

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Blossom

by Joe Jackson

In front of the shed was a layer of ice blacker than the sky at night. Its clear lining gleamed in the moonlight. John was already dressed. He wore one of those thick red shirts lumberjacks wear, and his whole torso seemed to be jutting out of his denim dungarees. It was a real laugh, had anyone seen him, slipping and sliding on the black ice, picking himself up but smacking his backside again. Six foot five inches with a moustache the size of a gopher; no one looking like that should be going down that easy. But he persisted. In the midst of the surrounding hedges and thickets, which seemed to be watching him, curly and secure, under the cover of darkness, the wolves made their cry.

“Pah,” he spat, “darkness is cheap.”

The hedges trailed away from the shed into the open field, and in the field were scattered two old oak trees. Bill’s house was further still, through the thickets marking a steep slope; all the way up but you could see it clearly from the top of both the old oaks. John and Bill found this out the hard way. (At the age of twelve, John had been too eager and broken a hand. Bill promised to wait for it to heal so they reached the top together.)

In the shed, which was a box with a triangular hat, all made from painted oak, were a mixture of things useful to John on a regular basis. Besides that (and what he enjoyed most) were drawers full of seeds and cuttings of flowers and plants. At the window, looking out at the frozen driveway and narrow road parallel, John turned on the light, and wiped the sweat from his brow.

“Boo!” cried Bill, sneaking up behind him.

John felt his brain rattle inside his skull.

“Ha-ha. You daft bastard.”

Bill turned and walked to the back of the shed.

“Did you not hear me outside?” said John, scratching his head metaphorically.

“Huh?—No. Come here, would ya?”

“What’s this?”

Bill placed his earphones in John and spoke alongside the noise, a female French voice, so that it was difficult for John to hear.

‘Vell now... vun vinter... it was so cold dat... all ze possums... zey were pier-ring, pier-ring past pitz-ah, poh-tayto...’

As far as John was concerned, it could’ve been that.

“What! I can’t understand a word,” said he, removing the earphones.

“Never mind. Let’s get to work?”

“Yes, let’s—did you have any more ideas on the intermediary colours? I was thinking in a few days this yellow bud will look more mustardy and that it will go well with the plainness in these leaves and the black.”

“What about the Chrysanthemums?”

“These are Chrysanthemums.”

“Oh! Well... they have a big head but they’re a bit boring—”

“Yes, yes...”

“What about these?”

“The Veronicas?”

“Yeah, corn-like.”

“Lovely ain’t they? I was thinking we could place them here—in among it all—
but if you stand here...”