

Happily, it was a bright but chilly spring morning and May decided that a trip down the old coast road to South Way would be perfect. She made a round of sandwiches, a flask of coffee and packed three of Angus's favourite treats into her hessian Scottish National Trust bag.

'OK Angus, this is it, our first solo trip.' She announced to her pet. She had driven around various empty car parks with Pete getting used to the feel of the vehicle and she felt confident with her manoeuvring skills but this time she would be calling the shots.

She checked the street was clear, reversed out the drive and took a deep breath. The roads were empty and soon Freda was purring along the old coast road bordered on one side with dark green gorse bushes and on the other by the sparkling blue grey waters of the Firth of Forth. May slid open the window and breathed in the smell of the sea and rotting sea weed.

'Many years ago me and Shona cycled to South Way, bought a stick of rock and cycled home in time to listen to Round the Horne while eating our lunch. A rare treat. Don't think either of us has been on a bike for decades.' She laughed at the memory.

Halfway there they passed a large lay-by overlooking the sea, empty except for an ice cream van. If the afternoon warms up maybe we will stop on the homeward trip and treat ourselves she thought. I wonder how much a 99 costs these days.

At South Way May carefully slotted Freda into a parking space beside the putting green and proudly stuck a parking ticket in the window.

'Hey Missus, that your van, it looks pretty neat.' A passing couple pushing a dilapidated buggy containing a chubby baby swaddled in a knitted multicoloured blanket called out to her. May acknowledged their compliment with a smile and reassured herself that she had locked the van properly.

A brisk walk along the promenade to the outdoor swimming pool and back to Freda satisfied both May and Angus's need for exercise. Back in the van they made themselves comfortable and enjoyed their lunch with a little light music from the iPod.

May decided to play a round of putting and left Angus inside the van but it was not as much fun as she had hoped. Next time she would record her score and keep the score card in the van and try to improve on each visit.

'Time for home,' she told Angus as she entered the van and soon they were on their way following the same route.

As they approached the lay-by May signalled and manoeuvred Freda into a sheltered corner not far from the ice cream van. She was delighted to see it was an Antonelli's van and her thoughts turned to Sundays long ago when they would stop on the way home from Church and her Father would buy a large carton of Antonelli's ice cream to go with the tinned fruit for their pudding. Happy days.

May nipped out and crossed to the van. A middle-aged man was sitting in an old battered arm chair reading an equally battered paperback. Just as she was about to turn away he noticed her, leapt up and slid open the window.

'Can I help you madam?' He asked. 'I'm not really open for business yet.'

'I can see that now,' she smiled in response, 'I was just going to treat myself to an Antonelli's 99.'

'Well if you can just wait until Easter weekend I hope to get the van up and running by then.' He looked over at Freda and continued 'or maybe I'll just convert it to a smart camper van like that one over there.'

'Only if you have plenty of time and deep pockets.' May laughed. She sensed the man wanted to chat and in truth she was in no great rush to get home.

'Time, now that's something I have plenty of. Jim McKay is the name, newly discharged from the Army after 25 years of loyal service for Queen and country.' He stuck his hand through the window.

'May Stewart, pleased to meet you.' May said shaking the out stretched hand. 'So how come you are sitting in an Antonelli's ice cream van on this fine spring afternoon?'

'After travelling the world I've returned to my roots and claimed my inheritance. My Mum was an Antonelli and this van has been passed down to me. My uncle runs the factory these days and we are going to see how the season goes with the van.' He paused, then continued 'Its thanks to my Mum I joined up. I wasn't a bad lad, just a bit wild and when I told her I wanted to leave school she marched me down to the army recruiting office and before I knew it I had signed up. Best thing she ever did for me.'

'I used to know the names of the various Scottish regiments but they all seem to be amalgamated these days. Which regiment did you serve with?'

'Well Mrs Stewart, if I told you that I would have to kill you,' was the stark reply.

They stared at each other for a nanosecond and then both burst out laughing.

'I really should be on my way,' she said, 'it's been a pleasure meeting you Jim KcKay, and I wish you all the best with your new venture. I'll be back down this way later and look forward to that 99, at senior citizen rates of course.' She turned towards the camper van, took two steps and froze.

'You stupid, stupid woman,' she muttered to herself. She knew what she had done and what she had to do. She turned back to the ice cream van and Jim McKay.

'I'm really sorry to bother you again, but in my haste to have my ice cream I only picked up my purse and because my nephew fixed the van with extra security I've locked myself out, she gabbled. 'I need to phone my nephew or the RAC and my phone's in the van.' She felt her voice thicken.

'No problem.' Jim reassured her. 'Before we make any phone calls would you like me to try and open the door and check that you really are locked out.'

As they approached the van Angus started to bark. 'With that kind of security you should be very safe. He sounds pretty ferocious.'

'Oh no,' said May, 'just very protective,' and tried to quieten down Angus as Jim circled the van trying the doors and windows.

'I think I can help, I just need something from the van.' He soon returned holding what looked like a Swiss Army knife. He positioned May by the passenger side window and encouraged her to talk to Angus. A few minutes later he called May round to the driver's door.

'You can open it now,' he said, and she did.

Relief flooded through May, only to be replaced by the fear that the security could be breached so easily.

'Don't worry, you really do have good security, it took me longer than I expected.'

'Oh Jim, I don't know how to thank you. Pete my nephew talked me through the procedure for locking the van so many times and I have fallen at the first hurdle so to speak. At least now I will definitely think before leaping from the van. I might put a sign on the door to make sure I shut it correctly.'

'Sounds like a good idea. Anyway I'll let you get on your way. Just direct all your friends and family to my van this season, that'll be thanks enough.'

They shook hands as they said their goodbyes and Jim waved at her as she left the lay-by.

When they arrived home May made herself a strong cup of tea, sat in her favourite chair and put her feet up.

'I promised you adventures Angus and I think that little episode today qualifies as one,' she addressed Angus in his basket, 'and I think we have also made a new friend. Altogether not a bad day, not a bad day.'

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