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Time Machine

by Miriam Silver

From an early age I always had my nose in a book; enjoying their pages was the only way I could shut out the interminable noises made by my siblings.

Greta, ten years older, Arthur and Dorothy twins, nine years older, all lived selfish lives until I came, a surprise . Apparently my parents didn't want any further additions after the twins. Nine years on, here I was, slightly sickly, resented by all, needing regular hospital visits.

I grew up in an urban council house where I shared a bedroom with a resentful Arthur who regularly woke me making me get out of bed to turn off the central light, I couldn't wait for him to leave home.

I learnt to read while waiting in the hospital where books, somewhat scruffy, were provided to keep us quiet. Colourful space stories, with pictures of rockets, space guns, telescopes, and moon travel all inspired me to the point I talked of nothing else inspiring my mother to take me to the library.

There I found further books about the space world, high beyond the stars. I was sure I would make a time machine one day, the components were all here, on the page.

It was under our dining table whose heavy cover provided the seclusion where I created my time machine, well hidden from my noisy elderly siblings. Under that table I dreamed I was using a space gun, which would fire my flashing rocket and take me directly through the stars to the moon.

There I developed my drawing skills too, sketching places my machine was taking me together with detailed plans of the rocket that would eventually be developed by some far off industrial business.

Trouble was Dad, his infrequent utterances directed at me his youngest, threatened all my plans by shouting, “get your nose out of that book!” or “Make yourself useful!”

Neither of which I could do while I was in space with my machine which of course meant nothing to him causing further bitter comments, “that boy, get him out of there, time he grew up,” and, “why can’t he be like the rest of them?”

Eventually, overcoming recurring asthma, leaving school as soon as I could, I found work in the local council office where futile humdrum work allowed me time to sketch and dream. Daily I escaped the boring routine, away I went, my imagination serving me well, producing drawings of my personal time machine that one day would rocket me into space.

The inevitable happened of course, I came to the notice of my employers, who reluctantly recognised I was not happy in my work, and, was using their facilities to further my own ends. I was summarily dismissed.

This made Dad furious, he’d been planning retiring as soon as I had left home like the others. Now here I was, in the way, again, frustrating my parents’ plans.

As a redundant space traveller, too old to disappear under the table, I recognised the necessity of earning a living which time travelling, sketching or imagination wouldn’t do. Firmly rejecting my father’s suggestion of factory work and after refusing various jobs at the employment office, as a last resort, the frustrated official told me that there was an apprenticeship in farm work, available for those wanting an alternative life style.

“Would suit your asthma, the outside life, ” he offered hopefully.

Instantly I saw myself in a shepherd’s hut with my dog, the hills and isolation. Perfect, it was all I needed, a place to sketch, develop my time machine and fly off into space.