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Memory is the thing you forget with or live with

by Rosalyn Hurst

The long days of Covid stretched, not in a line up or down, but horizontally across the space time continuum vortex. It took a trip to the calendar on the back of the kitchen door to remind themselves what day it was, for there were no events, no news on the BBC to distinguish any perceptible forward movement of time; confusing announcements on the duration of lockdown, lock in, lock up though rarely lock out added to the miasma of lost days.

“This is a long term post death experience, never reaching paradise, nirvana, no hot fires, no demons of hell, but the utterable boredom of limbo,” he offered.

She, the failed product of convent education, replied, “got it in one, limbo was thought by theologians to be a limb of hell, not a place of eternal suffering, but the eternal place for the unbaptised. Never gave it a moment’s thought till now, you know, I’ve beginning to think that if there is an after life what it will be like.”

That worried him, he tried to make light, “after life you mean after all this captivity?”

Looking out the window, absentmindedly drying a cup with a dirty floor cloth, she continued, “some Japanese believe that when we die we can choose one memory in which we live for all eternity.”

“Wouldn’t suit me, can’t remember what I did yesterday, but I remember the day you said you loved me,” there was a hesitation as he recalled over the shoulders of his beloved, his school sweetheart and had a strange pang of regret.

She dutifully smiled, "I remember holding Darren in my arms, such a lovely baby," and then remembered the second look, a bloody rather slimy creature, the pain and the panic and the realisation this was to be her responsibility till the end of time.

Both were silent, going through their memory banks to find just one that had some impact, for their long marriage, their children brought happiness, unfulfilled expectation and grief.

In the garden, she saw Fido, their elderly loyal dog snoozing in the shade of the fence. "Do you remember when we had to leave Fido in kennels for a week?"

"The one and only time, poor chap," he said, "never had the heart to leave him again."

"And do you remember when he saw us, rushing to us, nearly pulling the kennel maid off her feet and when he raced in the house and then curled up on the sofa with us both?"

And then they looked at each other, the memory, the joy of the reunion the companionship and the unquestioning love was the choice.