

MY WEIRD STORIES 2.

A SHOCKING DIVORCE.

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This happened to a colleague of mine years ago so I have adapted it slightly, well alright I have added a great deal, but the outcome was the same!

Thomas Newell was a very good accountant, he was an only son and an orphan. His parents had left him their house and a little money to finish off his exam finals. He was a very generous man always willing to help people, like his neighbours with their tax returns, but he had always been inordinately shy. Because he was a brilliant mathematician he found a job soon after without any real effort on his part. One of his neighbours put his name forward with a business he worked for and he was snapped up.

He had, since his parents had died, been rather lonely and felt embarrassed to speak about general matters. During his work hours facts and figures from the company accounts absorbed his time and he was quite able to speak on the accounting side of the business but he would hide in his shell if another subject was broached to him. He would just flush and stutter a 'thank you' or 'do you think that' and hide away into his little world.

He thought he would get a dog or a cat at home but he never actually got the urge to visit the cattery or the dogs home. He mentioned this one day to Sally Newell his cousin and she said she would go with him to the dogs home and they both would look for a suitable companion for him.

They drove to the dogs home and found exactly what they were looking for, a small Scotty terrier. It was so quick and both were delighted with the small bitch, and she took a shine to Thomas immediately. As he cuddled her in his arms the lady attendant took his details and his money. She told them that a house and garden visit was the associations rule before any dog or bitch could be handed over, so Thomas made arrangements for the lady to visit, and he handed over the little terrier to be put back into the kennel.

On their way home he turned to his cousin to thank her for coming with him.

"I shall call her Lady."

"Do you want me to come over to your home when that Miss Brumer calls to see if its suitable?"

"No I shall be alright but I do have that lovely garden that Dad put in years ago and I think there should be no problem."

So a week latter Miss Brumer came to visit with her check list.

"My" she said, "what a lovely house and the garden is just perfect, you could have had any of our larger dogs, now you will have to train your little Scotty not to dig into those lovely plant and bushes."

“Train?” Thomas stammered.

“Yes all dogs need training especially terriers otherwise they would be off on their own, I see your fences are very low.”

“Yes, Dad liked people to see over and enjoy the colour of the plants.”

“Your dad and mum are still alive?”

“Alas no that's why I wanted a little company.”

“But that lady who came with you was not your wife or girlfriend?”

“No she is my cousin, I live alone.”

“Well I could train your terrier if you wanted.”

“I could pay you.”

“I'm sure you could but you seem such a nice man, and yes I am approving your ownership of this little bitch, have you thought of a name?”

“Oh yes” Thomas brightened up at the thought, “Its Lady.”

“Well I will bring Lady to you tomorrow and each Saturday I will come and help train her, if that's fine with you?”

Thomas nodded his thanks and showed her out.

Next Saturday Miss Brumer arrived with Lady in a special carry cage and when she was released she immediately hurtled over to Thomas who picked her up and gently patted her. Miss Brumer then indicated that they should go into the garden as let her do her business and explore her new surroundings.

Now Thomas may have been born shy but he admired Miss Brumer and her obvious talent and knowledge of animals, and indeed his little Lady, nose twitching and running here and there eventually did her business and returned to Thomas who was sitting on the bench next to Miss Brumer. And there they sat for over an hour talking quietly with Lady curled up close to Thomas's feet. There was no training of the bitch but several glasses of wine later, Thomas asked Miss Brumer out for a date.

Three months later they were married in a local church and three months after that Mrs Newell nee Brumer went to her solicitor and put in for a divorce.

“We are incompatible” she said to Thomas.

“But but b..” stammered Thomas, “We were so happy especially in are little paradise.”

“The one your parents made, well I am demanding half of everything including Lady!”

“Lady is mine and so is the house and garden.”

“Well take your pick, which do you want!” and with that his new wife packed her

bags and left to stay with her old boy friend.

“Will we get the half?” said her boy friend in his flat.

“Well yes its the law here, but I don't want that Scotty bitch, I'll let Thomas keep her, after all you cannot divide an animal, and then you and I can go away as we planned. I suppose the money will make it worth while, the very thought of having his thin hands all over me. Come to think of it, you are a real cad Angus, so don't you forget this, it may have been your plan but my body, so its my money.”

Well with the one hundred thousand, the funds left over, did actually buy Thomas a tiny ground floor apartment and it did come with a small back yard, he and Lady were very happy together but whether his little Scotty was worth loosing his parents home and garden to a conniving pair of fraudsters was a mute point.

