

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

Don't Write

by Lizzie Staples

The cottage nestled deep in a valley with only a single dirt track twisting its way after a sharp turning left by the letterbox on a road that was mostly used by the locals.

There was one other cottage half a mile down the track. The rest of the villagers lived down the road. Everyone knew each other as it was a small community of 150 with a shop and pub .

Sheep grazed these fells, their calling filled the landscape day and night. It was only the moon that changed the valley casting long deep shadows over windswept land with boulders making safe havens for the sheep to shelter.

The month was March, it was a bad day with the wind howling against the window panes. The wooden gate constantly slammed against the post making a job for the spring months .

The kitchen was the warmest place in the house with a large wicker basket piled high with logs. A threadbare red carpe lay by the hearth and my grandmother's old grandfather clock ticked away the hours. My two dogs curled themselves in the large basket and washing hung above the stove to dry.

I did not have a writing table as such so my writing was done alongside bottled jars of fruit and bowls of winter vegetables, cluttering up my mother's pine table.

It was a solitary life with weekly visits to the shop. It was on one particular day back in Autumn that I decided to drop into the pub and try the brew that had been pressed by Tom. It is always a custom in these valleys for the locals to

bring their apples to be made into cider and shared around the community to help with the long winter months that lay ahead.

I noticed you sitting in the corner, at first I could not see you properly as that particular day there had been a power cut and the only light was a candle.

You were tall, with a complexion that was not one that worked the land. Your green coat was worn with a brown woolen scarf. Your corduroys were well tailored and your shoes had not have an ounce of mud on them.

On the other hand my hair was windswept and fell down my back in knotted curls. My blue coat had been my mother's but was still perfect for walking the fells and tending the sheep. I remember you looking at me for quite a while before you came over. Your accent was soft and not broad like the dialect from around here.

We soon fell into conversation and you told me that you lived in London but had travelled to this part of the fells to write a book, following in your father's footsteps who had also written a book 50 years beforehand.

I remember my grandmother telling me of this stranger who had knocked at her door and asked if he could stay as the local inn was full. Their relationship lasted over the years until he was sadly killed in a riding accident. Could you be the son of that very same ma? Fate had taken a turn on that Autumn day.

Your visits became more regular and we would meet up in the local pub, linked by our ghosts of the past. You started to talk of me coming up to be with you in London.

My life belonged to the fells and although we had a lot in common I knew I could not leave ancestral roots. I had my own book to write and needed to be surrounded by familiar landscapes and the changing seasons.

It was on that gusty March day with the wind rattling the window panes that I sat down at the kitchen table and wrote with tears streaming down my face, "Don't write, don't come, I don't need it, it's not why I have written. Life is more complicated than that."

You never replied.