



CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

AUTUMN 2021

TAW U3A

INTRODUCTION

Here we are again but this time with a selection of what each of us thinkS to be one or more of our best pieces.

We say “pieces” rather than stories because one of our members offers poems; Pam Ayres watch out!

The titles to the stories are, sometimes, the same for several pieces and that is because, as we have said before, each month we write to a particular title. However, although the title may be the same the stories under it vary hugely in interpretation.

The stories vary in other ways too, from personal experiences to a re-interpretation of an old children’s story – we are all “old children” in one way or another!

Having said all that, the most important thing is that you should enjoy what you read; so, go ahead: ENJOY

SERENDIPITY

BY

SUE BOYD

You can all blame me for picking this title and if it's any consolation, I had a great deal of difficulty in writing anything on 'Serendipity'. It also seems strange that it's come up on my birth month as it must have been picked out randomly when we handed in our ideas over a year ago.

I first heard the word when watching the film of the same name and, therefore, knew vaguely what the meaning was - a series of events that are not sought or planned, but all lead to an agreeable conclusion. The meaning in the Oxford English Dictionary is actually 'the faculty of making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident' and immediately the word 'happenstance' came into my mind and the definition of this is 'a thing that happens by chance', but not necessarily with a happy ending.

So, I'm no wiser than when I started, but here is my story anyway:

It was now April 2020 and I was in a much better place mentally than on 23rd March of the same year when the Covid-19 virus Lockdown started. Initially I'd been all over the place, not wanting to get up out of bed in the morning and scared of everybody, but mostly this unseen enemy that looked a bit like some alien from outer space. Lots of friends, especially those living on their own, were particularly paranoid about catching this deadly disease and wouldn't leave the house, were leaving parcels and home delivery shopping in the hallway for 3 days at a time because some scientist said Covid could live up to seventy-two hours on packaging (never mind if you got food poisoning from out-of-date food) and scaring themselves witless from watching far too many programmes about what this Menace from the Far East could do to them.

Then there were those people who thought it was a government plot to keep the entire nation incarcerated in their homes indefinitely or just refused to acknowledge that this deadly virus could either kill you or at the very least leave your body permanently damaged.

(1) By now I started walking every morning with my relatively new-found friend Marion, who literally prised me out of between the bed covers and frog

marched me into the woods showing me a new world of beauty right on my doorstep. Marion knew so much about the birds (I'd never even heard of a tree creeper or dipper), that inhabited our Special Place and what we didn't know about the animals and plants, we looked up when we got home.

- (2) After two more months of this daily walking, my hip which was riddled with arthritis, was beginning to really cause me a tremendous amount of discomfort and I was finding it increasingly difficult to walk at all, let alone in woods with tree roots to trip you up. I'd have to dose myself up with extremely strong doses of painkillers just to get me through the day and as for access to the bathroom, that was like scaling Mount Everest.
- (3) The next serendipitous event was a phone call from my brother in Essex offering to pay for a hip operation as if I continued on the National Health Path it would take 12 -18 months before I had any hope of having a hip op. Realistically I would have been confined to a wheelchair by that time and having only one toilet and bathroom upstairs would have had to think seriously about giving up my lovely home.
- (4) So, after much soul searching, I had the operation in September privately at Shepton Mallet and now some 8 months later am completely pain free and walking in my beautiful woods again with my amazing friend Marion, able to do my gardening which has also been another source of such pleasure during this Pandemic. I would add that during this time, I've eventually eradicated the bamboo in my front garden with a lot of help from a lot of friends and am now in the process of creating a rockery. Another mountain climbed.
- (5) About the time that I was having my hip op, Marion's husband Keith was diagnosed with not only cancer of the colon and liver, but Motor Neuron Disease. Consequently, she's now become his full-time carer and so our walks in our Special Place have become increasingly as important to her as they have been to me. I feel that we were meant to meet at this time in our lives for our mutual support and if this Pandemic has taught me one thing its that if you find true friendship, it is one of the greatest gifts and worth far more than wealth and possessions.