XXX

Prologue: Well I confess I had the same problem as Shelly, and I went right through early school until I reached the grand old age of ten when my teacher found my problem! Who said teachers don't only teach!

Sister Mary Magellan joined the teaching order when she was seventeen. She was Irish and from a large tribe of siblings. She was the youngest and as was common in most Irish families their mother liked to have at least one son train as a priest, and if possible, a daughter to join a nunnery. This of course saved the parents the cost of helping them in later life and gave them pride in their children's achievements.

Well Sister Mary had hoped to eventually marry, in fact she had already found the right boy but she submitted to her her parents request and instead joined the order as a novice. Her elder brother did likewise and went of to a seminary.

Some years later found Sister Mary installed at a church school where she became a form teacher for the ten and eleven year olds. It was a co-educational school and highly regarded in the township. Though the many years Sister Mary watched over her charges she would give her best in sorting out a myriad of problems, yet her natural flair was in actually teaching and always she was fair and tolerant to both girls and boys. She remembered what Ursula the eldest sibling told her when she started teaching.

Ursula told Mary, you will have a new set of children every year and with your constant love and instruction they will remember you for the rest of their lives. You borrow them from their parents Monday to Friday and you have them under your wing longer than anyone at that most important stage of their lives They will be a constant source of worry, surprise and pleasure so you are the most fortunate in our family.

In her second year as a teacher and on the first day of term, she had a new class and having taken their names down for the class role she noticed a little girl called Shelly Prouse. In fact Sister Mary had to take a second look before continuing with role taking. As the class progressed she found herself spending more of her attention on Shelly than the others. When school was finished she found herself walking to the window overlooking the road outside and checking that each child crossed safely, particularly Shelly Prouse. Sister Mary was careful not to be overly attendant on Shelly in class but one day she wrote some numerals on the board and asked various children to read and multiply them.

"Shelly Prouse" Sister Mary called out, "What is this multiplied by this," She pointed to the figures on the board.

Shelly stood up from the rear of the class room and leaned forward, she stuttered and soon her cheeks were red with tears gently sliding down.

"Well maybe you cannot see clearly dear, so wipe your tears and come closer to the front. Michael Leary will change places with you for a moment."

So Shelly made her way to Michael's now empty seat and she once more glanced up

to the board, and hesitated.

“That's fine Shelly I think I will give you a note to take home to your parents, just stay at Michaels desk please until the end of the lesson.”

“May I then return to my seat later,” said a worried Shelly.

“Yes of course, its certainly not your fault, we always seem to have one or two children who have eye problems every year, and as a precaution I've asked your parents to have your eyes tested.” Sister Mary took off her own glasses, “As all of you children can see I need glasses, without them its just an empty classroom, none of you exist!” They all roared with laughter.

And so Shelly returned to class with her new glasses and sat in her old seat and her education proceeded at a fast pace for that year and for many years after.

Sister Mary read in the newspaper years later that a Miss Shelly Prouse had accomplished her Degree in medicine and was to be placed as a Registrar in the local hospital. Sister Mary wondered what particular branch of medicine she has chosen. It was many years later when Sister Mary contracted that awful disease of cancer. She was subsequently sent by her Order to the hospital for treatment, it was here she met her old pupil.

“I shall have to operate Sister Mary, but thanks to you I will see what I am doing.”

“But dear Shelly you don't have your glasses on your nose any more!”

“Well Sister I have. They are small and they fit securely onto my eyes under the lids. They are called contact lenses, and nowadays you can even get a lazer operation to alter your own lens. I suppose you keep a check on all your new pupils but I am surprised you seem to have been the only teacher to recognise an eye problem.”

“Perhaps but we do have hearing problems to watch for as well Shelly.”

“Well they would be more difficult as some children refuse to hear!”

“Oh do tell me, in your class which ones were they.” exclaimed Sister Mary.

“Oh I think you already know and for what its worth most of us truly believed you had another set of eyes in the back of your head, now lets get you wheeled in for a scan, and for once I can tell my old teacher to stay quite!”

Authors note: Just a forethought about the title, A slice of time. Because each teacher only has that one year to connect with his or her pupils. Well yes I expect a 'passage of time' might have been more realistic, well what do you think!

