

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

The Pursuit of Happiness

by MaryPat Campbell

I work hard at my nasty little job, so dull and repetitive. Everyone else moves on sooner or later while I stay put. Younger colleagues are promoted, move to other companies, go abroad on adventures with their friends or partners. I'm tired of saying goodbye, wishing them well as they climb the next rung on their corporate ladders of success. I hate that excited look they have in their eyes. They've already left, just making the rounds of the leaving do, the soggy sandwiches and cheap white wine and the jealousy of those of us left behind. I know I'm just as good if not better than them, as I sign yet another card wishing 'congratulations on your new job'.

What I want most in all the world is a sleek black BMW with leather seats as I drive home to my beautiful wife and children in our second home on a cliff by the ocean. I'd be rich and famous and truly happy, envied for my good looks, expensive tastes, my sense of confidence and daring, and my magnificent house by the sea. I would be constantly interrupted at home by important calls from fellow entrepreneurs, eager to get my advice on the next business deal, much to my wife's impatience and eagerness to have me to herself.

Unlike me, my colleagues don't see the dangers out there. I pity them with their wide eyed sense of entitlement and future success. Launching themselves out there, they imagine that everything will fall into place. The world is full of terrifying things. The sea is polluted no matter which cliff by the ocean your house is built on.

My dreams are shameful and exhausting. The more my mind indulges them, the more things stay the same. I'll settle for staying put. No more disappointment, no more "if only", no more effort.