

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Michael Panics

by Sue Hitchcock

"Listen, I'm not crazy. I want you to save something for me. " The weather forecast was looking even more dire than had been predicted. The named storm, strangely called "Mindy", was expected just at the wrong time, with the full moon, the spring tide.

Michael's mood had become ever more panicky, while his boss, Matt, and Matt's assistant, Chelsea, were still laughing at him behind his back. Of course it wasn't their business to worry about the weather, nor his, but they should be worrying about the welfare of the local citizens and making emergency arrangements. Matt was still moping about the loss of his lover, and Chelsea, though sympathetic, had a happy-go-lucky nature, keeping her disabled mother cheerful as a priority.

"Well, Michael, what is this thing that's so important?" was her response.

"I know you think I am mad, but just look at the way things are building up. I've shown you the increasing amounts of seaweed and shells on the field and it's right by your mum's house. You must understand the way the tides work - the moon tugging the sea up at high tide and how the spring and autumn tides are higher."

"Yes, but it's always been like that, hasn't it?"

"We humans have changed things. You know the ice caps are melting and every year the tide is higher. This year it could be the crunch for us, here. It happened before, but we reinforced the promenade. It's not enough now."

"O.K. So what do you want me to do?" Chelsea was now seriously considering her mother's safety, rather than Michael's request."

"It's your mother! Please save her! She'll never make it out in a wheelchair, once the tide comes over. I've asked my mother. She can stay with us, and you too."

That evening at about ten Michael put on his anorak and rode his bike part of the way into town, padlocking it to a lamppost. Then he walked the rest of the way down to the field, now below sea-level at high tide and unlocked the shed, where he detached the mower from the tractor and attached the small cart. The tractor gave him a sense of power. Surely it couldn't be washed away even if it was slow. He parked it on the promenade where to his surprise people were treating the stormy weather like a dangerous fairground ride, shrieking with delight at huge waves slamming into Seaford Head. Remonstrating with them was useless and his voice could hardly be heard over the wind and waves.

Chelsea and her mother hadn't taken up his mother's offer of accommodation, but maybe they had somewhere else. However their lights were on, so they must still regard him as crazy.

"Chelsea, open up!" he was thumping on the door, thumb pressed on the bell.

After some delay, Chelsea opened the door and pulled him in, "I was just helping Mum to bed."

"No! You've got to go! Don't you remember, I told you tonight was the high tide! Get her up now!"

He followed Chelsea into the bedroom and grabbed Lynn, duvet and all, and plonked her into her wheelchair.

"Come on, Chelsea! We've got to get to higher ground! I think the council offices are high enough!"