

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Silence

by Miriam Silver

“No, couldn’t possibly, Thursday’s me Bingo, always have a Big Mac before we go, Gladys an’ me, yer know, she works for your friend, the one with the shower she calls a wet- room, we’ve been going since it opened, was a lovely picture palace before, always two films, the news and the organ played in between, came up out of the ground it did, all for 9d, wonderful value that’s less than yer 10p now, corse’ yer don’t remember, long time ago, my friend used to clean there, never had popcorn in them days, took our own sweets, don’t know how they can afford to go these days, but then, now they live on credit cards, not like us, never bought anything unless we had the cash. Sorry, what were you saying?” she asked as she took enough breath to enquire.

I didn’t think it was worth repeating myself, I’d only asked in a weak moment, I knew she’d go on about nothing. Ida’s a lovely lady, been ‘doing’ for me for years, comes regularly Monday and Wednesday, gives me time to myself, but the launch of my book is on Thursday and I must attend.

Ever since the children went to school I’ve been writing, he has never noticed, but then he’s away a lot, being a workaholic, making a great living, always left me to do my own thing, now there’s no one, they’re doing their own thing. Gratefully I am too.

I just need someone to come in, feed the dog, it’s not until next week, still time. If I can find the stamina I’ll ask my equally dear friend, Helen whom I’ve known since children’s’ primary school, though we’ve gone in different directions since then, we’re still in touch, here I go, deep breath.

“How lovely, come in,” she cried welcoming me, “you’re a good taster, here’s a sample of my scones, no not for the primary school, what a long time ago that was, no, these are for the cricket club, no don’t be daft, I don’t play, he does, I go to cheer our side and have a gossip, those cricket wives know it all, don’t mention our England team, what a shambles, then there’s the rugby lot later in the year, make food for them too, keeps me busy, out of trouble

I suppose, same for himself too of course, don't know what he'll do when his playing days are over, here, I've buttered this one, hang on I'll make some tea, tell me, how's things, don't see you much these days."

"Great scones, good to see you," I said as she breathlessly put the kettle on I tried to ask, "any chance you can feed the dog Thursday week, Helen, I'm really enjoying this."

"Here's the tea, yes, thanks, I did consider a Victoria sponge, but you know, all that cutting up, these will do, I've done some Brownies, here, want to try."

As she drank her tea I quickly asked her again, "of course, no problem, I go your way on a Thursday, help out with my granddaughter, haven't had a chance to tell you how clever she is, loves coming with me, gives my daughter time to herself, so necessary, not like our day, they're working from home, difficult for them to fit everything in, I'm glad I live nearby, feel useful, we go to the supermarket, River, she's only four, knows where to find everything."

And she took another sip of her tea while I made my apologies for seeing her so rarely, thanked her for feeding my dog, reminded her of the date adding,

"You get on, I've disturbed you enough, I'll see myself out."

Outside, in the fresh air, I appreciate silence, I discover it is something you can actually hear, and make my way slowly, taking careful steps so that I do not make a noise either breathing or walking.