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Following the party at The Weekly Global offices Ed had fought Sadie nearly all the way home and even broke loose on a couple of occasions as she tried to hail a black cab.

"Do you do this deliberately?" Sadie asked.

"Vhat ha ya talkin' aboot. Do vhat?"

"Getting so drunk that you're incapable. If you think you're getting away without satisfying me tonight, you've got another think coming," she dragged him by his tie through the apartment door to her flat.

Three cup of strong black coffee later and Ed had escaped by pleading that he needed to use the toilet. Sadie hammering on the door, threatening to break it down if he didn't come out and give her what she wanted, prompted him to climb out onto the ledge and along towards the hallway window. A neighbouring resident in this middle class suburban estate noticed Ed on the ledge. Being a good Samaritan and an humanitarian, she called not only the fire brigade, police and ambulance but also the local vicar, the Samaritans and the Salvation Army. It only needed the R.S.P.C.A. to arrive and they'd have had a full set.

If the hallway window hadn't been locked, Ed would have been through it and down the stairs before any of the emergency services arrived, but this was not to be the case. His attempt to escape had failed at the first hurdle and he was slowly edging his way back towards the open toilet window when he heard not only the wood splintering crash of Sadie breaking down the door, but also the sound of sirens approaching from a distance. He was halfway back towards the toilet window when Sadie's head appeared through the opening, and even in his inebriated state he could tell that she was less than amused.

"What the hell are you doing out there?" she shouted at him.

"S' nice nite fur ah walk," Ed slurred.

"You don't fool me that easily, you gutless little wonder. What I ever saw in you is beyond me, and I was going to let you make love to me. You can rot out there now for all I care." She slammed the window shut and Ed heard the catch being dropped.

Stuck on the ledge with the toilet window now firmly locked, Ed once again changed direction and edged himself back towards the hallway window, with the intentions of breaking the glass to get back inside again. Blue lights flashed in the car park below and firemen were inflating a safety mattress directly underneath his position on the ledge. A head appeared through the hallway window and a police negotiator started trying to talk Ed down, under the impression that he was suicidal. Ed's quick return into the building and his slurred appreciation had surprised them but not as much as his explanation of the events.

"Does this belong to you?" the policeman asked Sadie, indicating towards Ed.

"I suppose he does," Sadie replied as the policeman handed him over.

"When he's finally sober, tell him that next time we'll arrest him for drunk and disorderly and creating a public nuisance."

"Yes officer," Sadie replied closing the door. "OK It's bed for you my luck little boy," she addressed Ed.

"Ohhhhhh shit," was Ed's only comment.

Roy's body may have been unconscious on the cable car floor but his mind was far from dormant. Granted his brain rarely functioned on the higher intellectual levels, even when he was awake, but at this moment in time it didn't have any competition from the eyes. Roy's thought processes were consequently running wild, as dreams turned to nightmares and then back to dreams again. He saw in his mind's eye the memories of his childhood meandering by. It hadn't been a happy childhood by all accounts. At school he hadn't had that many friends. Not real friends anyway. Occasionally he'd been invited to join in with the other kids, but it quite often turned out to be their need for a scapegoat as opposed to real friendship. Roy had more often than not played alone in the city streets.

Even his own sister had teased him constantly throughout secondary school. Being only two years older than Roy and the product of a previous relationship of Diane Pratt's, Sadie had regarded a half-witted, half-brother, as a burden rather than a bonus. She begrudged being referred to as the idiot's sister. Even in her early teens Sadie had grand plans for her own future. Her biggest problem was her fierce temper. Being a red head she'd inherited the temper gene and spent a considerable proportion of her school life outside of the headmistress's door. Despite her own cruelty towards Roy though she still defended him if she heard anyone saying bad things about him. In fact about ninety percent of the trouble Sadie had landed in at school was related to defending Roy.

To give Sadie her due, since leaving school she'd always been there for him and in a way Roy appreciated everything she'd done. Until the age of 32 he'd lived with his mother, Diane and Donald had long since parted company and gone their separate ways. After his mother's death he was left with a dilemma. Not only had he lost his closest living relative but he'd also lost a cook, cleaner, laundress and general provider. At the age of thirty-two he was faced with the prospect of having to fend for himself. He needn't have worried that much though. Sadie had taken him home after the funeral and he'd moved to south London the next week. A job at Mc Doggies soon followed and finally the position he now held at The Weekly Global.

His sub-conscious mind wandered onto images of old wartime movies that he'd seen as a child. He could hear shooting and in his mind's eye a spitfire was dog fighting with a Messerschmitt over the Kent coast. Soldiers swarmed ashore from landing craft on the beaches of Normandy in another image and soon these were replaced with men crawling across a bullet-strewn bridge as it suddenly exploded. Gunfire and explosions were all around him as his mind wandered.

