

September News!

latest news from Diane Wordsworth's newsletter



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Bye, bye September!

Hey {{ contact.FIRSTNAME | default : "there" }}. How are you?

I can't believe that we are already at the end of my favourite month of the year. September seems to have flown by. We had a lot of time off, but we have been very busy.

Moving house

The house move is complete! And I am so happy to be in a bungalow again.

We finally gave the keys back to the old house on Sunday just gone after an intensive few days of emptying the house, the garden, the garage and the shed as well as dusting, cleaning, Hoovering, carpet cleaning, floor-mopping, and so on. We took both cars over several times a day and brought them both back, packed to the roof with

'stuff'.

No wonder we're exhausted this week.

At the new house we have several rooms that are at least liveable, but this week the big job was sorting out the office. We're both working in the same office, which I quite like.

The poet is currently having a work meeting on Teams. I thought it might be a bit distracting as he can be a bit shouty, especially when he's speaking to colleagues in Europe. But it's not really bothering me at all. I daresay he might have something to say about my loud, clacky keyboard, and I daresay it might be a different story if I was writing or editing something.

We still have boxes and bags in the hallway - before this week the 'boxroom' was the office - but the poet has made a pathway through the garage, so he can at least get around in there. The shed is full and so is the greenhouse, and that means we won't be doing a great deal in the garden.

Saying that, it is pear harvest in the garden and I've already made a pear and almond crumble 8-portion pudding, using conference pears from the garden.



Conference pears from the garden.



WW Pear & Almond crumble with double cream on his and Total 0% fat free Greek yoghurt on mine.

September publications

Despite all of this, I still managed to publish four books during September:

- Destination Desire: a Wordsworth flash fiction
- Where's There's Smoke: a Wordsworth flash fiction
- Crime Doesn't Pay: a Wordsworth short
- Five Slightly Sinister Short Stories: a Wordsworth collection

All of these books can be found on my Books2Read page [here](#).

Blog posts

I also managed to write up a few blog posts, which you can find on my blog [here](#).

And that, I'm afraid, is all I have to share this time.

Have a fab October!

Here's your free short story

Wordsworth Shorts



- Diane Wordsworth -

going, going, gone

going, going, gone

There was no doubt about it. The music box Grandad had brought back from Italy after the war was hideous. It looked like Walt Disney's castle, in a gaudy way, and was allegedly part of a pair. But it was tasteless and tacky and now it was gone. Instead of feeling elation, though, Abigail was distraught.

"I have to find it," she told her friend.

"But it sounds vile," said Laura. "You should be grateful the house clearance people took it. They normally leave tat like that behind." She took a sip from her Archers. "Where's the problem?"

"It was Grandad's music box," wailed Abigail, glugging her own Bacardi Breezer.

"I thought you said he died ages ago."

"He did. But his ashes are in it."

For as long as Abigail could remember the dreaded music box had taken pride of place on Granny's mantelpiece. She had never heard a single note, due

mainly to the contents, but also because Granny kept it well and truly locked.

Granny often spoke of the day she'd be reunited with her husband. Abigail had yet to find a man who would instil in her that kind of loyalty. But she lived in hope. And to keep her in on the pact, Granny had given Abigail the key, making her swear to do her bidding. She'd simply forgot to mention what, precisely, that bidding was.

Now Granny had gone...but so had Grandad's ashes.

"I have to bring it back," declared Abigail, determined. She had no idea where to start, but now the decision had been made she was able to move on. "Not a word to Mum," she warned. "The less she knows about this, the better. She'd be mortified if she knew what had happened. She's the one who arranged the house clearance before she and Dad went to the seaside."

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The house clearance people were easy enough to find, but once Abigail described the item, her spirits dropped again.

"Sorry, duck," said the old man, pushing his cap to the back of his head. "That music box was so 'orrible we didn't think anyone would want to buy it."

"What did you do with it?"

