

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

The Stash

by Chris Robinson

I've often fantasised about finding a massive stash of cash. A few weeks ago that fantasy became a reality which has quickly evolved into a living nightmare. My name is Maya and I am a home help. I assist people with household chores or shopping but mostly I provide companionship. I enjoy my job and have made some lovely friends along the way.

My favourite lady is Winnie. She is 92 and in good mental health but she is physically frail. We always knew the time would come when she would need round the clock care in a residential facility. It was a regular topic of conversation. She had one son who lived in Australia. He provided for her financially but visits were rare. She needed a friend and I had filled the role.

Winnie had accepted that she had to move so we decided to take the pain and worry out of it by sorting out her house together. I helped sort out cupboards, drawers, clothes and paperwork. Fragile keepsakes were wrapped in newspaper and carefully packed in boxes ready for the big day.

One day Winnie asked me to go and look for a trunk in the loft. She said it contained items extremely personal to her and she wanted to have a good look through them for old times sake. My contract stated that I was not to enter loft areas, outbuildings, garages or sheds for health and safety reasons but this was Winnie and I was fond of her so I broke the rules. After all who would ever know? I went into the loft and found the trunk straight away. It was too big and heavy for me to bring down on my own so I opened it and brought the contents downstairs gradually. There were bundles of letters, photos, a box of jewelry, some clothing, three teddy

bears and a doll. Winnie was delighted but said that her husband's army cap was missing and would I mind checking the loft again. Looked around I noticed the cap poking out from under a large dust sheet behind the water tank. Lifting the sheet, I saw a small safe with the door slightly ajar. Curiosity got the better of me and I looked inside. It was full of twenty-pound notes. Bundles of them. There had to be thousands of pounds stashed there. I stood staring at the money in shock. Eventually I came to my senses and, picking up the cap, put the dust sheet back and went downstairs to Winnie.

"Found it" I said waving the cap in the air but I didn't tell her about the money.

Winnie hugged the cap to her chest and smiled at me. "Thank you so much" she said happily. I waited for her to mention the safe but she didn't so I didn't mention it either.

The time came for Winnie to move. She never mentioned the money once. I helped settle her into her new home and promised to visit often. Then I dropped her key back to the office happy in the knowledge that I had a duplicate in my pocket.

This evening, under the cover of darkness, I came back to her house. Letting myself in I climbed the stairs to the loft. I switched on my torch and shone it on the dustsheet. Everything was as I had left it. I took the bundles of notes out of the safe and kissed each one before placing them in my holdall. I kept telling myself that Winnie didn't need the money but I did. She hadn't even remembered it was there. When the safe was empty I walked briskly to the loft hatch and started my descent down the rickety old stairs. I don't know what happened next. Did the stairs give way or did I lose my footing? Either way it doesn't matter because the result is the same. I am lying in a heap on the landing. I feel no pain. In fact, I feel nothing at all. I am completely paralysed. I hear Winnie's words in my head. She says "My son is in no hurry to sell the house. He is coming back in six months and will deal with it then."

Finally it hits me. I am alone, no one knows I am here and no one is coming. I try to scream but there is silence. Then the blackness starts to engulf me.