BELLY DANCING

WE'VE JOINED AN OVER SIXTIES CLUB
TO LEARN TO BELLY DANCE
WE HOPE THAT OURS WILL SHRINK IN SIZE
GIVEN HALF A CHANCE

TO THE SOUND OF EASTERN MUSIC
AND BELLS TIED ROUND OUR WAISTS
WE SHIMMERED BACK AND FORWARDS
WITH VERY LITTLE GRACE

NOW RAISE YOUR HIPS THEN LOWER
ROLL YOUR MIDRIFF ALL AROUND
I HAD A HEARTY BREAKFAST
JUST PRAYED I'D KEEP IT DOWN

THE BEAT BECAME MUCH FASTER
AS NEW STEPS WE HAD TO TRY
I SHOOK SO HARD MY BELLS FLEW OFF
HIT THE TUTOR IN THE EYE

MY PAL WAS LOOKING FLUSTERED

I WAS ANXIOUS I'D BE SICK
WE SIDLED TO THE EXIT DOOR
THEN LEFT THERE DOUBLE QUICK

WP

ONE STORMY NIGHT

BY

SYLVIA WISEMAN

As the wind rattled the window frame and the rain lashed the leaded glass Martha turned in her bed and pulled the covers closer. She was pleased to be warm and comfortable and she curled her toes in pleasure. No one should be out on a night such as this.

Her eyelids became heavy and she fell into a restless sleep but the wind howling in the chimney interrupted her dreams conjuring all sorts of terrifying images causing her to toss and turn. So when the sharp knocking at the front door awakened her from her slumbers she drew herself out of the covers and rubbed her eyes – was it a dream ? But no, there it was again, the urgent banging on the old oak door.

Wrapping her nightgown tightly around her she took the candle and cautiously made her way down the stairs.

Holding the candle high she opened the door a crack and was met with the face of a young woman. The haunted eyes that met hers were dark and tearstained, she was quite obviously terrified, her clothes were soaked and torn. Martha drew the young woman inside, “Help me please” she begged.

Putting an arm around the girl she helped her into the warm kitchen, the fire still glowing. Sitting her beside the red ashes she fetched a cup and filled it with warm milk from the range. The girl clasped the cup eagerly and put it to her lips, her shoulders still shaking. “Don’t let him find me” she whispered through chattering teeth.

“Who - who are you afraid of ?” Martha wondered

“Him - from the Manor – he came to my room and tore me from my bed but I struggled and hit him hard with my bed warming pan but he chased me down the stairs shouting and threatening to kill me. I could hear him panting behind me as I ran through the woods so I stopped and picked up a branch and as he came upon me I hit him with it”.

It was well known that the drunken lord of the Manor liked the ladies too much

and it was rumoured he had killed his wife as she lay abed after giving birth to a daughter, neither had survived but there had been no prosecution.

Martha knew the girl was in grave danger and prepared for a visit from the dangerous predator.

She blew out the candle and together they waited for the onslaught. They heard the boots on the path and then the fierce banging on the door. She opened it a jar and smelled the stinking breath and saw the bloodshot eyes. The man raised his fists but Martha was quicker than he and the last thing he saw was the glint of the knife.



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SKATING ON ICE

WE'RE SETTING OFF TO LEARN TO SKATE
THEY'VE BUILT A BRAND NEW RINK
WE'VE BOUGHT SOME SNAZZY CLOTHES TO WEAR
HERS RED, MINE BRIGHT PINK

THE INSTRUCTORS TRY TO HELP US
WE'VE JUST GRASPED HOW TO STAND
WHEN WE TRY TO MAKE A MOVE
ON OUR BUTTS WE LAND

I THOUGHT THIS TIME I'LL MAKE IT
I SPED ACROSS THE ICE
I DID A TURN THEN SPUN AROUND
NOT ONCE NOT TWICE BUT THRICE

I'M LAYING HERE IN A AND E
PONDERING MY FATE

SUDDENLY I 'M STUNNED TO FIND
THEY 'VE JUST BROUGHT IN MY MATE

ALAS FOR US THIS IS A SKILL
WE WILL NEVER MASTER
WE'LL HAVE TO TAKE UP HOPPING
AS WE'VE BOTH A LEG IN PLASTER

WP

THE MESSAGE
BY
SHIRLEY THORNHILL



Recently returned from deployment in Afghanistan, the soldier immaculately presented, walked briskly, purposefully into the Hospital. Only if your gaze strayed to his face would you see the emptiness in his eyes, betraying the horrors they had witnessed.

