

The air was damp. It seemed to her that the air had always been saturated with the tiny water droplets that people would categorise as too light for rain and too fine for drizzle. The water darkened the freshly moved earth which appeared bare and raw. The other graves, overgrown with a dense carpet of weeds, seemed content but hers was a deep dark red like an open sore. She was fascinated by the fresh scar and settled herself down on a rock opposite to wait. She had no idea why she was waiting, but she did anyway. Water was accumulating in the air, it was now almost definitely drizzle and she entertained herself by watching her clothes darken.

“So,” he coughed softly. “My name’s David.”

The voice announced hesitantly. She turned to look up at his thin frame, his collared shirt hung loosely and she wondered why his skin wasn’t wet. He perched on the rock next to her.

“I’m Jenny.”

She tipped her head towards the grave. David glanced across at the headstone. He did a quick calculation.

“Wooo seventeen, that’s shit.”

Jenny looked up into his blue eyes, his shaved head silhouetted against the sky. She could see silver scars crossing his stubbly scalp, they gleamed in the moonlight.

“You don’t look much older yourself.”

He blushed and rubbed his shaved head with his palm as if suddenly becoming aware of his baldness. The scratching sound of stubble on skin echoed.

“It’s having no hair, it was the chemo, it makes your hair fall out.”

Jenny nodded sadly and stared back at her grave. David read her stone with interest.

“Hey you died before me, almost a month ago, how come I haven’t seen you before?”

She looked up and shrugged.

“I just got here today.”

He leant his head close to hers in a conspiratorial manner; she echoed his posture leaning just a little too close to be comfortable. She wanted to over compensate and move back but he smelt of flowers warming in the sun and she relaxed. He didn’t feel like a stranger, more like a friend she had been waiting to meet.

“I’ve been working my way across the graveyard checking out the others.”

He whispered.

“Some of them are real wackos.”

He nodded solemnly and then laughed, Jenny giggled with him. They fell into a comfortable silence.

“Was it the chemo that?”

Jenny asked avoiding his eyes.

“Nah, the chemo let me have a couple of extra years but the tumour was too advanced, a bunch of anarchic cells killed me, bastards!”

She looked up into his eyes and smiled sadly.

“No really, I had a great life, just wished I’d had more of it. Still, didn’t have to explain why I messed up my exams, there were advantages.”

Jenny stared at his hand resting on his thigh and laid her own onto it squeezing gently. He continued quietly.

“I just had to go walking; I knew I had to check out the other graves, it’s weird.”

Jenny smiled to her lap.

“I knew I had to wait. Do you suppose?”

She enquired quietly.

“Well look we’re both dead, and we’re sat here talking so no theory is beyond possibility.”

“I like the idea that we were meant to meet its,” she stopped talking, considering her words carefully.

“Crazy?” David replied still staring at the grave.

“Romantic?” Jenny suggested coyly.

David splayed his fingers and they held hands.

“You are really pretty; I think you maybe have gorgeous eyes.”

David whispered.

“Think I maybe?” Jenny squealed in mock horror.

David looked deep into her matching blue eyes.

“There now it wasn’t that difficult actually looking at me was it, and for the record they are gorgeous but not as gorgeous as mine.”

Jenny sniggered and leant onto his body. David released her hand and wrapped his arm around her shoulders.

They relaxed into each other and watched a hedgehog slowly wander across the grave, Jenny stared at the tiny footprints. She thought of babies, they had such tiny feet. She would never have children now and she felt sad. David felt her retreat and squeezed her shoulders.

“What happened?”

“I thought about babies, I’ll never have babies and they have wonderful tiny feet. I, it made me feel sad.”

David swallowed, maybe this was too soon.

“No I meant, what happened?”

He nodded towards her grave.

“I saw my sister giving my boyfriend a blow job.”

There was a long silence whilst he processed the sentence.

“What? How?”

Jenny grinned at his expression; he was embarrassed, his cheeks were developing an attractive pink cast, he was also far too shocked to string a coherent sentence together. She had to admit it was an attractive look, she had never felt so comfortable in any ones company before but here sitting on this ornamental rock in the misty darkness she felt content.

“I had influenza. I have,” she paused and corrected herself.

“I had a big family, three brothers, two sisters and lots of cousins. Every Christmas we have a party and this year was no different. My boyfriend came and stayed, which was fine, the family loved him, even my grandma, who hated everyone. Anyway I woke about midnight feeling slightly better. The party was in full swing and I tried to find Anna my eldest sister and she.”

Jenny stopped suddenly and David who had been staring at her animated face waited fearful. Surely she should be feeling sad, or horrified, but she seemed so, the word couldn’t be happy could it?

“Look” she whispered pointing as the small black nose of a fox appeared from the bushes. It cautiously peered out then it walked towards them. David instinctively pulled her slowly back away from the wild animal, then the fox changed direction and walked away.