Its strange how stories seem to create themselves without too much thought by the author, this is one where I had the title but nothing else, so I just kept on tapping it out on the keyboard!

In every ones life a special person drops in and makes an immediate impression, this happened to Daisy Westbury. She was kayaking one sunny day along the river Avon, she had her bathing suit on and a safety blown up floatation device around her middle, so she felt very safe as she enjoyed the river bank and all its vegetation. The willows dipping their fronds into the water fascinated her, so she paddled closed to one very old willow that had little birds climbing up an down the yellow branches.

What puzzled Daisy as she gently manoeuvred across the river towards that great willow was that all the tiny birds were a bright blue and green colour. She had seen documentaries with such fauna but always from distant shores, sadly she had left her mobile phone in the car, she would had definitely taken a photograph if she had it with her. Suddenly she felt something hit her knee inside the Kayak, so she felt under under her leg and produced her own mobile phone. Suddenly a small voice entered her ear apologising for frightening her. So she drifted closed to willow fronds that, like a curtain, hid the trunk of the tree. She used her paddle when she met the river bank and swept the fronds aside, here sitting against the trunk was a small child, a girl she thought, but it could have been either.

“Why are you here so close to the water, where are your parents?” A startled Daisy called to the child.

“I love the river. Please take my photograph, with my lovely birds.”

Daisy grabbed her mobile and turned it on, or rather tried to but she had forgotten to charge it up.

“I would love too but there are two problems, the first is it needs charging and the second one is I cannot print out a picture for you.”

“No that's fine I don't need the picture for myself, and if you wait a minute your phone will charge up.”

“Why are you here anyway, you aren't at school, are you playing hookey are some such?”

“What is Hookey? I live here.”

“By the river?”

“Yes by my lovely old willow, the tree protects me and I can go out and help other souls just like you, now your telephone should be ready now.”

Daisy felt the child was so certain, she tried the start button once more and her mobile leapt into life.

“Do you want a smiley photo or just a ordinary plain one?”

“As I am please.”

Daisy selected the camera and focusing she took the picture. She checked to see if she had captured the little birds as well and indeed they were all there and in focus. Gracious , Daisy thought they must have all stopped climbing all at once just for this photo. She looked up and they were still moving about the child's body.

“They are my friends, you know we get a lot of sad people along the pathway behind so I send out one of my little birds to make them feel better. Of course they cannot see them but that does not affect the outcome. People feel so much better and go away much happier.”

“Well that's a kind thought, you must be a very special person to think like that.”

Daisy looked up after shutting down her mobile, but the child had gone.

She leaned over to the river bank and finding a small branch she snapped in half and drove both pieces in to bank so she could find this tree again, then she paddled back to the boat house and pulled the kayak from the water.

“Did you go far?” asked the owner of the boat shed.

“Just down to that big old willow.” said Daisy.

“Funny you know, you have a big smile on your face. But when you arrived and paid me the hire money for my kayak you were very drawn looking and if you don't mind me saying you were kind of tetchy.”

“Do you know this child?” Daisy bought out her mobile and switched it on then showed the photograph she had taken to the boat man. He looked at it carefully.

“Can't be here, those are foreign birds.”

“No, the child?”

“No child there just the birds on the willow leaves, but they can't be. Look no blurring, I reckon you stuck these on yourself, do you remember those girls fooled their parents with photo's of fairies and elves in the twenties. I reckon you just gone and did the same.”

Daisy smiled and shook her head, then she remembered the sticks she had stuck in the ground, but she thought now she would not come back, looking up at the boat owner who seemed a little angry.

“I had a lovely day, thank you very much.” and then to herself 'I wonder if it was a boy or girl.' Then in her head came 'What difference would it make.'

BICYCLE

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Have you ever read those 'Oh I wish' type stories when you were young? Well here's one for the wrong two wheeler type!

One day Jonathan was cycling to work, it was in the city and he found it quicker than waiting for a bus, besides which he could come and go as he pleased plus the fact that the city elders had created special cycle ways. So Jonathan with his smart helmet on his head and his yellow plastic coat was as safe as houses, biking along the narrow strips of tarmac set aside for cyclists like himself.

But alas these narrow strips were also used by motorcycles illegally, they were especially used by these roaring monsters at traffic lights, enabling the motor cycle to roar ahead in advance of normal road users when the lights changed to green.

Jonathan had reached the second light before his work place and just as he applied his brakes, a 500cc motor bike brushed past him and claimed the front place before the traffic light.

