

ENGLISH: *CREATIVE WRITING*

The Circle

Years of study and hard work rewarded me with a lucrative dentistry in the city. I had become a well-respected figure in the community, furnishing people with award-winning smiles. A stocky man wearing a stained singlet plodded sheepishly through the expensive, glass doors. There was something strangely familiar about him, but I could not put my finger on it.

“Name?”

“Uhh... Louis Bosworthy.”

The receptionist continued to question him, building his patient profile while I finished making my cup of tea. The contents of the teabag leached into the boiling water surrounding it, mirroring the childhood memories that came flooding back...

I inhaled a deep breath of icy-fresh, winter air. Grass brushed against my waist as I waded through the sea of green, venturing further into the woods beyond the outer reaches of the village. My eyes darted, my heart pounded, my hair danced; chasing imaginary creatures through the forest.

As a child, I ran everywhere. I ran to the bus, to the shops, even around the house; but I never felt more alive than when I ran through the undergrowth of the forest.

I frolicked here and I skipped there, I played to my hearts content; all the time in the world wasn't enough to quench my desire for racing through the dense woodland.

There was a small clearing in the heart of it all where I escaped for hours. The trees formed a tight circle around the clover patch lining the edge of a pond, brimming with fish and tadpoles. An abandoned glasshouse lay shattered near the centre, the focal point of many adventures. I sat there alone; talking to the spiders, catching the insects and playing 'Hide-and-Seek' with my rabbit Lucky. This was my safe haven, my place of solace.

I never had any 'real' friends, just the imaginary ones in the woods. The other children in the village had not accepted me. I was different; a 'weirdo'. I sat by myself at school waiting impatiently for the bell every afternoon, racing out of the gates the minute it rang. However if I was too slow the school bully, Louis Bosworthy, and all of his minions would circle me like crows at a carcass. They beat me and stole any money I had left over from lunch. His gang would even come to my house and terrorise me when no one was around. The only place they had not found me was my clearing in the forest.

As my fingers chased the fish in the clearing pond, Lucky pricked up her ears at the sudden snap of a twig. No fox would be careless enough to alert its prey to a premeditated attack. This was a predator of a different kind.

“Hey Pissbolt, whatcha' doin'? Playin' tea parties with ya rabbit Lumpy?” Louis jeered, the rest of his gang snickering at the remark.

“Her name is Lucky!” I growled.

“Yeah? Well you'll be wishin' your name was Lucky in a minute.”

My first instinct was to run, but Louis' thick, round fists were quicker than my legs. The pain tore through every nerve in my face as I fell backwards into the pond. The water splashed violently beneath as I broke the surface, enveloping me in a frozen blanket and ripping the warmth from my

skin. I quickly crawled out of the pond before he could do any more harm. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Louis picking up Lucky. "See, Bryce, I told you it was lumpy! Here, catch."

My dearest friend was being tossed about like a ragdoll, and all I could do was watch. Suddenly Louis shrieked.

"That bloody thing bit me. Ya' little shit." Louis dropped Lucky and with one swift anger-fuelled kick, broke her neck with a crack. "Your filthy rodent bit me, and now you're gonna pay for it." He leapt into the air and landed hard on my ankle. I cried out in pain as I heard the same sickening crack as before, a painful reminder of the severed bond between Lucky and me. "That'll stop ya' from runnin'. Quit whingin' Pissbolt. You know what they say? What doesn't kill ya' makes ya' stronger." His eyes lit up like a firecracker at my pain, and in less than a moment they were gone.

I lay there in the dark, cradling Lucky's body while I sobbed and shivered. Tears streamed down my face as rain began to fall, matting Lucky's once plush black fur.

I snapped out of my trance, realising my tea had gone cold.

Louis did not recognise me as I examined his beer-stained teeth and explained the details of the procedure in my well-practised professional tone. I noticed he was starting to feel uncomfortable. "Is it gonna' hurt?"

"Well," I paused, "normally we would apply an agent to numb your mouth before the needle, but we've just run out, so, I'm afraid we're going to have to give you the needle without it."

"What?" His gullibility surprised me, his panic invigorating.

"Yes. But you know what they say, Louis? What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."