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## Saving Grace

by Sheridan Maguire

*There are a lot of things we don't want to know about the people we love. I don't want to know about the tartar on their teeth, or which hand they use to clean themselves on the toilet or the colour of their urine. I don't want to know about their anal problems, their bladder issues or the wax in their ears.*

But you know, once in a while, the surprising facts of someone's life just poke you in the eye and you can't ignore them. It's like you're walking along and suddenly you trip on an uneven paving slab – the world goes around, upside down, and makes no sense for a few seconds. And then the pain comes and the fury.

The uneven paving slab in this case was Aunt Grace. She was about the height of a standard lamp from IKEA and as skinny as ... what, a stick? Her hair was a carefully coiffured grey with an elderly blue wash. Tortoiseshell glasses which were way too big for her sat across her face like a tabby cat on a windowsill.

How she could see through the filthy lenses was always a mystery to me and might explain why she kept walking into things. She was safe at home because she knew where the furniture was – although I have to admit to moving tables and chairs about when I visited to see if she would walk into something, which she often did. Hilarious!

But not as much as when I took her shopping. How stupid did she look when she stumbled into that pile of cornflakes boxes by the checkout, or that time when I sabotaged her rolator and she kept going in ever slower and more painful circles. Painful to her and painfully funny to me. And then she'd ask me to take her home and I'd make her tea which was scalding hot and I didn't tell her.

Oh what, you don't like where this is going? Am I making you feel uncomfortable? Well not as uncomfortable as she has made me feel. When I pushed her down the stairs in her house two months ago, it was gently and with love. The dear little thing was always saying how she wanted to live to be a hundred but I knew she was lying, and it was much kinder to help her over the threshold.

As she tumbled down, I listened to the sound of her falling. It was curiously quiet, except for the loud crack at the bottom when her femur snapped in two - but unfortunately not her neck. Oh, you can be sure I was solicitous, covered her in a blanket, called 999 and hovered around while the paramedics looked at each other.

I knew what they were thinking and my pain at Aunt Grace's imminent departure was a surprise to me. I even managed a small tear as they took her away. I'd visit her before the end, in a few days when it was nearly over. She died of pneumonia a week later. After the ambulance had driven off, all blue lights and siren, I looked around, standing there in the silent hallway of the old smelly house, and I knew - joy of joys - that my money troubles were over.

At least I thought they were, but her solicitor told me this morning that the bitch had re-mortgaged the house to the hilt. She was penniless.