

Wake-up call

Gemma woke to the dawn sunlight filtering through the lavender drapes, handcrafted by an Indian collective, which she'd purchased last week from the local free trade ethical shop in town. She'd added a tie-dyed matching trim of pink silk, which she'd dyed herself with avocado stones, just to add a little extra flourish. She got up and made herself a large mug of of fair trade coffee, and returned to the bedroom. She'd left Jon still sleeping; he'd had a busy day yesterday, teaching carpentry skills at the local school and later, at the evening class; his hobby reborn. He'd been tired, but so much happier than when he faced the daily commute, over an hour long both ways, to his faceless office for a unrewarding job. He'd even been inspired, as soon as he returned home, to pick up his guitar and work on a new tune for his band, which played weekly for the sing-around at the community hall.

Meanwhile, she'd been busy baking cakes for the annual celebration happening this afternoon, 'Care for all'. The celebration had begun eight years ago, after the vaccine was produced and it was safe to mix and mingle once more, get together again sharing lives and memories. Thank goodness, Gemma thought, the people had finally come to their senses, all over the world. As one, they'd decided that enough was enough; they would find other ways to live their lives, at one with nature and humanity.

She was looking forward to the celebration, meeting up with family and friends, old and new and the warm fuzzy feeling everyone shared. And later, she and Jon were planning to wander to the evening meet-up, held around the town's memorial to those who had lost their lives in the pandemic. It had been carved by a local stonemason, with the names of the lost, etched on its sides, for remembrance. The last time they'd seen the memorial, a fortnight ago, the late-flowering climbing roses and vines were already at the top, their buds beginning to form. And they would at last gaze in wonder at the newly created Green Man, his skeleton now clothed, as every year, in sweet-smelling blooms.

So as Gemma opened the curtains on another glorious autumn morning, and as the sunlight welcomed a beautiful day, she could hear the birds and bees mingling their sweet twitterings and buzzings as they lived out their lives in this newly created world, where humanity once more had become part of, not apart from, Nature; a post-apocalyptic heaven.

She was still tired. Leaving the curtains open, she set the alarm for an hour's time and lay down once more at Jon's side and dozed.

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As the alarm blared out, Gemma woke. She picked up her mobile, at the side of the bed.

And her dream shattered. The date glared out from the screen.

28th September 2020. Back to reality; an apocalyptic hell.