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Hope floats off park pond

by Nick Barrett

It was perfectly formed. Ken thought that as a suicide plan it also looked painless. Cleverly set up the multi-gym weights machine in the garage as shown on the website, put your neck in just so, pull out the pin and it's instant goodnight Vienna.

Better than pills, or falls from great heights, or crushing by cars or trains, or lying out on the freezing moor full of alcohol waiting for the cold to do its work. Just a quick snap. The machine bought to improve my health finally destroys it, Ken thought. Typical.

Who would care? Marriage broken down, job long gone, employers not interested, debts, kids can't be bothered, drinking too much, nothing to look forward to except the multi-gym - it's the way to go.

Ken went out for a last walk around the park. It was a favourite place, where he saw his first Punch and Judy show with his grandfather, got pushed on the swings and roundabout by his mum and dad. He remembered that thrill as he went down the big slide all on his own for the first time. He took his own boy and girl there, creating the same memories for them, perhaps. Some places he couldn't kill himself, and this was one. The garage beckoned.

It was a great wee park, never appearing in any guides or online reviews, just a friendly local place where anybody could be happy on the grass or a bench, maybe with a picnic at weekends in summer. A bit down on its luck these days though, like himself. The toilets and pavilion buildings had mostly rotted, pulled down years ago. The multi-gym loomed.

Ken stopped for a look as a man and a boy sailed a model wooden yacht in the park pond. He thought the four foot long, highly varnished sleek replica of a racing craft oozed quality, not quite as perfectly formed as the one that his grandfather had made for his father and that they had sailed on hot summer Sundays so long ago, but quality all the same. Had he sailed it with his own two? Maybe not. Must have. Where is it now? Could be in the overcrowded garage, probably in the corner opposite that multi-gym - the thought darkening his mood.

Ken lifted the garage door, averting his eyes for a moment from his perfect instrument of death. A quick rummage and there was the boat, obviously needing a rub down and varnish, but with new rigging and sails, a couple of small repairs to a spar and a mast, maybe it could soon be back on the pond.

A perfectly formed plan quickly fell into place. Great excuse to see the kids again, invite them to the relaunch of their great grandad's yacht. Something to help him focus on, forget suicide. Some space needed for a work bench, so that multi-gym could go. But maybe just move it to the shed for now?