

Excerpt from “Autumn Daffodils – Charlie’s Story” by Peter Turnham

I spent the next weeks and months hating myself for the self-inflicted torment to which I was subjecting myself. There was no future with this woman, just peaks of joy along a path of despair. I reasoned that if I had the same feeling for Annie, then I wouldn’t be doing this to myself, but then we both had our own addiction. Annie hated what the alcohol had done to her, but she couldn’t give it up. I hated what my pointless relationship with Joanna was doing to me, but I couldn’t give it up. The months turned into nearly a year and with no word from Joanna, I was finally beginning to appreciate how an alcoholic must feel after being dry for a year. Stanley and the others all looked as though they were feeling very sorry for me.

“Unrequited love. Can anything be more tragic?” Audrey said.

“I suppose you’re right. It is all a bit tragic, looking back,” I agreed.

Stanley sighed on my behalf and asked if she was finally gone for good, and I had to say, “Not quite”, and told them what happened next.

I was certainly beginning to assume that, after nearly a year, I would never see her again, but then one morning Sylvia shouted out to me just as I was leaving the office.

“There’s a woman on the phone for you.”

I grabbed the phone in a rush saying, “Yes, can I help you?”

The voice on the other end said, “I need a nice man to take me out to dinner. Are you still that nice man, Charlie Bartlett?”

My heart as always leaped in my chest. I could feel my pulse beating in my throat, and there was a brief silence before I managed to answer.

“I think you know the answer to that.”