

## In Our Time

My grandsons are playing on the lawn. They circle Louise and the baby, whooping in delight, spraying water from their plastic guns. The baby girl leans forward and squeals at them, little hands clasping and feet kicking in excitement. It's a beautiful summer day and my garden is looking its best. I wonder for how long. But after all that's what a visit to Granny's is all about, having lots of space and being treated to the things they've always wanted.

My cat makes the mistake of jumping down into the garden from the neighbour's fence. I'm surprised he hasn't heard the singing and shouting. Too late, he realises that there are visitors, but not before a spray of water has hit him. It's surprisingly accurate, leaving a furrow of fur that ends in a quiff between his ears. Disgusted he heads for the tree before there's a second shot. The boys are after him but, knowing where he's going, he disappears up into the leafy branches.

I'm watching this from the kitchen unable to do more to help the unfortunate feline. Drinks for the boys are already outside and I have come in to prepare squash for Louise and myself. I feel in need of something stronger.

'It's lovely to see Louise and the children here.' It's my husband, Paul, who's crept up on me. 'Has Ben come with her?'

'No,' I reply. 'He's like you used to be, too busy to get away from work.'

'If I'd known what I know now, I'd have spent more time with you all,' he replies.

'I know. We always missed you.' I don't want to dwell on this, now's not the right time for sad reminiscing and 'what ifs'.

'They're beautiful children.' He's looking through the window. 'What a gorgeous little girl.' He chuckles. 'She'll be a handful if she ever catches up with them.'

'Tell me about it.' I pause for a moment. 'From what Louise says I wouldn't be surprised if they decide to go for another one.'

The ice is melting in our drinks. I'd prepare something for him, to stop him from leaving, but he doesn't need a drink. I don't want him to go, not just yet. He starts to move towards the door and I can't think of anything else to say that will keep him.

'See you later?' I ask.

He nods, 'I'll be waiting for you.'

And he's gone. I pick up the tray and carry the drinks to the garden. Paul died four years ago. For a while he visited me frequently but not so much now. Time moves differently on the other side and it's hard for him to know that our lives have moved on without him. I expect he picked up the happiness of children singing and it brought him home for a short while. I wipe my eyes, fix a smile and walk out into the dazzling sunlight.

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