

## *H & M and the Others*

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Short Story

H & M woke feeling peevisish. Flicking on a screen, it showed native tribespeople going about their business.

The right ears of the males suddenly rose upwards and slightly sideways to turn into spinning black drills. Some of the drills pierced a neighbour's hand; others became pinned to tree trunks. The latter were left to continue drilling into the tree until the tribesman expired. Asphyxiated perhaps. The sound of women screaming filled the air.

H & M swiped left and studied the sailors swarming up the ratlines to reef the topsails. Zooming into the water slicked face of one sailor while toggling a wave to come closer, the pretty face didn't look so pretty now as it hurtled towards the sea.

Next came a city scene. Crowded; smoggy. Refreshing really after all that storm at sea water. Towers came into view. One, then two. Twin towers you could say. Closing in through the windows the worker bees became larger. Some were getting coffee and donuts – the latter not good for their teeth – some were photocopying, some standing around and talking, or sitting in their ergonomic chairs looking at screens. H & M liked the duality of looking at a screen looking at them doing the same. One worker bee was tucked away in a corner office playing a game against the computer.

With a quick glance at the sky, H & M saw a plane pierce the fluffy clouds. A laptop tap brought the plane and the corner office together. Wasn't the result the game player intended.

H & M turned to show *The Others* before turning back to the screens. Funny how grief has momentary lapses of forgettingness. The last of *The Others* had gone. No-one left to share ideas; no-one left to playfully refer to him as H & M or reverently as High and Mighty. They'd all worked together for so long to bring about good. Penicillin had been one of many successes and they'd relished its usefulness. Sad how nearly a century later, it had become too useful and therefore at times useless. H & M longed anew for those times to be restored.

H & M shrank thinking on how *The Others* would view the Brexit machinations. Even the Australians on the other side of the globe were discussing it over their smashed avo at cafes. An avocado blight would give them something else to think about. Many of their ancestors had emigrated after the success of the Irish potato famine ... *The Others* wouldn't have endorsed that blight either let alone what happened at Wuhan.

H & M noticed a screen showing a woman working from home at her kitchen table with primary aged children sitting at the other end. The children were giggling over craft glitter scattering on the floor. Zooming in closer H & M saw the card they were making. They were edging the love heart with glued on multi-coloured glitter. Mother's Day? Birthday? Just because? The Mum looked like she was trying to ignore them but her suppressed smile and blinking eyes gave her away. What was she trying to work on? H & M saw calculations .... Covid survivor profiles ... immunisation trial statistics ... *The Others* would want her to succeed. H & M wanted her to succeed. A warm glow suffused H & M's being.