

Bourne
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workshops

Betrayal

by Marina Davies

Three weeks had passed since her death.

Before long a neighbour's whispering was communicated to them; small villages can be like that.

She was selected to investigate; her concise observations, her subtle questioning made her the obvious choice. It was agreed; an early morning surprise visit to ascertain whether they should intercept further.

Her boots followed the path to the house. It remained unchanged, except it was unlocked, ajar. Without a warning call, she stepped into the doorway. Her heavy coat blocked the ray of sun, snapping off the light, which had illuminated the parachuting dust particles. These microscopic specks had been successful in their mission; they ruled triumphant over the furniture.

Silently she surveyed the scene; had he surrendered, given up? Opportunist Autumn leaves made a sudden dash past her, joining comrades already hiding in ranks behind the sideboard. Flotsam and jetsam of everyday life lay deposited at the legs of the sofa.

A tortoiseshell butterfly desperately flapped at the window; it's last bid for escape before a winter incarceration. Its frantic efforts observed patiently by long limbed spiders artfully knitting their traps.

Stealthily, she moved towards the kitchen. Bowls, encrusted with traces of food and cups ringed by half drunk tea, assembled by the sink.

Familiar tools encircled a wireless on the wooden table; its gentle vibrating sound causing petals to cascade down from the drooped-head roses in a vase.

Did the evidence before her match the intelligence they had received?

That's when she saw him through the window; a dark shadow, half obscured by the artichokes, digging a small trench in the earth.

He was alone. She stood and watched, so alone.

Swiftly she left the confines of the cottage and strode towards him; he stiffly tried to uncrumple himself, smoothing his jacket, and hastily wiping the stubble on his chin. His spade loyally beside him. He made no attempt to escape. Immediately she grasped him.

She propelled him towards the house; there was no resistance. They paused; they entered, damp soil smuggled in the tread of boots, leaving coded messages across the carpet.

In perfect symmetry they sat opposite each other in their habitual seats.

'How's it going Dad? I was passing and I thought I would drop in for a cuppa, do you want one?' she searched for cups. 'Shall I wash up?'

He looked at the dirty crockery guiltily, 'Sorry, a bit of a mess...but there's plenty of milk...Liz brought some up...I think she was checking on me, a bit worried I expect,...I didn't go to the Parish Council Meeting, I told her I would.'

'Dad, no one would have expected you to go, everyone understands. It's early days still...what's this you're tinkering with?' She hung her coat on the chair back, looking with interest at the radio.

'Oh a little project, Douglas found it in his loft...something for the winter nights. Better take my tools off the table, what would mum say?' he drifted momentarily, 'Right...I think I need to have a shave, I'm alright, now don't you go reporting back, Andrew will flap.'

She walked round his side of the table and hugged him, kissing the top of his bald head,

'I love you Dad, your secret is safe with me,' and she gave him a conspiracy wink.

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