

Recalling Scarborough by DM Denton

Her first glimpse of the sea was from a room as small as the experience was vast. It wasn't the best lodging in Scarborough, except as could be afforded; but there was a brightening view of the bay below the promontory where a castle crumbled, sands stretching wider and wider along the indecisive surf, and stars quickly fading.

Wintry gusts whined against and even through her grimy window. She dressed warmly and decided to go out before breakfast.

Things were happening in the harbor with fishing boats, and on the pier shops and stalls were preparing to open. Until that morning she had only ever seen gulls playing flying games over plowed fields for the freedom of having lost their way. Now they seemed agitated in a place they belonged. Her footprints on the sand were the first since the last tide so she could imagine she was walking where no one had before. It was even colder than expected but nothing could dissuade her from approaching the sea and what it might do next. If it had been summer she would have taken off her shoes and stockings and tiptoed into little bursts of foam at the water's edge, seaweed bobbing to and fro as though the land wouldn't let go. Instead her gloves were washed in icy sand as she examined shells and pebbles.

Seagulls were circling her now, the sun dispersing any clouds as it enlarged and chose to illuminate her for whoever was there to see. She looked around and saw a man coming down the strand in a great cape that belonged to an actor's wardrobe, hailing her with hand and voice, assuming she was glad to see him.

She surrendered long before he caught up with her.

"You must be perished. Here."

She stopped the cape from sliding off his shoulders. "Then you'll be cold."

"I can bear it." He turned, wondering what distracted her from him.

It was just a thought. That she might share a little of her passion without any impropriety, looking beyond his intention and the onlooking tiers of tile-roofed houses, pointing to the northern gray of a simple church presiding like a cathedral.

"That's St Mary's. Where Anne Bronte is buried."

"Interesting." His smile said otherwise.

"Scarborough is where she saw the sea for the first time too."

He rubbed her hands with the coldness of his own.

She no longer had a choice, his cloak embracing as if to hide her, stroked over her ears and cheeks, fastened under and lifting her chin. She was ashamed she could be so ready for his adulterous advances, a long kiss, an uncertain happiness, a dance without music, and a pleasure that didn't know how to be.

The *Cathedral* bells signaled a chance passing. He held her arms when they separated a little and didn't seem to notice she was crying. "Ah. I can smell chestnuts roasting. Breakfast!"

In another moment it wasn't that hard to let him go.