As he approached Reception, a young nurse took his arm and led him to the bedside of a barely conscious elderly gentleman.

“Your son is here” she said gently, several times, before he opened his eyes and could see the hazy vision of the soldier standing before him. A tear ran down his lined, life-worn face as he summoned the energy to offer his hand.

Throughout the night they sat together, their hands clasped, the soldier offering words of love, comfort and calm. He didn’t hear the nurse’s offer of respite

or refreshment. His gentle, but strong words bought tears to the eyes of the night staff, such caring gentleness from a son to his father in the closing hours of life.

As dawn broke the old man gave a sigh-like final breath and was no longer in pain. The appalling world we live in would no longer be a burden to him. The soldier released the now lifeless hand and informed the duty nurse. He waited silently, respectfully to one side as she did what was necessary. She turned to offer words of sympathy for his loss, but before she could do so he said,

“Who was he?”

“He was your father” she said, puzzled at the question.

“No, he wasn’t. I never saw him before.”

“But why didn’t you tell me when I took you to him?”

“I knew it was a mistake, but he needed the comfort of his son. He was too ill to know I’m not his son, but knowing how much he needed me to be, I stayed. I came here to speak to a Mr. William Paul Grey. His son was killed in Afghanistan yesterday. I was sent to tell him. What was that gentleman’s name?”

The nurse’s eyes welled with tears. Barely able to utter the words, she said,

“His name was William Paul Grey.”

SWIM TO SLIM

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MY PAL SUGGESTED SWIMMING
IT WILL KEEP OUR WEIGHT AT BAY
NOW THAT WE ARE PENSIONERS
ON WEDNESDAY YOU DON'T PAY

YOU HIRE YOUR COSTUMES AT THE POOL
MY FRIEND CHOSE VIVID RED
NOT WANTING TO BE NOTICED
I PICKED UP BLACK INSTEAD

I FELT MY GARMENT WAS TOO TIGHT
MY MATE SAID NOT AT ALL
THEN WE SAW THE SIGN ABOVE
IT SAID ONE SIZE FITS ALL

MY COSTUME STARTED SAGGING
AS SOON AS IT GOT WET
THE WRINKLES IN IT MATCHED MY SKIN
THIS DAY I'LL NOT FORGET

HER COSTUME WAS CONSTRICTING
SHE COULDN'T CATCH HER BREATH
WE'VE NEVER FELT SO FOOLISH
SO GRABBED OUR TOWELS AND LEFT
WP

**SERENDIPITY
BY
ROBERT BEATTIE**

He never considered himself a fortunate man. Life had not started too well. According to his mother, his first action on being born was to pee over her dressing table. His aunt said it was a lovely golden arc but that was no consolation. He was given a couple of rabbits as pets. They were interesting, he thought, but they died.

His father's job was itinerant so they were constantly on the move. He never, really, settled at any of the schools he attended so made no friends. Very early in life he learnt to be friendly and to be able to chat about most things to anyone but he didn't learn how to make relationships. He knew that most people he met would be around for only a while as his family would be on the move again soon.

He was fortunate, though, in two ways. He was, academically, clever and was a good sportsman. Consequently, at whichever school he was at he was always in the top two or three in the class. His ball skills meant he was a popular addition to any team and was in demand to play most sports. That meant that he got to know lots of people quickly and easily though never knew any of them well. They knew nothing about him other than what they saw.

He passed the 11 plus and got good results in his 'O' and 'A' levels. He took a first-class degree in Economics and decided to qualify as an accountant. He went into business and did well. He became comfortably wealthy with a nice house and an expensive car and seemed to have a good social life. He was invited here and there and met lots of attractive women. He lived with one or two. He enjoyed the sex but the relationships never developed beyond that. Each soon came to an end as each woman realised that they had no future with him. He felt unable to commit himself to another. He had never had to do so previously and, as he approached middle age,

he saw no reason to change. He was isolated in himself but felt no loss. He was alone but not lonely, he thought.

Because of his skills he was welcome as a member of a number of charity boards and was, invariably, an officer of each board either as chairman or secretary. He was also a member of several social clubs. His social diary was very full and he was rarely at home. Partly as a result of that and partly because of his experience with his rabbits, he didn't have any pets so was completely alone in his house when he was there. It was early in the new year. He was due to attend a club meeting but couldn't be bothered, for once. But there was nothing on the tv, his "friends" were otherwise engaged and, anyway, he'd refused several invitations because of the club meeting. At the last minute he decided he would go to the meeting after all.

