

The Black Lotus

a short story by Simon Ings

We buried Rudy this morning. It was drizzling; the sky was uniformly leaden.

When the vicar invited Rudy's mother to look at the flowers, Tina Strossner edged forward to the lip of the grave and peered short-sightedly at the daffodils some children had thrown upon the coffin. Then, out the corner of her eye, she noticed the bouquets, ready to lay upon the grave, and she realised that these were the flowers she was supposed to be admiring.

She stepped towards them and her foot slipped on the edge of the grave. Soil fell with a hollow sound upon the coffin.

One cannot help but remember such moments. Long after the eulogies have faded, countless trivial incidents remain. We uncover them again by accident, and with a twinge of embarrassment, as one might remove a crumpled paper poppy from a winter overcoat.

After the service Tina came over to me, to thank me for being here.

"Sorry I was late," I said. "The train was cancelled."

"How are you getting back?"

"I've a return ticket."

"Drive back with me."

I looked at her. I could not read her expression.

"I think the weather's clearing," she said; she was trying to encourage me.

"I suppose," I replied. I didn't want to talk. I was feeling light-headed, confused. The fugues had started up again.

"Please." She took hold of my hands. "It would be good to have company."

Tina's sister had laid on a simple funeral meal for us. We ate outside, in the back garden. Above us, the clouds broke up and dissolved. She and I sat by the pool. It was covered in green plastic strawberry netting, "to keep the hedgehogs from drowning." The lawn was thin and brown. Tina's sister had sown expensive seed, but it had proved too delicate, and unsuited to the sandy soil. It was choked in moss, itself brown and dead. You could crumble it to dust with your fingers.

Tina took me by the arm as I was absently digging up a little pile of moss. "Maureen?"

I smiled at her. "It's all right," I said. "I'm awake."

Tina smiled back, embarrassed. "Sorry."

She was worried for me. She shared my medical condition, and so she knew what to look for in the onset of a fugue.

Let us know what you think of **infinity plus** - e-mail us at:
sf@infinityplus.co.uk

support this site - buy books through these links:
[A+ Books: an insider's view of sf, fantasy and horror
amazon.com \(US\)](#) | [Internet Bookshop \(UK\)](#)

[top of page](#)
[[home page](#) | [fiction](#) | [non-fiction](#) | [other stuff](#) | [A to Z](#)]
[[infinity plus bookshop](#) | [search infinity plus](#)]