



Sterlington Stairlift Stories For Children

Stethoscope Sunshine



Chapter One

In this story we haven't told you the real name of the person that it's about.

We gave her the nickname "Flower" instead.

Ever since she was a toddler Flower was interested in sounds. It didn't have to be music or loud sounds and most of the time she preferred the kind of tiny sounds that most people didn't even think about.

One day she was watching television with her mum and saw a programme about a child who had bad ears and couldn't hear properly.

In the programme a nurse blew up a balloon, held it against the child's ear, put her lips against the balloon and made buzzing sounds. That made little vibrations through the air in the balloon and the child could hear them.

It showed how a different kind of sound could help someone to hear and Flower found it all very interesting.

On another day she found out about the glass trick. If you hold an empty drinking glass against wall and put your ear at the end of the glass you can hear people talking in the room the other side of the wall.

"What a good idea!" thought Flower.

Chapter Two

One morning Flower's mum said "What shall we do today?"

"Can we play listening glasses?" asked Flower.

"Glasses are for looking through, not listening with, daft" said her mum, tickling Flower under her arm.

"Not those glasses" said Flower as she wriggled away.

"What glasses do you mean, then?" asked Mum.

"The type you have lemonade in", said Flower, suddenly smiling and licking her lips at the thought of lovely cool, tasty lemonade.

"Hmm, I still don't know what you mean", said her mum.

Flower replied "Let me show you, then".

A few minutes later Flower was in one room and her mum was in the next room holding a glass against the wall and wondering what her husband would think if he suddenly came home and saw her.

But he didn't.

Flower wondered if she could make her mum hear tiny sounds through the wall, and she did.

She started by banging things together to make loud sounds, then clapping her hands to make quieter sounds, then speaking rather quietly.

She stopped speaking, ran into the other room, and asked her mum "What did I just say".

"You asked me what time the shops shut" said Mum.

"Correct" said Flower, thrilled that it had worked. "Now do you believe me about listening glasses?"

"Of course I do" said Mum, and started to wonder if her little girl was going to be super clever as she grew up.

Later she found out.

Chapter Three

Flower's interest in sounds never died.

She saw lots of books about it and was quite happy looking at pictures of things used to listen and measure sounds.

Flower was looking through a book when she saw a stethoscope for the first time.

It was a kind of "V" shaped thing with bits that go in someone's ears and an end piece that is held against something they want to listen to.

She learned that Doctors use them to listen to hearts and other parts of people's bodies and that can help them find out what is wrong with someone who feels ill.

When Flower turned a page in the book and saw bits about horses and other animals she was delighted.

Most small girls like horses and stories about horses, and Flower just loved them all.

This book told her things about animals that she hadn't really thought about.

She thought knew what a Vet was, someone who helps animals who are ill or hurt. But she didn't know how vets made animals better or what things they used.

Flower's dad was a clever chap and loved his daughter very much. He knew it was important for people to get answers to things they were curious about.

So when Flower asked him about a hundred questions to do with what she had seen in books, he sat her on his lap and started to read to her from a different book he'd got from the library.

Chapter Four

"The things I am going to tell you are supposed to be from true stories", her dad explained. "So keep still, be quiet, and try not to fall asleep".

"OK", said Flower, and made some snoring sounds just to be cheeky.

Dad grinned then started to explain things from the book.

"There was a man in a country called France. He had a very long name but most people called him René Laennec.

In the year 1816 he invented the stethoscope which is something used for listening through.

"I know what a stethoscope is" said flower.

"OK, smarty pants" said Dad. "If you are so clever maybe you remember that I told you to keep quiet about ten years ago, or was it more like two minutes ago?"

"Message received and understood", said Flower, remembering something she heard in a children's film.

Dad started to read some more bits from the book but had hardly started when Flower piped up again.

"If his name was la neck perhaps that's why doctors hang stethoscopes round their neck".

"When you grow up you can ask one" said her dad. "That is if you ever do grow up and stop messing around and interrupting when your handsome and intelligent father is trying to tell you things you wanted to know about, you cheeky, cheeky, cheeky little squirt!"

He tickled her again and she went all unnecessary.

After a while they both calmed down and he continued.

Chapter Five

Sometimes Flower's dad read bedtime stories to her.

He would say "Which story would you like?"

For a long time the reply was "Can I have Goldilocks and The Three Bears".

With the way he told it, she especially like the bits where Goldilocks tried baby bear's things and they were "juuuust right".

