

It Made Me Laugh

“It made me laugh,” she said, which was typical of our favourite aunt, a rounded, motherly sort, whose cheerful disposition and attitude to life endeared her to all who knew her, and whose daughter, our cousin, was so spoiled we suffered pangs of jealousy when she escaped all bounds of discipline metered out to us by our parents if and when needed.

Aunt Sarah had little in her life to be cheerful about, with a husband who treated her like a slave and spoke to her in a manner unbefitting human kind, lavishing his undivided care and attention on his prize chrysanthemums in the greenhouse at the bottom of the garden, or treating his cronies at the club to drinks while barely giving her enough money to live on.

How we hated him, wishing she would kill him in the most excruciatingly painful way possible, but she never retaliated returning neglect with kindness undeserved.

The never-to-be-forgotten incident to which she referred happened when she took the three of us with our cousin to a matinee at the majestic to see Buster Keaton. Unlike his usual films of near-death misses with trains or dangling precariously by his trousers from flagpoles at the top of skyscrapers, this one was more like a “Carry on in the Jungle” of yesteryear. Captured by cannibals, our bulbous-eyed hero was on the point of being dropped into the boiling pot for supper and you could hear a pin drop as the audience waited with bated breath to learn his fate.

Suddenly, without warning, my aunt started to laugh, causing us to sink deeply into our seats with embarrassment. Then there was a titter from the row in front which spread until the place was in an uproar and by the time it had died away the moment of disaster had passed, and escaping an untimely end our victim had been rescued by whom or what means I never knew, and though it made Aunt Sarah laugh we left the cinema in a state of anti-climax and were very subdued indeed.

Joan