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Tilting

by Grant Mcfarlane

Her optimism was only ever an insufficient amount of cynicism. Hope filled dreams replaced that which Mr. Carver had always described as a "healthy sense of caution". Of course, I now have the privilege of hindsight but I recall telling her much the same at the time. Not that she listened. "I'm a Yuppy now Mum, everything is possible," she'd nonsensically proclaim.

It was 1988 when Carrie left Sittingbourne for a new life in New York. Chain smoking at the back of the plane, chatting with her friend Alice who had got her the cheap bucket seat on her BA friends allowance. "I'm thinking that we should do the whole apartment in slate grey. It would go great with beechwood furniture, don't you think?" Ignoring Alice's attempted explanations on the limits of decorating a studio in the Garment District, she continued. "Paint is cheap and the furniture we'll take on to our next place, once I get established."

The degree had been a useful accompaniment to her beauty in getting a position at the Private bank, Pictet & Cie, as a client onboarding administrator. A glorified meet and greeter with some form filling to while away her hours. Carrie enjoyed being one of the boys and quickly secured promotion to a customer liaison for private clients, where her social nous could be better used to commercial gain.

Alice loathed the constant hyperbole and attempt to glamourise everything but played along. "Ok you can take off the mask now," Carrie announced as she untied. "Oh. My. God. It's like something out of Dynasty," she squealed as she wandered into the lounge of their new apartment. "This is a step up from the Ikea stuff you had wanted a few years ago. Are you sure you can afford me just paying the same amount of rent as before?"

Carrie attempted to explain how stock options and bonuses worked, while not making any sense to either herself or Alice. Life, in her experience, had a kind of velvet lustre. You looked at yourself from one perspective and all you saw was weirdness. Move your head a little bit, though, and everything looked reasonably normal. Affording a \$1.5m apartment at 26 was simply a tilt of Carrie gazing to the future where everything is paid.

It affected us all in some way. I stopped going to the pub both every Friday and Saturday. My mother never went on her Christmas break to Eastbourne. You probably had to learn what "negative equity" meant. But Black Wednesday meant something different to Carrie Carver. She had forgotten her father's lessons whilst rising so high, so quickly. She had been asked to clear her desk and flew back to Kent the following day, leaving the burning ashes of her life behind.

She saw in her mother's care and concern something more solid than the guilt of her New York cage. Willingly, she repeated the mantra of her mother each day, "I Carrie, blinded by flying high will now keep my head straight."