The club was a social club. He wasn't, for once, an officer and hadn't noticed what was on that night. He turned up at the club premises and found that a 10 pin bowling fixture had been arranged with another, similar, club from another town. He thought, "I don't really fancy this," but a woman who had been circling him for some time persuaded him to give her a lift to the alley and, on the off chance of things with her developing, he agreed.

The alley was crowded. There were several teams playing and people were milling around. His companion went off to talk to one of her women friends and he stood, as so often, alone for a moment or two. He saw the back of a woman he thought he knew. He watched her for a while until she turned round and looked directly at him. He had never seen her before.

She wasn't pretty; nice looking but not pretty and not really his type from outward appearances. But he eyes caught his. Her eyes were emerald coloured, he thought, and they smiled at him. She moved her head slightly in his direction. For once, he didn't know what to do but she took a small step towards him and, quite inadvertently, he move towards her.

"Hello," she said. Her voice was low and pleasant and, close to her now, he didn't know what to say but managed to croak a reply. She laughed. "Would you like a drink?" she said. He returned her laugh but said, "No thanks," and they were off. Very soon the others present disappeared as the two of them formed a sort of bubble, just the two of them. He felt he had known her for ages. She told him her husband had died a couple of years ago and left her with two young children. He told her things about himself he had told few others. At the end of the evening he asked

if he could see her again and she gave him her contact details. They met again soon after and were married 6 months later.

He realised that she brought to his life something he'd never previously experienced. He couldn't put his finger precisely on what it was but he knew that, before he'd met her, he hadn't just been alone, he'd been lonely. She filled a hole in his life which he hadn't known had been there. He thanked his lucky stars that he'd gone to the alley that evening and for ever after wondered how things had come together to take him there.

For her part, she hadn't loved him at first, even when they married. He was attractive and intelligent and was, obviously, well-off but there wasn't the same spark that she had found with her first husband. She was glad she had met him and was delighted to marry him as it gave her and her children comfort and security. But, as time passed, her feelings towards him changed and, suddenly, she realised that she loved him more than anyone she had known. His strength and his kindness towards her and her little family, were things that she couldn't do without and she blessed her decision to go to the alley that fateful evening. "Pure serendipity", she thought.

WENDY PENTLING

I felt for the phone on the bedside cabinet as I needed reassurance and pressed in the number. Tom answered. What a relief.

When I first met my husband Robert, I thought this was my means of escape, not realising I was going from one type of abuse to another. My father was so tyrannical I was too afraid to talk to him then Robert turned out to be a bully and had to be right at all times

So, this was my lot in life. Luckily, I never became pregnant, much to Robert's displeasure and few years into our marriage he demanded we saw a specialist. After tests on us both the results came back showing that he was the problem, but this was something he would never accept.

I learnt never to have an opinion of my own and lost myself in my books. I loved history although Robert scoffed at my taste, but as long as the housework was done and his needs catered for, he would limit his contact with me.

After the diagnosis from the fertility clinic he didn't want any intimacy between us and moved into the guest room, odd name really because we never had visitors as they were frowned on. Robert only mixed with business acquaintances and that was always at the golf club. Wives were not welcome there not that I would have wanted to go anyway.

One morning I heard strange sounds coming from Robert's room. When I entered, he was laying on the floor clutching his chest and struggling to breathe.

Later that evening when I returned from the hospital, leaving Robert in the stroke ward, I saw a removal van next door.... Tom moved in becoming my friend and neighbour.

He was a widower and as we grew closer, I fell in love and was loved in return. Something I had never experienced before

Then the dreaded phone call to inform me Robert was coming home,

The next day various pieces of equipment arrived, soon followed by Robert in a wheelchair

“Hurry man it’s freezing out here”, he growled.

Nothing had changed and if anything he was more insufferable.