"Oh I wish he did not do that." said Jonathan loudly, but the motor bike rider hadn't a helmet on and he heard him, so before he knew it a great mound of a bearded fellow looked over him.

"Was that you who said that about me you little Cretan?"

"This is a cycle way for bicycles not motor cycles." Jonathan replied, not at all put out by the big bully standing next to him, who incidently was just about to grab him and pull him off his cycle.

Just then the lights changed so the oaf rushed back to his motor bike and clambered aboard only to turn round and shaking his fist before stamping on his start lever. Well it started but it didn't moved so he slipped it into gear and still it vibrated to be sure, but move it did not. Jonathan peddled past the oaf and carried on, once over the intersection he stopped and looked back only to see the motorcycle was being swallowed up by the roadway, which by the way had reached the cylinder block and was encroaching even further.

When he arrived at work he told someone what he had seen but they made no answer just pointed to the morning newspaper, there was an official notice from the city roads department. It simply said 'In light of the complaints from normal cyclists the department have placed overnight a special formulation of tarmac at city traffic lights, any vehicle over two hundred pounds will sink, so cyclists are asked to check both their own weight and that of their bicycle before coming into our city.' Jonathan grinned to himself but was admonished by his work colleague

"What?" he said, "you drive a car!"

"Yes" said the other, "and I've got two wheels stuck by a kerb a mile away! Now they tell us."

"A kerb, next door to a cycle way, you as well!"

The telephone rang, Jonathan picked it up, after a while he said 'Yes he's here, how

much!" Then turning to his colleague, "its for you, City Hall, there's a fine and recovery charge, get a bicycle next time!"

XXX

Gladys lost her husband three years back and, as she had a large house to take care of, she thought long and hard as to what to do. Her friend Susan recommended selling up and buying a small apartment. Her other friend Clarice suggested renting out a part of the large house, so she invited both her friends for dinner one day to discuss the potential of either suggestion. Well after two hours of debate they all decided that Gladys could rent out a part. The main reason was Gladys husband Edward had spent both time and a fortune on planting out the garden and Gladys still wanted something close to her that retained something of Edward. She often loved to sit in the double swing seat that they both enjoyed, and on a sunny day she still sat there clasping a cup of drink as she watched the birds dipping and diving into the concrete bird bath Edward had made.

So once decided, she put a notice in the newspaper for a companion to rent a portion of her home, three rooms in all and preferably someone who enjoyed gardening and preference to be female. She had a box number for replies as she did not want a hoard of people arriving at her front gate. It was a weekly newspaper so she had to wait some time before they rang and asked her to collect her box mail. She did the following day by catching the local bus into town. She found four letters to answer so she hurried home, eager to open them.

The first letter was from someone called Sharon, it had been on the bottom of the pile and therefore Gladys had thought it probably was the first placed in the box and therefore the earliest. Sharon turned out to be a single mother with a little boy baby five months old, but with an odd skin complaint. It was this fact that Sharon had unfortunately not found a place to stay as she was currently living with her parents. At the end of her letter she asked what was the rent and would Gladys mind about the baby? Gladys put it aside and opened the second letter.

It was from a Gregory Richard Gordon, in the back of her mind somewhere she recognised that name. But she wanted a lady not a gentleman, so she was just about to return it to the pile. However since he had written she felt obliged to read on. Mr Gordon was a young executive and was willing to pay any rental as he wanted to live close to the work place which in fact was two blocks away from her home. He said he was quite, home loving man without any faults. That 'any faults' rang a bell and she searched through her pile of old newspapers, found nothing so went on the internet and typed in Mr. Gordons full name. Ah yes, he was accused of manslaughter of an elderly lady two years ago and it was two blocks away, the block that held the Courts of Justice.

No, she said that is what I will reply.

She picked up the last two and strangely she recognised the writing from both so she carefully slit then open to find a letter from Susan and another from Clarice. She sighed, they both loved her husband's garden and she knew Susan had a certain feeling for Edward although she was Gladys friend. And Clarice could be such a

pushy person and frankly a bore, even a day with her could be fraught with resentment. So she wrote to these last three explaining why she would choose an unmarried woman with a young baby to stay with her. Of course she was extra careful to thank her own two friends and in doing so in such a way to thank them for their wonderful consideration.

