

SLUMBERLAND

Susan had gone to bed, but sleep did not come easy. Her mind was occupied with thoughts of her school exams in a few days' time and she was aware that in one subject she was not so well informed as, perhaps, she thought she should be.

The subject in question was Geography and she turned to her confidante of many years "Jimmy", a rather tousled clown that always sat on the dressing table facing Susan as she lay in bed. She had always told Jimmy her worries and pleasures, whatever the day had brought; Jimmy understood if nobody else did. So the night wore on and, being summertime, the bedroom window was open and a midnight world lay outside.

Susan was awakened by a shake on the shoulder and there was Jimmy with hand outstretched which she grasped and together they glided from the bedroom and out into a starry night.

Keeping a very tight grip on Jimmy's hand, Susan began to enjoy the nocturnal ride as the countryside passed below her. Jimmy pointed out various places of interest: lazy rivers winding their way to the sea, here and there a burst of light from a township not yet gone to bed, streams of light, red and white, from passing cars as they traversed the streets, here and there, rocky terrain. She noticed in particular how beautiful the lakes looked with the moonlight shimmering on their waters. They continued on over industrial areas interspersed with villages and smaller townships and then along the coastline with the promenade lights gleaming like white pearls in the velvet night.

A final swoop leaving the cliffs over Dover, then inland heading for home; through the open window, a slight bump and Susan found herself in bed again.

Looking over to Jimmy, still on the dressing table, she saw there was now an enigmatic smile on that much loved face and as she continued to gaze at him, Jimmy gave her a huge wink. This was one secret, she thought, that they shared and she would never forget it.

Susan is now a silver-haired grandmother and she regales her family with more stories of her life but there is one story that she has not told. The nocturnal journey she and Jimmy made all those years ago.

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