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Granny

by Sue Hitchcock

So Margie was put in the charge of Granny Geogahan, rather she was put in charge of the old lady. Both Margie and her mother knew this was the case, but were only too glad, if it satisfied the policeman Granny Geogahan was relishing the esteem which the responsibility gave her. It reminded her of the days when her husband had been the owner of the fair and she had been the queen, mother to all the fair hands. She had looked after Margie a lot before she started school and it had been a happy time.

She had taught her little granddaughter how to mash potatoes with lots of butter and pepper, but the favourite thing was playing with off-cuts of pastry till it looked dirty, but the biscuits, studded with sweets gave Margie a childish pride. Suffering the rationing during her childhood, Granny Geogahan longed for sweets and had over-indulged Margie with Smarties, chocolate buttons and lollipops, which led in due course to the decay which had been the cause of the lengthy treatment Margie had so recently endured.

The first day with Granny was interesting, all the details of her caravan familiar, but now Margie looked with new eyes. The beautiful lace curtains were dirty and slightly ragged and she resolved to clean things up a bit. What Granny most wanted was to show Margie all her treasures and tell her their stories.

“Look at my horse brasses, Margie! They came off our horses, the ones that pulled the caravan.”

Margie knew that even when Brendan Geogahan had started the touring fair in the 1920s, it had never used horses, and he had been a farm boy in Ireland before that. Still she didn't contradict the old lady. When her granny had met Brendan Geogahan's son, she had been living with her parents in a council flat in Camberwell, a fact she had told Margie many times.

"Look at this doll, she's an Irish dancer. You know I did Irish dancing when I went to Ireland."

"How old were you then, Granny?"

"Oh, about twelve, I suppose. I don't know. I stayed with some other girls."

"Relations?"

"Oh... Take a look at this! Doesn't it look like Bobby?"

The plaster dog did look like Bobby and she picked up her pet to show him the ornament.

"Shall we have a cup of tea, Gran?"

The tea she gave Margie had two spoonfuls of sugar, now taboo, and it was secretly tipped away and another cup poured, while granny was petting her dog.

Margie managed to find a way of living with the old lady, with a new toy, when her mother brought her a mobile phone, "just in case". At last she was able to contact Roma, who was now living at the pub, so it would be impossible to visit her for longer than a day. If only Declan would return and take her to Conyer. Margie's mother came home to sleep at irregular times, so she had to sleep in Grannie's caravan. At first she was disturbed by the noises of the old lady's snoring or getting up for a noisy pee in the night, but soon she slept till Bobby yapped for his breakfast.

Then one morning Margie woke, wondering what time it was. Her phone said nearly ten o'clock. She listened and heard nothing. Silence, she discovered, is something you can actually hear. No Bobby, no teacups clinking. She scrambled out of bed and found the door open, but no Granny was to be seen, and it was raining fine, misty, wetting drizzle.