

Percy Janes First Novel Award

Nina Rumbolt Pye, Mary's Harbour

Patella (an excerpt)

The blood drained from her body as she slowly backed away from the window and only after Rita had exclaimed "Mom" under her breath, did Fanny realise she had whimpered. No one had to tell her what was in that parcel. She had witnessed that scene before when clergy had returned the meagre belongings of a relative to his family. She wanted to scream, to hit something, to kick something, but as she turned to face Rita, she saw Cack and Dorothy also watching her.

"They are coming here Ma," said Rita as she started towards the door.

"Do not let them in this house," Fanny barked, her fists tightly clenched to her sides. She did not want that package that held the leftovers of her son. She couldn't bear to see that little flannel shirt she had sent him to the hospital in, without him in it. She was suffocating. She couldn't breathe. Then came the knock on the door.

Rita and the children stood frozen, not knowing what to make of their mother's behaviour. Finally, Charl burst through the door and Dr Paddon came in behind him.

"How come no one opened the door for Dr Paddon? What was yas doin?" Charl looked from one to the other as Roy, John, Mildred, and Liz followed the doctor inside.

Fanny kept her eyes on the parcel as she slowly backed away. This didn't go unnoticed by the doctor. He held it out to her and told her it was for the children from Nurse Jupp. Fanny looked into Dr Paddon's face and saw kindness and bewilderment, and she realised her mistake. At almost the same moment, the doctor also understood the situation.