

BRYN AND FRIENDS



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Bryn Petersen

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the new edition of 'Bryn and Friends'. Regular readers already know, the e-magazine is a forum for me (writing under the pseudonym Bryn Petersen) to present short stories, poetry, articles and promotions relating my creative artist/writer friends, with the odd story or poem courtesy of yours truly.

For this edition, I'm excited because it includes contributions from two new writer friends, both of whom live in the United States of America! Bryn and Friends has gone international!

Kelly Jeanne lives in San Diego, California and she has very kindly contributed the short story entitled Grey Poupon. I would love to read some more of Kelly's creative fiction! Kelly has also provided a short synopsis of the background to her story. It is always interesting to learn a little of the background to how fiction stories evolve.

Tom J. Hannon lives on Long Island, New York. You can read the first of a series of stories Tom has contributed, Rainbow Bridge. Tom is a prolific story teller, and he has a number of published titles under his belt.

Once you read Kelly and Tom's contributions, I'm sure you will agree, they each have their own unique ways of story-telling.

The poem for this edition is one I wrote recently, not my usual fare, but topical nonetheless. I hope you like it.

BP

GREY POUPON

A passenger boards a train and approaches a gentleman sitting by himself...

"Excuse me, but do you have any Grey Poupon?" Hope pools in her eyes.

The gentleman's steely gaze softens. He feels sorry for her, yet simultaneously can't believe the faux pas she had committed, allowing all those within earshot to hear how destitute she is. She was either very naïve or very brave.

"My good woman, for your own safety, please keep your voice down. Last week someone was foolish enough to ask for a bottle of Perrier."

"Excuse me?" Her brows knit together.

Surely, you must see the dire consequences behind your words?"

How she hates it when someone answers a question with a question.

Why can't people be more direct?

She had to keep reminding herself she wasn't in the States anymore. She truly resented being sent to Blubberhouses in North Yorkshire, England on this writing assignment.

One more week and it's back to Chicken Bristle, Illinois.

She definitely preferred bristle over blubber any day.

"Look over there." He points with his cane.

She turns. After focusing for a second, she notices a small monitor. On the screen, she sees herself, along with the gentleman, pointing with his cane.

Cameras? Why cameras? she asks herself, in shock.

As if reading her mind, the gentleman responds, "Ever since we came under the rule of Lord Pompous and Lady Pompadour, it's not been the same."

"What's wrong with asking for Grey Poupon?"

"It's not what you ask for. It's that you ask at all because it plainly shows - as far as our Lord and Lady are concerned - the impoverished state in which you are living."

Just as he was about to continue, with the purpose of saving her, the doors to the car fly open, and in burst a couple of armed guards, smartly dressed in their stately uniforms, marching swiftly toward the woman.

The look of fear in her eyes, and the involuntary gasp escaping her lips said it all.

What fate lies ahead for our heroine? Will she be imprisoned in the infamous Tower? Will she be taken to the executioner, where the crowd will eagerly await the moment she is beheaded while enjoying a picnic on the lawn? Sadly, we will never know.

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

At this point, our guest contributor has kindly supplied some contextual background notes:

The Story behind The Story

This is an example of art imitating life. When I first wrote this story I didn't pay attention to how much the story mirrors much of my own life. I wonder how many other stories I've written that reflect those parts of my life that, as far as my subconscious is concerned, are important enough to bring out unawares.

I believe many writers do this on a conscious level, but... to do it unawares? Maybe if most writers went back and examined their writings, they may find it happens more often than not. It's just incredible how the deeper, darker recesses of our minds are still directing us, calling the shots, whether, we realize it or not. Kind of spooky, isn't it?

Here is a breakdown of how my subconscious weaved itself into my story.

"It's not what you asked for, it's that you asked at all.", the gentleman told her on the train.

All during my childhood I was looked down on for asking questions. I was always mocked as an adult for asking 'stupid' questions.

Being an American and now living in England, she is out of her element, leaving her feeling vulnerable, lonely, and without support.

This is how it was for me the whole of my childhood - as well as the majority of my adulthood. I never had a sense of family or belonging. No sense of support. I was always left feeling vulnerable and alone.

She paid the price for daring to ask when the guards came to take her away.

As a child, I was always punished and told to, "Shut up!", "Stop asking questions!" As an adult, many times I was punished by being ostracized by others, never being made to feel that I, or my questions, were valid.

Because of the multiple parallels, this story will always have a special meaning for me.

Kelly Jeanne

RAINBOW BRIDGE

My fear of death ended when I left my remains on the highway pavement. To my surprise, I accepted and enjoyed an eternal afterlife, knowing I'd eventually reunite with my master. I was still a puppy when I met my fate, and I've waited seventy human years for Joey to meet his. It's been a long wait, but it'll be worth it when he claims me forever.

Not that I'm complaining. With vast meadows to play in and plenty of sunshine, apart from car rides and fire hydrants, what more could a dog ask for? My furry friends' disabilities and illnesses are no longer crippling them. Sick and old dogs become healthy pups again in this Shangri-La.

Joey was just eight years old when he picked me out of a litter of four. Because I'm a Dachshund, he named me Little Wienie. Give me a break. I'm a stud, not a stub. Now that Joey is older and hopefully wiser, we'll discuss changing my name to one more masculine for my breed. What's wrong with Frank or Stretch?

Joey passed away last night. I'm at the lookout point where doggies wait to reunite with their masters before joining them on their final journey. I'm excited as a puppy to cross Rainbow Bridge into Heaven with my human, just like others before me. It's times like these I thank my lucky stars. I won't be one of those pets left stranded at the overpass to Heaven because their master never came to claim them. A fate I wouldn't wish on a cat.

