

"Mr Loveday`s Little Outing"

Short story written by Evelyn Waugh(1903-1966).

The story revolves around the themes of madness, crime and recidivism. The action starts at the "County Home for Mental Defectives". Lord Moping, who belongs to a rich and aristocratic family is an inmate at the hospital due to the fact that many years before, he had tried to take his life. On one occasion, Lady Moping and his daughter Angela, pay a visit to him. Once there, they meet Mr Loveday who, at this stage, becomes a nuclear character in the story. "Everybody loves him, staff and patients alike" He is the life and soul of the place. He helps everybody there, does different kinds of favours to the inmates, plays cards with them, repairs their gramophones etc. The Director informs Lady Moping and Angela that during his youth, he had been taken to the asylum after having been accused of throttling a young woman. The Director also informs that "...he gave himself up immediately afterwards and has been here ever since". That had happened many years before. For some mysterious reason, Angela becomes interested in Mr Loveday's persona and asks him if he would like to have a little outing and taste freedom for some time. At Mr Loveday's affirmative answer, and after some bureaucratic procedures, she succeeds in getting the outing for Mr Loveday. What happens next is very unexpected and provides a lot of food for thought on the issues of madness, behavioral and mental diseases. Scholars and scientists from Rutgers University researched on this particular story and Mr Loveday's personality only to conclude that very little is known about the mysteries of the mechanisms that rule the human brain.

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" The Fly in the Ointment"

Short story written by Sir Victor Sawdon Pritchett (1900-1997).

The action takes place during times of economic turmoil. Harold is a young lecturer at a provincial institution. He visits his father who has just gone bankrupt due to his greed and dishonesty. " The old man was a crook and his balance sheets were cooked", Harold reflects. His father seems to be strong and self-confident, he shows himself unaffected by the economic depression. However, when a simple fly enters the room, he feels very upset and tries to kill it unsuccessfully. His discourse changes completely and now he becomes vulnerable, insecure and very concerned about his financial situation. When Harold suggests that he could raise some money for him, his reaction is that of a desperate man, showing a dreadful thirst for money. He is like the fly in the ointment.. But for his corruption, he could have been successful. It is an interesting story to reflect on the real thing or the relative value of material possessions.

"The Force of Circumstance" is an amazing, stunning short story written by the outstanding writer Somerset Maugham (1874-1965). The action takes place in remote Malaysia, probably at the beginning of the 20th century. A happily married couple, Guy and Doris, live in a kind of cottage in a wilderness area. They love the beauties of Nature. Everything seems to run smoothly until one day a mysterious dark-skinned woman starts wandering around the idyllic cottage. As from that turning-point, the

action takes an unexpected twist which leads into an even more unexpected ending. Intriguing, with drops of suspense and ambiguity, this story can be recommended to all English language lovers. If you happen to read it, we could exchange comments and viewpoints on it.

Until next short story! LOL, Alice

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"The Voyage" is a delicious short story written by Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923). It is well worth the time it takes to read for it is full of messages and symbols. The story is about the voyage Fenella Crane is going to make to Picton, New Zealand. She is a 5-6 year old girl, tame and obedient who is travelling with her grandmother to her grandparents' home. She has just lost her mother and her father, who is apparently broke, sends her away for he cannot support her any more. What Fenella encounters at her destination, is her grandfather who is bedridden. Both the voyage itself and something she sees on her grandfather's bed, will change her whole existence for ever. The climax of the story arises at this point. The theme is connected with the passing of time and the ephemeral aspect of human life. When I finished reading it, I immediately remembered Calderón de la Barca and also Serrat's words: "Todo pasa y todo queda pero lo nuestro es pasar haciendo caminos sobre la mar".

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"The confidant"

If you ever travel to Australia, you will probably stand in awe at the beauty of the huge greenish plains, the surprising amount of sheep, strange species of colourful birds and the sweet wild flowers softly shaken by the breeze.

Abigail Trump lived there, in a tiny village called Maryborough. Her big inviting cottage stood near a hill surrounded by a neat garden which fit the scenery perfectly well.

That night would be very special as Abigail would be celebrating her 80th birthday and some old friends and a distant cousin would be coming from nearby villages in their old and noisy cars.

Abigail was single. Once, she had fallen in love, that was all. She just had a sister called Emma who lived in London with her only child, Jeremy. The "boy" was 22

and was studying Law at Oxford. Jeremy was her aunt's pride. "Someday he will be a brilliant lawyer", she would often say.

But Abigail lived so far away.

Her only company was Emily, a 60 year-old lady, with small and bright black eyes, grey hair always bunned. Emily was talkative and extroverted. To Abigail, she was the housekeeper, the secretary, the nurse, the friend and also the confidant.

Abigail felt that she was part of her family; there was a sort of secret communication between them, a mysterious and intimate shared communication only perceived by sensitive visitors.

- *Emily! Where are you Emily?*

- *Yes, Miss Abigail. I was watering the red roses, they look especially fresh and happy for your birthday!*

- *You always add a romantic touch to everything, Emily, she sighed. (Pause)*
How is everything getting on?

- *Well, if you mean the food, everything is ready in the refrigerator: the sandwiches, plum pies, apple pies, cakes, cantaloupes, pineapples and lots of drinks. Everything suitable for this terrible February heat.*

- *What about the icecreams?*

- *Mark phoned this morning. Everything will be here at 6 o'clock.*

- *Good. Have you found the old cotton thread napkins?,... the ones embroidered by my dear mother?*

- *Oh yes, Miss Abigail. They were at the bottom of that big box, remember at the attic?*

- *Yes. How many did you find?*

- *All of them. I washed the 12 napkins, ironed them and folded them nicely.*

- *Oh, thank you Emily. What about the silver chandelier?*

- *It is already glittering in the dining- room. Do not worry, Miss Abigail. Old Emily has already taken care of everything for you to have a perfect birthday party.*

- *Thank you very much Emily. Sometimes I wonder. What would I do without you?*

- *I will always be around Miss Abigail. We have shared so many moments, sweet ones and also bitter sometimes...but always together...(Pause) Do you remember your 50th birthday?*

- *How could I forget?*

- *It was the hottest February ever heard of. Nearly 90 people came that night.
It was such a nice celebration! Remember Lord Turtleton?*

- *Yes, Lord Turtleton (Showing disappointment)*

- *He could have been a good husband but for...*

- *Bur for his alcoholism and his dreams of glory... Oh, my God!*

- *So many remembrances. And tonight, in a way, we are going to bring those
memories back.*

- *Shhhh!...Listen to that music on the radio: "As time goes by", listen to that
sweet piano...It's such a beautiful song! By the way, it is time for my pill.*

- *Yes, Miss Abigail.*

After a minute, Emily came back with a glass of water and a white pill which Abigail swallowed boringly.

- *Emily, I think I will rest for a while on the sofa, it is so hot. The fans are not*

enough. Wake me up when Mark comes.

- *Yes, Miss Abigail*

- *And please, turn on the garden lights when he comes. The house should look bright.*

- *Yes, Miss Abigail.*

Apparently, everything was ready for the attractive birthday party to take place at 9.

But Emily never turned on the lights.

She turned them off instead.

She also unplugged the refrigerator.

It was empty, no pies, no cakes, no fruits, no drinks. Nobody had been invited.

Just loneliness and emptiness. Mark would never come. He had died 5 years before.

There would not be a party at Abigail's house that night.

Distractingly, Emily started humming the sweet melody..." As time goes by"

Then she went to the dining- room.

She took her glittering chandelier and giggling, tip- toed upstairs.

She was very, very happy as she had always wanted to sleep on Abigail's antique bed.

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