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## People Rarely Look

by Miriam Silver

People rarely look the way you expect them to, even when you've seen pictures. She'd only known him through word painted pictures related by the relations with whom she and her mother lived. She endured endless meals, trying to make sense of the comments, which were always abusive and derogatory, then the glances and shushing when they realised she was listening.

As far as she could remember no one had a good word to say about him her father, whom she'd never met, wouldn't recognise him, should she ever find him.

Elsie had never seen a photo of him, until now, sorting the house out, clearing drawers, boxes and shelves of all the things that were important to her mother who had lived here most of her life. She hadn't lived with her mother for over thirty years, had visited fairly frequently, with the children, her grandchildren, then weekly when she too was on her own, the children and husband gone. There was only herself to do this job, her brother, as usual too busy when there was any work to be done.

As she filled yet another black bag a bundle of official looking papers tied in pink tape appeared from under old catalogues.

She'd never had any real conversation with her mother, just the usual stuff around shopping, the children and local gossip, so it was with some trepidation she untied the pink tape.

Well, well, was all she could think when she read divorce papers, lawyers letters confirming he'd been living in Ireland during the war,

“Kept himself safe while we endured the blitz, rotten sod” Elsie spoke out loud,”  
The last letter from South Africa addressed to Arthur Shore, her mother's and her maiden name.

“At last, I can give him a name, wonder if he's still there.”

Although in shock she decided to find out more about this absent father, a man who had never acknowledged or supported his family. He might have died. Maybe intestate, then she could claim...she was off into the realms of fantasy.

Returning to piles of papers, taking more care now, thinking there must be more, and emptying an unmarked envelope she saw photos and newspaper cuttings.

At last, she thought, maybe a photo of him, keep looking. Wedding photos, parties, holidays, didn't know any of them. Then from the bottom of the heap she pulled out black and white postcard size photo with two adults one child, another with same adults and one older child one baby, the head of the male had had his head cut off.

Further searches did not reveal any more it seemed as if family life had finished with the birth of the second child. No dates or names on the backs of any of them. The headlines on the newspaper now yellowing, dated ten years ago, screamed at her,

“Arthur Shore found dead, foul play suspected.”

Under these words was a photo and a detailed account of this Arthur Shore's life, a wife and family somewhere in England, asking for any information. Murder was suspected.