He scratched his head, then repositioned the cap so the peak came down over his eyebrows. "I think 'e put it in for the auction. That's next week. In Warwickshire I think. It'll already be there, no doubt. Or on its way. They like 'em a week or so in advance so's the punters can examine the goods, like."

"Do you have the address?" asked Abigail, scrabbling in her bag for a pen and paper.

"Nah. But it'll be on the Internet. I can give you a website address."

Abigail made a note of the URL and found everything she needed to know on the website. It wasn't *too* far away, in a little place called Knowle, which wasn't in Warwickshire any more in any case. She could take a couple of days off work and drive over there.

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When it starts to rain in England it forgets to stop. It was banging down on the street outside the tiny auction room, which was probably rarely stuffed with so many people.

Abigail had never been to an auction before. "What if I run out of money?" she asked Laura. "It's probably worth £30, but I'll only have about £100 on me."

"Just shake your head. Make it clear you've gone as high as you can. But if it's only worth £30, you should be fine."

Now, as rain hammered down outside, Abigail played with the tiny key she'd hung on a chain around her neck. "Look after that," Granny had said. "It's very precious. I'll need it if I'm to be reunited with your grandad."

The music box was lot 144. She'd already been and looked at it about a hundred times, but she went to have another look. The lots were displayed around the room on plinths with numbers on them to match the lot numbers. A little man in a brown overall scuttled to and fro whenever a lot was due. They were currently on number 36. There was ages yet so she felt quite safe sneaking in another peek.

Oh no! Who was that? Someone was looking at her music box. He was tall with dark messy hair that was cut short in some attempt to tame it. But the rain had caused it to curl and stand up about his ears. He looked quite cute...what was he doing? This man was handling her music box, turning it upside down. Poor Grandad! Why? He couldn't possibly like it. It was grotesque.

Abigail kept her eye on the tall stranger who, while he did have a bit of a browse, kept returning to *her* music box. The house clearance man had told her no one would be interested in the horrid thing. So who was this?

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When lot 143 was called, Abigail made her way back to the action. The brown-clad man had moved her music box closer to the podium. She was frustrated to see that the tall stranger was suddenly interested too. Hopefully he'd be her only competition. But even that was too much.

The bidding started at just £10, alternating between Abigail and the man. He kept bettering her by five pounds, so she did the same. When they got to £50, it started jumping up by £10 a time. How did that happen? Neither of them had said anything. Abigail didn't even wave her stick with the number on any more. The auctioneer knew it was just between the two of them.

Seventy pounds now, and Abigail's turn. She nodded. Eighty. He nodded. Ninety. She nodded. A hundred. That was her limit. He nodded. Abigail hated him. One hundred and ten. She hesitated. There was always her petrol money. Abigail nodded. One hundred and twenty. He didn't even pause, just nodded straight away. One hundred and thirty.

She had just one more fiver.

"Your bid," said the auctioneer.

Abigail took a deep breath and held up her hand showing all five fingers. Her heart was racing. This was her maximum.

"One thirty-five," said the auctioneer. The man nodded. "One forty." He looked at Abigail. "Your bid, madam."

She burst into tears and dashed out into the rain. She didn't even hear the auctioneer's 'going, going, gone', but she knew he must have said it. All she could actually hear was a rushing through her head. It turned out to be traffic swooshing by on the wet road.

Through tear-filled eyes and the heavy curtain of rain, she watched until she saw a break in the steady stream of cars. Then she ran across the road, head

down, and into the small church that was almost opposite. She plonked herself down a few pews from the back and sobbed her heart out. Grandad was lost to her, and Granny, now.

"Oh Gran," she whispered. "I've let you down so badly." Then she cried quite softly until all of her grief was spent.

"Here," said a deep American voice from the pew behind. She glanced over her shoulder to see a folded man's white handkerchief being passed to her. She held up her tissue to show that she was fine, thanks. But seeing how sodden and useless it was, she smiled weakly and took the hanky.

"Thanks." She dabbed carefully at her nose, not wanting to spoil the pristine cloth. She kept her face down thinking she must look a fright.

