

The Year Without a Summer

by Maureen Marsh

She gazed around the flat, at all her boxes, as yet unpacked. Items of clothing lay indiscriminately on the floor. Bits of non matching crockery and beloved odds and sods were on display in all their unimpressive sentimentality.

The flat itself, had the slightly dishevelled and unique appearance of an old eccentric lady. One whose previous glamour, still clung in somewhat faded form.

She admired the high ceilings and the pretty French windows that led to the small kitchen area. The smallness and manageability of the place was in stark contrast to her life in London which had become so complex and unmanageable.

Walking over to the windows, she opened them and took in a deep breath. Viewing the shared garden area. Its somewhat shabby wildness appealed to her and beyond the garden she had a partial view of the Town itself, low rise and sprawling with a myriad of trees and woodlands in the distance. It was a spell binding, almost mystical view, in contrast to the former urban landscape.

The final year in London was a year without a Summer. Bitter arguments and bitter tears. There were Blizzards, storms and tornados. A whole shared life thrown up, like fragments of a delicate work of art that was broken and fast turning to dust in the storm. There were occasional breaks in the weather, where she felt that perhaps it wasn't all hopeless. Finding herself laughing again with him over some familiar thing or locking eyes in a loving gaze that said 'I am still here, after all', but it was a mirage that disappeared as surely as it arrived and the winter storms came back in force again.

After he left, a stillness came over. A cold stillness. Like the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. A chilly winter of the heart. A devastation too extreme to put words to and a bleak empty landscape ahead.

Initially, she took in lodgers but their presence merely alerted her to her aloneness and that the house was no longer hers, no longer a home and this life, no longer belonged to her. Not

only did the clothes not fit, they were the wrong colour, the wrong style and they looked ridiculous on her.

It was not a choice to leave, it was an inevitability.

As she gazed out the window, the thought occurred 'who shall I become?'

Taking another breath of air, her gaze was taken back to the garden and the small tentative growth of a snow drop. Its delicate and fragile beauty. Its hopeful rising from the earth, reminding her that spring had finally arrived.