

## A Short Fuse

Annie Baldwin an only child, had temper tantrums from the age of two. Screams could be heard regularly from the bedroom window.

‘I’m not going to bed, I want to watch Dr Who now.’

‘No Annie, you can’t. You know you’ll get nightmares.’

‘I know, but they pass, I get over them.’

Yes, until the next Saturday’s episode, then she’d howl and bawl into her pillow. Her mother quietly closed the door and left her.

Making a cup of Ringtons tea her mother sat quietly by the kitchen fire pondering. I can’t cope with her anymore. Is it me? Am I a bad mother? She thought. She pulled out a Consulate menthol cigarette, lit up and inhaled like her life depended on it. The stress of her daughter was getting to her.

Just then the kitchen door burst open and she coughed hard on the cigarette.

‘It’s not fair,’ Annie squealed. ‘I want to watch Dr Who.’

‘You little brat, get up them stairs.’

Her mothers face was bright red and she was gritting her teeth. Annie knew she had gone too far.

‘Get in that bed young lady and don’t dare come down.’

Annie started singing and commenting on how cold it was to divert her mother’s anger.

‘NO MORE DR WHO, EVER!’ her mother squealed, and banged the door.

I need a drink, she thought and took a bottle of Gordons Gin from the cupboard. All the stuff she’d read hadn’t worked – the naughty step, deprivation, punishment and putting Annie in her room. Everything failed. After two glasses of wine she came up with an idea.

At tea time the next day she sat Annie down, ‘I’ve got an idea Annie. Instead of watching Dr Who and having nightmares, I’ve bought you the Dalek costume we saw last week in Woolworths.’

Oh I’d love it, Mam, I’d love it, can I try it on now?’

Annie pulled on the costume and was full of excitement, ‘I love it Mam.’

‘OK sweetheart, let’s put it away to keep it in good condition.’

Saturday night came and Annie never mentioned Dr Who, she climbed into bed and her mother kissed her goodnight. She made her way downstairs, took out the gin and poured it into the lead crystal glass her sister bought her for Christmas. She lit up a cigarette and paused, this is bliss. The tension in her stomach was gone. Annie would be fast asleep.

Just then the door burst open and there stood Annie in her costume, 'The Tardis has landed,' she cried. 'And I've come to exterminate.'

Her mother's face froze, then softened, and she burst into huge bellows of laughter. She opened her arms and cuddled Annie, 'I give in, Dr Who has won.'

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