

MODERN FAIRY STORIES

The Block Of Flats

There was once a block of flats, an H-block if you like. Now this block of flats was not happy with his existence. He was very lonely. He was an old block, you see, and one of the first of his kind, and he had no friends. There were lots of houses and banks and things, of course, but he was bigger than them, and they were frightened of him, and kept away from him. I say he, because he is a he. He thinks and he exists. Poor thing. How would you like to be a tall block, with no friends, and little people inside you painting you, sticking things into your sides, knocking parts of you down, and walking all over you? It is not very pleasant, that's for sure. Anyway, Harry (that's my nickname for him, because he's an H-block), Harry had a surprise one day when the architect who designed him, came around to see him. Of course, Jim (the architect) didn't know that Harry could think just like him; he just came to see if Harry was well.

'How would you like to be a tall block, with no friends, and little people inside you painting you, sticking things into your sides, knocking parts of you down, and walking all over you?'

While Jim was checking Harry over, Harry heard him saying to his workmate that he was constructing a new type of block. A totally new, unheard of design, with lots of coloured paint and a new kind of outside lift. Harry was sure that this block would be a she-block but what Harry was so excited about was that Jim said that the building contractors had chosen and bought a piece of land right next to Harry! Harry was so happy that he smiled all the next day, and passers-by later said that they had never seen a block of flats with so many windows open! Days, weeks and months passed without any sign of building, but then, seven months after Harry had first heard Jim speaking about the new flats, building began. When the new, bright and sparkly clean block of flats

was completed, Harry was dying to speak to his first ever friend. But how would he be able to communicate, he thought. Eventually he decided. He would whistle. He did, and people below had to cling onto their hats and bags. There was no answer but Harry noticed that his new friend must be crying, because lots of water was dripping down the walls and windows. 'Poor thing,' thought Harry. 'I wonder why she's so upset?' So Harry 'spoke' telepathically to her, as only blocks of flats can do, to ask her what was wrong.

'Oh, woe is me!' she wailed. 'I wonder what woe means?' thought Harry. Alas, Harry was not a classically educated block of flats. 'What's the matter?' asked Harry.

It was a long, sad story that Harriet (well, she's an H-block too) told. Apparently, some of the stone of which she was made was very badly behaved, and it did not agree with her. Or, to put it more precisely, she did not agree with it. It had a lot of nasty habits, such as getting dirty and having to be scrubbed clean by the people living in that particular flat. Of course, this hurt Harriet,

'After much heaving and thrusting, Harry collapsed.'

but every time it was done, all the nasty stone could do was laugh, which was not very nice, was it? Poor Harriet! What was she to do? Harry suggested kicking that particular stretch of wall out, but Harriet said that she didn't think that was a good idea, because the builders might knock her down then, mightn't they? This crying went on for quite a few days and Harry was getting more than a bit upset. This was his first friend ever, and all she could do was cry! Harry decided that it was time for action. He had stood still for long enough. He put all his strength into shaking himself, and he wobbled and wobbled, and shook and shook, and trembled and trembled, until his foundations began to weaken. If he could not have a friend, someone to love apart from himself (as nice as that was), then he would kill himself, for he could take his solitude no longer (and anyway, he might be able to knock some sense into that naughty stone!). So Harry's old and weather-worn foundations began to crumble. Harry knew his end was near, but he was glad. At last, his sad existence could end (choking stuff this). After much heaving and thrusting, Harry collapsed into a pile of rubble on the ground. No humans were hurt, because it just happened to be a Bank Holiday. As dust sifted down the sides of Harriet, it mixed with the moisture of her tears, so that when Harry reached Harriet's ground floor, he had cemented his first relationship (I indeed apologise for that pun). But this

was not the end of Harry; this story does have a happy ending. For Harry's self-demolition gave certain planners in the town-hall an ideal opportunity to execute their new plan. Harriet had been a little damaged by Harry's downfall, and it was inevitable that something major had to happen for her to survive. The building contractors' plan was to build a new luxury shopping centre (it was either that or the less popular option of a new Hospital Wing), which would combine the two structures (whom we know as Harry and Harriet) into one. So, after all, Harry would have his first friend, in the closest relationship I would have thought possible!

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GUY'S

HOSPITAL GAZETTE



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