A gentleman came later explaining a carer would come twice a day to assist Robert morning and evening

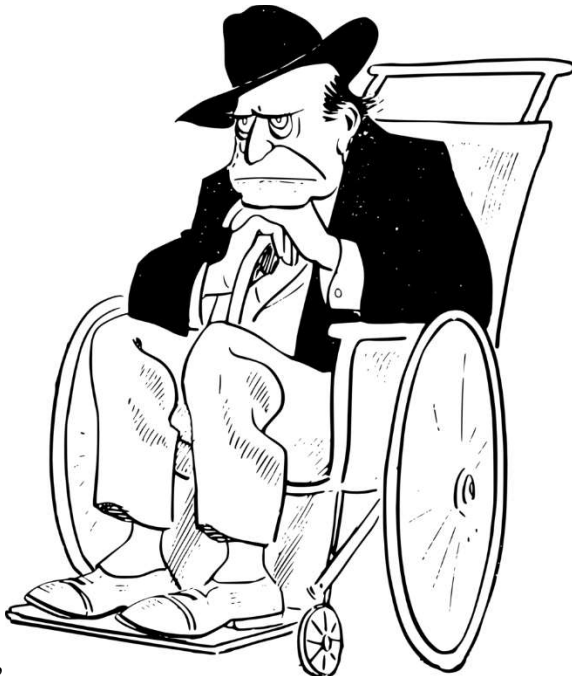
Tom and I managed fleeting moments together, but the yearning to be with him was always on my mind and I hated Robert with a passion.

After a few outings with Robert in the wheelchair I informed the carer I was confident to take him on my own and I headed for the park closing my ears to his incessant whinging.

When we reached the lake, I parked the chair near the edge and began to feed the ducks and giving Robert some bread, I told him to throw it out to the swans. As he leant forward, I faltered and to save myself I grabbed Roberts wheelchair. We both plummeted into the freezing water,

I lay on the bank shivering feeling detached from reality, I could hear voices somewhere from beyond

“I couldn't save the gentle man officer. It appears he was strapped in his wheelchair and he went straight down”



Tom's voice. My saviour. Perfect planning.

The Message
By
June Liddy

Sean was an evil boy, the kind that enticed wasps into pop bottles and then replaced the cap and gained great pleasure in seeing them die as he vigorously shook it. Numerous pets passed through his hands and either ran away or his parents did the 'right' thing and re-homed them. He left school with nothing to show in the way of exam results and was fired from job after job as he was extremely lazy and dishonest.

One day he met Lucy whose spiritualism fascinated Sean. She used to attend meetings hoping to hear from her parents who had been killed in a car accident. She was vulnerable but flattered by Sean's interest in her. They seemed to get on and Sean's parents were ecstatic when he announced their engagement and even more pleased when they eventually married and Sean moved out of their home.

Everything seemed fine for a few years but away from prying eyes Sean became extremely controlling and jealous of Lucy and her high flying job in finance. Lucy tried everything to pacify him but his behaviour was taking a toll on her and her confidence diminishing.

'Why don't you believe me Sean', she questioned. 'I love you and there is no-one else. I am not interested in any of the guys at work. I have to go away on this course but I will be back before you know it. Why don't you visit your Mum?' she blurted.

Sean's fist smashed down on the table as he shouted, 'You are not going, end of!'

Lucy hoped she could reason with him later but now was not the time. She discreetly packed her bag and was determined for once she would hold her ground.

However, little did she know that she never would. Sean had noticed her bag packed inside her wardrobe. He stopped her at the top of the stairs with the pretence of giving her a good morning kiss. He put his arms around her but instead of pulling her towards him he gave an almighty push and she somersaulted and hit her head violently against the banister before sliding down, hitting the sharp edge of a table at the bottom. She instantly died and Sean remembering the wasps smirked.

Accidental death was the verdict and Sean became quite the actor, weeping and wailing at the drop of a hat. As he drank more and more whisky he became morose. While under the influence he decided to go to a meeting. The speaker immediately asked if anyone had the initials SB and said she had a message from Lucy. Sean froze trying to concentrate through the haze of alcohol. 'Yes, yes, me' he slurred. 'What is the message?'. The speaker peered into Sean's eyes and said, 'Lucy says she understands. She forgives you'. Sean broke down and had to be escorted from the hall. Lucy's friend Barbara helped him and because he was so inebriated he blurted out how he had pushed Lucy down the stairs!

