

## The Shed

By Mariam George

Yippee...I'm going to have a make-over. I hope it won't be drastic. I have been certified fit by a surveyor, even though he kept poking me everywhere and thumping me occasionally. I take pride in my identity but I must admit that I do look rather shabby with my faded paint work peeling away, dents in my plaster and my creaky door. Now the creaky door is a real nuisance: the rusty hinges wail painfully even with the slightest touch; and it keeps jamming – have I put on a few pounds? A trim may be in order. A thorough rubbing down and a bit of oiling should fix the problem; although I must say the creak does have its uses. It serves as a warning signal of someone entering. That was how I met my new young owners, Rob and Daphne, who were introduced to me by my previous owners, the Cricks. Sprightly and enthusiastic, they assessed me, looking up and down, left and right, every nook and corner, inspecting every fine detail....They even took out a measuring tape to make marks on the floor.. 'nearly as bad as the surveyors,' I thought. I heard them discussing topics like space, light, practicality and Daphne suggesting to Rob;

"You could easily fit your table with the woodwork tools in this corner and I'll have my art stuff across there. We'll be here at different times and won't bump into each other."

"Looks spacious enough for that." agreed Rob adding, "That corner next to the shelf will be sufficient for the kids' outdoor toys too."

The mention of kids made me excited. I wondered how old they were; was I getting girls or boys; what were they called; what were their hobbies. I found out soon enough as they moved in a few weeks later and was introduced to eight year old Jake and six year old Eliza. They were exuberant and joyful. The thud of feet, the peals of laughter and the tantrums (of course!), were sorely missed when the Crick children grew up and left home. Welcome Back!

I hope the new family are barbecue fans too. Now we're talking. The Cricks loved getting together with family and friends in the summer, the delicious aroma of food filling the air, ball games on the lawn, (generally resulting in me being hit on more occasions than I wish to remember) and endless rounds of hide and seek with my frame at the centre and a towering apple tree protecting precious hidiers from their seeker and muffling each of their whisper. The corner where I stand has always been a popular spot for hiding.

In a way, I too am partially hidden by the hedge and bushes and the creepy clematis camouflaging me. My obscure position allows me to have clear view of the garden and its winding stone path leading to patio, conservatory and house. Since my friends – the apple tree and clematis – and I witness the same incidents during the day, we often have a critical analysis of the days' events after the sun goes down usually agreeing on most. Never was a dull moment, apart from the long cold winter months when the apple tree and clematis go into their quiet mode.

The only exception was Mr Crick's visits. From time to time, he used to visit me with some books; put the heater on; make some tea; sit in the red, old tatty armchair reading and sipping tea from his enamel mug. I often wondered the reason behind this particular behaviour. Logically speaking, the house seemed far too spacious for the two of them and they seemed happy together. Then why choose to be in my cold abode during the cold, harsh winter? Maybe they both had an argument and he was sulking. Or could she be nagging him too much? It has been an enigma to me to this day. Certain questions never get answered, but leave their unique marks which remain memorable for future pondering. However, these occasional visits did warm me both physically and mentally. I would prefer to think that he used to miss me as much as I did and this was his way of keeping in touch.

Except for the very cold winter months, I never felt too lonely as the Cricks were enthusiastic gardeners, either potting or sowing, all through autumn and spring although the visits were not as frequent as during summertime. More so after both had retired, either to get the tools or the feeds or the seeds, labelled and kept in a cupboard with lots of cubicles at the far end of the room. One of Cricks' friends had built it for them. Mr Crick had painted it and my door, a type of dark blue grey, which he used to retouch occasionally during their spring clean. It hasn't been done recently though. Various feeds like Ericaceous, general, orchid and bonsai were categorised and stacked away systematically. All the tools cleaned and hung on hooks or stacked against the walls. But I must confess, recently they were a bit haphazard about cleaning their wellies and garden tools, which dirty my floor. I shouldn't complain as it's not often. Maybe, they were too tired or in a hurry.

Creek.. creek...I suddenly realised that it's my door. Rob and Daphne had walked in, the sun silhouetting them, both in their tatty jeans, gloves on their hands ready to continue with my face lift. They had already filled my dents and painted the walls. A very neutral colour most people go for...magnolia...but I'm

glad they decided to stick with the same dark blue grey for the door and cupboard. Moving the cupboard wasn't as easy as they had anticipated. Size and sturdiness made the job quite demanding both physically and skilfully. However, I was impressed by their communication; "Left, a bit to the right", "Steady, steady, straight and slowly try to push", "Just a bit more and angle the back to the west wall", went on the commands to each other. They manoeuvred it well into its place and went on to stack away their gardening stuff from the boxes they had brought earlier.

Over a couple of days, Rob's woodworking table and tools came followed by Daphne's art materials. However, the best part was when Daphne decided to do a small mural depicting bugs, caterpillars, butterflies, flowers and plants where the children's toys were stored. The adults weren't ignored. A cockerel near Rob's working area and a small hen around her work space, finishing off with a small clock over a swan notice board on the adjacent wall near the door. The hinge on my creaky door was oiled and I felt elated to have my very first ornament.... a willow heart on my door. They have introduced a few friends to me in terracotta pots, beautiful variegated leaved plants called Hosta's. Finally one day, they came with Jake and Eliza to show them their 'new' old garden shed with their special toy corner. The "wow wee" and "that's awesome", said it all for me as they wandered around curiously, inspecting everything and maybe drifting off into their own bug filled world. The addition of a wicker chair with grey cushions, to fit in the corner near the table made me feel truly special. I do hope, they too will use it often to keep me company in the cold, dark winter months and bring a heater too. Be it to sulk or to keep in touch with me...

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Creative Writing July 2020