David only turned back to her when he saw his tail disappear. She was staring wide eyed at him. He realised he was holding her close, his fingers gripping her flesh with a gentle force. He released her slowly.

“Sorry, I.”

“Were you trying to protect me from the nasty wickle fox?” she teased.

David rolled his eyes as his cheeks coloured up again. Jenny nuzzled into his shoulder and he felt her warmth flow over him.

“Anna smoked secretly down the side of the house behind the dustbins, obviously it was the worst kept secret but I thought she might need a fag around now and I staggered out side and quietly peered over the bins to scare her. She was kneeling with her head in Bens crotch and before you ask if she was really giving him a going over then you should have heard the noise he was making.”

Their minds wandered back into the gentle silence.

“I always wanted to go to California” she said quietly.

“I’m so sorry, about Ben not California, obviously.”

David blushed again. He had started so well but now he was making such a mess of their first meeting.

“Obviously.” She repeated.

“The point is she was drunk, really really drunk, you know vomiting all over her bed in the early hours of the morning drunk. I think she must have wanted to do him all along but she didn’t, I don’t know why, but when she was so drunk and I was out of the way she relaxed and went for it.”

David hated them both and swallowed down his anger.

“And Ben?”

“He was a stupid bastard, but you see in a way I wasn’t surprised, they suited each other, they were much better suited than me and him, but that wasn’t the problem.”

David squeezed her shoulders in support.

“I staggered back to the house, not really believing what I’d seen, that’s when I saw my mother coming to get me. I told her I was going back to bed and she hugged me. As I went in I recognised that determined expression, in that moment she made a decision to see what was so interesting that I needed to be outside at midnight when I was ill and I didn’t stop her.”

David stroked her hair. Jenny suddenly slumped and rested her head on his shoulder. He could feel her warm tears falling onto his shirt.

“I’ve always had mood swings but it was only recently they diagnosed me as bipolar. That was the real issue, I mean I was angry don’t get me wrong, but I should have stopped my mum seeing them together and I didn’t. My mum went mad at them both, she never forgave either of them and the family went to pieces and that was my fault. That’s the irony really; it was my actions that were the trigger. I just couldn’t bear being me anymore; you see it didn’t really matter what my sister or Ben did, whatever happened with them I should have protected my mother. Letting her see them together, that lack of compassion for others, for my mother, after everything she had been through with me, for me, how could I be so cruel.” Jenny remembered her mother’s face smiling at her, never once had there been a frown and she shivered with shame.

“I hated myself.”

David could feel the soft tremor of her shaking.

“It’s not your fault, you were angry; they were the ones who acted badly not you. Anyway, it’s ok to make mistakes, you’re human, we all make mistakes, and we all have regrets.”

David looked down at the varying colours in her pale blonde hair.

An owl hooted and the trees rustled.

“Did you have a girlfriend?”

Jenny asked sadly.

“Nah, I’m gay.”

Jenny tensed and looked up as he laughed.

“Sorry, but I just wanted to see what would happen, I mean this is weird isn’t it, all this?”

Jenny sat up and stared into his smiling face.

“I don’t care if you’re gay.”

“Yes you do, I’d be so pissed if you were, I mean I think we were meant to meet and ok I’m dead and that’s a bind, but look what happened, I found you.”

Jenny stared back at his smiling face, he forced his smile in to a wide inane grin and then she realised her expression was echoing his.

“But I don’t feel happy.”

David nodded vigorously.

“Yes you do, you feel fantastically happy because you have a brilliant new boyfriend who is, I have to say, quite a catch!”

He nodded knowingly and she couldn’t help but laugh at him. He blushed again. She loved the way he could be arrogant and shy simultaneously and even with a bald head he was so attractive. She wondered if he would kiss her.

Jenny stood up suddenly; he remained seated watching her as he fidgeted trying to straighten his cotton mix trousers. He had been dressed in new clothes, he wished he had jeans on; she would have liked him in skinny jeans. She swallowed, tilted her head upwards and spoke loudly as if making a speech.

“I waited until a week later when I was alone, then I ate ever pain killer we had in the house, I sharpened the paring knife and slashed my wrists. I did it in the bath because my mum had just saved for a new hall carpet. As the blood ran away I relaxed, I knew then that I would soon be free.” She waited for a comment, he was a kind gentle boy and she was crazy, she had told him her story and now he had all the facts he could make a considered decision. He was right the graveyard was full of wackos and she was definitely one of them.

David stood up and hugged her. It was a one armed hug and as she raised her arms she stopped herself from hugging him back, that was a platonic ‘we can still be friends’ hug. She didn’t want to step back and lose him; he took the initiative and stepped back. She refused to look at him, why did she have to confess straight away? This had been an opportunity to be happy. This is how it would always be, she would always react instinctively, whether it was leaving her mother to discover her sister or telling David that she was a nut job. He reached out and lifted her chin. They stared into each other’s eyes and she wondered what it all meant, then he tilted his head and kissed her and she knew then there was no more time for regrets.