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A Different Margie

by Sue Hitchcock

Margie had changed since she first fell for Dino, not much in her appearance though. She might have grown an inch and her bony limbs had acquired an infinitesimally small increase in her feminine curves. Her hair was still lank and mousy, fit only for a ponytail except for the strand she would twiddle and suck, when she was thinking. She had, of course, had her teeth fixed, which was the beginning of her self-awareness.

But it was the epidemic lockdown, which had isolated her, leading to some introspection. Her instinctive reaction to any event was to run, as she had when Declan locked her in the caravan. At school she had been considered slow, lacking in talent, except by the sport teacher, who had tried to lure her back to school as the first wave of the Covid plague waned.

The disappearance of her family and the fairground community had a more profound effect. Margie had been developing into a useful member of the crew. She was capable of operating a ride, keeping track of the money and making sure the punters kept to the safety rules. She could shout the attraction, haggle and hold her ground in a dispute. What use was this now there was no funfair? The death of her father was followed by a kind of diaspora of all her relatives, who needed to look for work. Even her mother was out most of the day, working at the nursing home. Then Granny, present in person, was away with the fairies, as they say, or at least with her muddled memories, until Margie could no longer watch her all the time. Then she was gone. Only Declan was aware of his responsibilities to his sister, and he had to work merely for them to survive.

“Please let me go and live with Roma!” was all Declan heard, but though Roma was a lovely girl, she was even worse off than them.

“She’s not even living in her boat now, is she?”

“No, but I can help her fix it.”

“Didn’t you try before?”

“Yes, but I can do better.”

“We’ll visit her on Saturday and see how it is.”

Margie smiled. At least she had hope.