Barbara, horrified, went to the police and Sean was arrested and interviewed and confessed to the murder of Lucy adding that he didn't really want to kill her but just stop her going away. The clairvoyant was interviewed but had to admit that the message from Lucy was a fake! She had been primed about Lucy's death and knew Sean was in the audience.



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ZUMBA

WP

WE, VE JOINED THE LOCAL ZUMBA CLASS
MY VERY GOOD FRIEND AND ME
WE HOPED THAT WE WERE FIT ENOUGH
WE'RE NEARLY EIGHTY THREE

WE PURCHASED FANCY LEOTARDS
WAS HARD TO FIND OUR SIZE
WE NEEDED TWO TIMES EXTRA LARGE
NO POINT IN TELLING LIES

SUDDENLY THERES MUSIC
DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO FAST
I COULDN'T SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY
AS ARMS AND LEGS FLEW PAST

WE SHOOK OUR BITS AND SWUNG OUR HIPS
I COULDN'T DO MUCH MORE
SUDDENLY MY LEGS GAVE WAY
I CRASHED DOWN TO THE FLOOR

DOES YOUR FRIEND REQUIRE FIRST AID
OR BRANDY IN HOT TEA
COULD YOU MAKE IT TWO OF THOSE
A DOUBLE PLEASE FOR ME

A RAINY SUNDAY IN 1956

BY
SUE BOYD

Fred Grimshaw sat in his armchair and gazed out the window as rain lashed down unceasingly, making rivulets on the dirty window panes. As he looked around his living room and out into the kitchen, Fred heaved a weary sigh. Piles of newspapers were strewn across the floor, dirty coffee cups jostled with plates of half-finished food which hadn't quite made it out into the kitchen to join even higher piles of dirty crockery. There were overflowing ashtrays and sticky glasses from his nightly tot of whisky strewn around on the floor at his feet where Fred had left them before staggering upstairs to a bed where the linen hadn't been changed for weeks.

As he looked at the unoccupied chair on the other side of the mantelpiece, his eyes filled with tears. It was only six weeks since his lovely wife Maud had died of a stroke and, although his daughter Jennifer had arranged for a cleaner to come twice a week and sort out the house, Fred had turned her away saying,

“I don’t want some busy body poking her nose into my business. Why can’t you come and do it Jenny?”

“Don’t be silly Dad, I’m far too busy working and looking after my family.” So, the mess had just continued to pile up.

Fred closed his eyes to shut out the chaos and his mind drifted back to a rainy Sunday afternoon in 1956 when he’d first laid eyes on his Maud. He’d gone to visit his friend Taffy who’d arranged a date for him with his fiancée’s best friend. As Fred walked into the room his heart skipped a beat as he was introduced to this petit brunette with her gloved hands lying demurely on her pleated crimplene skirt and a small hat perched jauntily on her glossy curls. He’d bought her a bunch of flowers from the florist just nearby, on strict instructions from his mother and as Maud looked up at him with the biggest blue eyes he’d ever seen, Fred was lost for ever within their depths.

That night the four of them, Fred and Maud and Taffy and Barbara went to the cinema and soon it became a regular occurrence on a Saturday night to go to dances, whist drives and, of course, the cinema. Fred and Maud became inseparable and within eight months and two weeks became engaged. They had a double wedding with Taffy and Barbara and still continued going out with them on a weekly basis. However, once the children started arriving – a boy and a girl for Taffy/Barbara just Jennifer for Fred/Maud, they gradually drifted apart.

Fred was of the old school who believed a man went to work and earned the money and a woman stayed at home and looked after the children. Maud was more than happy with this and over the years they lost contact with Taffy and Barbara and just lived for each other.

Suddenly the door bell woke up Fred with a start. He was going to ignore it, but it rang insistently and so in the end he got up and with a scowl on his face, opened the door. Standing on the step was slightly plump, but pleasant looking woman who smiled at him,

“Aren’t you going to invite me in for a cup of tea Fred” she asked.

“Who are you” he asked suspiciously “and No I’m not going to invite you in” and went to slam the door shut. But the woman just laughed,

“Not changed Fred” she said “you don’t recognise me, do you?” “I’m Barbara”

It transpired Taffy had died a year ago of cancer and on seeing the obituary announcing Maud’s death Barbara had set out to trace Fred. As she looked past him into his living room, she said

“Oh dear, bit of a mess. Let’s go to the café around the corner for a cuppa and a catch up.” And so, on a rainy Sunday afternoon in 2021, with memories of that rainy Sunday afternoon in 1956 still as bright as ever, Fred and Barbara became friends and eventually companions bought together by their memories of so long ago.

