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Return to Form

by Garf Collins

“It’s perfectly formed, don’t you think?” Matthew said as he pointed out an unusual cloud formation to his wife Claire. “See the way it swirls upwards. Like an ice cream after the cone has been taken away.”

Claire looked up with feigned interest.

”Not sure about that. It’s just a random twist of air. Now! That’s perfectly formed,” she said as she pointed out two Peacock butterflies on a patch of nettles. See their exquisite colouring and those large spots which warn off predators.”

Matthew grunted reluctant agreement.

They were on a brief holiday in Cornwall. She was an entomologist working at the Natural History Museum and he was a Civil Servant in the Department for International Development. With no children of their own they had chosen a week when there were few about. It was their usual uncomfortable compromise between his wish to travel and hers to stay close to home.

They went back to their B&B in Padstow and later went to the Old Ship Hotel for dinner. They sat opposite each other in a silence broken only occasionally with remarks about the food.

Afterwards, back at their lodgings they read in bed before agreeing that they were tired and needed to go to sleep.

The morning was clear and bright with the sun illuminating the clouds over the sea. Matthew was about to point this out to Claire but he thought better of it, saying, "I'll make us a cup of coffee."

After breakfast Matthew said,

"It's such a nice day. Let's go for a walk down by the harbour and have a look around."

"No you go Mat. I'd like to read this report about the impact of global warming on butterfly species in the UK and then I can get up to date with the Archers."

Matthew sighed and saying a brief goodbye he departed.

As he walked his mind went back to their disagreement about perfect form on the previous day. They had very different ideas. Thinking about this he startled a bystander by bursting out,

"Our marriage certainly isn't perfectly formed. Never was."

He remembered how they had been in the same group of friends at university. After they left they had met again by chance and had drifted into a relationship which had turned habit into a companionable marriage. Now 20 years on, they were just two people living in the same house.

Matthew hadn't realised where he was until he stood overlooking the Inner Harbour. There was an elegant yacht with a red hull which he greatly admired.

"Now that's what I call perfectly formed," he told himself. He had sailed in his younger days and always missed it. Sitting on the quay-side with a coffee he started idly reading a local paper he had picked up. In the small ads he read,

'Crew needed for transatlantic voyage. Experience necessary. Share costs. If interested ring 01323 460 770.'

Finishing his coffee, Matthew slowly took out his phone.....