

The Reunion

By James Anthony

May Blossom lived up to her name. Her pink soft face surrounded by a mass of white tight curls. The threadbare brown cardigan she always wore over her green stained sweater. Dark brown trousers pulled around her ample waist by a thick leather belt. She stood in the park, as if rooted to the spot, encircled by cherry blossom recently fallen after the April showers. Her carrier bags piled high in a Sainsbury's shopping trolley. Early morning workers hurried past trying to avoid her eye and the smell that contained her in an invisible bubble.

She pushed the sheet of cardboard that had been her mattress for the night down the side of her trolley. The cardboard tore a hole in a carrier bag and scattered some of it's contents through the wire onto the floor. Muttering to herself, she sank down to collect her world. A crumpled photograph of a smartly dressed woman standing in a summer garden. Another of three children, arms raised, on the front of a white knuckle ride. A key ring holding keys unused for years.

She gathered the keepsakes and raised herself with the help of the wobbling trolley. Opening another carrier bag, she placed the memories inside next to a framed certificate obscured by cracked glass. A birthday card caught her eye and she suddenly realised that today was her birthday. She looked much older than her forty seven years. Her free-wheeling lifestyle had taken it's toll.

Memories of previous birthdays filtered through her befuddled mind; romantic meals, birthday cakes overloaded with candles, smiling faces she could hardly identify, cold subways. Even the sun rising on a clear spring morning couldn't lift her depression.

A voice interrupted her slide into blackness, 'Mom, is that you?' A woman in her mid-twenties stood a few feet away.

May turned to her with a blank look.

'Happy birthday,' she smiled. 'We've been looking for you ... and what a day to find you.'

'Who're you?' May searched her memory trying to identify the face.

'I'm your daughter ... June. We've been searching everywhere for you. The Salvation Army contacted us yesterday to say they thought you might be here.'

'June ... do I have a daughter? What do you want from me?'

'We want you to come home.' June stepped forward and reached out her hand.

'Home, where's home?'

'It's not far, I've got the car parked by the gate. Come on, let's walk that way.' June took May's hand and gently pulled her in the direction of the park entrance.

May resisted, holding back, she grabbed her trolley with her other hand.

'You won't need that now, Mom. We're going to look after you properly.'

May looked at her trolley and then back to her daughter, fear filled her eyes. 'I don't know you ... Leave me alone ... I'll scream if you come any closer!'

June let go of her hand, tears ran down her cheeks as she watched her Mother push her trolley down the path.

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