The wartime images in Roy's mind were swallowed by a warm blanket as a deeper level of unconsciousness swept over him. He was a baby in his mother's arms. His father was screaming at her for something or other. He couldn't quite make out what was being said. All he was aware of was a sense of fear. He knew he'd been the cause of their argument. His father had never liked him since he was born. Sadie was a different matter though. She had been the apple of his eye. She could do nothing wrong and her stepfather went out of his way to show affection for her.

Roy on the other hand had been pushed aside. He remembered a time when he was about five years old. He'd wanted to go fishing with his father but was told that he was too young. Sadie though had been going fishing with her father every Sunday for the last year and she wasn't even keen to go.

"Do I really have to go fishing?" she would ask.

"It will get you out from under your mother's feet," her stepfather would insist.

When their mother suggested that taking Roy would give her a complete break, his father had made an excuse that Roy was too stupid and would fall into the river. For some reason his father never really wanted him to accompany them.

The next image creeping into his mind was discovering the reason why Sadie had been her stepfather's favourite. Roy had sneaked out and followed them to the river one day. They'd never once attempted to cast a line into the water and carried their fishing tackle into the surrounding woodland. Roy hadn't followed any further, the darkness of the thick undergrowth had been foreboding and being a nervous individual at the best of times, Roy had just wandered back home again.

Sadie gradually changed over the following years. The sparkle from her eyes went and a grim determination to succeed had overtaken her. Her relationships with boys had all been extremely short. He couldn't remember one of which had lasted more than a few weeks. Sadie became a very bitter and angry girl. Her redheaded temper overflowed on more than one occasion, which contributed towards her reputation for unpredictability. Roy could remember the talk of the other boys in his year. None of it was flattering to his older sister and many references were made to wild animals.

Another burst of gunfire cut through his thoughts. An image of a wounded soldier appeared in his mind. A bloodied bandage wrapped around the soldier's head and rivulets of blood streaming down his cheek. His own head throbbed as bright lights flashed across the canvas of his imagination. The soldier was gone and a teenager had replaced him. Sadie had finished school the previous month and left home almost immediately. It was the summer holidays and as usual Roy was all alone. To pass away the long summer hours, Roy had taken up fishing. It hadn't required much intelligence and was a solitary pastime. He never actually caught anything but then he'd never figured out that you had to put bait on the hook. This vital flaw in his reasoning had followed Roy throughout his life. No matter what he attempted to do, one vital component was always forgotten.

As the cable car swayed on its mounting, Roy remembered the time he'd been strung from a tree at a children's camp. Even then he'd been the brunt of everybody else's

jokes. Not once could he remember a time when the other kids were nice to him. Not even the younger ones had shown him any kind of respect. Roy was pathetic and even he knew it. He'd grown up alone, lived his life alone and would probably die alone. If his life flashing before his eyes was anything to go by, that might be sooner than he'd originally thought.

His latest predicament finally came back into his mind. He'd achieved a certain level of success. He was a reporter and an international one at that. OK he'd missed the Queen's visit to Gibraltar, but that was just teething troubles. He was new. When he'd started at Mc Doggies the junior manager had declared that Roy was so stupid he'd never manage to fill the fries bucket with a double-ended scoop. Granted, it had taken a few weeks to figure out that the small end of the scoop fitted into the box better than the large one, but he'd mastered it eventually. After two years he'd even received his fourth star. He was proud of that star. They hadn't even insisted on him returning the badge after he'd left the job to become a reporter. Roy could see himself now, standing on the stage receiving an award for the best news story of the year. One day he'd be famous and then he'd show all those other kids at school just who he was. One of these days his face would be on the front page of every newspaper in the world. That was if he survived the crack on his skull. Otherwise it would be a photo of his coffin.

The sound of explosions shattered his thoughts once more, the thought of a fateful day in chemistry class filtered back into his mind. It wasn't his fault that the chemicals had become wet. He only put them under the tap because they looked dirty. The resultant destruction of the chemistry block had signalled the last science lesson of his educational life. Roy left school with no 'O' levels and no CSE's. He'd been lucky to get the job at Mc Doggies. The basic requirement was for at least three 'O' levels in order to operate the cash register. Roy spent his first six months in the job filling the fries boxes until he was promoted to wiping tables.

White fluffy clouds drifted across his thoughts again as he slipped into deeper unconsciousness and out of his previous dream like state. His life had finished flashing before his eyes. The clouds dissipated and the blue sky slowly darkened towards blackness, his thoughts were no more. Even Roy's subconscious had decided to take a break from being in charge of the show as he slipped peacefully into some kind of oblivion.