

A White Christmas

1st Draft (2)

A monologue

by

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15 July 2019

Characters:

Tess, late 30s/early 40s, lonely, boozy and loose of tongue

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INT. TESS'S KITCHEN

A beer can is popped open and beer fizzes down the side of a glass. Tess gulps and starts tapping at her laptop.

TESS

Winnie Wildblood, Winnie Wildblood. What a name. "Dear Ms Wildblood," no, too formal. "Hi Winnie, loving your name". Too familiar. She probably knows she's got a cool name. "Hey Winnie, I came across your call out on HoveIntoView.com and would really love to join your creative circle...." "Would really like to add some curves to your creative circle. By curves I mean, I'm not fat, not that it would matter if I was, right? Fat is a feminist issue and all that.. I mean as in curveballs, like I'm a renegade. I'm an outlier. I'm a .." fucking douchebag. Jeez Tess, try and sound a little less tragic.

Tess gulps more beer. Sound of typing.

"Hi Winnie, I'm interested in joining your creative community, but can I just be so bold as to suggest..." Now I sound like a retired colonel. "Just thought I'd point out though that the phrase 'hove into view' is an oft-used but incorrect variant of the nautical 'to heave into view'. Hey, but language is a living, morphing organ right so no sweat." No sweat? What the frig? "Anyhoo, far be it from me to get my grammatical panties in a bunch. As you can probably tell, I'm a writer and a freelance hack. I've just moved down to Hove following a messy divorce." Aggggh, cliché alert. Divorces are always 'messy', the process of consciously, viciously, uncoupling from a once beloved spouse invariably leaves one covered in jam and bits of fluff!

Tess laughs at her own jokes and drinks more beer.

"As you can probably tell I'm a..." Ugh "You maybe able to tell from my florid turn of phrase... that I'm a... I'm a..." that I'm a bad writer. Come on now! Positive thinking... "that I am journalist widely published in a number of organs" No, that's two organs.

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

Nobody needs two organs. I've most recently had an article published on the feminist website HappySlut.com titled *From Beard Oil to Bandicoot*, it was a stinging indictment.. A swinging indictment.. A swingding excitement of (hic)... ugh... "an analysis of sinister millennial hair movements. To wit, the popularity of beards among young men over the past few years seems to have increased in line with the practice of draconian feminine waxing regimes, Brazilians and such, leading me to conclude that the more hair the lads are allowed, the less the lasses are. My ekshtensive research includes observations conducted discretely in my local gym changing rooms that have led me to conclude that I'm the only woman on the planet without a pudendum as bald as a bandicoot."

Tess angrily slams down her beer and hiccups.

Why am I telling Winnie Wildblood all this? "Anyway, Winnie can you tell me exactly what sort of writing I can submit to your creative circle for consideration? I would very much like to be accepted into your... I would just like to be accepted..." I...erm. (hic) Ugh.

She hits send.

TESS (CONT'D)

Oops.

DAYS LATER. Morning sounds, a radio, a kettle boils. Electronic ping. An email lands.

TESS (CONT'D)

Ah. At last Ms Wildblood, six days late, but never mind. "Hi Tess, sorry for the delay in replying. Life got in the way. Thanks for your very informative email. You clearly have much of interest to say. And sorry to hear about your divorce. I've endured similar so I understand. Our group meets fortnightly to give feedback in a safe environment. We're a mixed bunch..." A 'mixed bunch'? Sounds like some kind of terrible salad. "...

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

a mixed bunch of novelists, screenwriters and playwrights. I myself am a poet - we don't have any essayists, but do send a sample of your creative writings for consideration. Best Winnie." Well missus 'I myself am a poet', I don't write essays, I'm not a frigging schoolkid. And good to know you've got a life that prevents timely replies to emails, I wouldn't want to be writing to a corpse. Ugh, don't be mean Tess, she's 'reaching out' as they say; she could even become a friend, something one's not currently overburdened with. "Dear Winnie, I haven't, as yet, completed any novels, plays or poems but I am planning to in the fullness of time. However, it was nice of you to say you understand. Maybe we could meet over coffee and swap divorce tales? When are you free? I'm my own boss so free most days."

