

Skeleton in the cupboard : Part 1 (l.1 – l.95)

Introduction

This document is an extract from a short story written by Tony Wilmot and entitled « Skeleton in the cupboard ».

It deals with the two characters meeting, a man, Robert Smythe and a young girl. They meet everyday and start talking. The girl is doing an investigation about something which happened 20 years ago. It turns out (*il s'avère que*) that the man played a role in this event.

In a first part, I'm going to introduce the 2 main characters. Then, I'm going to talk about their encounters and finally I'm going to comment on the investigation.

A – The characters's portraits

The girl : “she was twenty-ish” (*début de la vingtaine*), she's “doing some research”. She lives in Elmston and is “pretty” and “attractive with a pulse quickening figure”.

The man : Robert Smythe, “he was more than twice her age” so in his forties. He is married with “Margaret, his wife” and works as a “civil servant” (*fonctionnaire*). He lives “in a leafy suburb on the outskirts (*périphérie*) of town”.

B - The encounter(s) (le(s) rencontre(s))

They met in the park. They shared the same bench at lunchtime.

They are used to meeting each other at lunchtime (“For several days now” (l4), “would” (l2) (*habitude*)). They enjoy each other's company.

He finds her charming but there's no sexual interest. He's aware of the age difference (= the generation gap). He respects the conventions.

C – The investigation(s)

The girl

She has spent a lot of time investigating (l 56-57). It's difficult for her. She has met obstacles (l 53-54). She is determined. Some questions are unanswered, what is the identity of the person and the link(= relationship) between them.

The man

There is an evolution of his behaviour and feelings.

First (l 1-17) he's eager (*impatient*) to see her. Next (l 18-32), he feels anxious, ill-at-ease when he hears that someone wants information about a specific car type. He may own a MG Sports car, he may feel concerned.

Then (l 33-65), they speak about the weather, the food, her hometown (Elmston) and her investigation. He attempts to get more information about her research. He's intrigued, curious.

Finally (l 66-95), he seems ill-at-ease, trapped by the girl and tries to avoid the conversation.

Conclusion

This is a strange atmosphere, an atmosphere of suspense. It's captivating. As readers, we feel intrigued because we understand that the man might be linked to the girl but we don't know in which way. The man may own an MG Sport car and be involved in an accident with it.

Vocabulary :

- pond : mare
- bench : banc
- assignation : rendez vous
- unease : malaise
- stride : pas rapide
- hereabouts : alentours
- pal : copain
- trail : piste
- shiver : tremblement
- chap : type
- purposeful : déterminé
- dull : ennuyeux
- thrilled : enchanté
- to entice : séduire, attirer
- to pry into : s'occuper des affaires des autres
- to unearth : révéler (une vérité)
- to nod : acquiescer