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People have always trusted me with their secrets.
But who do I trust with mine?

by Rosalyn Hurst

When Gary saw the muddy surface of the football ground rush up to meet his unprotected face he had two thoughts. The first, 'That pain in my chest must be a heart attack,' followed by, 'just as well it wasn't last week when Kelly and I were having a reunion shag in the old stationery cupboard on the first day back from lock down.'

Three hours later he was aware of sounds, bleeping, people moving about, but somehow did not have the energy or inclination to open his eyes. "He's going," a voice said, followed by sounds of weeping, it was Kelly, "Oh Gary, I love you, my saintly man, what will we do without you?" And the voice said, "Was he your partner?" A hesitancy, "Not exactly, worked with him at the call centre, he was such expert on computers, internet all those things, always helped out..." And the voice faded away as Gary reflected that dying wasn't all that bad, place in heaven guaranteed...perhaps.

The heavy swing doors closed behind him as Gary entered the arena. First was the smell, musty, dusty, a whiff of incense and from a nearby shelf the comforting aroma of good wine. Next was the noise, like a good primary school, muted voices, busy voices, the occasional "good grief," and "Did you hear the one?" His eyes eventually focussed, thousands of desks, thousands of people on laptops, on mobiles, walking purposefully between the aisles, although at one side a four elderly people were engaged in a disinterested game of table tennis.

Gary stepped forward and heads turned in silence. The table tennis stopped, the phones rang unanswered, mobiles and laptops pinged and were ignored.

A man approached, "Hello mate, welcome to paradise, bit of a shock first drink on the house, what will you have?" Gary looked at the shelf with dusty but distinguished bottles, "a glass of red if that's Ok."

"Right up, I'm Armand,(bartenders) hey ,has anyone told Michael (communications) yet?"

Then sotto voce said, "Drink that up mate because you will need a second one before Isadora (computers) gets here."

Gary sipped the wine, still confused. Armand turned to the watching silent crowd, in a voice used to calling time, said, "Look you guys get out of here, back to the table my old friends," then added, "poor old saints not much for them to do these days. There's ten thousand of us you know, here we fix things, over there diseases and illnesses, very depressing."

"What do you mean?"

"We're the patron saints, old George, years ago was whizzing all over the place, (cavalry, knights, crusaders) and its only the horse riders that occasionally give a call, same for Eligiius, (harness makers). As for Cafetan, (odd lot dealers), well no one has seen him do a day's work.

Gary caught a glint of metal, a commanding voice, "At bloody long last," Gary was being appraised by cold military eyes, "is this the best that could be found?" With a sigh added, Michael Archangel, (communications.)

A rush of air, "Oh my goodness here she comes."

A scream, "Who got this one here? I am computers (scientists technicians and users), we don't need him."

"Isadora of Seville, my dear, we all have the utmost respect for you, with all the new calls for help, I cannot cope, all those breakdown, lost connections" muttered Jude, (hopeless causes). "And what about me?" queried Antony, (lost things), "Now people forget their passwords, lose their phones, I am just run ragged."

"Enough!" Commanded Michael, "Back to work. Gary sit alongside Isadora."

At a desk, which to Gary seemed strangely and somewhat discomfortingly familiar asked Isadora for help.

"Right, the minute someone says, Oh dear God the internet's gone down again, or In the name of Jesus Mary and Joseph why cannot I open the bloody file, we get a call. You are now patron saint of the internet, failed connections and you have to decide to intercede or not. Let me tell you there are some that are over reliant," Jude broke in, "Tell me about them, hopeless cases, some of them don't need me."

Isadora continued, "I ignore them, but possible to over ride systems, give some a nice experience, make them feel good for the rest of the day."

So Gary sat down and as the time stretched into all eternity listening to the calls for help on finding or even losing secrets the caller wanted to remain hidden, and even being elevated to the patron saint of secrets-held-on-the-internet, a saint that all sinners could trust. He worked assiduously even winning the respect of Isadora, for Gary knew somewhere there was a secret he should not reveal, that somehow the boss had overlooked, was ignorant of.

Who could he tell, no one, for he risked being sent to the other centre full of djinns, and imps and minor devils who in the bizarre arrangements of celestial management systems, kept the vast number of patron saints so very busy.