading, music...but not knitting. They arranged a date and meeting place. He would wear the red carnation.

Lonely Betty had found dating sites. She had filled in details honestly... 'slightly overweight, dyed blonde, curly hair, age 40'. She had sent a true picture of herself, one that revealed chins, pale skin, good legs though. Betty never wore make-up. Take it or leave it, she thought. They left it. She dressed in camouflage: encompassing, flowery dress, decent neckline, dangly earrings, flattish, comfortable shoes she could walk in.

Entering the crowded Queen's Road cafe-bar, Betty noticed a man with a carnation. Bruce?! The man was shortish, balding, glasses. She had seen him before, on the website possibly, or in the street? He looked towards her, then scanned the room again, as if searching. Betty took fright. She made for the 'ladies'. Locked in a cubicle, her heart was thumping. What was she doing here? She flushed the loo for good measure.

Back in the cafe-bar she was just in time to see a tall, handsome man, (it was Bruce!) approached by a beautiful, curly blonde, slim girl in a white dress, heavily made up, long, brown, bare legs. He smirked, she tittered. They sat on the bar stools, drinking. Betty stood behind the couple at the bar pretending to need service, listening to the conversation. Bruce seemed older than his picture, and was that grey hair at the back? And surely not fake tan make-up on the collar?!

'You're not Betty?' Bruce's gravelly voice drawled.

'I'm Melissa, meeting Brian. You're not Brian?' she giggled, invitingly.

They laughed, with familiarity, with hilarity.

Betty reddened and moved further along the bar, out of sight.

The couple soon left, got into a sleek, metallic-blue car and drove off.

Tearfully, Betty ordered coffee and found a table near the window. She blew into her pretty, lace hankie, wiped her eyes and felt a bit calmer. She was aware a man with a carnation was standing by her table...Bruce? No, it was the short guy with glasses. Could he sit down...?

‘Yes, of course,’ Betty said politely, really wanting to be left alone.

‘Sorry about this stupid carnation,’ he said, ripping it out of a buttonhole in his shirt. ‘I was meant to meet a Melissa here this eve. That’s not you is it?’ he said, rather hopefully.

‘That’s nice,’ thought Betty.

‘No, I’m Betty and I was here to meet with a Bruce.’

‘Think Bruce has just left with Melissa, thankfully,’ reassured Brian, with a kind smile.

They laughed happily, with familiarity.

Next morning, Betty, shocked, read the headline of the local paper out to Brian.

Body Found in Flat, Murderer Stole Car

‘Crikey, that could have been me!’ Brian’s eyes widened, in horror.

‘No more Bruce... and no more dating agencies,’ he whispered, as he kissed Betty’s curls.