Bourne toWrite...
creative writing workshops

The Days of Wine and Roses

by Francesca Ryan

“There can't be a quarrel without two parties and I won't be one.”
He looked wearily at her.

“Is that so? Well, the party's already started, buster. This is the one you're at. Pour yourself a drink.”

She sat down heavily on the faded red sofa and glared up at him. Not for the first time, she wondered why she stayed. The man was impossible. Impossibly, what was it? She felt a myriad words unfold in her head. Impossibly unfeeling. Impossibly annoying. Impossibly irresistible. Fuck it, she wasn't going to start writing a poem right now, not to him. That was his department of course, teaching English Literature at the college. Which was ironic. Because she thought actually, men are more interesting in books than they are in real life.

She'd been his student. And now, that dynamic had become fixed somehow. The one where he got to be calm, patrician, unemotional. She was his nemesis; impulsive, passionate, unruly. And young. It had been her who had initiated it their relationship. Full on vamp mode, at the Finals do. It must a full five years ago now. She sighed and poured herself another glassful.

“Perhaps a little more tonic with that pint?”

He almost got a face full of gin, but she wasn't going to waste it.

“I just want to know why she wrote you that e-mail.”

“She’s my PhD student. She's entitled to drop me a line now and then, don't you think?”

Oh. He was veering into sarcasm. Very good. Let the bell sound and the fight begin. She caught a whiff of his Dior aftershave. He hadn't worn it for a while. What a cliche.

“Don't you love your Jeannie anymore?”

The baby voice was a calculated grenade. Nothing irritated him more. A thrill went through her body. He sighed and shook his head. This was a familiar move in the game. It usually ended up in bed; but he wasn't up for it these days. His quiet study upstairs was calling him. He wanted to retreat there. The green shaded lamp, the pile of marking. Tammy the Bengal cat, staring owlishly at him from her perch on the leather chair. Peaceful. Just the cat and his computer for company. Instead, he reached over to the sideboard to pour himself a glassful. She wanted to play Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf? Very well. Alcohol always blunted the edge of his ennui.

"Oh, here we go," she smiled. "Welcome aboard baby! Are we doing educating Rita, or Oleanna tonight?"

"Whatever you like, pumpkin." He gulped down his glass.

What wouldn't he give for a quiet life. But he'd become accustomed to her face. Although he was getting too old for it. He really was. And she was just getting started. This play had no interval. She thought it was a student who filled his thoughts? If only she knew.