

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

A few questions

by Richard Wilding

Listen, I say, I'm not crazy. I want you to save something for me.

“What?”

I want you to save yourself the trouble of trying to escape, I say.

“I won't say a thing to anyone. I don't even know who you are or what you look like. I have no idea where I am. I promise I won't say a word to anyone. I don't even know where I am. Knock me out again and drive me somewhere, anywhere, and just drop me off and I'll never know how long it took to drive me there and I'll never be able to trace my way back here.”

But you do know what I look like, I remind her. You saw me at The Smugglers.

This makes her pause. For a moment I think she had genuinely forgotten. I think fear can do that to people. It can make their brain freeze. They say there is the 'fight or flight' response in us but there is also the stay frozen to the spot response.

Perhaps she is trying to trick me. She could be. I don't think I know her well enough yet to trust her. Say I let her go, and decided not to go through with the experiment. Say I let her go and made her promise she'd never say a word to anyone. And say she meant to keep her word. But one day, she'd break her word. And then she would remember what I look like. And where we met. And then, well, and then things might not look so rosey for me. Not that this is going to happen. But even so. It's good to think through all the possibilities. Planning, etc.

I ask her if she has been an eavesdropper.

"What?"

Please, just answer the question.

"No."

Or falsely accused anyone, or been excessively angry? She shakes her head, no.

Have you had evil thoughts?

"No," she says.

No? I ask. Not even while you've been here, with me?

"No," she says, and she begins to cry. I don't enjoy watching her cry and I consider telling her about the experiment and about how she will go down in history and be famous and people will want to know about her and hers will be the first heart in the history of all human hearts ever to be weighed for its love, but I'm not sure that knowing this, knowing what would happen to her shortly would have necessarily been a comfort to her so I put up with the crying because it won't be for long.

The crying subsides and a lonely tear falls away across her cheek, like a lost child looking for its mother on a lonely moor. She closes her eyes and scrunches up her hands. I think she is about to scream so I ask her if she has ever insulted a god or a goddess, to take her mind off things.

She looks at me again like I am genuinely mad.