



Dreams of Love and Intrigue

Compilation of Short Stories

By

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Sofia's Tale

By

Greta Ann Hughes

Sofia's Tale

Sofia awoke with a start. What had the dream meant? Could her darling Jeremy have been taken away from her just as she had got to know him again?

It had been a very lonely month without him. She had started to do some of the things that had been put to one side around their new home. It was an old farmhouse, which hadn't been lived in for a long time. The main part of the house needed very little doing to it. A good clean from top to bottom and paint to brighten the rooms. The ceilings were high, with old-fashioned chandeliers, giving the place a look of grandeur, even though the house was way out in the country.

Jeremy had been the one to find the house. He had an eye for the unusual and was good at bargaining. They got the place for a song, even though Sofia felt very sorry for the old lady selling the property. It had been in her family for a long long time, but she had fallen onto hard times and with her health not being as good as it used to be, she was having to move out into a nursing home. With the little savings that she had and the sale of her home, she would be able to live at the nursing home without too little discomfort.

The house was called Theodora, which the old lady was named after. She told a tale of a sinister death, where even today the ghost was supposedly still seen. The death had been that of her great great grandfather, who after riding home late one evening came upon two vagabonds breaking down the front door. Behind this hid his wife, Matilda, so frightened that they would gain entrance and kill her and her darling son Frederick.

He beat one off quite easily, as the thief didn't expect the sudden attack from behind. The other one had time to gain his ground and pull out the knife from the belt around his waist. He plunged the knife straight into the heart. There was no chance that he could have survived such a wound as that. He died almost at once, but as he lay there, he uttered a curse that who so ever may raise a hand against any female who was to live in the house from that day on, he would haunt, hunt and finally kill the assailant.

So having been told this and being young as they were, they paid no heed to the story.

Yet again Jeremy had been working late, there was always some urgent deadline to be met. You would think that in this day and age of the computer, the internet and e-mail, that the day to day running of an office should be easy. But this was not so. People still kept things to themselves until the last moment. Running in and wanting the job done without even a thought for anyone else. And as usual, it fell on Jeremy to sort the problems out.

On this particular day he had had enough. Why couldn't they for once think of the one they were dropping this off on? He rang Sofia to say that he was going to be late home, yet again. He may even stop off on his way home for a quick drink to try and wind down from the day's mental stresses.

By the time Jeremy arrived home it was very late. He blundered about in the living room. He shrugged off his coat and left it where it fell. He went straight to the drinks cabinet and filled a tumbler full of whiskey. Damn it all, if he was going to get drunk, he

might as well do it properly. There was a note left on the coffee table from Sofia saying that whatever time he arrived home to wake her and she would be there for him. She knew the problems he had at work and said that she was always there to listen to him. She wanted nothing to come between them.

They had such a close relationship that at times it was as if they were Siamese twins. During the last couple of months since finding out that they were to have the baby that Sofia wanted so badly, they had been almost inseparable. It came as such a shock to Sofia that Jeremy had hit out at her with such a force, that she stumbled back against the oak cabinet and finally came to in the early hours of the next morning. Shivering in the cold as the heating had gone off, she made her way unsteadily to their bedroom. Unsure of whether to go in or not, Sofia hesitated at the doorway, then turned and walked into the bedroom at the far end of the house. This room was still unfurnished and was mainly used as a storage room until they had finished off the main part of the house. She lay down on the unmade bed, covered over only by her dressing gown. She wept silently, the tears coursing their way down her cheeks, to leave damp patches on the bare pillow.

When Sofia awoke the next morning, she wondered where she was. Finally fully awake she went hurriedly to their bedroom. Jeremy had gone. His clothes were still where he had dropped them the previous night. She wondered again, why he had reacted like he had. It was so unlike him. Although he was given to outburst verbally, always against others and not her, this had been so uncharacteristic.

She went through the daily chores in a semi trance. She hesitated by the telephone several times during the morning, wondering whether to ring Jeremy or wait to hear from

him. The phone remained silent. The day turned into early evening. Sofia prepared the evening meal expecting her husband to arrive home at the usual time.

When he didn't show, Sofia then started to get really worried. She rang his office, but there was no answer. She rang the police, but until someone had been missing for longer than what Jeremy had, they couldn't do anything.

Sofia sat and listened to the wind, which had begun earlier in the evening to howl around the house. It sounded like someone who had gone mad. She finally fell asleep on the sofa. There came a loud crash, Sofia sat upright, staring around madly. Her eyes came to rest on a dark patch on the carpet just in front of her. Her hand groped for the light switch and in a flood of light the realisation that this was blood made her hand go to her mouth to hold back the scream which was waiting to come out.

She went running from room to room calling out for Jeremy. Her echoes were the only thing that came back.

Suddenly a deep chill filled her heart. The memory of the story, which Theodora had told to them, came to her. She was suddenly very afraid that ghosts could come back.

Who could she turn to? The police would very likely think that she had gone mad. She had no living relatives, she solely depended upon Jeremy as her friend, as well as being her husband.

She went outside, the wind had calmed and the moon was full and bright in the sky, lighting up the whole area she was able to search around the gardens. It was then that she

noticed that there was a light flickering out in the summerhouse. Who could be there at this time of the night? Venturing forwards, using the grass to cover any noise she may have made. She turned the handle slowly, although this was not used the door made little noise as it inched its way open. There lying in a chair in the far corner, she could make out a shape. Slowly and on tiptoe Sofia made her way to it.

