Barely Awake

I woke at what I can only presume must have been two am, but in reality could have just as easily been four am of even five am, to rain bucketing down. A good spring shower, it might have been called if I lived in the Northern Hemisphere, but I don't. So it was a chilling autumn rain, and it brought the damp coldness of the mountains with it and the Antarctic winds from across the ocean.

It made me grateful for the warm doona I was curled up in, wrapped snuggly around my toes and shoulders, and I took the time to burrow just a little deeper down under it so my ears and nose could be covered too. I lay in a sleepy stupor as the drops thundered down, pummelling into the side of the house, the metal roof of the carport, and the windscreen of the car.

As thoughts raced through my mind, I tensed momentarily, wondering if the youngest would come barrelling down the hallway worried about the rain. Moments passed and I realised I was holding my breath waiting for his arrival, but when the pounding footsteps didn't reach my ears I allowed myself the gentle repose of sleep, yet it's longing fingers escaped me.

I closed my eyes anyway and began to tell myself a story.. How far would I get before I succumbed to the coma of sleep? Would Lucy escape the clutches of a well meaning grandfather who's angry heart and malicious attitude is slightly abusive towards her? Would Ben rescue her in time and tell her the long buried family secret that will forever change her life?

I can't say, because as my mind pondered all these questions and more, I began to doubt my story again. Was it believable, did it need an extra element, had I reached the point of retelling it to myself so much that I had a monotone story with flat characters who were going about their mundane lives? Very possibly.

I rolled over, ignoring the ache in my left knee wondering if a girlfriend, unintentional as she might be, would be the missing element. But no, perhaps not. I sighed quietly so as not to disturb the sleeping mass beside me, and rolled back the other way across the bed. My head, now uncomfortable required a pillow adjustment, and then the doona required adjusting to trap as much warmth as I could under it in this unheated bedroom.

Perhaps the truth was that I was running from my story, not because it lacked realism or

believability or even people desperate to read it, but because I feared the critics. I yawned and closed my eyes, seeing the young dark haired child sleeping peacefully in her bed. My eyes snapped open. How did she get there?

I've told this story to myself for the past 5 years and she's never slept in her own bed without having a nightmare. I ponder this a moment, is the ending that's been evading me for so long finally nearing? I close my eyes again, and see a loving father standing at the doorway, checking that his daughter is safe, and then a hand, wait where'd this girlfriend come from? Didn't I just say she wasn't allowed in the story?

I shift my sore knee slightly under the covers finding a place on the mattress for it that helps relieve the ache. I take a couple more calming breaths and close my eyes again, knowing the story will play out in my mind, but I still can't find the missing pieces. The ending eludes me, hovering just out of reach taunting me.

My breathing slows and calms as sleep begins to take over, maybe in Epilogue will do..

The dark winter nights and mornings often mean storms on our little island, but not the thunderous booming storms of the mountains I grew up with. Sea storms are different. They tend to be gusty and wild, whipping wind and rain about like a child creating waves in a bathtub. The lightning stays out to sea most of the time, and the thunder rolls with the waves.

I rarely wake up to their noise and racket, and am often the odd duck out at the breakfast table when everyone comments about the ruckus of the night before. There are often complaints from those who sleep at the front of the house near the metal roof that extends over the walkway leading to our front door. The drops pinging loudly and keeping them

awake.

If it’s not the noise of the rain it might be the taunting wind that whispers at the cracks of their windows and rattles the frames inviting them outside to play. Those who sleep in other areas of the home are restless sleepers and often wake during such moments to be sure that everyone is safe and comfy and well tucked in.

To be the only family member awake during a morning downpour was an unusual event, although the ache in my knee was not and likely the reason I was awake. I often find myself telling and retelling the same story over in my mind as I drift off each night. It’s a sense of comfort much like a special blanket or stuffed lovie may be to a child.

Yet, the ending of this story truely does elude me. I’m not sure how to wrap up all the loose ends! I wrote the above excerpt on a cold April evening of 2020 in on of my many writing journals, and as I reflect back on it I can’t help but chuckle that the ending still feels just out of reach.

That’s not the only issue the story has had, it’s struggled with a lack of conflict and too many happy go lucky people. It’s struggled with name changes, age changes, location changes, and a myriad of other issues too great to continue to list. Yet it’s that one story that I constantly return to and am determined to finish and share.. someday, when I manage to put all the words into coherent sentences.