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Anonymous on a busy street

by Stuart Carruthers

It was the old man tending his garden who kindly informed me of her whereabouts. The thatched cottage was picture perfect. Situated in the centre of Chapel Lane this was a quite part of town and its cobbled street was deserted despite its attractiveness. We chatted briefly with neither giving away too much information. He never asked me my name, nor I his.

Five years previously while walking to work one day, I noticed a woman sitting on a bus. She wasn't dressed differently to any of the other passengers; she just had something about her. A few months later I saw her again, this time I got a more detailed look. It was definitely her. It would be more than two years before I told the others.

Over the course of the next few months I planned my early morning journey into work around her commute into town. She always took the same bus and sat in the same seat on the lower deck. Her mannerisms were exactly like the Kate and John's. One day she gave up her seat to an elderly man and straight away I noted her hand gestures. She smiled like we did, her eyes closing slightly as she ushered the man into his seat.

Uncle Matt collected us from school that bitterly cold February day. We climbed into the front passenger seat of his old Post Office van and headed down to the docks for fish and chips. As we watched the ferry slowly emerge from behind the East Wall, he told us the story that would change our lives forever. By the time we got back to the house that night, we were no longer children but young adults. Her name was never mentioned again, her pictures removed, that's just how things were in them days.

It was after dark when she returned. She walked straight past me before I noticed it was her. I waited an hour before I plucked up the courage to knock on the door. She didn't answer. I tried again, nothing.

“Mrs O’Connor likes her anonymity,” said the old man as I walked back up Chapel Lane.

He was right, some people just don’t want to be found.