

Bourne toWrite...

creative writing
workshops

A Celebrity

by Sue Hitchcock

This is the time I hate most, waiting for the make-up girl. I'm facing a large mirror surrounded by lights, a wide band holding back my hair, exposing my face more or less as god gave me. The hairband is beige, matching my face and I look bald in my reflection. Admitted my lips are silicon enhanced, but uncoloured, they're just another puffy part to go with my baggy eyes. My nose is a bit odd now after too many lines of coke, sniffed to make me feel more vivacious for a performance. I hope the make-up girl comes soon.

When I was a child I loved to sing and dance, giving my adoring parents a little show every Sunday evening. Later I attended a Saturday Stagecoach class with religious regularity, singing loudly, dancing flamboyantly and I always auditioned for parts, whenever I could. I knew I wanted to be worshipped as the star of the show. My parents had no contacts to open doors to the career I wanted, but my schoolmates egged me on, getting me to put my songs on YouTube or TicToc. I was desperate to be on telly.

There's a site where you can apply, called "Want to be on a television show?" It was fun, being on "Bargain Hunt" with my Mum – we lost a record amount of money. Then my friend Katie and I had a lovely holiday, going on a show where we were supposed to be looking for an apartment on the Costa Blanca. They didn't even ask if we really had any money or a serious desire to buy a property. I even went on a dating programme, but didn't meet anyone I fancied.

After a while your face gets a bit too familiar to be a member of the public, especially when you get known on YouTube, then you get to be a minor celebrity.

If you haven't got the talent to win singing contests and you can't cook or do pottery, then your only hope is to go on quiz shows, not the serious ones, those where you're supposed to act stupid. They even give you a script, if you're not funny enough. One alternative is to go out with someone more famous, maybe a footballer, but then you're in trouble. The gossip mongers are out to get you, even in the papers. Then your best hope is to hide behind your image.

The good thing about an exaggerated image is that you can go shopping unrecognised. You put a woolly hat over your hair and covid mask is a blessing now. I stare at other shoppers and wonder what their hopes and dreams might be and if they look back, they seem to look through me, the ghost they feel they might have seen before. Sometimes I am not sure I exist, actually.

The make-up girl has arrived and maybe she will remember me, turn me into the avatar I have become. I shall do my part and even receive fan mail. Can I pull myself away from this shell? Is there anyone inside?