

Thanks, Sylvia. Wow! Have we got some interesting people here this week! Painters. Dancers. Philosophers. Yeah. But we're just coming to the most interesting lot of them all. **My** group! Yeah. OK, so I'm Gareth... as you know. I expect you'd all like to know a little bit about me first, yeah? Well, this is my first visit to (*reads from his key card*) Anantara Uluwatu Bali Resort, pardon my pronunciation, Indonesian is not my strong suit. (*He laughs*). But anyway I'm here to guide my group through the intricacies of writing creatively! How exciting is that?! (*Nodding to the unseen Sylvia*).

Gareth

OK, OK. Yeah. Talking too much as per! (*He dumps the notebooks in Gwen's lap*). Would you mind... you know? (*He gestures at the ladies and Gwen, with some asperity, splits the pile in two and the women take one each and pass them on*). Excellent! Little present from the management. Right! So. To proceed. I'll be drawing on my own considerable experience as a tutor and published writer. And this week, it seems I've got really lucky. And I'm not just talking about the weather! (*He laughs*). No. 'Cos my whole group, small though it is, is female. Seven lovely ladies who are going to write creatively over the next five days, starting with...? (*He points to Honor*)

Gareth

Honor

Hi...

Sue

(*To Gareth*). Excuse me? (*To Honor*). Sorry.

Gareth

Yes?

Sue

(*Holding up the course brochure*). What's happened to Judy Merriman? I thought she was tutoring this course?

Gareth

Oh, yeah... right. Judy... I thought Sylvia...? No, well, sorry. You didn't get an email before you left home?

Sue

No. (*She looks round the group; they all shake their heads*). When?

Moira

Some of us don't have email.

Gareth

No? OK. Yeah, well, Judy can't make it. She was involved in this car accident at the weekend...

Moira

(*Interrupting*). But I've just bought all her books!

Sue

Accident? Is she OK?

Gareth

Oh yeah. Nothing too serious, really. Whiplash, you know. Yeah?

Moira

Oh that can be really nasty, whiplash.

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Beg pardon?

Moira

Whiplash. I've had that. It's agonising. I was in this car once...

Gareth

(*Interrupting*). Right... (*To Sue*). So I've, like, stepped in as her replacement. Last minute and all that. Yeah? Hope you're not too disappointed, er...?

Sue

No, I just didn't know. I see. No, it's OK. Sorry to interrupt.

Gareth

No worries. (*To Honor*). Sorry. You were saying. You are...?

Honor

Oh, yah, Honor. Hiya. I'm from Sydney. Hello, everybody.

Gareth

Well, hello, Honor. And do you work? You know... Or, what, run a home...?

Honor

Well funnily enough, I work **and** run a home. Like most women.

Gareth

OK, OK, didn't mean to... whoa! Got to be careful with this one! So. Honor what is it that you do, when you're not running a home? (*He laughs inappropriately*).

Honor

Oh. I... well, I have a business.

Gareth

Very nice. In what line?

Honor

I beg your pardon?

Gareth

Your business? What...?

Honor

Oh...! (*beat*) Gardening. Yah... Holistic gardening.

Clare

Cool.

Gareth

Wow! Holistic gardening. Very now. And so, Honor, we'd be honoured... (*he laughs at his own joke. only Gwen politely joins in*), if you'd just share with us what you're hoping to get out of this week.

Honor

Well. How to write, I suppose. (*Gareth clearly expects more*). Creatively?

Gareth

Great. Great. Well, I think... I hope, I can help you there. Yeah, definitely. And next...?

Chris Christine. Chris. I'm just here to learn. And enjoy myself. Hi. *(Her mobile rings. She scrabbles in her bag)*. Oh, God, I'm so sorry. I thought I'd switched it off. I meant to. *(She does now, as Moira tuts)*.

Gareth Yeah. Enjoyment. That's what it's all about. Like Sylvia said earlier, the philosophy here is you do what you want to do, when you want to do it. Whatever. As long as it doesn't frighten the geckos! Excellent. And...

Rita Rita. Hi. Haven't written anything since school. 'Cept shopping lists. And cheques. I'm good at them. So I'm a virgin, writing-wise. But I 'spose everyone has to start somewhere?

Moira Of course they do.

Gareth That is so right, Rita. Blank sheets and all that. Fabulous. Fabuloso. *(He looks enquiringly at Gwen)*.

Gwen Me? Yes, right. Gwen Lloyd. I live in Melbourne, with Leo whom you've already met. Doing art appreciation? *(She waves at the unseen Leo)*. I'm a magistrate. Been writing for years, but I've never shown anything to anyone, so I'm looking for the courage to share.