To Sharon she set out a reasonable monthly rent and suggested, that if she would like to do some cleaning and general housework, she could reduce the rent considerably. Then she gave her address and asked Sharon to call to see if the three rooms would be suitable.

Now there are three ways I could end this story so its for you the reader to choose one, I will say now two are awful and horrible as they have just this moment leapt into my mind. Ah, you thought I was going to leave a lovely gentle paragraph about the little baby boy growing up in a household with his mum, with love and support for Sharon and himself giving Gladys, who by the way was childless herself (sorry I did not mention that before) was given affection and care for the rest of her mortal life. Well you may like to have that so don't read on because it gets worse!

Sharon turned out to be Mr Gordon's sister so she did away with Gladys and installed her feckless brother into the house, Gladys pension fund was purloined by forgery and a will was also forged, whilst the garden was dug in one spot to accommodate the body of poor Gladys.

The second ending happened like this, Sharon's little baby had an shocking decease which poor Gladys caught and died soon after. Sharon had to move as the house was sold and she died of a broken heart. Well that one brings up a host of questions, like why didn't her parents catch the disease, or Sharon, or the hospital. So lets leave it at two only to choose, one good one bad.

By the way Edwards garden still looked beautiful, but the roses really did bloom extraordinary well each summer!

Nancy Graham was a middle aged widow who had a son who was married to Jenny at the ripe old age of eighteen. That was six years ago but life came to a screaming halt when the boy, one Jeff Graham was found full of barbiturates had crashed into a tree near his home. This of course gave Jenny a sad end to her already rickety marriage, and to her mother in law sadness with unprecedented gossip about her son, well known for his rowdy and drunken behaviour. So he was buried with a tear from his indulgent mother and a little relief from Jenny.

And so it came to pass that Jenny unable to continue with the mortgage moved in with her mother in law. Nancy in the meantime had started proceedings against the government for the pothole in the road that her wayward son had supposedly hit. Nancy was spurred on by the frequent advertisements of legal claim companies who charged the claimants nothing in costs but received fifty percent of the payout. It was shown that the pothole itself served no purpose in the accident it being a kilometre down from the crash site. But a stomach full of liquor and drugs were the eventual cause.

When after two years Adam Henry came to rent the house next door, both women took a fancy to this tall strong blond with blue eyes. Jenny was initially very shy, having been somewhat affected by her previous marriage, but Adam seemed such a quite inoffensive man and he was gorgeous looking to boot. One would have expected Nancy to encourage her daughter in law in her gentle approach to this hunk but not a bit of it, Nancy herself was also attracted to this new neighbour, after all she was still young at heart and looking in the mirror one day she decided to buy several of the products for anti wrinkles and skin care to improve the canvass so to speak. She even got to sitting and displaying her elegant legs on the front porch bench just about the time Adam was due from work and walk past her home.

Well eventually she called him over one afternoon and they sat together with a beer discussing the ways of the world with Nancy ever so carefully bringing out Adams past and present pursuits. No, he was not engaged or married, he only rented the house next door until he had saved a deposit to buy his own home, and on and on he went until Jenny also arrived home from work. By that time Adam had quite dried up in spite of drinking three of Nancy's beers. So he shook both their hands and left hurriedly. Of course this caused eruptions to follow from Nancy. 'Could Jenny not see how well Adam was getting on with her, why couldn't she notice and stay away for awhile.' And from Jenny 'He's not interested in you Nancy with your face all covered in that gross greeny brown coloured skin enhancer.' Well the effect on Nancy was to slap Jenny across the face and then run indoors to wash the stuff off which she had forgotten to do in her eagerness to get outside onto the porch.

Well Adam had already understood the effect he was having on these two neighbours and being a thoughtful person realised this could cause friction between them. So he

packed his bags ready to leave and visited the local estate agent. He had over the past two years saved enough to place a part payment on a small apartment they were just completing down in the town, so he moved in a month later having avoided both women those previous weeks, by arriving home later at night and skulking past Nancy's house or later staying with friends. He never saw his old neighbours again.

xxx

Reg Johnson was short man and his best friend Desmond could only be described as a lot taller. Both had been at school and one day Desmond had come to the aid of the much shorter Reg who was being bullied about his stature. From then on Reg became Desmond's true friend and Desmond enjoyed having Reg to follow him around. It was hero worship and Desmond was particularly pleased at being his hero. Reg was also clever, you had to be when you were that short to keep out of trouble, so the two of them lived very close lives with Reg doing all of Desmond's homework and Desmond being on constant guard duty to rescue his friend. They grew up together and even saved and bought an apartment when in their early twenties, their parents were so used to having both children visit them that it became the norm. In short they were adopted by each others family.

