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Sunbeams on a Sunny Day

by Ivor John

It looked to be a rather nice day Francis thought, gazing across the room towards the small casement window. The net curtains obscured the view a little, but not such that she couldn't enjoy the sunlight. As it caught the dust particles, they appeared to be floating, supported by warm, yellow light falling on the dressing table. Thoughts suddenly came to her, pleasant reminiscences of when she was a little girl, giggling with her mother as she helped her make the bed.

She remembered the sunbeams, as she had mistakenly called them. Those little flecks, dancing across her eyes through the sunlight. Of course, now, she knew they weren't sunbeams but flecks of dust, thrown up as her mother shook the eiderdown, trying to spread the feathers evenly rather than in the clumps they formed into during a nights sleep. Neither were they supported in the column of light through the tiny window of the little cottage, they were only revealed as they passed across it, to be replaced by others as they fell below and others replaced them. She remembered, how much happier she had been then, in the bedroom with her mother, watching the sunbeams dancing across the light.

A small alarm clock on her bedside table told her it was nearly ten o'clock.

Ten o'clock, she thought and still in bed. She felt ashamed, for a moment, embarrassed by her apparent idleness. But then though, 'why does it matter'. She did not have work to go to. Few friends, certainly none that would be knocking on her door. 'People didn't really do that now' she thought. Not like before. She could stop her mind returning back again to that little cottage. Friends, knocking unexpectedly at the door, asking her mother if Francis could come out to play.

They would walk along the lane to play in the little wood. Or they would sit in her little garden and play with Blackberry her rabbit. Named after her favourite rabbit in Watership Down, which she read over and over.

She looked at the clock again, 'half past now'. Pulling her thoughts to order, cutting off suddenly her hypnogogic images of Sandleford. She was reluctant to leave them, but surely she had to. Half of the morning had gone already, and she hadn't even go out of bed. There was nothing particularly she had to do. Some breakfast maybe, cereal, some muesli, but she wasn't really very hungry. Sometimes, she would make a cooked breakfast, but not often, only if she had some eggs left over and a loaf which was still fresh enough to use, although toast was quite forgiving.

Sometimes she would persuade herself to walk into a little cafe, on the edge of the town. Those few roads where any shops that were still open were charity shops, scruffy little junk shops or hairdressers, which couldn't afford town centre rents. She liked the little cafe. It had five tables. There would be copies of the Daily Mail and The Sun for customers to read. Little wire baskets on each table held salt and pepper cruets and granulated sugar in screw top jars and a few red and white paper napkins, folded into a fan shape. Today was not a day she could go to the cafe. Anyway, breakfast would be finished by now. Now would be toasted sandwiches or soup of the day. Warmed through from a can and served with a brown roll.

Filling a glass with water from the tap, she put it down on the table, while she popped her tablets out of the strip by running her fingernail around the foil and popping it through from the back. She looked at the two Cipramil tablets for a moment, two little white disks, before swallowing them and washing them down with the glass of water. She liked to sit down for a while after taking them, the nurse on the ward had told her that. She walked into her tiny living room, pushed a bag of laundry aside and sat down on her shabby sofa.

Why had Peter phoned last night, she wondered. Normally, on Wednesday, he would spend the evening with her. They would watch Coronation Street and then go to bed. They would make love and sometimes he would stay until the morning when he would leave early to go to work. Last night he hadn't come over, he had phoned to say he was busy. A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy grew in her mind.