"Oh, give it a good old blow," said the American. She did so, making a honking great noise, and started to hand it back to him. As it squelched in her hand, she changed her mind.

"I'll wash it for you," she said.

"Sure," said the American, standing up and making his way to her side. He held out a hand. "The name's Toby Vincenzo -"

"Oh," she said, flatly, fighting the fury as she saw his face. "It's you."

"Gee, I'm sorry, Miss ...?" She didn't fill him in. "Well, I didn't think it was something worth crying over," he said. "It's only an old musical box. Not a very nice one at that. And the key's missing -"

"*Only* a musical box?" she spat, shuffling along the wooden seat. "It's *only* my grandad in there. That's all. It contains his ashes." The American's face froze. That changed his tune. She reached inside her shirt and waved the chain at him. "Here's the key."

Toby tried to hide a smirk that was tugging at his lips. "I'm glad you find it so funny," said Abigail, shivering. "I've taken a day off work and followed that music box halfway across the county to have it snatched from under my nose. And it's hideous, as you've just said, so why do you want it?"

The American's face sobered again. "I've followed that musical box halfway across the *world*," he said, calmly. "It's cost me a lot of money and I've taken a month off work. It might be hideous, but my own grandfather made it before he emigrated to the States. It's one of a pair. Yours is Cinderella's Castle, my granma's is Sleeping Beauty's. She wanted this one to make the set after I saw it on the Internet. I had a bit of a rush to get here in time. My grandfather passed away last year, but it would have been their seventieth wedding anniversary next month."

"Oh." Abigail felt churlish.

He sat down beside her and she shivered again, so he removed his jacket and draped it across her shoulders. The jacket felt warm and comfortable and had a nice, friendly smell about it.

"You weren't to know," he said. "Just like I didn't know your grandpop's remains were in there." He



paused. "Why was it in the sale?"

Abigail poured out the whole story, drawing comfort from Toby's jacket and closeness. When she'd finished he said: "Shall we go and liberate him?" Abigail nodded and the two of them skipped out of the church and back into the auction room. "You do the honours," he said.

Abigail slid the key into the lock and clicked it once to the side. The box opened to the sound of Strauss, and a little drawer popped out at the bottom too.

It was empty. Spotless. Abigail was stunned. She felt all of the fight leave her body. The entire episode had been a complete waste of time - and of Toby's money. Grandad was gone.

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"Don't forget to drop by before you leave England," she said to him after a cup of coffee. She was still coming to terms with her disappointment but there was nothing either of them could do. "I have to let you have your handkerchief back."

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"I've got some really bad news," Abigail said to her mother the following day. "Let's have a nice cup of tea."

Out came the whole story once again, but instead of being angry or upset, Abigail's mother smiled sympathetically.

"Oh, Abby. Your grandad's already safe. What did you think me and your dad were doing at the seaside? Mum got a bit forgetful after he died and got steadily worse, but I already knew the plan for the ashes to be scattered together where they honeymooned. I cleaned out that ghastly music box and practically paid those people to take it away."

"But the key..."

"I forgot to give it to them." She got up from the table and walked across to the kitchen drawer, fishing the tiny key from the cutlery tray. "Your gran gave me a key too. Perhaps when your lovely American gets here, you can pass it on."

She also fished out a little burgundy box. "This was supposed to be for you on your twenty-fifth birthday."

Abigail took the box from her mother and opened it. Inside, on a bed of blue velvet, lay the most perfect locket, oval in shape with the name 'Abigail' etched onto the face. Abby opened the locket to find a picture of her grandparents on one side, and another of the three of them when she was a very young child on the other. And nestling between were two curly locks of hair, tied together with a ribbon.

"Dad's ashes weren't the only thing Mum kept in that box. She kept this safe in the little drawer."

"Oh, Mum. It's terrific."

Just then the doorbell rang and Abigail went to greet an armful of red roses. The message on the card said: 'See you at the weekend, love Toby xxx'



the end

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**Diane Wordsworth**

Doncaster, England

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