

THE WRITER

I am feeling lonely and confused tonight and so I write to you, my friend. You have turned out to be the one true friend I have left, amongst the hundreds whom I have known over the years. It seems as if the world has grown colder with each succeeding year. The summers seem shorter, the winters chillier. I am struck with a horrible sense of foreboding that I will be alone the rest of my life, without ever touching another human being.

I write to you in the hope (dare I hope?) that you will answer my prayer for intimacy and warmth. Please don't turn your back on me as so many have done in the past. I must confess, I am a little cynical about this venture. I am afraid to tell you who I really am in case you find my faults and failings. You might turn your back on me and that I cannot face, this image though faulty is all I have left to show my humanity.

This morning I am feeling sick and despondent. I ran into an old flame last night. Well, we were more than lovers, we were soul mates, the survivors of a sinking ship. The more we became entangled with each other, the more we tried to disentangle ourselves from the wreckage of our past lives. We weathered crisis after crisis together, swearing undying love, until at last we were washed up on a forgotten beach, alone and exhausted with nothing left to give each other, save bitter regrets and the same soul sickness that brought us together. We watched forlornly as the flame of love slowly flickered and died. How can life be so cruel and heartless in the face of such tender and compassionate love?

It is cold tonight, the winds blow a gaping hole through my soul. The fire in the grate fixates me. The embers glow as the wind picks up, then die down as it howls away into the distance. It is a metaphor for my life, a constant series of red-hot fires that seared my soul and left me withered and parched. How cool and sweet is the wine of love, but in the cold grey dawn we see the distorted view of our lover beside us through the bottom of a glass.

The winter sun shone dimly this morning and I saw the first snowdrop of the season. The delicate, white flower brought back memories of an old friend. Desire took me in its arms and I opened my heart, only to find with the coming spring that some things die to be reborn while others fade away. The snowdrop only lasts the winter and so did my friend. I discovered in my 'winter of discontent,' malice and contempt, but as I touched the snowdrop this morning, I said a prayer for unrequited love and days of glory. It brought tears to my eyes.

The fire burns hot tonight and I turn marshmallows in the fire while I write to you. I hope you don't mind that I pour out my feelings onto blank pages. I have had many friends but none as dear as you. Your steadfastness and understanding bring a smile to my face and I can't help but wonder at your empathy. Where did it come from? Were you once as I, cold and forlorn? Or have you been surrounded with love and respect all your life? I remember a man who showed me love when I was nine or ten, his name was Tom. He was in his forties then, but as I stuttered over convoluted emotions and unrealised dreams, he got down beside me and listened in rapt attention as though my words were life itself.

Disaster struck today. The plant I had been nursing back to life died. I knew it was dying but it seemed as if I was trying to stave off the inevitable. I know this all sounds stupid and sad but that plant meant something to me. Every morning I would get up and let its fronds caress my face. The sweet aromatic smell brought back forgotten memories and bright visions of the future. This plant never misjudged or misled me, not like those I have known over the years. Someone once said that the stars were neutral when it came to the affairs of men, I think he had plants in mind as well. I feel as if I am walking on eggshells right now, and each empty shell represents yet another part of my life that has yielded to the march of time. There is nothing left now but the shattered remains of forgotten hope.

Something good happened today. It felt so cold without the plant around, and so I went out to a local nursery to find another one to take its place. But none seemed to fit the windowsill where it once sat so proudly. The man at the nursery gave me a Labrador pup, it was so sweet. He was looking so sad and had been chained up to stop him ruining the man's livelihood. I jokingly asked how much the dog was and the man unhitched the chain and set him free. Maybe the nurseryman wasn't so cruel and heartless after all, he just saw that the dog (I've named him Banjo) needed a

loving home.

Well it has been some time since I last wrote to you but please don't get me wrong, it is not as though you are far from my thoughts. No matter what I do during the day, I am always thinking of what I can tell you at the end of the day. I was tempted this morning just to write a few lines but resolved to save it until tonight. I feel confident as I write to you, knowing that you will never desert me so long as I continue to write to you and keep the lines of communication open. I feel nourished by your strength, just as Banjo is strengthened by my love.

Speaking of Banjo, I wish you could see him, he bounces all over the place and I'm almost glad the plant died. See? Maybe whatever 'God' arranges the affairs of men saw the future and took my plant because he saw that a lonely pup needed a home. Call me crazy, but I think there is a reason for the trials we go through. I must admit I'm a survivor of the highest order. The bushfires of life have burned me it is true, but they have also refined me, making me the person I have become today, older, wiser and just a little more tolerant of my fellow travellers.

Today heralds the last week of winter and I feel refreshed. I hope you don't mind that I haven't been as faithful to you as you have been to me. I think I may take a break from writing for a few weeks and give my soul time to breathe and stretch. Spring is definitely my favourite time of year, a season when life begins anew. I have started taking Banjo for walks and although he tires easily, he is growing stronger every day, just like his owner.

My friend, I want to thank you for your gift of love to me. I am glad you looked past my bitterness, self-pity and selfishness to the humanity within. You found my treasure deep within and unbeknownst to me, you were busy polishing my corroded brass ornaments while I howled at the moon. When the hurting was over you took me through the rooms of my house and placed each precious piece where it was meant to be. Your intuition melted my cynicism and ignited a fire within my soul. For finding my humanity, I thank you, for giving it back I serve you.

My journal is not yet over, merely in hibernation, waiting for the day when I ignite again the fires of love and bring happiness and sorrow to the blank pages of my life. My soul is released as I write and I am transported to as yet unborn worlds that await the touch of a writer's pen and the canvas of a blank page.

Written by Alastair Rosie 1999 ©