

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Balance

by Rosalyn Hurst

There is always something malign about the rain that lashes down on a deserted High Street in February. Shop assistants glare at anyone opening the door, letting the precious warm air escape as debris of the storm, dripping from coats and worse umbrellas invade. The rotting smell emanates from overflowing gutters blocked with the debris of coffee cartons, plastic bags, and unidentified wrappings. No sign of spring, no promise of sunshine, no hope for better things to come.

On such a day, St Valentine's Day 2014, Hube sat at his empty desk in silent despair. No cards received nor sent, no token of wishful love. A former pupil of a minor public school, and even a graduate of a minor university he had believed in the promises of a bright privileged future. But life in an estate agent's in Haywards Heath did not fulfill his life ambitions, for he, even after four years, was still directed to selling 'affordable houses', or retirement opportunities; not for him the palatial mansions, the sought-after barn conversions or even the modernised oast houses that would earn a tidy commission. His colleagues claimed to be out viewing, but he knew they were having a late and long lunch.

The door opened and a woman came in, backwards shaking her coat, sweeping off a scarf releasing long blonde hair. As she turned he glanced up from his phone with the hope it looked like he was on an important call. His heart leapt, for she was so thin she had to be truly wealthy, recalling that old adage that if they looked as if their jewellery weighed more than them, these ladies were truly loaded.

He stood, indicating the most expensive properties; he was delighted she was not fazed by prices. He noted her east European accent, her soft long leather coats, her luxurious hair falling oh so expensively on her shoulders, but even though she wasn't much to look at but she was something to think about.

“Call me Neme,” she said with a charming smile, “I know an unusual name England, but many have this name in Italy,” Hube returned the smile, ‘a Russian in disguise,’ he thought, ‘definitely loaded’.

An hour later a stunned Hube sat in her car, a Tesla of course, a sale on the top estate agreed, cash ready. She was the contrast to what he saw in himself and he was fascinated. He ventured to suggest that as it was Valentine’s night it would be a good time to celebrate.

Hube knew he should have called the boss and handed this sale to him and needed the fortification of a serious vodka to face the wrath when he returned to a deserted office. And he was further shocked that she agreed and swept him off there and then to London.

February 14th, 2021 Hube, now portly, sat in the morning room that overlooked the grounds of the country estate and glancing at the date was reminded of his extraordinary change of circumstances in the past seven years. Neme had indeed not only bought the estate, but had set him up in many business ventures. Hube became oblivious to the fact that many failed, for Neme seemed to have an inexhaustible amount of ready cash. Hube took exceeding pride in his ventures, solely through his own abilities.

He looked out the window wondering, first whether he could risk a meeting with Judy as her husband was away, no too risky, so second, when the golf course would re-open and lastly what was for lunch. The only disturbance was that two boys, sitting on bikes on the public footpath that ran along outside, were peering through a gap in the hedge. Opening the window, he yelled, “piss off, you’re on MY land.” To his great satisfaction they took off.

He had not noticed the door opening, and there stood Neme these days so remote, a glazier of a grimace on her face, that face without a cornucopia of expensive cosmetics had the appearance of over ripe blue and pitted cheese. Thin-lipped, she said with quiet venom, the viper about to strike, “What did you say?” And for once, perhaps only the second time, Hube felt strong enough to reply, “Its mine, It’s my deals that pay for this, don’t you dare argue with me. In fact get out and make yourself look presentable.” He sat down, took up the paper enormously satisfied that he has shown he was master of this household.

Neme did retreat, and finalised her plans for revenge.

‘He was well named that Hube, I should have known he could not resist the disease of all weak leaders, hubris attacks them all. But not me.’

And making calls to her “contacts” she knew she would soon return to full control, for she, Nemesis, Greek goddess of revenge, was indeed the nemesis of her soon to be dead partner.