CROSSING THE BRIDGE

BY

ROBERT BEATTIE

The three Bill Goats Gruff lived in Northern Italy in the land of the Hundred Valleys. They had all moved a bit south for the sun but mother and father lived near Locarno and required visits as parents do.

So, one Easter, being good Catholic boys, they set off to share the holiday with their parents. Big Billy Goat Gruff took the lead, as usual, with Middle and Little, as they were called for ease of identification, in line behind him.

To get to Locarno they had to cross the bridges of the Hundred Valleys, a not unduly onerous trip for tough, fit, young goats but somewhat dangerous. At first, all went well. They crossed twenty or thirty bridges without too much difficulty but then, oh!

Well, but then!! Big Billy got distracted by a lady – well, it turned out she wasn't much of a lady – just before they got to the longest bridge on the route. He said he would catch his brothers up in a while and for them to go on without him whilst he spent some time with her.

So, the other two trotted off, clip clop, towards the next bridge. Then Middle was suddenly taken short. "I knew I shouldn't have had that curry last night," he said "But it was so delectable. Look, I may be some time here, just making myself comfortable and then presentable."

"Too much information," cried Little.

"Alright, but you know what I mean. You go on and I'll catch you up over the bridge."

So, off Little went whilst Middle retired to a quiet spot for a while.

Little was half-way over the bridge when he heard singing. He looked over the parapet and there was an enormous troll.

"I'm a troll polderol and I'll have you for supper" he sang.

For a moment, Little was frightened but then he thought of his brothers and said,

"But I'm only Little and won't hardly be a mouthful for you. Middle is behind me and he's much bigger. Why don't you have him?"

The troll wasn't overly bright, just big and fierce. He thought for a minute or two and then said, "Alright. On your way, youngster"

So, off Little trotted.

Soon Middle turned up and began to cross the bridge. He heard the same song. "I'm a troll polderol and I'll have you for supper".

Middle was as quick thinking as Little and said. "But I'm only a few mouthfuls for you. Why don't you let me go so you'll have plenty of room for my much bigger brother who'll be here in a minute."

The troll thought again. "How big is he?"

"Oh! Gigantic and full of lovely tender meat. He doesn't exercise and is very fat and tender"

The troll thought again and his mouth watered. "Oh! Alright. Get off," he said.

Middle trotted off and met up with Little over the bridge. They settled down to wait for Big Billy

Now goats who are related can communicate over long distances so Middle and Little were able to tell Big Billy what was ahead of him. Far from being lazy and fat Billy was trained to a "T". He exercised every day and was an expert in goat martial

arts. In addition, he was not in a good mood, the liaison with the lady goat not having worked out too well. He'd had to leave her smartly when her partner and his three brothers had turned up at an inconvenient moment.

He approached the bridge and began to cross it, quite slowly, just to keep in character. He, too, heard the singing. He, too, saw the troll.. He said "Are you the bloke who threatened my two brothers just now"

"Oh yes!" Said the troll. I'm a troll polderol and now I'll have you for supper."

"Oh no you won't," said Billy and he lowered his head and charged. The troll was completely taken by surprise and met the charge with the full extent of his large stomach. He rebounded from the charge and flew into the air only to be tossed up again as he fell to earth.

"Go on Billy. Give him one for us", shouted Middle and Little. So, he did and then again.

The troll dived off the bridge into the water and was never seen again.

The three brothers went on their way singing their victory song "Men of Harlech".

They came to another bridge and there stood Horatio.

"Hi Horatio", said Billy. "Everything alright?"

"For the moment, yes but I'm waiting for the hordes., replied the hero.

"OK. Give us a shout if you need help." and on their way they went.

Eventually, they reach the last bridge before Locarno

It was blocked by things

"Is this a Bridge too far?" asked Little.

"You've been reading too much, Little" said Billy. "This is Italy, not Holland. We have only one bridge to go and I can see Mum and Dad over there. Let's forget the bridge and swim over to them. It will cool us down, wash us off and make us more presentable for them."

So, that's what they did.



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