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Watched

by Sho Botham

Missy opened her eyes to let in the light. Moving her body gently she was aware of discomfort in her left knee. During a long exhale her arms opened outwards as if embracing the world. 'How wonderful to be alive,' she thought, 'but why does it always hurt?'

Oblivious to the soft wind dancing in her hair, Missy gingerly stood up and went through her daily preparation ritual, before performing one, shaky, novice, salute to the sun.

At the start of lockdown, she'd begun developing her daily mindfulness and movement practice. The golden light of sunrise was her time of the day. Within two weeks she couldn't wait to get out the door each morning and walk briskly to her favourite spot at the beach. There she would stand, drinking in the golden orangey tones of the sun before lowering herself carefully onto a small pink cushion on the sand. She carried her cushion with her in a lightweight orange rucksack.

As lockdown went on, the morning sun grew warmer and Missy's day started earlier and earlier. She meditated before performing her salute to the sun and on those times when her body felt especially energised, she would take a moment or two to move to her own internal rhythm, thinking to herself, 'move as if no one is watching'.

But someone was watching.

As she walked home, Missy often passed others out early. She got on nodding and waving terms with them. They were either, out for their own permitted, daily exercise or taking the dog for a morning walk. The giveaway of the dog walkers was the little bag of poo, strung over the fingers of one hand, ready to be deposited in one of the poo bins along the beach.

As the weeks and months of lockdown came and went, Missy's salute to the sun, improved a little and her left knee, although still uncomfortable, had not got any worse. She had become a regular fixture of the beach as the sun rose and the sky glistened golden, each morning.

Missy never paid much attention to the luxury apartments with beach-facing balconies. They were much too expensive for Missy who lived three streets back from the beach in a much more affordable block.

Today, a few bright flashes of light coming from one of the balconies of the expensive beach apartments, made Missy slow down on her way home. Her eyes were drawn to the light. When it flashed again, she saw immediately it came from - a long black camera lens that seemed to be pointing in her direction. Missy dismissed the thought and carried on home.

Over the next few mornings, she noticed the camera lens was always there, watching her. She began to feel quite uncomfortable. She was sure it was watching her, following her as she walked to and from the beach. She never saw anyone, just the camera lens.

One morning, Missy was about to sit on her cushion when something stopped her. She felt she was being watched and she looked around with a look of fear in her face. She was the only one on the beach. But that didn't take away the feeling that someone was watching her.

Instead of going through her daily rituals, Missy, put her cushion back into her rucksack and started out for home. Striding along at pace, she tried to ignore the camera lens that was intruding into her thoughts. But her eyes couldn't help looking up to the balcony that seemed to stand out from all the others. 'It isn't there,' she thought to herself. 'It isn't there.'

Missy never saw the camera lens again. Over a week or two, she resumed her daily rituals facing the early morning golden sun. But she is still convinced, she was watched.