Throwing back the cover she found Jeremy. His eyes shot wide open and upon seeing Sofia he reached out and held her tightly. His own eyes were ringed red by the tears he had shed. Once they had pulled themselves apart, he said that he had stayed in the summerhouse all day. Taking glances at the house and seeing the shadow of Sofia as she moved about. He was so ashamed of what he had done and not knowing if Sofia would be able to forgive him, he had remained there all day.

Now tired, cold and very hungry and still clinging to Sofia, they made their way back to the house. Sofia told him about the blood stain, which she had seen on the living room carpet, and on checking this they could find no trace of it. She also confided that she had thought about the story, which had been told to them by Theodora. After realising what the stain could have been, the reflection of the moonlight striking through the vase of flowers, they laughed.

The only thing the dead could do to them was to give them strange thoughts.

So now with the memory of Theodora's story receding to the back of their minds, they climbed the stairs to their bedroom together and to share their love with the rising of the

sun.

The End

Kitty's Life

By

Greta Ann Hughes

Kitty's Life

Kitty wanted for nothing. She was well cared for and loved by all the family. It was a large family. There was mamma and papa, with their three sons and two daughters. Jeremy the eldest son had been married for the past four years and had a two year old daughter of his own, Philippa. Marcia the second eldest daughter was also married and had recently had a baby , her name was Jessica. The other three children, two boys and girl were still at home. The youngest of the family, Katrina, had met with a fatal accident just six months earlier. She had been on a skiing holiday with some friends, when the cable car she was travelling in, had broken free from its cable and plummeted to the ground. Her closest friend Sabrina had survived the accident. Katrina was sadly missed by everyone. Each weekend the family got together and it was as if they had all been apart for months, instead of just for a few days. The house was always alive with laughter, even now after the tragic accident.

The house was a huge Victorian building, set in its own grounds. Within the grounds there was a small but wonderful woodland. Planted under the canopy of trees were delicate plants, flowering in an abundance of colour that caught the suns rays coming through the leafy boughs. All the children had played here from an early age, with little chance of coming to any harm. Within the woodland there were hundreds of butterflies, fluttering by and adding their own colours. The sound of bird song filled the air and you could also hear the scampering of tiny feet of the squirrels who were in search of food.

It was on one of these Sunday gatherings that late in the afternoon, all of the youngest

children set off to go and play hide and seek in the woods. Kitty followed at a distance, as she hadn't been asked along. Valerie, who was the shy one, was chosen to be the one to come and find them. As she began to count to one hundred, she thought she caught a glimpse of someone very familiar to her. She shook her head, it must surely be a trick of the light. Reaching the count of one hundred and calling out "coming, ready or not", Valerie turned around quickly, hoping to catch any one of them who may have been standing behind her. But no one was there.

As Valerie skipped along, peeping under the thick shrubs and behind the hedges, she still had the feeling that someone was watching her. It wasn't like when she had played hide and seek before, when she knew that it was her own brothers, peeping out to see if they were to be caught in the game. As she neared the next hiding place, a small makeshift hut, that they themselves had made years ago, she heard quiet giggling coming from inside.

Quickly jumping in, Valerie joyfully shouted, "caught you". Indeed she had, because for more times than they could count on, they always ended up in the hut. She sat down and with a slight shiver she started to tell them all about the feeling of being watched. Each one of them said that they had felt something too. But not one of them could pinpoint from where they thought they were being observed.

They sat and chatted and told each other stories, but it was only when the dark shadows started to show, that they realised that the hour must be late and they must set off back to the house in case they were missed.

Hand in hand they sang their way along the carpet of green grass, but as they neared to where they came back into the garden, they suddenly stopped. A high piercing scream broke the otherwise stillness of the quiet late afternoon. The sound came from within the wood. From the nearby garden table where the elders sat, they too were stunned into their own silence by this shriek. They quickly dashed forwards to the opening of the woodland.

“What on earth could have made that noise”, papa said to no one in particular. They all stood and listened, their eyes roaming over the now darkened area. Once more the scream pierced the now deadly silence and a movement was seen just a little further in. With startled looks at each other, they stepped forwards. It was mamma who with a shaky hand to her throat uttered, “It’s Kitty, she is caught in something”.

Quickly they ran over to try and help poor Kitty, who by now was visibly shaking. As papa bent down he felt a small hand on his shoulder. Valerie looked at him and said, “Please papa, let me, for now I know who has been following me all through these woods”.

Valerie knelt down besides Kitty and gently taking the awful old trap that she was caught in from around her hind leg, she gently cradled her on her lap. Looking up towards all their gazing faces, Kitty’s eyes suddenly changed and with a last gasp of breath, she slowly closed them.

For a long time no one spoke a word. Then slowly standing up, with her arms holding

the now still form of Kitty, Valerie broke the silence and said. “I am sure that you all must have seen the change in Kitty. I for one am sure that the eyes, which have just gazed at all of us, were the eyes of our dear sister Katrina. For hadn’t we all, at sometime or other commented about these eyes. The loving looks which sometimes caught you unawares. Then there is also the name that we always called Katrina, hadn’t she been our little pussy cat?”

As they all made their way back to the house, all had their own thoughts on this. But for now they must make a grave for their recent lost one, little Kitty.

Tears glistened from all of their eyes. And in silent agreement they carried onwards.

The End

Saving Lucy

By

Greta Ann Hughes

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