Here he comes. I'd know that scent anywhere. It's Joey. I wag my tail and run to him as fast as my short Dachshund legs can move. A Labrador Retriever gallops past me. Joey cries happily as he kneels to receive sloppy kisses from the oversized

animal large enough to belong in the horse section. I catch up and nudge Joey's arm with my nose. I bark, *"I'm over here. It's Little Wienie."*

Joey reaches down and scratches behind my ears. "My goodness. You look the same as I remember before you ran under the truck's wheels seventy years ago. Good for you." He turns his attention to the dog with the name Thunder on his collar. "Sorry for the delay, boy. You've been so patient. We were apart for what feels like forever, but you were never absent from my heart. Once we cross to the other side, we'll be together forever."

I'm confused. Why talk to just Thunder instead of both of us? And what does he mean by "We?"

Thunder and I follow Joey until we come to a sign that read, ONE PET BEYOND THIS POINT.

I cringe and feel sorry for Thunder, knowing he'll be Joey's second choice. He won't be going anywhere. It must suck to be him right now.

My tail swishes faster than a windshield wiper set at high speed when Joey picks me up and hugs me tight. He puts me on the ground again and looks into the eyes of the oversized dog. This will be good. His farewell speech will strike Thunder with a bolt of lightning.

"We've been through so much together. You were my shadow during my adolescent and college days. And later at my side when I first kissed the woman who later became my wife." He kissed the dog on the forehead. "How can I forget the time you saved my son's life when you rescued him from drowning in the pool?"

Thunder answers his human with more sloppy kisses.

I watch Joey wipe a tear from his eye. “Putting you down was the hardest decision I ever made. But you were suffering. I did what was humane. Now, look at you. I’m overjoyed we’re together again and to see you so healthy.”

I bark, *“Okay, Joey. The cat’s out of the bag. You read the sign. One dog only. It’s just you and me now.”*

A hippy-looking guy with a beard, long hair, a white robe, and sandals approaches us. “What’s the delay over here?”

Joey points to the sign. “I never expected this. It’s cruel to force someone to make such a tough decision.”

“You’re barking up the wrong tree, pal. I don’t make the rules. Imagine how crowded Heaven will get if pet owners bring all their animals with them? But after so many complaints, rumours are the higher-ups have discussed a policy to allow pet owners to choose more than one animal. Unfortunately, change takes time. We’re talking eternity here. Maybe the new law will pass in another five hundred years, give or take a century or two. As head of bridge security, I must enforce current laws.” He points toward Thunder and me. “Make your choice. Select one. Move on.”

Joey turns to me. “Sorry, Wienie. You were only in my life for five months. We never got to know each other that well. Unfortunately, the strict one-animal policy forces me to leave you behind. I’m sure you understand.”

“No, I don’t understand,” I growl as Joey and Thunder follow a rainbow and vanish into the distance.

This isn’t fair. I came first. Thunder should wait in line. Why am I in the doghouse? I did nothing wrong. I never saw it coming. Joey gives me a humiliating

name, makes me wait a human lifetime, and then rejects me as nothing more than a distant memory.

The animal shelter truck delivering its latest arrivals pulls into the welcoming headquarters parking lot. It reminded me of the time I came to this refuge. I knew nothing of this place and learned to adjust, but I never expected to be here forever.

How many of these new residents will reunite with their humans in the future? And who will go unclaimed like me? My despair and anger drive me to end it all. In a moment of déjà vu, I envision running under the wheels of the animal shelter truck. Then I think. Why? Rainbow Bridge is paradise. It's not Heaven, but doggone close.

Instead of complaining, I'll just sniff around with my canine friends, chase balls, and teach the newer dogs new tricks. And then wait until Joey returns to get me in another five hundred years. Give or take a century or two.

T.J. Hannon

DAWN OF AN ERA

As months roll by, the memory of a smile fades
Out with the old, the world returns to trade
Famously stoic, people resume ordinary lives
The pain of Her loss forgot, no time for sighs

A wet May morning, well practiced they march
Boots buffed shiny, bright uniforms starched
Nowhere does Pomp and ceremony like England
Crowds cheer the procession from behind stands

Inside the gilded carriage, with well bred wave
Their Majesties return smiles the crowds gave
After the longest training in England's history
The day so heartily dreaded has now come to be

This era will be very different from the one before
It's connection and relatability - you know the score
This generation question, debate, demand answers
It's the era of daring, challenging, taking chances

This Head of State's not shy to share opinions
Business like, a leader with no need for minions
Wants value for real service and worth keeping
A pared-down company of hardworking people

Some may mistake Him, think He's a soft touch
They've not seen His actions that reveal so much
Diligent, decisive, environmentalist He cares
For everything living in the world we all share

With respect for others, and the power He holds
Tries to understand diversity in the State He rules
With His Queen beside Him, He will give us His all
Till the dark day of reckoning to God He's called

Bryn Petersen

THE FINAL WORD

In the UK, a serious cost of living crisis is biting hard, and ordinary UK citizens are cutting back on monthly expenses. I (for one) never thought I'd see things from my early childhood repeated today, food banks, fuel and period poverty. The United Kingdom is allegedly a first world country, isn't it?

Something else apparently overlooked is that, in times such as this, so-called 'investment' in building infrastructure slackens, and we could find in a few years time, a more severe shortage of social housing, the roads in an even worse condition, poorer bus and train services. I understand many people are angry and frustrated at low (or no) wage rises, but is this really the time to be striking? As always, these are just my personal musings, and opinion, and I quite understand if your thoughts, feelings and opinions differ.

This is why I am happy to produce and bring to you this free to download monthly e-magazine. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Until the next issue of 'Bryn and Friends', please take care, keep safe and always remember to always be kind!

BP

THE END