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I Landed in London

by Janie Reynolds

I landed in London on a wintry autumn evening

In Ibiza, from where I had just landed, they have autumnal weather in autumn. And, wintry weather in winter. But, evidently, in 1849 the seasons were all mixed up.

Waiting for the seatbelt sign to dim, I pondered on a possible explanation for Dickens' use of the adjective 'wintry' to describe autumn, 'using sloppy language' unlikely to be one of them.

Having recently moved to Ibiza for the warmer weather, *I* could perhaps be forgiven for describing autumn as 'wintry' given the ten degree difference between a Balearic autumn and an English one. But Dickens' use of the word 'wintry' couldn't be explained by a sudden difference in latitude as it was highly unlikely that a gentleman in the 1840s would arrive, from warmer pastures, in a jetplane at Gatwick airport.

It also occurred to me that, now that we are standing at the dawn of a climate catastrophe, we are likely to face a great amount of confusion over which season we are in, in future. We will no doubt be faced with many an autumnal winter and summery spring. The names of the seasons may even have to be updated to reflect global warming, and we will probably need a new name for summer - 'summer' still conjuring up images of pleasant sunny days, taking tea on the green and fertile lawns of country houses and little blonde girls running hand in hand through daisy meadows in billowing white cotton frocks.

Not so much of raging fires sweeping through the countryside faster than the native fauna can run and burning them all to death.

To reflect the soar in temperature we might need to rename summer 'Scorcher' or 'Sizzler' or perhaps 'Swelter'. Then, that could be followed by a 'sweltering autumn.'

Boggled by all of this, I shuffled my way along the fuselage. Stepping out on the airstair, torrid heat from the plane's engines blasted into the atmosphere ambushing the resident cold.

'England', I said to myself expressionlessly. I felt no affection, nor loyalty, nor tenderness towards the country of my birth.

As I neared the ground, a strong scent of something sweet and familiar entered my nostrils. I looked around, wondering how an ice cream van could be parked on an international airfield. The Greensleeves jingle was hypnotising me from a distance, ringing emphatically over the whirring of jet engines and the thunder of aircraft.

The other children and I were being summonsed to leave our houses with a 5p bit and run to happy Mr Edd who would be handing out cornets from his stubby little colourful van. The back of my throat tingled and moistened at the thought of two Cadbury's flakes with strawberry sauce and sprinkles.

"Madam," called an irate airport worker beckoning at me frantically towards her fluorescent tabard. "Come over here and get off the runway!"

I was shocked and crestfallen. Not by the dazzling headlights of a jumbo jet accelerating towards me, nor by the wintryness of the autumnal evening. It was because Mr Edd must have left before I got to get my 99.

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Note – the fuel used to keep soft serve ice-cream, such as Mr Whippy, frozen inside ice-cream vans with no external power source, smells very similar to Jet A1 aviation gas fuel – a fuel with a freezing point of -47C.