

Nothing Travels Faster

by Miriam Silver

Nothing travels faster than the speed of light with the possible exception of bad news, which obeys its own laws, an edict I believed until I discovered it was not always true.

I'd been minding my own business, sitting in the park eating lunch, practicing delaying tactics, which enable me to avoid decisions, crucial to my life when a voice said,

"Do you mind if I join you?"

I looked up, mouth full and saw a young woman.

"I don't usually talk to strangers, only..." she trailed off, so I moved up to make room for her and put aside my useless, messy-life thoughts.

"Talk away, I'll eat, want to share?" I replied trying to cover my irritation.

Ignoring my offer she enabled me to take a bite out of my supermarket sandwich.

"It's only that my life is about to fall apart," she burst out, obviously trying not to cry.

I realised here was a kindred soul and said in an effort to cool the situation,

"Erm! Please, carry on," while stuffing the remnants of my lunch into my bag as she dabbed at her eyes.

"He used to enjoy bathing the baby, he loved to cook, even sometimes I was able to go out, meet my old workmates."

As she stopped, I enquired encouragingly about her work before being a full time Mum. Without answering she went on to say he'd come home later and later always blaming work, never in time to read Daisy her bedtime story, their daughter missed that too.

“I suppose I’ve become a boring stay-at-home, though it was a mutual decision, just for Daisy’s first years.”

To show some interest I rephrased my question, which made her remember and smile.

“I worked in the same firm as him, that’s where we met. By the time Daisy goes to nursery I’ll be out of date, probably retrain, do something more compatible with her hours.”

Picking up my rubbish, ready to go I heard her say,

“I think he’s seeing someone else”

She sounded so despondent I stopped while she backed up her story with proof of his other relationship.

“While we both worked at the advertising, it was lovely, he did copy stuff, I was quite good at design, lots more up to date colleagues there now for him I suppose.”

With a jolt, I realised she’d worked where I worked now, only one of that type in this town, which made me not only feel stupid, but look silly, like a sitting duck, waiting for him to divorce his wife so we can be together.

Stupid me, satisfied with odd meetings in hotels, having this ‘affair’, kidding myself he was in-love with me. By chance, an unexpected encounter is making me face my unreasonable expectations.

“Thanks for listening, you’ve been a great help, Daisy finishes nursery in a minute, thanks again,” and waved as she left.

I watched her hurry off. Instinctively I knew I’d just learned about decisions and avoidance. My destructive life had gone on too long.

