



The Secret Notebook

by Victoria Cooper

Monday

Your name is Lily Euston; like the station. You live in East Wing, Cromwell House.

You have a daughter called Jemima with cropped black hair and a gap between her teeth. She bites her nails, try to ignore it. Ask about her new boss, not the dark circles under her eyes; her husband is an idiot; but don't tell her I said that. There are two nurses, one called Rosie gives extra biscuits. Maggie has a voice with a slap in it but a kind heart. Try not to mention the dandruff.

The cottage pie has lumps in the mash.

Tuesday

Your name is Lily Euston; like the flower. You live in East Wing, Cromwell House. There is table tennis today, don't go. Bob will choose you and he always cheats or eats the balls. Tell Vera (the lady next door who shouts bingo) that you will only play Dominoes with her if she pipes down.

The nurses are Rosie with glasses and Tom who flirts. He will remind you of someone but try to forget who.

Eat extra bread at lunch the cauliflower cheese is not worth the wait. Nobody visits on Tuesdays.

Wednesday

Your name is Lily Euston and the year is 2021. You live in Cromwell House. The tree outside your window will remind you of the pattern on your plate when you were a child.

Sometimes your nephew, Ollie will visit. He is sweet but serious. Rosie your nurse fancies him, but don't tell him, he is a terrible blusher. Ollie is writing a book, do not ask him about it, he has writer's block. The conversation will peter out and he will stare at the floor. Pretend to nod off.

Roast dinner today will remind you of Fred's potatoes. Watch some telly to cheer you up or shout at Vera.

Thursday

Your name is Lily Euston and you live in East Wing, Cromwell House. You will get a Doctor's visit, he's not a real one but he has a picket fence smile just like it. Remember, you are 87 and the date is 6th May 2021. You have been here a year and we still have a Queen. He will try to catch you out, remember how good you were at the game with the tea towel over the orange, the torch and the bible.

Anxious Eve from next door may visit. She brings freesias and fruitcake even though you told her you hate them. You will wonder if she is worse than you.

Tell Bob you're too tired for charades; last time you had to ring the emergency buzzer when he did Brief Encounter.

Friday

You are Lily Euston, you live in East Wing, Cromwell House. You hate Fridays.

Jemima your daughter will visit, try not to tell her how tired she looks, it makes her look sad. Her pale blue eyes will remind you of someone you loved very much. He died two years ago and you will feel your heart ache when she laughs just like him. See if the roses are blooming, he always had a soft spot for a blousy pink.