

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

The Secret Notebook

by Miriam Silver

We first met when we were looking at the same library shelf. I was concentrating, didn't notice anyone until a male voice said,

"Do you think this will be comprehensive?"

Turning my head, happy to be diverted I saw this guy, taller than me dressed formally holding out a book.

"That's odd," I said, "I've been looking for that."

After a brief pause I went on, bit too fast really,

"I'm trying to follow my own advice, New Year Resolutions, even made a list."

"I'm trying to get into cooking, you know I'm tired of take away and the ready prepared," he explained and added, "look, nice to meet you must rush, lunch hour over, could we meet later, my name's Bill by the way."

"Er! Yes, where?" adding quickly, "I'm Liz."

"I finish at 4.30 today, how about the coffee shop across the road? 4.45 ok with you, give me your phone number in case..." which I did and we went our separate ways.

Amazed at myself, I did go, and met him, and we fell into an easy conversation. He told me he worked for the council and felt he was getting lazy, not just about food, but about exercise too.

I explained I wanted to cook properly, my job, sitting at the computer made me lazy, I'd decided I was going to overwhelm my friends with my haute cuisine adding sheepishly,

“I’ve never done any real cooking.”

“Neither have I,” he said, “the library’s open late, lets go, I must make an effort,” his smile was most encouraging.

Later, over a drink, I even told him my plans to have an allotment. Then on a whim I invited him to dinner, where he would of course eat healthily.

“Sounds good, thanks,” adding “let’s share some chips just to say goodbye to unhealthy living,” that smile again, “or maybe Chinese? I’m William, by the way, known as Bill, whatever!”

He arrived at the same time as my friends, Daisy and her current fellow Joe, which did cause a bit of confusion. I overcame all that beautifully and accepted their hostess gifts gracefully.

Being my first dinner party, of course I was ambitious, too keen to impress. Three courses, all organically British grown sourced reliably, washed, mixed, stirred and cooked, while dreaming of Celebrity Master British Healthy Chef.

By the time I served the failed soufflé I was exhausted, wished I’d stuck to a simple pate. The nut roast was tasteless and dry, the farm vegetables all, hard and uneatable, followed by non gluten pastry dessert covered in non-dairy cream and halumi cheese. All eaten gallantly by my guests while I held back my tears.

Serving coffee, organic of course, Bill put a friendly arm round me.

“It was a wonderful try, it could have been me, after all, just because we were looking for the same book doesn’t mean we have to think either of us are failures!”