A few times Flower was very quiet and still. Her dad thought she had fallen asleep so he stopped reading. He was just about to get up when she said "Well, go on then!" She wasn't asleep at all and he guessed she was simply listening quietly so she didn't miss anything.

When she was a bit older Flower wanted him to read a story named "Oh Lewis! written by Eve Rice. The story was about a young boy named Lewis, his mum, and his little sister Ellie. That story was Flower's favourite for quite a long time.

But now she was snuggled up on her dad's lap and he was telling her some more things about sounds and the things used for listening to sounds.

"A long time ago in the year 1950 a vet named Alan Phillips opened a surgery for treating sick animals. It was opposite the railway station in a town named Sutton in a county named Surrey.

Alan invented a special stethoscope for listening to horses' hearts.

At the time he had a girlfriend named Jacqueline Nield who loved reading books written by Jean Plaidy.

Jacqueline, who liked to be called Jacquie for short, was born on an island named Jersey and was going to be married to a young doctor. But they had a row and didn't get married so she decided to move away. Jacquie went to a town named Wallington in Surrey and lived in a flat in Clarendon Road.

She got a job near Sutton and started to ride horses on Sunday mornings. The horses were kept at a stable at Hunter's Field in a village named Woodmansterne, a few miles from where she lived.

She used to ride there on a moped, wearing a velvet jacket, riding trousers called Jodhpurs, and riding boots. People who saw her might have thought she was cranky and got on the wrong type of horse by mistake.

Hunter's Field was where Jacquie met the vet Alan Phillips when he went there to look after the horses.

She was very proud of him and loved it when he told her about listening to horses hearts through his special invention."

Flower loved the bits her dad told her about the horses, the heart sounds, the stethoscope, the love story between Alan and Jacquie, being snuggled up with her dad, and secretly knowing what she was going to ask for when her next birthday came along.

Chapter Six

When the family was having dinner one evening Flower's mum said "Children shouldn't expect to have parties and get presents just because they have a birthday, but you will have a birthday soon.

If there's anything special you would like you can tell us. You may not get what you want but there's no harm in telling people what you would like".

"Well" started Flower, "You know what dad was telling me about horses and things, well, that should give you a clue". Then she stopped and was very quiet.

Mum and Dad looked at each other and Dad started speaking. "Your mum was right, you can tell people what you want but you may not always get it. A horse is a very nice ..."

He was stopped by Flower who suddenly said "No, no, I don't mean that. I don't want a horse. You are the best mum and dad ever and I know daughters cost a lot of money, and I know you haven't got much, and I don't want a horse, and if I don't get anything now or ever, I won't sulk like that Linda Taylor next door does, or go to live on Jersey just to get away from you, or anything. I just want my own stethoscope. I have always wanted my own stethoscope, I was born wanting a stethoscope. Even before I knew what one was I wanted one of my own."

"Keep your fingers crossed", said Dad, "You never know".

After Flower went to sleep that night, meaning after her dad had read her a story, Mum and Dad had a chat.

They knew their little girl was interested in sounds and remembered the "listening glass". They could see that the subject of sounds was very important to her and thought they must do their best to try to buy her what she wanted.

Chapter Seven

The next week Flower's mum, whose name was Avril Greig, had to see the doctor about some mum's matters which were much to hard to explain in a nice simple story like this.

After the mum's matters had been sorted out she told the doctor about what Flower said and asked if there was any harm in a girl of Flower's age having a stethoscope.

The doctor said normal stethoscopes didn't have batteries or anything so they were safe if they were used properly.

He said "It is unusual for a child to want something like that and people should be shown how to use a stethoscope properly. But if Flower is really interested bring her along here and I'll let her try mine for a few minutes."

"We've got to go to see the doctor together" Mum told Flower.

"Why, is one of us ill, mummy?" asked Flower, looking a bit worried.

"No, sweetheart", said Mum, "Nothing like that. Wait until we get there and all will be revealed". As she said it she moved her hand and arms apart as if she was opening curtains to reveal something.

"Can we go NOW?" asked Flower, who was suddenly curious.

"Later", said Mum.

The doctor let Flower hold his stethoscope and told her some of the things he had used it for. He said that sometimes he used it with another "thing". The "thing" was called a sphygmomanometer but not many people could say that or remember its name.

Some people called it by a shorter name "sphygmometer", or called it a blood pressure meter.

Flower wasn't very interested in the sphygmo wotsit at the time, but thought she might be later, so she asked her mum to write the name down.

The stethoscope was great. She listened to the doctor's heart through it, listened to her mum's heart through it, and listened to her mum's tummy through it.

