

## Da Hansel

I slippit da key intae da lock o' me Great-Granny's hoose and swung open da door. Da hoose felt empty we nae kettle singin upo da rayburn, or da auld clock tickin on da brace underneath Nana an Grandaa's wedding photo. Dey wir nae smell o' freshly baked oatcakes lingerin around da room and a grey head waitin we a blyde smile an a warm bosie. I maed fur da laft stair, an opened da door tae a strong waft o' foosty stoor.

Me faider's curly blonde head, so lik Grandaa's on da photo, cam trow da hatch. He said "Loris dir an aafil lock o' bruck in here, but we'll need tae watch we dunna fire oot onything important. I keen dir's auld photos an likly paperwark as weel. Why does du no start we yun furnitir an a'll drag some o dis bruckit toys doon."

I lifted boxes o' records aff o' twa auld chairs an shifted dem tae da hatch. Da ony thing I fan ina tae da muckle kist o' draaers wis a moch aeten gansey an twartree moose pirls. In ahint dat wis a boannie auld fashioned dressing table, wie a lock o' peerie draaers an a muckle oval mirror. I gaadered aa da gaer oot o' da draaers. It wis aa weemin's things, gaer lik ledder glivs an lacey hankies. In da tap-maest draaer dey wir some bits o' jewellery lik broaches an gless beads but tucked right up ida corner, wis a peerie falded up envelope.

I windered whit wis in da envelope, so I shook it oot in me luff. A silver locket. It wis tarnished but still boannie, covered wi intricate engravings includin twa sets o initials on da back. "*To CA from TB*". I popped open da catch an inside wis a peerie black curl o' hair. I wisna sure wha da folk might be, so I pet it back ida envelope dan in me pocket. A while eftir whin we wir machtless fae reestlin' da furnitir doon tae da briggiestanes, we stopped fur wir twal so I aksed Dad wha da initials might be.

"Weel CA could be Granny, shö wis Catherine Anderson afore shö married but I dunna keen wha TB is. We can hae a look on da family tree whin we win haem if du's wantin."

A peerie start eftir, I wis shiftin rooges o' books an I knocked a scrapbook aff da tap o' ee pile. Whin it hit da floor, a sheaf o' newspaper clippings fell oot. I hockit among dem, dir wis da expected wedding an birth announcements, an dan, oddly, a falded-up front cover fae 1945 in 'The Guardian'.

### ***"H.M.S HERALD Sinks! No Survivors!"***

***Tragedy struck as H.M.S Herald was en-route returning servicemen from France.***

***On 14<sup>th</sup> August, she struck an underwater mine in the channel and sank immediately leaving no survivors."***

I windered why some een kept dis. I shivved da bundle back ida scrapbook an laed it by in da box tae take haem.

We wir joost about finished, doon tae da last pile whin I fan a peerie metal chest wi a key. It wis bashed up, wi scrapes an scratches ower it.

"Yun's a deed box, Loris. Better tak it haem tae look among later, might aesy be something in yunder dat we need ta keep," Dad telt me.

I cerried on roustlin trow da bruck till da laft wis clear. It felt lik a completely different place, nae life in da auld family hoose onymare.

Nixt morning, we opened da lock box. On da tap wis a cracked ledder, falding photo frame. Dad opened it tae fin twa photos. A boannie young wife wi her 1940's style froke an victory roll hair. An on da idder side, wis a young good-looking bloke wi sleekit back dark hair, a naval uniform an a hat under his arm.

“Dad, is yun Nana’s bridder Lowrie?”

“No Uncle Lowrie wis in da airforce, no da navy.”

We hockit ferder. A bundle o’ letters tied aroond wi a piece o’ red ribbon, aa addressed tae Catherine Anderson. I opened da tap envelope.

***“My dearest Catherine,  
I’ve enclosed a ‘peerie hansel’ to remind you of me. I had it engraved before we left Leith with our initials....”***

It wis signed ‘Tammie’. Dey aa wir. An dan I read da last een.

***“This will be my last letter. I’ll be demobbed and heading home as soon as the ‘Herald’ reaches Leith...”***