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## Freya

by Sho Botham

Thinking they'd got away with it, the two teenagers rushed across the busy road together, holding hands tightly and shouting at the top of their voices. This was Karl's last memory of Freya alive.

For the past forty years and more, he'd tried, unsuccessfully, to banish the sight of her broken body lying lifeless on the tarmac half under the bright yellow car. The ache in his left shoulder, a reminder of holding her hand tightly until the pull of her body was too great as she was tossed into the air when the car hit her.

Karl's wife, Lesley, knew that she was second best. For Karl, it had always been Freya. Even the birth of the twins, nearly thirty years ago, was blighted by his thoughts of Freya and whether they would have had children. Karl's parenting skills were very over-protective and especially in relation to road safety. First, he lectured them about being safe and not letting go of mummy or daddy's hands when out walking or crossing a road. Then it was when they rode their child-sized bikes with stabilizers. Next the lectures were about being careful on two wheels when the stabilizers came off.

More lectures followed until the twins reached seventeen and wanted driving lessons. They quickly got fed up with their father telling them how important it was to be careful and to always look and be aware. He never added that he still felt guilty that he hadn't done any of these things on the fifth of June 1981, when he pulled Freya with him into the road not noticing the yellow car speeding towards them. If only, had become the most frequent thought in his head. If only, he'd been nearest the car.

If only, they'd paused for a moment to check it was safe to cross - but they couldn't do that, they'd stolen a bag of crisps from a small newsagent as a dare and they had to get away. If only, they hadn't dared each other to steal the crisps. If only.

Karl's lecturing continued as the twins passed their driving tests and shared a car. It continued with new vigour when each of the twins met the love of their life.

Karl's lecturing became unbearable when the twins gave him grandchildren. With renewed effort, Karl was determined to keep his family safe. He hadn't noticed how through the years his constant lecturing to his family had taken its toll on him. He hadn't noticed that his young, jubilant self, had retreated so far into the background, as to be forgotten. When his wife Lesley got especially fed up with his pessimistic lectures, she had tried to remind him of how vibrant and mischievous he once was. Karl dismissed this as her thinking about someone else.

Karl's phone rang early on a Sunday morning. Immediately he was concerned that something had happened to one of his family. He was sort of right. Something had happened. A new granddaughter had arrived into the family. His son Mark, was babbling excitedly telling his father all about the new Freya in his life.