EVENING The 6pm news is on the radio. Tess pops a beer open. An email pings.

TESS (CONT'D)

"Hi Tess, thanks for suggesting we grab a coffee but I'm actually pretty hectic most days, I have shared care of my twin sons Minerva and Becket," Becket!? Fuck Off!? "and I teach creative writing at Sussex University, along with running several groups and a Tai Chi club at St Mary's Community Centre. Would be great to get you involved with the creative circle, so, as I say, do send us in some of your writings, when you have some. Also, if you're looking to meet locals, there are loads of other groups who use St Mary's, there's a crafting group called Ripping Yarns if sewing's your thing. Gotta dash, late for Becket's ukelele lesson! Byeee." Jesus H Christ! Crafting!? Uke-fucking-lele lessons. Purlease.

Tess takes a few glugs of beer and types angrily.

TESS (CONT'D)

"Dear Winnie, I never suggested we 'grab' a coffee. 'Grabbing' coffee is a ridiculous idea and could lead to pillages and burnt hands.

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

And let me tell you how I feel about crafting: Along with *Bake Off*, Cath Kidston floral pinnies and girly tea sets, I consider the whole home-making/baking comeback to represent the total failure of Fourth Wave Feminism. It encourages women to aspire to daintiness and I abhor daintiness. I have no idea of your age as you've omitted to include a photo in your LinkedIn profile, but I imagine you're one of these on-trend young mums knee deep in retro knitting patterns and Insta-ready, pastel-coloured, prissy little fucking fairy cakes. You probably sport a perfectly waxed woo-woo as well..

TESS (CONT'D)

"Please don't add me to your long list of chores. I won't be sending any writings into your creative seventh circle of hell, so goodbye and good luck with your dainty, oh-so hectic life."

TESS hits send and cracks open another beer.

DAYS LATER. Morning sounds, a radio, a kettle boils. Ping. An email lands.

TESS (CONT'D)

Oh Jeez, please leave me alone. "Dearest 'lil Sis, hope you're settling well in sunny Sussex. You don't answer my texts so I'm hoping that means you're busy with work and new friends." Yeah right. "So are you *sure* you won't come for Christmas? It's only the second one since we became orphans! And the first since you and Brian split, so it won't be easy. I think our little family should stick together. Todd and I have discussed it and he's fine about you coming. He's absolutely cool about your little outburst at his birthday meal, we both know the divorce has left you feeling a little... testy, shall we say, towards men and maybe male pattern baldness *is* something people should talk more openly about." Oh well now, that's just peachy, thanks Todd, yer baldy bastard. "Anyway, dear 'lil sis, let me know asap as we need to plan catering etc. If we don't have you we'll ask Patty and LeGlyn. Hugest love, Liz. PS.

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

Also the offer still stands for me to pay for a cleaner, we can't have you drowning in old Domino pizza boxes and shuffling around in your slippers on such sticky lino." Really Liz? I mean... really, you terrible cow. "Dear Liz, Testy Tess the man-hater here. Seriously though I don't hate all men, just Brian and Todd. This is because they're both bellends. And thanks for your recent visit, but if all you're going to do is count my pizza delivery boxes and assess the adhesive quality of my floors, I'd rather you stayed away. Christmas will be fine, I'm planning on shuffling up to Londis in my slippers and getting in a Ginsters turkey roll and a bottle of Bailey's to drizzle over said floors. I shall be hosting an 'at home' in the new year, so you and Todd can come round and indulge in pity porn as I loll about in last year's pyjamas with my tongue stuck to the lino."

Tess sighs. Gets up and puts the kettle on.

TESS (CONT'D)

Tess you can't send that. "Dear Liz, I'll call you soon about Christmas. I'm fine. Love Tess. PS. Sorry again that I ruined Todd's birthday." Only sometimes one forgets he has birthdays, one can't imagine him ever having gone through anything as interesting as birth.