Moira You mean no-one's seen any of your work? How do you know you're any good then?

Gwen *(Nettled)*. Well, I don't, obviously. That's what I meant about needing courage.

Moira In my opinion, it's a very exposing experience, writing.

Honor Is it? Oh, great!

Gareth *(Quickly cutting in)*. Yeah, courage. We all need that, don't we? Yeah, I'm sure we can work on that, Gwen. That's why we're here. To listen, support and learn. A magistrate, eh? Watch out everyone, we better behave ourselves! *(He laughs)*. And next...?

Sue Hi, everyone. Sue. I write loads. Have for years. It's crap, mainly. *(Moira tuts again)*. Just liked the sound of this place. Bit of sun, the odd glass of vino and a chance to unwind. I had hoped there might be some more men, though.

Honor Didn't we all, darling.

Moira and Gareth speak simultaneously

Moira Good evening, I'm Moira...

Gareth Have to spread myself about a bit, then, ladies, won't I? *(He laughs, as Moira retreats.)*. Sorry, love, *(Moira bridles)*, I interrupted you.

Moira Yes.

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Moira Moira. As I said. Moira Bennett; with two "T"s, thank you.

Gareth *(Eager to move on)*. Great. Thanks.

Moira *(Continuing)*. I should warn everyone I'm in recovery and feeling a bit fragile. I hate these sort of things. They make me feel very vulnerable.

Gareth Right.

Moira Oh, yes, and I'm not one to complain, but my bed's too hard.

Gareth OK... and you are hoping for...?

Moira Well, I don't know... perhaps at the very least a softer pillow. *(Everybody laughs)*. Oh, I see. Well, I'd like to have the opportunity to explore these issues in my writing.

Rita *(Sotto voce)*. Oh, lovely.

Moira *(Ferreting in a vast canvas bag at her feet)*. As a matter of fact, I've brought some examples of my work along with me ...

Sue Oh, my God.

Moira Sorry? *(Sue shakes her head. Moira turns back to Gareth)*. I could leave them with you, if you like?

Gareth Oh. Yes. Lovely.

Moira As long as you promise to protect my intellectual property and the unflinching exposure of my innermost feelings.

Gareth Your...? Right. Sure. Yeah. Sort of catharsis-type thing. Okey-dokey... Well, thanks. Great. Yes, I'd love to... So, OK, perhaps now's a good time to adjourn to the bar? Yeah? *(He gives a thumbs up)*. Fantastic! Don't forget, first cocktail is on the house! *(He goes to move off)*.

Gwen Er... Gareth? *(She gestures with her head at Clare, who is staring into space)*.

Gareth Oh, right, yeah... so sorry... So many people. So many faces. I thought you were one of the stressbusters. No...? Sitting there so still and quiet... er? Hello?

Moira nudges Clare, who looks around, startled.

Moira Wake up. He wants you to introduce yourself.

Gareth Yes, hello. Sorry nearly missed you out! Er...

Clare It's cool. Hi, everybody, I'm Clare? Alternative therapist? You know? Aromatherapy... crystals... yeah? Here to chill, maybe write a little bit and do some personal exploration, you know?

Gareth Fabulous...

Clare Yeah... really into, you know, like, colour and mantras. Maybe chanting? Poetry. Stuff like that.

Moira Chanting?!

Gareth Yeah. OK. Poetry. Yep. Good stuff. Write a little, say a lot. Excellent. Brilliant. Right. Yes, lovely. So, let's get at that alcohol! All righty...

They all get up and start to move in the general direction of the bar. Moira buttonholes Gareth and thrusts a pile of notebooks at him.

Moira I knew instinctively that you'd be sympathetic, Gareth. I sense a kindred spirit in you. I felt it as soon as we met.

Gareth Oh. Good. Yeah. That's really...

Moira *(Interrupting)*. Here's a few of my notebooks for you to look over tonight. Just to get a feel of where I'm coming from, as they say.

Gareth Right.

Moira You ought to know though, there's some pretty harrowing stuff in there.

Gareth Yeah? Great. I mean, oh dear. Is there? Right... well... thanks.

Moira You can let me know what you think tomorrow morning in our first session. Or we could meet up beforehand? I'm an early riser.

Gareth Are you? Yeah. Lovely. But first session tomorrow will be soon enough, I'm sure. See you then.

Moira exits, pleased. Gareth is left staring after her, then at the notebooks in his hands with a look of dread.