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I am a Camera

by Penny Humphrey

I am a camera with its shutter open. I am watching her as she sits at a window table in the quaint tearoom. The shelves around her are busy with antique tea pots and cups and all the regalia that goes with tea.

She holds the tea cup up near her chin with both hands clasped around it, her eyes on the street outside. A young woman passes the window with three small children, one in a pushchair, the others holding the sides.

A man in a grey suit carrying a brief case, strides past, then stops and hails a passing cab, he leans in from the passenger side, the driver nods and he gets in, the taxi moves quickly away from the kerbside.

The woman in the tea shop watches every passer by carefully but no one sees her, they are too busy in the outside world, getting on with their lives.

She sips her tea from the red and gold bone china cup and glances at her watch.

She looks agitated, sometimes she looks around the inside of the tea room.

The dark door on the other side of the room opens and the little brass bell fixed to the top of it rings a merry tune. A man walks in and sees the woman in the window straight away, they smile and the man takes a tour around the tables with their red gingham patterned cloths, as the woman stands to greet him.

They kiss briefly and sit down, they both glance around the room. He takes her hand in both of his and talks to her earnestly and she listens without interruption. It is raining now, drips of water chase each other down the grimy pane outside.

The room darkens a little as the rain clouds shield the sun, a rumble of thunder, umbrellas raised and the people in the street quicken their pace.

The little brass bell tinkles again and the man and the woman look up spontaneously, this is a clandestine relationship, it must be, they are so jumpy.

I pan around; two white haired elderly ladies drinking tea and eating cakes from an ornate cake stand.

On another table a middle-aged man in a blue striped shirt and a tie drinks tea and eats a large slice of chocolate cake with a fork while he has eyes only for the laptop on the table beside him.

A waitress in a black dress and black and white mop cap clears away the cups, saucers, plates and crumbs from another table.

The quiet is disturbed for a moment when a mobile phone rings. The man in the window answers it quietly then returns it to his pocket. He talks briefly to the woman. He throws some money onto the table and they leave quickly. He does not hear the waitress say "Thank you sir".

The last I see of them is walking past the window outside hand in hand, into a world outside my universe.