

A Very Weird Mystery

By S. A. Tomlin

This story is part of a genre that I would describe as 'a Slice of Life'. It is a story that we could all experience and be involved with. And for that reason I deem it a true story. True because it could happen or may have already happened to absolutely anyone of you. Parts, if not all, have happened to me already.

It also acts as a reminder. A reminder that; you never know exactly what others are going through, so treat them with kindness & humility.

Also, there really is truth in the phrase, 'smile and the world smiles with you,' so put it to use and bring a little bit of happiness into the world.

Quote of the Story:

"There are two ways of spreading light, be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Crash. Swoosh. There it was. *Crash. Swoosh.* And again. *Crash. Swoosh.*

A beat drummed out by the waves echoed through the building. *Crash. Swoosh.* The wind was whipping up a gale and the rain was relentless, coming down horizontally. Waves smashed into the beach. Birds flew about crazily, only just avoiding the crests of these walls of water. Everytime they thought that they'd seen the last of it, another torrent would pelt them. *Crash. Swoosh.* A fast, dangerous current ripped through the bay. These were treacherous waters.

The flash of dark red could occasionally be seen, but even if the flag blew away, surely no-one would be mad enough to swim in this. If the waves didn't knock you for six, the stones were sure to slice through your flesh, like a hot knife through butter. And if that didn't kill you, the hypothermia would quickly settle in and immobilise you.

Crash. Swoosh. Boats were toppling left & right, while crews attempted to bail the water out. If one sunk today, it wouldn't be the first though it would be the first that I've witnessed. As it pounded the café, the rain rushed and roared, pouring straight out of the clouds. The sheer quantity of water was the most remarkable thing. How could the clouds hold this amount of it before bursting? It was teetering on a tsunami against the little painted houses of the village.

I was worried that the glass wouldn't hold, that the windows would smash and all of a sudden we'd be drenched. Exposed to the elements and

left to face the terrors of the storm alone, with nothing but our minds to protect us. I trusted the old stone walls though, they had been through a few storms, they could handle it. But the new double glazing looked weak and flimsy compared to these gale force winds.

“And here are your drinks,” the waitress said, smiling.

Christ that made me jump. As usual, I'd been off in a world of my own trying to escape the current day to day life.

I watched the waitress walk back to her countertop. It looked like she had had a long shift, as her apron was covered in different coffee's and powders. Yet you couldn't tell from her face. Happy as can be and chatting away gaily with the regulars. Except for the light dusting of cocoa powder on her nose, which gave her a cute playful look. I imagined going over and brushing it off, tucking her hair behind her ear and offering her a drink, and asking whether she'd want to go out for dinner. And then. And then. I digress.

Except for the sprinkling of cocoa, she looked as fresh as a daisy. There were no crows feet about her eyes, but they smiled warmly with the rest of her face. And no slouch in her posture, or even a drag in her step as she served the drinks, either. If anything, there was a spring. Her pupils were crystal blue like a beautiful quartz stone, glistening and shimmering as the light from the fire in the corner bounced off them. A blue like the sea, deep and untameable. And just like the sea, I know that I will never explore their depths.

Instead, all I could do was just gaze happily into them and let the soothing colour put me at ease. How long had I just been absorbed? How long had I lost all perception of time, to just admire the beauty? I couldn't tell you, but watching her smile and laugh with everyone was mesmerising. It didn't seem to matter what words they uttered, she would glow warmly either way, just pleased to bring some happiness into the world. And those golden locks! Like Rapunzel's they flowed over her shoulders and down her back transfixing me. It looked like ...

“I just don't get it, why would I have frozen peas?!” Nan interjects loudly, completely uprooting my train of thought and awakening me from the blissful daydream. “All I'm saying is, I only eat fresh peas. I can't stand that frozen rubbish.”

“Maybe you bought them by mistake when you last went shopping,” adds Dad helpfully, trying to sooth the conversation. “Or maybe you fancied a change and thought you’d try them?”

“No. Definitely not! I barely buy any frozen goods, most of it is ultra-processed rubbish made for the youth these days.”

We’d come out for a nice meal, Dad, Nan and I. I thought it would be good for her to get out of the flat and have a change of scenery, but then the storm took hold and it has semi stranded us here, for the time being.

“Well actually I do buy frozen fish fingers because the kids love them, don’t you Sam?”

I look up sharply and direct my attention over to Nan. “Yes Nan, I used to love them. Especially with the chips you did. They were the best,” I replied with a tear in my eye. “Really crunchy on the outside but super soft and fluffy on the inside. Way better than the chip shop down the road. Do you remember the time I put so much vinegar on them that they were completely soaked with it, and you suggested hanging them on the washing line?” I laughed. “And then you squeezed the vinegar out with a fork and the plate was swimming with it?”

“Yeah, sort of love.”

It went quiet as we all took a sip from our drinks. When I went to get them earlier Nan stepped in and said, “Don’t worry love, I’ll get these. I may be old but I can still do stuff like this for you,” while Dad looked over warily from beside me. I was pleased that Nan still felt independent enough to do things like that, but when I look over now, and see her slowly taking a sip through the steam, I’m not so sure she is. It’s gut-wrenching how quick it can take hold.

“But where did they come from? I certainly didn’t buy any last time. Besides, I wouldn’t have been able to carry them back anyway. Not at my age.”

“Back on about the petit pois’ are you Mum?” Dad added smiling.

“If you mean frozen peas, then yes I am! It’s just a complete mystery. Did you buy them last time we went shopping and forgot to take them home with you?”

“We might have bought some Mum, but we haven’t been shopping together for quite a while now, so I doubt it.”

Conversations like these weren't that uncommon in recent months, but when Nan had something bothering her, she'd often bring it up again and again until she cracked it.

"What do you want for lunch Nan? Looks like they do some lovely food. It'll make a nice change for you." I say, steering the conversation away from green vegetables. While she looked over the menu, I glanced back out the window to the Harbour. The storm raged on and it didn't show any signs of lessening. Waves tormented the front, and water washed all over the pavements and walkways. The seaspray plastered everything and added another layer of water to the rain soaked walls. A thick coating of foam lined the edges of the Harbour, surrounding all of the remaining wildlife.

"I'm not too hungry really, I might just have some soup and a bit of bread. We had a good breakfast this morning, see."

"The soup looks quite good to be honest, cream of tomato, I was tempted," Dad says excitedly. "Although I think I'll go for the Steak pie and chips. Sure you don't want anything else Mum?"

"That's not like you Dad!" I joke. "I can't remember a time that a meat pie has been on the menu and you didn't go for it."

"No, that'll be good, thanks love. So long as it doesn't come with any peas!"

"Oh Nan, I wish we could figure out where they've come from. They really have put you in a bit of a state, haven't they?"

By this point Nan looked really quite troubled about them, and she was beginning to raise her voice too. Luckily the sounds of the wind and rain far outweighed her voice so that none of the other customers noticed her distress, although the storm definitely wasn't helping matters.

"Did you buy them last time we went shopping and forgot to take them home with you? That must be how they ended up in my freezer." Dad was struggling to stay calm now, but he had a good handle on it. I found it quite heartbreaking to watch, but it didn't get to me in quite the same way.

"No Mum, you go shopping with the carers now, do you remember? Maybe Sally bought it by accident or thought that you liked them. I'm sure we can speak to her to make sure it doesn't happen again."