

The Long Wait

Edie pulled her coat collar up and shuffled towards the bus stop. It took her a good ten minutes to get here from her flat, since the lift had broken down. She found it too far to walk now to do any shopping, especially if she used her trolley, but she wasn't going to the supermarket today. Looking at her watch she could see that the 39 was late.

Edie lived on her own but she wasn't lonely. It was years since Stanley died and she was used to her own company, but she still liked to chat to people sometimes. A few weeks ago a girl moved into the flat next door. Edie was enjoying a breath of fresh air one day, on the balcony that ran along her landing, when her new neighbour came out with a mug of tea in her hand. By the look of her she was expecting and she was black – not that it made any difference to Edie, because Stanley was black.

“Hello” said Edie, “you getting settled in? My name is Edie.”

“Pleased to meet you” said the girl, “I'm Patti”.

“When's your little one due?” said Edie, glancing down at Patti's bump.

“Just before Christmas the doctor says” .

“You'll have your hands full then” said Edie, beaming at Patti.

Edie and Stanley had never been able to have any children, so Edie was excited at the prospect of a new baby next door.

After that first meeting she and Patti became good neighbours and good friends. It seemed that Patti's boyfriend had disappeared once he knew she was pregnant and her family just weren't interested.

The two of them often had a cup of tea and a chat. They got into the habit of having fish and chips together on a Friday evening. There was a van that used to park down in the courtyard below and it did a roaring trade with the people who lived in their block.

Edie was just getting out her box of Christmas decorations one day in December when Patti rang her door bell.

“Come in dear” said Edie. “I was just going to put the kettle on.”

“Great” said Patti, “and I wanted to ask you something”.

“What’s that dear?”

Before Patti could answer she cried out in pain and Edie could see a small puddle on the floor where she was standing.

After that things happened very quickly. The ambulance took Patti to the local hospital and later that evening Edie got a call to say that the baby had arrived safe and sound.

The 39 dropped her outside the hospital and before long she was sitting beside Patti’s bed looking down at a small sleeping face wrapped snugly in a hospital blanket.

“It’s a girl” said Patti.

“She’s lovely” said Edie, “what are you going to call her?”

“I’d like to call her Edie”

Tears of joy ran down Edie’s smiling face.

Author’s note: The book title which inspired this story is “Lady in Waiting” by Anne Glenconner. It is the autobiography of one of the Maids of Honour who attended the Queen at her Coronation in 1953.