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Old Times

by Jo Loader

“Quite like old times”, the room says,” Tom’s mum read from the ad with an air of slightly forced joviality.

“Well what does that mean?” asked Tom, “sounds terrible.”

The teenager slumped back further into his car seat and looked gloomily out of the rain splattered window. They had been driving for about three hours in stop-start traffic, he had a headache and his mum was trying to ‘big up’ the airbnb they were going to stay in. At the wheel was his Dad, who turned his head and scowled at his son in the back seat.

“Oh come on guys, this will be lovely - quite like old times,” said mum, still trying to big things up.

“You say that all the time,” sighed Tom, bored with the journey and bored with trying to be optimistic about the wet weekend ahead of them.

“You say it when we’re off on holiday - ‘threes up’ in the front of the camper, you say it almost every time we meet up with your old friends and you say it every single time we have apple crumble after a roast dinner.”

“And that’s bad thing?” asked mum.

“Well why is ‘old times’ a selling point?” countered Tom, “who, apart from old people, care about old times - what’s so great about them? What’s wrong with right here right now? How about we go crazy and look to the future?”

His mother turned to him in the car, looking at him a bit more seriously now, “Well my friend, seeing as you’ve asked, “ she began, “when your not so young anymore, when you have had your first kiss, you’re first romance and your first heartbreak you might

understand. When you're a parent and you've watched as your child takes their first steps, rides their bike free of stabilisers, scores their first goal and you realise that these things are just gorgeous moments that can never be repeated. It might be a bit clearer to you. Then there's the bitter sweet stuff - the last time you read a bedtime story, the last conversation you have with your own parents, the last time you sleep through the night without needing a pee! Maybe you'll get it. The past, 'old times' is where most of my life is. Let's face it I probably don't have as much future in relation to how much past I have. So what's wrong with revisiting it now and again? It's a happy place that I've loved and lived through."

Dad slowed the car and turned sharp right into a drive. They had arrived. Tom peered out of his window and smiled, mum inhaled sharply and held her breathe for a moment before exclaiming, "Oh look! It's gorgeous, just perfect - quite like old times."