Of course it took a lovely auburn haired girl to eventually split them apart and she did this small feat by appearing one evening without an escort at a local dance hall that the boys would frequently go too. Her name was Tammy and every boy in that hall that night dreamed impressionable dreams about her, not least the two close friends. Tammy was not tall, slightly higher than Reg to be sure, but she had high heels on so flat footed she, Reg felt, was exactly his size. Now Desmond, having been around Reg all this time, was sure she was the perfect girl for him. Both boys as well as many of the single male population in that hall that night had a dance with her. But only Reg and Desmond danced twice with her and both asked her out for a date. And she yes to them both but on different days.

When the boys eventually got home they naturally wanted to skite about their date and after an abrupt silence they both agreed to let Tammy decide whom she would choose for a second date should she wish. So Desmond was the first date and he came home with lipstick on his cheek and an empty wallet. When questioned by Reg he told of all the places he had taken her, some indeed were ones Reg had decided to take her too. As the boys often talked over things, Reg was not best pleased and began to lay out a plan in his mind to discredit his friend.

So the next evening he took Tammy to many of the places Desmond had taken her and when Tammy had suddenly said 'Do you two always do the same things?' Reg replied 'that he had told Desmond where he was going to take Tammy on their date and obviously Desmond, not the brightest of individuals, had used Reg's plans for his own purpose'. Well Tammy was quite taken aback but said nothing and when Reg took her back to the bus stop, which she had asked, he asked for a second date. She said Desmond had asked her for one as well and she needed time to think, but would he leave his mobile number with her.

She now had two mobile numbers but she chose not to ring either. They never saw her again.

I wrote this story hunched over a Mainframe computer waiting for the electronics to finish their processing in 1989. It was to be about a gentle giant running his piggery, more than a prediction of the fall of the Soviet Union. The fact that a new Russian Federation was born in December 1991, was pure coincidence. This started as a short story but got longer and longer thus I divided it into chapters, well it was a long night at work and I had to keep awake for the processing and various switches to press!

The Monastery.

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CHAPTER ONE. Beginnings.

The mist swirled as the wind picked up, bringing intermittent showers and numbing cold. Beneath the sandstone headland the sea swell surged rhythmically, echoing deeply within the hollowed out cliffs. Dawn was coming and the old mother sow was dying. Stefan clasped her head closer to his chest and prayed that old age be banished from that moment on so that life on earth could be truly eternal. Alas the old sow sensing his grief, grunted once then lay still as the life force left her. He covered her head with his overcoat and blessed her with his hand, then fell exhausted into a deep untroubled sleep wedged between her enormous body and the doorway he had hauled her through.

The wind increased and the mist dispersed. He awoke to the roar of an oncoming thunderstorm, so levering himself up and out of the doorway he trudged wearily across the yard and commenced digging her grave where he buried her alongside a host of chickens, geese and lambs. Then he shouldered his spade and with his great arms outstretched, herded the other animals along toward the farmhouse. Brushing his large hands over their heads and necks he comforted each one, and they, feeling his touch, entered the old house and settled down to await a change in the weather.

Thus for five years this had been the life of the St. Owen Abbey pig-man, a daily ritual of feeding, grooming, caring and loving his animals. For reasons best known to themselves the abbey fathers had decreed that their famous breeding stock of pigs and sheep be kept well away from the walls of their enchanted enclave lest the smell drive the friars to distraction. Volunteers were always sought on an annual basis, but strangely none were forthcoming. It was left to Stefan, after all he was so good with the pigs, and pretty useless at anything else. The abbey tutors discovered long ago he had this disagreeable habit of debating every new rule that the fathers, in their combined wisdom, decided to implement. It was useless to explain to Stefan the reason for these rules and procedures and why they were necessary, particularly as they generally encompassed the improvement in comfort and convenience for the staff. One such covered a new regulation that no food or sustenance was to be given away in times of famine, as the brothers would need extra food to sustain their heavier duties in providing spiritual relief to the populace. Stefan took some offence at this even though nobody could ever remember when the last famine had occurred.

Brother Stefan by no means languished in the piggery, for in truth he probably found

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