

Tea Towel

by Sho Botham

For over fifty years a pulsating glow occurred regularly in the depth of an old drawer that currently lived in the junk room. No one uses the junk room. It is full of old furniture and bits and bobs from all the various houses Aleesa had lived in. There are two bright floral themed guest rooms. One in fresh lemon tones and the other in relaxing shades of green. The junk room has been one of the jobs on Aleesa's 'to do' list since the death of her husband nearly two years ago.

"Mum, why does granny Aleesa live on her own?"

"You know why, Marty. Grandad used to live there too before he died."

"Mum, why did grandad die?"

"Marty, we've been through this before. Grandad got very sick one day and he died."

"Mum, will granny Aleesa always live on her own now?"

"Marty, I don't know the answer to that."

"Mum, I don't want granny Aleesa to die like grandad did. She won't get sick, will she?"

"Oh Marty, I don't know love, I don't know if she'll get sick."

"Mum"

"Yes Marty"

"Mum, can I go out and play with David?"

"Yes Marty, you can go out and play with David. Make sure you are back in time for tea."

Wandering through the rooms that seemed so full of life when her husband was alive, Aleesa now felt the emptiness of the overly large house. Opening the junk room door she walked around the odd pieces of furniture her old fingers leaving trails in the light patches of dust as if triggering memories of times past. On reaching the rickety dresser, Aleesa stopped and looked at the drawer with its dents and scuffs. Her hand grasped the wooden handle and pulled the drawer towards her.

Nothing happened, she pulled again but still, nothing happened. Now she wanted the drawer to open and focused intently on making it happen. As if by magic, the drawer moved and exposed the contents for the first time in years.

“Marty, I thought we could go to granny Aleesa’s on Saturday. Your dad’s not working so we could all go.”

“Mum, can I bring my iPad?”

“If you must.”

A medium sized cardboard box sat on the table in the large country kitchen. Beside it was something small wrapped in a tea towel. Aleesa told Marty he could rummage through the box to see if there was anything he wanted to play with. He put his iPad down next to the box and focused on its contents. He didn’t seem to notice the small item wrapped in the tea towel. Aleesa picked it up taking care to keep it covered and she walked across to her chair to join her daughter and her son-in-law.

Marty listened intently to what his granny was saying. He pretended to be interested in the box but the adult conversation was much more interesting.

“Mum, does granny really have a piece of a star wrapped up in a tea towel?”

“Marty, how many times do I have to tell you not to listen to other peoples’ conversations?”

“But mum, does she? Dad, do you know?”

“Marty your dad doesn’t know any more than me.”

“Mum, why can’t I know about it?”

“Marty, it’s difficult to understand. Your granny has a secret and today she told us what it is.”

“Mum, dad, is that what was in the tea towel?”

“Yes Marty it was. Your granny isn’t quite what she seems. I always knew she was my adopted mother but I didn’t know why. Today she told us about where she grew up - far

away from here on another planet. The piece of star wrapped up in the tea towel glows to keep her connected with home. It has been in the drawer for a very long time and has glowed on and off regularly for all of that time. Now she has uncovered it in the light, her time with us is limited. She needs to return to her home planet for she cannot die and without grandad here to keep her company she needs to go home. We will have her with us for some time yet but when winter comes she will return home.”

“Mum, don’t be silly, granny comes from Eastbourne.”