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The Middle Sister

by Lou Beckerman

We seven live side by side where land meets rough seas. I am the middle sister. The fourth. If I were the mid-point of Pleiades' Seven in the starry heavens I'd be called *Celaeno*. Isn't that just the loveliest name? As it is I am known as *Brass Point*: OS Grid Reference Number monotonously something-or-other. How humdrum. And who even cares.

The other six are without imagination but I was borne for greatness; to be a heroine. How fame has eluded me all this time is beyond tragic. Snatched by underserving siblings.

They say exposure to elements and tidal fury is diminishing us all. The crumbling and tumbling, inch by inescapable inch; centimetre by soft centimetre. But I am worn down – devoured - by something far deadlier. Eaten away from the inside. Look deeper under my chalk white appearance and you will find I am rotten green to the core – an apt embodiment of the fourth of the seven deadly sins. Envy. A sour malignant resentment has gorged on my once innocent, hopeful self.

My estranged sisters and I have only this relentless retreating in common. Some of us, in striving for significance, make bids for freedom two or three times a year. Really just sibling rivalry bids for attention.

If, for just a short time, I could have broken free, how I would have cherished my freedom – like the seagulls eddying and laughing wildly in the winds above and around me.

There's a paradox here. Do you see it? To the west of us at Birling Gap (*Whirling Crap* I say) humans dangerously jeopardise their already short fragile lives by stealing selfies on edges and cracks waiting to break away any moment.

While at the other extreme, to the east where Beachy Head (*Bitchy Dread* to me – how she loves notoriety), sits waiting for the desperates intending to end their unbearable stress, sorrow or shame. Even I know you can be drowning not waving at the top of a cliff. Both invariably generate headline news to gawp at. Wouldn't you know it - there they are, my insatiable fame-hungry sisters, all over the media yet again. Damn them.

But it's ME – half way – mid-point. The *central* point where hikers and bikers, the idlers – lovers, friends, travellers, lay out their blankets. I'm the one who offers the vital sustenance stop. It's on me where the sailor's eye naturally falls to assess safety. Yes, yes I know there's a blinking lighthouse – but come daylight I am the most reliable focal point. Ah – but none of this is newsworthy or sensational is it. Nobody sees this humble service as worthy.

I heard the Expert Environmentalist saying, '*We are letting nature take its course. There is nothing anyone can do. They will collapse*'. Well I could have told him that - and the *real* reason too.

This won't end happily. But then there are never really endings, happy or otherwise. There is only change. I eavesdropped once on a walker mentioning a 'level playing field'. Perhaps that's my next incarnation.

It's time to cut the ties.