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## Rainy Day in Oxford

by Vera Gajic

A story can only end one of two ways: truthfully or artfully and I have no intention of ending mine truthfully, that would ruin the story, you'll have to find out the truth another way, if you feel so inclined.

It all started one rainy morning in Oxford. It was one of those days after hours of continuous rain, when everything was sodden and water was sloshing along the road spraying up with every passing car. I'd just been to my first lecture in the grand hall and was on my way to the Bodleian library to join up.

The famous Bodleian library, I couldn't wait to inspect its shelves groaning with leather bound books handled by my heroes. To think that I could sit at a desk where Iris Murdoch wrote her first manuscripts. I had entered a new world and I had very high hopes of it, but in the meantime I had to get out of this rain. Too late, a huge lorry drove passed and sprayed me from head to foot with muddy water. I let out an involuntary yelp. It was cold as well as wet, I felt like a drowned rat. I looked up to see this tall, attractive man nearly as wet as me. We locked eyes and we both started laughing, there really wasn't much else to do, apart from get angry of course, which I might have done if I hadn't seen his lovely smile. I knew immediately I wanted to get to know him. Someone who can smile when they have just been soaked at 10.30 in the morning was a positive force I wanted in my life. It helped of course that he was the epitome of an Oxford intellectual with his tweeds and college scarf. He looked too old to be an undergraduate though, maybe he was a Phd student. All the better.

"Are you Ok" he said in a kind voice "you're wetter than I am and that's saying something"

“ I think it’s gone all the way through” I said. The cold water on my skin making me shiver.

“look I live just around the corner, come home and we can dry off. I’m Andrew, and I’m perfectly safe really I’m a pussy cat” he said as he offered to carry my bag and led me down a little lane of terraced yellow stone Victorian or were they Georgian, houses.

It was still raining but not as hard. The water was squelching out of my sensible shoes, my hair was stuck to my head and drips of rain crawled down my back, one by one, like slow insects.

Andrew stopped at the house with the red pillar-box front door fumbling to get his keys out of his wet trousers. He opened the door and I followed as he made a dash for the kitchen trying not to drench the hall carpet.

The kitchen was covered in hanging pots, pans, lids and other cooking paraphernalia, shelves full of jars, tins, plants, and mixed crockery of every colour and shape. The small table was piled high with papers and pens, books and magazines. I could see this was a busy kitchen, a lot of living went on in it.

“take your jacket and shoes off, I’ll go and get some towels” said Andrew as he pulled his wet shoes and socks off and disappeared upstairs.

I was really shivering now and I wondered how many clothes to take off. I didn’t want to appear suggestive. Mum had warned me about the men at university, much like men outside university I thought, only after one thing. I doubted that though. Andrew seemed far too nice. I was wrong about that.

I took my shoes off and decided to take my wool tights off. I’d never warm up with them stuck to my legs.

Andrew came back with towels and lit the paraffin heater in the corner. “don’t get too close, it’s a bit of a bugger, easy to burn yourself when it heats up”

I sat down on a wooden chair by the table and wiped my face and hair then my legs and feet, bending down making sure to dry between my toes, as my Mum had always taught me I could feel someone looking at me from the doorway. I raised my head and standing there leaning nonchalantly on the door surround was the most beautiful woman I’d ever seen.

“who’s this you’ve brought in Andrew?” said the vision in a husky voice, the corners of her mouth turned up in perpetual amusement as she took a long drag on a cigarette. She wore a long maroon woollen cardigan which reached to her ankles and a multicoloured knitted scarf wound loosely several times around her neck. Her hair was long blond and wavy. I’d never seen anyone as sophisticated.

“sorry I didn’t get your name” said Andrew looking at me

“Hi, I’m Emma” I said

Andrew continued “we bumped into each other when we got soaked by a lorry just now on the high street. I wouldn’t go out there if I was you, bloody mayhem. Emma, this is Nancy, my girlfriend”

Oh, how my heart sank at that moment. Both Andrew and Nancy, unavailable, unattainable, irresistible. Who was I kidding they wouldn’t be interested in little me. But they were, both of them, and that’s when our lives together started.