

Coalition Re-visited.

I love this view. I've lived here all my life but never tired of it. That rolling meadow, the sweet smell of grass after the rain, the sound of the swans launching into flight from the river, that old oak tree which holds all the memories. I feel the tear rolling down my cheek, the weight on my chest at what I've done. Why oh why couldn't I just let the past be the past? I wish I hadn't done it. I wish I hadn't told her. I was just being selfish. Now it's led to this. My beautiful daughter so upset she can hardly look at me. If I could just turn the clock back to before dear Fred's funeral, I could leave her to remember *him* as her own dear daddy, never knowing her true father disappeared before she was born. It's true what she said, 'Don't ever ask me to love him. He may be my biological father but I've only ever had one dad. The man who was there for me all through my growing years, the man who taught me right from wrong and the Christian faith. The man who was my son's best friend, taught him how to mend the punctures on his bike and made him a super model railway layout. The man who patiently let my grandson teach him how to use the internet and do online banking, and finally the man who held my little great-granddaughter in his arms last Christmas as they both stared in wonder at the star on the Christmas tree. Yes, Fred was my real dad, Michael and Sandra are my real brother and sister. I do not want to know about sisters in America"

I feel his hand slip into mine. "Hello Joe", I say. "No Nan it's me Nigel." "Oh, my clever great grandson, I am so sorry Darling. You are so much like your great grand-father." "Maybe Nan, but great-grandad Fred was the man I will always remember as mine. GI Joe has never been part of my life and none of us have any memories of him. I'm glad I found him but to us he will only be just another yank, and you know how Dad hates yanks." "How long did it take you to find him Nigel", I ask. "About twenty minutes on the internet, his unusual surname helped, and the fact he spent months in an American military hospital after being evacuated from France. And finally, of course he became President of a huge corporation in Detroit and his name is on the list of top 100 richest people in America. It was lucky I had to go to Detroit on business myself and could look him up in that plush retirement home. It was a bit of a shock for him I can tell you. But you know Nan, he told me he never stopped thinking about you and said if he had known you had a baby he would have come back. But he never got in touch because he was so badly disfigured he didn't think you want to see him."

I feel his hand slip into mine. This time it is Joe. The gate creaks just as it did back in 1944. We go through it and holding each other up shuffle our way down to the tree. I am tracing my finger around the shape of the heart Joe carved out with his penknife all those years ago. Our initials are there but difficult to read. I can just about make out the 'J' for Joe. He has his arm around me and we kiss. Suddenly there is loud cheering and clapping from behind us. We are looking around and there, led by our beautiful smiling daughter holding our great-great granddaughter Lola is our whole family celebrating the moment. I'm glad I told the truth in the end.

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