

# REVERIE

## KIMBERLEY WHITE

OPEN BOOK UNBOUND WRITING

Tales of the stag do to Amsterdam were being told, in far too much detail, if her sister's face was anything to go by. As the Best Man delivered his speech exuberantly to her left, Isla tuned in and out, floating on waves of thought.

In her peripheral vision, the guests were chuckling, amused by the raucous stories, and laughing at the bride good-naturedly, who sat with her head in her hands. The bright and airy room was awash with the glow of good spirits and young love, but Isla was alone and far out to sea in her mind.

Even though her sister was an ethereal goddess today, Isla couldn't focus on anyone but them. One of them sat on the table on the far right, and the other on the table on the far left, a statement of their divide. Their bodies were purposely angled in opposite directions.

It made her want to scream like a banshee and shake them until their heads fell off. Her heart physically ached that they had chosen not to take their rightful seats at the top table on her sister's special day. But her sister had made it clear, either it was both of them, or neither. They had decided for her; refusing to share a table, a toast, their daughter's wedding day.

How did all those years together end up like this? How did they let it come to this? Isla couldn't count the time she had spent chasing these thoughts from her sleep.

*And they looked like bouncy castles!* The best man finished his joke to jeers and applause, clapping reverberating in her ears.

His words triggered Isla to jolt suddenly into a childhood memory.

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It was almost five-year-old Isla's bedtime, but she was jittery with excitement at the thought of her birthday tomorrow. Her Mum and Dad had a surprise for her.

*Now, close your eyes!* If it was possible, her mum and dad seemed more elated than she was. They had made her stay up in her bedroom for the last hour whilst all sorts of noises and stifled giggling erupted below her.

She was growing impatient, and she needed the toilet. Finally, they burst into her bedroom with a flourish, eyes wide and cheeks flushed. She could see her big sister behind them, giddy with glee.

*What is it? What is it?* Isla was shrieking now, and her Dad swooped down behind her to cover her eyes with his warm, calloused hands.

The merry troupe led her blindfolded to her Mum and Dad's bedroom window, which overlooked the garden. *TA-DA!* Dad uncovered her eyes.

*WOW.* Isla couldn't believe what she was seeing. It was like all her dreams had come true. Her heart beat double-time inside her little chest.

*Well?* Mum was expectant, searching her face for a reaction.

*A BOUNCY CASTLE ALL FOR ME!?*

Mum and Dad dissolved into laughter. *Yes, pet. Well, not all for you - for the party tomorrow! And it's just a rental, it has to go back the following day, mind.*

Isla zipped around and raced down the stairs, her sister hot on her heels. Launching herself on to the bouncy castle, she was surprised how firm it was, how quickly it threw her back up into the air. She delighted in the rubbery smell as she faceplanted on the surface. It was candyfloss pink, with turrets reaching far into the sky. It was perfect.

She bounced with her sister for what felt like hours, late into the warm July evening. Mum and Dad gently prised her from the bouncy castle well past her bedtime, knees raw and spirits high. They said she had to keep her energy for her birthday party tomorrow. All her friends were coming over.

During the night, Isla awoke with a start. A sensitive wee soul, she could hear something downstairs. She was scared that someone was stealing her bouncy castle. Sticking on her welly boots and wielding her sword for protection, she picked her way downstairs to confront the intruder.

She reached the double doors leading out into the garden and peeked out from behind. She had identified the commotion, and it was quite unexpected.

Mum and Dad were bouncing on the bouncy castle, giggling unstoppably and whooping as they tossed each other from side to side. Mum even had a glass of wine in her hand and was trying to bounce (unsuccessfully) with her hand over the glass so as not to spill. Mum's lack of coordination seemed to delight Dad greatly. Her hair had come undone from its top knot and billowed around her shoulders, golden sand. Messy, carefree, enchanting.

Isla may have been little, but a wise intuition told her not to break the spell. Their laughter was sweet music to Isla. How happy her Mum and Dad were. She hoped they didn't spill wine on her bouncy castle, but even more she hoped that they didn't notice her. She wondered what was so funny to them, but she was glad she didn't know.

The next day at her birthday celebrations, Isla carried that feeling around all day like a party balloon, just for her. She couldn't explain it, but it was a warmth that spread through her chest and lit up her whole universe. They brought out her birthday cake together, singing joyfully and sharing secret glances. With a mouth full of marzipan, she knew. She knew they were her lighthouse in this loud and busy world, there to guide her and keep her safe, always.

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Clinking glasses jolted Isla from her reverie back into the moment.

As she regained focus, she realised the whole room was looking at her expectantly. Both were smiling at her, both willing her to do well from polar ends of the universe. If only they would look at each other like that, again.

*It's time for your speech, Isla.*

She swilled the metallic bubbles of her champagne around her mouth, playing for time as she straightened her thoughts. Smoothing down her bridesmaid's dress, she rose out of her chair to begin. Isla had beautiful stories to share about her sister, but she knew she would keep that pocket of sunshine all for herself.

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