

Hope Springs

2021-44

“Hope springs infernal.” His riposte to her cliché, delivered with a smile. They looked at each other. He continued, between question and statement, “You were hoping to meet someone interesting at this party.” Another pause, which complete silence would have amplified, but the moment was given space by the hubbub of party voices. She blessed the day masks came off, now she could see his face – and it was OK; something there, possibly. “And you’re suggesting it might be you.” Hers, more statement than question, also spoken with a smile. He smiled back, then was caught out as she gestured towards him and challenged, “Say something interesting then.” He balanced the thrill and panic, took a breath, “The world is being dismantled by the scale of human activity, whilst politicians announce answers to the wrong, outdated questions.”

“That’s good!” She almost beamed at him. “We certainly need to do things differently.” He joined in the energy, “Your turn.”

“So foul and fair a day I have not seen.” He nodded in recognition – but this was no time to brag. He felt her energy, speaking from her heart. “That’s good too.” They each waited, both hoping they could think of how to develop this promising start. As they hesitated, a woman in the group of friends standing next to them, turned to her and asked. “You OK? This guy hassling you?”

She smiled easily at her friend and said, “Yes & No. I’m more than OK, there’s no hassle.” Her friend looked at them both, nodded knowingly, then turned back. The two of them were back together, alone in the crowd. He took heart from ‘more than OK’ and took the hint from what her friend had said.

“Do I look like a problem guy?” he offered, probably too tentatively. She was surer, “No – it’s just, well, she’s my friend and we look after each other. The occasional trouble with guys is they either think I’m not really in their league or they think I’m like a princess from some African tribal fiefdom.” They both laughed, briefly.

“Well I don’t think in leagues - but you might well be a princess.”

“Maybe I am...”

“You look the part.” He let that silently sound for a moment. “I don’t know much about African fiefdom’s but I was brought up in Africa; my parents worked there.”

“Well – my parents were born there.”

They both moved slightly closer, as he asked her, “What’s your name?”

“Hope.”

END