

Connection

By

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We called it a mansion. It wasn't. All I knew was that it was simply a semi-detached house at the bottom of a hill near a football stadium somewhere, sometimes I could hear if the home team scored. Either way, it was bigger than the ordinary flat we lived in. In comparison to the stench of an over-crowded car en route, I would walk through the door and it would strike me. That perfect aroma. The smell of summer - but softer. It was a truly delicate perfume. It wouldn't be long until my nose would adapt to the smell and lose its originality, so I drew in as much as I could take until it hurt. My Auntie Wendy would be waiting for her long-awaited welcome hug. I would smell her clothes as we embraced; it was her who spread the perfume throughout the house. I held her tight, trying to make the smell my own as she asked, "How are you my darling?" with a kind smile on her face.

Later on my brothers, Mark and James, would play hide and seek in the 'mansion' with me. Laughing and shouting with each other we would scatter in different directions, one to the garage through the tiled, slippery kitchen and past the piano, another to the living room toward the cream sofa and into the gap behind it where the double-glazed window was. I would

head for the shiny upstairs bathroom and hide in the airing cupboard on the first floor. Not because it was the best place to hide, but where that unique smell was re-ignited; though now a warmer, cosier version of the same smell seeping from her towels, dressing-gown, and bed sheets. I would sit in there, even after being found, with my eyes closed, inhaling the warm scent and almost trying to taste its fragrance, picturing my favourite auntie with her big smile, open arms and loving way.

The smell would only return the next morning when she'd come downstairs having replenished that significant bouquet. "Did everyone sleep ok?" She would ask, always putting others first. Even the smell of our egg, cheese, ham and bread couldn't overwhelm the scent of something so powerful to me. I was sure no one else sensed the strength of it, which made me proud. I truly believed she wore it just for me, to make me feel safe and welcome. It made me feel an important part of her life. It was a special connection I had with her that nobody else knew about; not even her.