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Lemon Water

by Sho Botham

Pushing past people in the morning going to work. Bumping into others when she went for lunch. And the biggest crush of the day, going home on a busy train. Standing face-to-face and toe-to-toe with strangers lost its appeal years before. The worst thing of all was the smell of tired, sweaty bodies, crowded into a carriage that was much too small with no ventilation.

Garlic breath floated past her nose mixed in with blasts of dark chocolate and the sweet, sugary smell of a well known fizzy drink. The evening train wasn't any busier than the morning one. But the smells were different. In the morning, it was all, freshly showered fragrances that might not be her favourite but much better than the sweaty body brigade, going home.

Leyla was becoming exhausted with it all. She would stand face-to-face and close her eyes dreaming the journey away. In her mind she was on a quiet, sun-kissed beach or sharing a lemon water with a gorgeous stranger. Her dreamy adventures took her around the world. She hadn't been able to see a way out of her current life for over 10 years.

On Tuesday, 29th of September Leyla's life changed forever. Mr Meesdom, head of HR, called her into his office.

She came out of HR slowly, stumbling over her own feet. Shoulders bent forward, her chin almost touching her chest. Her breathing was erratic. She got back to her desk and slumped into her chair.

Her colleague asked if she was okay. But Leyla didn't hear her. She was miles away on a sun-kissed beach looking for a stranger to share a lemon water. Her colleague wasn't sure what to do. This was not the Leyla she had sat across the desk from for several years.

Leyla, jumped up and shouted yippee. Everyone in that part of the office looked round. Leyla shouted again, yippee.

Turning to face her across-the-desk colleague with a huge smile, Leyla said, "I've been sacked. Isn't that wonderful? No more busy trains, no more bumping into people. It's a sign. I can go and find my sun-kissed beach and my gorgeous stranger and we can drink lemon water together."

Leyla's colleague said, "but why have you been sacked?"

"Well," said Leyla, "I haven't really been sacked. I'm being made redundant and my payment will buy me a ticket to my sun-kissed beach. It's my one chance to change my life and I can't wait."