

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

I'm Frightened. Of us

by Miriam Silver

I have this memory, a dream, I'm in a strange room, in bed, my belongings all around me, I have to be somewhere soon, I'm anxious about this visit, I can't seem to recall what or where it would be. I know I haven't prepared for it. I'm burning up with fever, my legs are useless. I must stay in case I'm infectious and continue to toss and turn trying to throw off an increasing feeling of doubt and troubled tension.

After a restless night, I wake up, breathe deeply, realise quickly that these feelings can be discarded by using my legs, going for a run, being cynical about dreams and think only about today's meetings and the coffee I'll buy while I try not to dwell on that dream as a forerunner of doom.

I would have done anything to turn the clock back, but as that isn't an option I'll have to put it all behind me, I choose my outfit carefully, mustn't look too formal, hope that my weight loss will impress, pick up car keys, close front door firmly and try to look as if I'm not going to my execution.

It had all started when my judgement was impaired after becoming a bit convivial at the old boys reunion where I'd been invited as their representative at the annual prizegiving day.

Admittedly I was flattered and I'd ignored the presence of the local press who listened to my speech which included my achievements and my misdemeanours which were included to amuse the boys. A childish prank, committed when I was a new boy, done to impress bullies as I remember. The teacher whose bike I'd hidden was very annoyed, he was in a hurry to get home that night. Of course I apologised, a schoolboy prank, which went down eventually as an old boys misplaced mischief.

Unfortunately the local press illuminated their reporting with this, adding that their local candidate for major was not as free of sin as he made out.

None of my subsequent achievements were covered in this article, that I was a foster child made good, from several primary schools going on to university, eventually running a successful business providing employment for local people and serving my town on their Council. All of which qualifies me as a candidate for this position, for which I was attending a selection committee today.

As I arrived at the town hall, a reporter for the local paper shouted,

“Can you check some facts?” what now I wondered.

“Just want to know if you committed any other offences?”

“Have you found your biological parent?”

“How do you feel about the unisex toilets in our school?”

“Mr. Mayor...”

I quickly interrupted before he asked another question “thank you for your interest, I must remind you I’m not elected yet, so Mr. Mayor is inappropriate,” and went inside.

I did feel frightened, not of the press but of us, the Council, I just hoped they would recognise I was in favour of unisex everything, diversity in our dealings with the public, provision for exercise, as in the updating of our swimming pool, even though it was an uphill job winning these issues, having persuaded Luddites.

Overcoming near dominant feelings of fear and hoping they would ignore my early bad behaviour and only see my regular attendance at council meetings, my interest in human rights and sexual biodiversity, I walk steadfastly towards the committee room confident they would elect me their mayor.

