



SOWING THE SEED by Rhona Gorringe.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

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Sowing the Seed by Rhona Gorringe.

“They’ve started already,” Rachel said, looking out of the window. “I heard them before I got up. I’m going outside to watch. It’s like a mating ritual with two great balletic beasts bowing and paying compliments to each other.”

A grunt came from the other side of the newspaper and a knife clattered onto the table. “Yes, ploughing! It always comes sooner than you think,” her husband said, getting up. “Reminds you of when you were little, eh, on your Dad’s farm? Here’s your coat and mind you don’t get cold, now.”

Outside, Rachel leaned on the field gate. Screaming seagulls swooped in delicate tracery, following the mirror blades of the plough as it churned the stubbled field into furrows. Her nose twitched at the sweet tang of a soil she could almost taste. Autumn, another year passing. Rachel wondered what the next year would bring. There was something oppressive about the shortening of the days and the low sunsets, as if Nature didn’t want to look at the skeletal branches and desolate landscape. The sound of tattered leaves whispering in the bare hedgerows added to Rachel’s sense of melancholy. She had no liking for this oft-quoted ‘seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness’.

A second tractor, with harrow and drill, swung round and followed the straight, deep lines, shedding seed into the trenches. Rachel sighed. It was all done so fast these days. As one crop was harvested, another went straight in. There was no time for the earth to recoup its strength. Fertiliser was spread to boost the next crop and the rotation went on relentlessly. She kicked at a stone and thought of her father’s words: “Be gentle with the earth. It gives you so much.”

A whiff of diesel floated above the heavy smell of the newly turned clods and made her retch. Joe was right, she had to look after herself. Shivering, she pushed aside her apprehension and returned to the warm kitchen. Green shoots would soon be showing in the fields. Rachel smiled and patted her swelling belly, thinking of the new life she and Joe had created. This was no time to be mournful.

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