Ping. An email has landed.

TESS (CONT'D)

Oooooer, I didn't expect to hear from you again Ms Wildblood? "Tess! What a lot of trouble your lively and intriguing imagination must get you into. I'm not sure you'd be right for our group. Our members need to stay in control of their thoughts and feelings in order to share kind and constructive feedback."

Tess gasps in outrage.

TESS (CONT'D)

"However, I feel you need to talk. If you'd like to meet up for a low-risk, lukewarm, slow-sipped beverage - unrushed, ungrabbed, unspilt - then I have a one-hour window next Wednesday at 4pm. Shall we meet at that new cafe by the library, the one rather thrillingly called Apropos of Muffin? I won't look like you imagine; you have me so wrong. I'll be wearing a long, black velvet coat. And maybe a hat made of prissy little fucking fairy cakes that I'll have crocheted myself out of pastel-coloured wool. Oh and, FYI, I wax nothing - apart from lyrical."

TESS (CONT'D)

Oh my GOD! 'a low-risk, luke-warm, slow-sipped beverage - unrushed, ungrabbed, unspilt?'

TESS (CONT'D)

Is she flirting with me. Or just showing off that she, herself, is a poet? Oh crap I suppose Hove is very gay. She must think I'm gay too. "Dear Winnie, thank you for your email. I'm not sure what you are expecting but I think I should be straight with you. Erm. Sadly, I'm straight. I did try not to be once but the situation became as messy as my subsequent divorce. Urm.. Do you still want to meet for coffee?, Yours..." No, not yours, "best wishes, Tess."

An email pings.

TESS (CONT'D)

"Dear Tess. Again, such a lot of information. Your candour is endearing. Straight or bendy I don't pay no never mind. Looking forward to you 'heaving into view' on Wednesday at 4pm."

TESS (CONT'D)

Blimey. Maybe she just wants to be friends. Now what the frig does one wear to meet a Tai Chiing lesbian poet in a long velvet coat.

DAYS LATER. Morning sounds, a kettle boils. A radio plays Christmas songs. Tess boots up the computer. Ping!

TESS (CONT'D)

"Tess, I've left about 20 messages and you keep saying you'll send me an email explanation. Patty and LeGlynn are all set to come for Christmas so if you do suddenly want to come, you'll be on the sofa with the dog. I hope you're OK. What's going on?"

TESS (CONT'D)

"Dear Sis, I'm so, so sorry. Things have been hectic. I've met someone. I thought I was meeting a lesbian inside a long black coat but I met a long black man inside a lesbian's mind. By which I mean that Winston Wildblood, for that is he, has female sensibilities and fancies women. But don't worry, he's not a player, he's a good man with a huge heart. Which is what led him to me, he sensed the pain oozing through my waspish words so suggested we meet. Downsides? He's a bit older, but you wouldn't know, as he says, black don't crack. He has two kids with deeply pretentious names, but they're quite sweet. Me? A stepmom? I'll have to try won't I? Also, he can be quite earnest; a do-gooder as Mum used to say. But maybe I'll learn goodness from him. Oh, and some of his poetry is abysmal. But the fact my mouth waters at the thought of his silken, hot chocolate limbs wrapped around mine, tends to offset any doubts about his doggeral.

He's divine, Liz, a hefty 6ft 4 inches of mahogany splendour, which is how he manages to work a name like Winnie. That fooled me. I'd also assumed he was white, he says all white people assume anyone with a respectable job is white. Liz there is so so much we pale little rich girls don't understand, things we think we understand. Anyway, We shall see. I'm sorry not to tell you before, but I am spending Christmas with Winnie. I need to do something different to take my mind of mum and dad. And Winnie is nothing if not different. But of course I think family is important and I promise I shall visit you soon. I'll call you later or tomorrow anyway. Give my best to Todd. Love you sis. Tess xx."