

WordCraft Posting

Fiction Workshop

Inspiration: The Tea Set Box

Assignment: You're in your 80s and are expecting someone for tea. Who is it?

She said she was my granddaughter. But how can that be? How can I not know everything about my own daughter?

She said she would come for tea. Tea? Do I know how to make tea? I would rather have wine. It makes me less anxious.

Who is she really? My daughter died many years ago and is therefore unable to answer my questions about the stranger approaching my door.

Did my daughter have an affair when she was very young? What perfect storm could have forced her to give up her baby and not tell me?

The doorbell rings. She's here. God! She looks just like her mother, who looked just like me!

"Hello, Nana," she says. She knows the family pet name for me!

"Hello, Dear," I say, squeaking in this voice so unlike my own. "Won't you come in?"

We sit, uncomfortably, and gaze upon each other with nervous anticipation.

Finally, I say, "Please tell me of your life. I want to understand."

"I was born in Europe," she says. Stunned, I recall the year abroad that my daughter insisted upon after graduation from college.

"My father and his family raised me. I always knew that my mother was American, but asking about my American relations was met with silence or a curt comment implying that that side of my family should not concern me."

Again, I am stunned. But I realize that this young woman has inherited something from her mother---a dogged determination to learn the whole story.

The tea (and wine) forgotten, we spend the rest of the afternoon learning about each other, her American family and her plans for the future.

She leaves with a promise to return the next day. We have much to discover about each other---both past and present.

At 88, one does not expect surprises. This surprise is surely a gift more precious than gold.

By Elaine Cox