

*'It's awfi busy in here the day Ertika, i'n't it?'*

That was Rosalina, that horrible little green thing with the tiny red flowers, always talking, day and night, so wearing, really. Does she not have an "off" button? That's the trouble with some plants, they never stay quiet, don't save their energy so that they can grow up.

I'm said nothing, kept quiet, stuck to my new plan. I knew that the moment would pass, that Rosalina would find another victim to prattle at soon enough. She was what we call an IA- an Inveterate Gabbler.

I stayed focussed, deciding that the best way to get out of here was to grow big, become more attractive to 'Our Customers', as they milled around bleating like sheep. At least I was impervious to sheep, and even goats, which are known to try to eat almost anything. But I digress, which is quite normal for a cactus. Actually, we are known for digressing, it's in our DNA from all those long years of standing in desert regions under the blazing Sun.

Look, let me tell you my story, please.

That first night I was here, just after lights out, I heard my two big 'cousins' whispering about me:

*"Look at that wan thut cries hirsels Ertika. Thinks she's that pretty an' that. Thank God she's such a shrimp. We'll get ootta here first, so we wull; an she'll be here for bluidy years . Size matters titchy bum!"*

Well, since that night I remained imprisoned for nearly three weeks, the smallest of the three Golden Ball cacti here in Dobbies near Milngavie, wherever that is. I hated it there, and I hate everything that has happened to me: being separated from my family, from proper sensible conversation, the packing up, shoved beside other plants that I have little in common with, the journey of two days in constant motion, all in the dark, then decanted into this dim sunless place, the disorientation, the mindless excited chatter of the other plants, so many different voices that I can't follow. But, no, I've put that behind me.

But I need sun! And, perhaps strangely for a sun-worshiper like myself, I yearn for the cold darkness of a star speckled frosty night sky.

At first I wanted to go back home, back to the care of Hans; I loved those slow growing years surrounded by the other *echinocactus grusonii*.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echinocactus\\_grusonii](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echinocactus_grusonii)

I miss the music too. What we get here in Dobbies is all jingle jangle stuff, not what I call music. Hans played good music for us. He's a soft to trad Jazz fan, and a classical music buff too, and a dance music fan, and especially, a Scottish Dance music. His all-time hero is some 'mannie caw'ed Jimmy Shand'.

([www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3hAtxZXNrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3hAtxZXNrA))

Hans talked to us every day, called us *miene leiben* (my wee lassies). He has this funny way of speaking, a mixture of German and Scottish; and that has proved a Godsend because I can pick up what is going on around me. Hans told us that he spends all his free time in Scotland, playing Golf, and that his handicap is 16.

Actually, that was the only thing that annoyed me about Hans, he used tell us endlessly of all places he had played, about each and every one and his games, stroke by stroke. Look, I confess, I put up with it and tried to look pretty for him, but inside I switched off and slipped down into a snoooooozzzzzzzle.

And Hans is still doing 'The Munros', which are something to do with Julie Andrews, I think. Doesn't she have such a lovely voice? I'd love to see that film. I know the words to all the songs from the music Hans played for us. If I could change my name, I would want to be called 'Maria'.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1HwVmY28Pk>

It was horrible when Hans was away and left us to those idiots who always showered us with water, even though we all shouted as loud as we could, in German of course, but here is the translation:

***'Stop! You great Numpties, Stop will you. We don't all this need water. A teaspoonful a week is just fine, not bloody bucketfuls!'***

*(Sorry - should this be buckets full [of water]? My Scottish is still a bit weak! And you've no idea how hard it is to articulate that phrase in German, so*

*many changes of tense and gender - a nightmare really. Scottish is so much simpler, once you get the different dialects.)*

Of course they could not actually hear us, with their ears stuffed full of I-Pods. How appropriate, the veritable vegetables that they were. And surely they should be called Ear-Pods?

Anyway, back to my story. Gradually I began to notice that things there at Han's place were not so friendly after all. In fact I learned that growing 'big' was bad for me, because anyone who got big soon disappeared. In fact I never actually met my Mum so I consider myself an orphan. And then my bigger sisters were taken one by one. So I did my best to stay small but one day, disaster struck.

Han's broke my heart.

*"Ertika, I'm sorry, it's your turn now, but don't worry ma bonnie wee lassie, I'm sending you to Milngavie, near the Camel's Hump. And I'll pray for you every day, so that you get a good home."*

Some of his hot tears dripped onto me and I still have them here, deep inside, right next to my deep root. I still love that man, even though he sent me here among all these nutters like Rosalina. Why did he do this to me? Something to with the 'wheels of commerce ever turning' he murmured, but frankly, that phrase means nothing to me.

But the word 'Camel' rang a bell in my DNA and, as I bumped along in the container, I had dreams of living in the sun, soaking it up, growing bigger, sprouting flowers, feeling the bees sniff into them, feeling the pollen do its wonderful work, feeling my seeds spurting up into hot dessert winds. I'm sure you know the sort of thing, romantic and sappy, but well, that's what every cactus wants, really, true romance and a happy family of her own growing up around her.

So, since that first night when I arrived here, in Milngavie, I kept quiet, and put all my energy into getting bigger, and to make myself more attractive, hoping that someone would come for me, to answer Han's prayers.

And then this morning it happened!

## Luv, Luv me doooo.....

---

John and his very kind social worker Margaret, came for me today. John wanted me above all the others, to give as a gift to Sheila and Jim. Since he picked me up John has been speaking to me non-stop. I guessed at once that he was an IG like Rosalina and I began to cringe, inside. But on the few occasions he shut up, while he was slurping his coffee, I managed to get across the bones of my story, so that he could write it down for Sheila and Jim, show my provenance as it were.

And Margaret told me that Sheila and Jim are such a loving couple, and assured me that I will be happy with them. It seems they have a nice big house in a quiet street and, wonderfully, they have a large Conservatory. And there will music and films. I am hoping that I might even get to see Julie on screen at last. But Margaret warned me that there would also be a lot of Formula 1 on their TV, I hope I get to like it.

Then, this afternoon at John and Margaret's house, I heard the Beatles for the very first time. I was almost bopping and twisting out of my pot! And I was singing along, (quietly, of course) to all the songs and then one struck me as so appropriate for my meeting with Jim and Sheila tonight.

I've learned all the words.

This is it:

"Luv, Luv me dooo."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOYifXhm-Zc>

And maybe, just maybe, I will fulfil my destiny after all.

Maybe someday I will reach my full grandeur, have many grandchildren.

And become worthy of my other name, the name I have always wanted:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIjobdArtiA>

Anyone for a song?

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIHOJ2dq\\_UU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIHOJ2dq_UU)

Or for the traditionalists:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCptMS8IZvA>