

# Our Woolly Writer Winner

Drum roll please, it's time to announce our champion! Thank you to each and every one of you who entered – we were inundated with amazing stories and rhythmic poems, and are blown away by our very talented readers. We'd like to congratulate Elin Davies for her very emotive and heartfelt story. We suggest you sit back and read this lovely tale with a cup of tea...

Ben had been planning this for ages and he knew that if he hid her present in the craft room, she would never suspect a thing. It had taken him an age. Each blanket stitch – as he remembered from his school days – stabbing his fingers and pricking his thumbs, a labour of the love he poured into the material. Yes, it was a bit rudimentary, but he thought Jess would love it all the more for that. The bright blue felt and the spidery words, picked out in bold red, were the epitome of Jess' passion for all things homemade. The message was clear: marry me. He'd wanted it to be a question, but he couldn't manoeuvre the needle into making a decent question mark, so a straight-up request it had to be. Inside the patchy, basic felt bag – no zip, that was way beyond him – a ring. Glowing gold, encircling a corker of an amethyst with diamonds either side. Edwardian, the lady had said in the shop. Perfect, Ben thought.

Hiding it in the craft room was the icing on the cake. There sat Jess' beloved Singer, passed down from her grandmother on the rickety old table her dad had made when she was little. There was a drawer under the worktop, battered and apt to jam, where the spools lived. Next time Jess came in to lose herself in conjuring up a new creation, there lurking among the rainbow of threads, she would find the little felt bag. Today was the day, Ben

was sure of it. She hadn't been in for a few weeks and he'd been waiting impatiently each day for the moment of discovery. He was nervous and had a pain gripping his chest which he knew must be anticipation as he hovered near the sewing machine, watching on. Today, surely.

The sound of the key in the door made his head spin. He listened as the front door creaked open, slammed heavily shut, the keys dropped in the pot and the shoes fell to the mat. A few seconds later, the kettle was on. Ben crouched behind the sofa bed in the craft room, dodging the tassels on the threadbare green velour throw – another of Jess' creations from long ago. He lost himself in a moment of reverie, remembering the student days when that throw had been all that lay across the two of them, panting and giggling on Jess' single bed, sunlight filling the tiny room and shining on their glowing faces.

But Jess was coming. He'd know the padding of those bare feet on a wooden floor anywhere: cat-like, confident and slinky, though today her tread was heavier than usual. Hard day at



*"Today was the day, Ben was sure of it. She hadn't been in for a few weeks and he'd been waiting impatiently for the moment of discovery"*



school maybe. Come to think of it, she hadn't even called out a hello to him since getting back. Really hard day then. The handle thunked loosely as she turned it – he really must tighten those screws – and in came Jess. Her hair was piled up in one of those messy buns he liked, her face pale and her eyes sunken. He loved her most when she was tired, he could scoop her up like this, be her hero and make things better for a bit. She was wearing one of his hoodies, a grey Abercrombie thing they'd got on their mini break to New York, hanging huge on her hunched shoulders. And in her hand, an ever-present cup of steaming tea. That mug had been made by one of her students, a take on Van Gogh, midnight blue with chubby yellow stars all around. She had exclaimed over that mug, had fallen in love with it, and that was the moment when Ben had come up with the handmade proposal plan. A surefire hit.

Ben crouched lower and watched as she pulled back the wobbly chair – how many times had she asked him to fix that too? – and dropped herself onto its padded cushion. For a moment, she stared into her tea and Ben counted the seconds of silence before she put the mug on the table and turned to look at the sewing machine. Carefully she lifted her hand and clutching her sleeve she used it to wipe a fine layer of dust off the Singer. Then she slowly pulled out the drawer. There it was, nestled in among all the colours, his hope for a perfect future. Ben watched as Jess' rosebud lips formed a perfect, stunned, silent 'oh'. Those eyes he loved, bluer than a summer

sky, filled with tears. She put out a pale hand to steady herself on the table. With shaking fingers she lifted out the little bag and squeezed it tenderly with both hands before kissing it gently, sobbing into the blue felt. "Yes," she whispered.

"Yes!" yelled Ben and punched the air with his fist as he scrambled to his feet behind the sofa. He clambered across and landed at Jess' chair, his smile wider than he knew his face could even fit. "Yes baby! I knew you'd love it. Sorry there's no question mark, you know I wanted it to be all romantic and I just wanted to surprise you, I thought you'd like..." But Jess didn't hear. Still clutching the little felt bag, the tears now streaming down her wan cheeks, she got unsteadily to her feet, and walked right through him, out of the room.

Ben had been planning this for ages. He just hadn't thought he'd be dead when she found it.



ELIN DAVIES

**FUN FACT**  
ELIN SANG  
MEGHAN MARKLE  
DOWN THE  
AISLE!

## Hear from our winner...

"It's amazing news to have won, I'm absolutely thrilled!

I'm a singer by trade and I take my knitting with me to all my concerts but I've always wanted to try my hand at writing.

The Woolly Writer opening sentence captured my imagination straight away and now you've inspired me to keep at it – maybe I'll take a notepad and pen everywhere as well as my knitting bag!"

## Hear from our judge...

"It's such a beautifully-written piece and it really captures the love that goes into a homemade gift. There is such a clever twist at the end and I really didn't see it coming – it brought a tear to my eye and an audible 'no' from my mouth"



EMMA VARNAM

**2nd place**

JILL  
PRITCHARD'S  
poem

**3rd place**

STEPHANIE  
CLARKE'S  
poem

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