

# BRIGHID LOWE

FLASH 500

OBITUARY FOR 'M'

'M' is missing, presumed dead. Yet occasionally, there are sightings and glimpses of 'M' that still seem to persist. Elegantly attired, she navigated a life that seemed to be fulfilled by steadiness, security, love and talent. Up until her final disappearance, we always felt that she had been there for us. Watching her climb up and down her sweeping staircase, it was difficult to comprehend the geography of her old life and its many inheritances. Her life had swung far out from the shipbuilding of her childhood, yet she had disappeared only a few miles away from those empty yards.

The void that now masqueraded as 'M' had eroded away her identity from the inside, and with deceptive gentleness it had systematically plundered her memories and re-fashioned them into distorted epics. Now that she was absent, what dimension and shape would this void take? Would it possess her smile and loiter behind us as we cooked or washed dishes, just as 'M' had always done? Would this void recognise itself when it stood at the foot of the staircase adjusting its appearance in front of the mirror? What still shocked everyone was her beauty; it had not vanished completely but would often flare back in defiance of her suffering. 'M' had been beautiful – there are the photographs that bear witness to this – yet we could not comprehend how or when this beauty had ended.

'M' has specifically requested that there should be no flowers; apparently their petals would only make a mess on the dining room table. Outside, through the windows, flowers are everywhere: bluebells, lily of the valley and poppies, they even overrun the pathways, despite this we still cannot pick them. These are the rules of her disappearance. Birds are her only company now; all are permitted except for the plump-bodied pigeons that taunt her. Slung between the known and the unknown, we can only watch as 'M' moves along the tightrope of her disappearance.

Each life, any life, will be constituted by opportunities that are passed by or that remain unfulfilled. 'M' understood this and towards the end, her anger was toxic, palpable and all consuming. 'M' tasted her rage with every mouthful of food, drank it with each cup of coffee, lingered over it with every glass of wine and heard it accompanying any piece of music. With her eyes widening at the shock of her own absence, restless with the terror of it all, 'M' could metamorphose in front of us. Elegance would suddenly flash into the grotesque: her painted-on eyebrows acting as a constant barometer of her desire to exist. This ferocity, the ferocity of her need to stay alive, disabled and poisoned every impulse of empathy or compassion, whether it resided in her or within us. Even this sourness should be recognised as a last act of generosity. We are being shown that only real love can curdle into the rage of defiance, and that her rage will become our rage.