



**Waiting**  
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by C D Clement

## Waiting

"Uncle John. It's Maggie, Uncle John."

"Hello John."

The voice, though calm and soothing, cut across John's concentration, pulling him away as he strained to catch the distant sound.

"Please hush, just for a minute." John's own voice seemed distant to him, but still he heard the angst in it. The hope that already knew it would go unfulfilled.

"But John we always speak at these times, you know that. What would have you so involved you would put me to one side?"

The voice verged on patronising, like an adult to a small child. John sensed it but wasn't sure how he felt. Should he feel his hackles rise, or was the warm safe feeling that fledged over him worth trying to grasp?

"Maybe I am a child?" John thought, his mind drifted, desperate to find a memory, then felt the urgency of the moment pulled him back.

"No! No! No! Wait!" John's anger flared in his words, then drop to embers as he went on. "I heard a voice, I am sure I heard a voice?"

"You did John it was me, I spoke to you."

"No it was a woman's voice, or a girl's," confusion flooded in on John as he spoke. "I am sure I did. I am sure it was a woman's voice."

"Now, John, you know it's only ever you and me here. For our conversations who else would we want? Just you and me."

John wondered what was here when the voice wasn't. He tried to remember, but an empty feeling came upon him, a feeling of being in nothingness. Not a darkness but a bright white, devoid of features and seemingly endless. The memories of colours, of distance and horizons were all in John's mind but somehow when he tried to focus on them they mingled, becoming confused and indistinct. He could remember being 10 years old and the games he played out in the fields in summer, remember his first suit and his first kiss. Remember people and place names, things he had done but he could not seem to picture any of these events in his mind. It was just a jumble of facts, no story book pictures just a encyclopaedia of dates, names and descriptions.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"John, John, John. Must we always start at the same place?"

The voice paused briefly then continued.

“Well I suppose we must. John listen to me and try to concentrate. You are waiting, remember?”

Again a pause.

“Waiting for the end, and I am here to help you.”

John's voice showed no fear just a vague curiosity, “The end of what?”

“Of everything John. Well everything for you anyway”

“Everything?” John's mind tried to grasp the concept of the end of everything.

“Yes John, everything” the voice had a hint of sadness in its tone.

“Why?” confusion filled John's mind, but he felt no panic, no fear.

“Oh John.” the voice was truly saddened now. “ Oh John, you were such a penitent man, serving with your life long work at His Church. Your whole life entwined with the one solid belief you had, supported by the foundation of your faith.”

John felt himself smile, or at least thought he did, in his confusion he found it difficult to place his physical self.

“You lead a good life, John. A moral life guided by the compass of your belief, but now you know the truth and for that you must wait here. Wait for your body to wither and pass, for eternity to claim you.”

On the edge of the mists of John's confusion a shaft of realisation pierced the smog. Memories pushing through, figures stepping through the shroud.

John smile broadened, “Yes I remember. I met Florence at the Church. She was such a pretty girl, I never thought she would turn her eye to me. She did you know, stepped out with me to the picture house and afternoon tea.”

John paused, sinking deeper into the warmth of his memory, feeling a flush of contentment and peace.

“She even said yes when I asked her to be my wife, that was the first time we kissed.”

“I know John, you've told me”, but there was no impatience in the voice just pleasure at John's reminiscences.

“We were together... .”, John paused as if counting in his mind, “ Oh it must have been close on 50 years.”

“You were John, 51 years in fact”

"Yes... ", John's voice trailed off into thought, then distantly and almost quizzically he said, "I wonder where she is now?"

The voice sighed softly, "She is fine, John."

In the silence of remembrance that followed John was sure he heard a soft voice, barely audible.

*"Uncle John, Uncle John. It's Maggie, Uncle John."*

John's voice softly repeated the words, "Uncle John."

"John," the voice gently nudged John back to the moment, "do you remember what happened to Florence? What you had to do?"

"Florence." John repeated, "She is fine now."

"Yes John, she is."

John felt his eyes close tight, his brow furrow. He pushed his mind hard to focus, to catch a memory on the edge of his reason.

"Wait, wait", John's voice was strained, "you're lying, she isn't fine. She isn't. She's dying, she is ill and you won't help her."

"No, John, she is fine now but that is because you helped her. You saved her," the voice was firm now, almost commanding John to remember.

"Yes, yes. I prayed to God and he sent us a miracle." John's voice was alive and strong for the first time.

"No, John, you saved her," the voice pushed him harder leading him down a path he wished not to tread.

John felt his face contort at the realisation, he had saved her. He had called on his God and found no miracle, no intervention.

"John, tell me."

"I can't."

"You must, John."

"I can't! I won't!"

"Let me help you John. I know this is hard for you but you must remember the truth."

John felt, or more sensed, a change in the void. In the brightness there was a spark of radiance. Without seeing John sensed a change, felt the wings unfurl in front of him, felt himself almost overwhelmed by the divinity before him.

"I know you," John's voice was just a whisper, "you came to me before, when Florence was so ill."

"I did John and I told you a truth, a truth that set her free."

"You're Raziel!", John's voice was clear, confident but somehow shocked.

"You told me my God had forsaken me. You fed me lies and untruths to trap me!", the anguish in John's voice was palpable. His mouth bitter as he spat out the words.

"No John, I am of the Sarim, I was tasked by our God as the Revealer of Divine Mysteries, a noble service for our Lord", Raziel's voice shook like thunder then his tone dropped almost to a whisper, "or at least it was before... .."

John still could not find his physical being but sensed his hands cup his face as he lowered it. Felt the tears run slowly down his cheeks as his realisation of the truth returned.

Almost inaudible, barely a breath leaving his lips, John spoke, "My God has forsaken me."

Raziel sighed then spoke with an anguish growing in his voice, "Not just you John, he has forsaken us all. Like a child who outgrows a toy, he has discarded us. We are outside his Grace now. We are nothing to him."

In the pause before Raziel continued John was sure he heard a gently sob.

"He has left us all. No eternal light, no paradise awaits you or any of your kind, and we are left to tend to you, to answer your questions as you pass over to an eternity of nothingness. This is the truth I revealed to you."

John took a deep breath, "Yes, yes but you allowed me a choice."

John's confusion seemed to clear further, everything coming into perfect focus.

"You allowed me to choose to save Florence. To take on her burden, to let her live out the rest of her life in peace."

John sensed Raziel smile, again as a parent would smile to a clever child.

"Yes John, and with the divinity imbibed in you at your creation you made the noble choice, you saved Florence."

In the brief silence that followed John felt the haze of confusion pressing back in around him, felt everything he had remember slipping away, like dust to the wind.

"Thank you Raziel", John murmured, "Florence is safe. She really is safe."

"Until tomorrow John"

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"Hello, Auntie Flo?"

"Yes, it's Maggie, Auntie Flo."

"Yes I said I would phone to let you know how he is."

"Yes I went and saw him, it's really no trouble."

"Well, it wasn't one of his better days. I'm not really sure he even knew I was there but he did say your name though, and we are all praying for him to improve."

"I know Auntie Flo but I hate to think of it that way. Alzheimer's is such a horrid word and I worry it must be like purgatory for him... ."

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