

Hiraeth

by Leonie Thompson

CHARACTERS:

GWEN, an older woman

MILENA, a younger woman of Serbian heritage

EXTRACT:

SCENE:

*Two women sit next to each other on a bus. The older woman, **GWEN**, sits next to the window and is carrying a large handbag and wearing a warm coat. The younger woman, **MILENA** has a laptop bag on her lap. She holds a mobile phone but isn't looking at it, instead she stares, wistfully into space. **GWEN** is looking out the window before she turns to **MILENA** and strikes up a conversation.*

GWEN I remember when this was all fields.

MILENA (*looking out of window, confused*) It is all fields now.

GWEN (*laughing*) Yes. I know. It's my little joke.

Pause.

It's what people say isn't it?

MILENA (*confused*) Oh. Okay.

GWEN I am going to the park with Toby and Arthur.

MILENA Sorry?

GWEN It's our weekly visit to the park.

MILENA Right.

GWEN Have you been to St Helen's Park?

MILENA No.

GWEN You really should go. They have just opened a new cafeteria—looks very smart. Beautiful rhododendrons. Not at this time of year. Obviously. But in June. Stunning. All sorts of colours.

MILENA Okay.

GWEN I like the purple ones best. Although purple isn't my favourite colour. To wear, I mean. Someone wrote a poem about an old lady wearing purple, didn't they? Who was that? I think I like pink better. Softer on the skin. Particularly when you get older.
(*Fumbling in her handbag*) Do you want a humbug?

MILENA Sorry?

GWEN A humbug?

MILENA I don't know...?

GWEN Oh, it's a sweet. Minty and chewy. Don't see them so often now. I buy mine from Newson and Sons off the high street, it's an old-fashioned confectionary shop. All the sweets are displayed on shelves in big glass jars, like in the old days! There is too much choice really, but I like these best. They are rather nice. Try one.

MILENA Oh—okay. Thank you.

She offers the bag to MILENA who takes one and eats it.

GWEN Take two—keep one for later, if you want?

She offers the bag again and MILENA politely takes another one which she holds awkwardly in her hand.