"Do our bellies make that much noise all the time?" she asked the doctor.

"Most of the time, yes" he answered. But we don't hear it normally because it's inside.

You may have heard someone's tummy rumbling sometime without using a stethoscope, yes?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, my dad's", she said.

"Our bodies are working all the time", said the doctor, "Even when we are asleep. Food is being digested and other things are going on. If someone is healthy their body makes the kind of sound you heard through the stethoscope.

If you hear it without a stethoscope it is because it's louder and their tummy might be rumbling because they are hungry or ill.

Doctors listen to hear if the sounds are usual or not so they know if someone is ill".

Flower found out that the stethoscope didn't make the sounds seem very much louder. She still had to listen very carefully. But it was very interesting and she still wanted one of her own.

They thanked the doctor for being so kind and went home.

Chapter Eight

The postman walked straight past without stopping.

Tears ran down Flower's face and made her pillow wet.

She suddenly sat up.

"Mum, it's not fair" she screamed.

"Hey, calm down darling", said mum as she cuddled Flower in her arms.

"You were having a bad dream, it's alright, it's alright".

After a few minutes Flower woke up properly.

"Was I really dreaming, mum?", she asked.

"Yes, we all have bad dreams sometimes, don't worry".

"In my dream, if that's what it really was, I didn't get any birthday cards or anything and I know you said children shouldn't expect things, but I've never done anything wrong, and I don't sulk like that Linda Taylor next door, and I don't expect anything and I didn't ask to have a dream anyway, and ..."
She stopped.

"What day is it?" she asked her mum.

"The ninety fifth of October" her mum replied, grinning.

"You! There isn't one of those", said Flower as she threw the tear-stained pillow at her mum.

Mum ducked and the pillow knocked over a vase of flowers.

Just then the doorbell rang.

"Stay there, rotten shot", said Mum, and glided down the stairs.

"Package for a Miss Greig, could you sign here, please!" said the postman.

"What day is it really and who was that" asked Flower as her mum went back into the bedroom with the vase on the floor.

"Lucky there was no water in that vase" said Mum. "It is the "brrrrrr of brrrrrr" today", and mumbled as she moved her finger up and down past her lips like babies do.

Before Flower got too upset Mum said "It is Wed-nes-day and it is my lovely daughter's birthday, Many Happy Returns!"

"YES!" screamed Flower, very glad that the bad dream was gone.

"Was there anything for me?" she asked.

"There was a tiny package for a Miss Greig, but the label said it mustn't be opened until this evening. So, up washed, dressed, breakfast, then we'll see how it goes", said Mum.

Chapter Nine

It was evening on the same day. Mrs Greig and her birthday girl, Flower, were near the dining table and Flower had started to open the package the postman brought.

It wasn't so tiny. To a young girl of Flower's age, even though she was now a year older, it was a fairly large package.

She opened it carefully, using scissors the way Mum had shown her to cut away the brown paper from the outside, then opening the cardboard box inside.

Inside that was a smaller cardboard box. Inside that was an even smaller cardboard box. Inside that was an even smaller cardboard box, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Altogether there were fifteen cardboard boxes that got smaller and smaller.

Flower thought the smallest box was too small to have anything in it, but she opened it anyway.

Inside was a tiny piece of paper. A message on the paper in tiny writing said "This voucher entitles the holder to one giant hug from her dad".

Just then her dad walked into the room, took the piece of paper, lifted Flower off the floor and gave her a giant hug.

Before he let go he whispered "There's another box under the table".

He'd never seen Flower move so fast.

In the box under the table was her stethoscope!

Chapter Ten

We could have ended the story when Flower got her lovely new stethoscope but we thought you may like to know what happened afterwards.

Flower learned a lot about her stethoscope and other stethoscopes. She listened to all kinds of things though them and was very good at knowing what the sounds meant.

When she started school she learned quickly and passed all the tests.

After school she went to a college, then to a medical school at a city named Oxford where she learned to be a doctor.

Flower used a lot of different stethoscopes and new types were being made all the time. She tried as many kinds as she could.

By listening to people's hearts and tummies when they became ill she was able to help them to get better.

That pleased thousands of patients and brought a lot of sunshine into their lives.

That's why we called this story "Stethoscope Sunshine".

The End

This story is dedicated to a doctor who really has brought sunshine into people's lives.

Her initials are RHS.

They are the same initials as the Royal Horticultural Society which has a bright and colourful flower show each year.

That is why we chose the name "Flower" for the girl in the story.

If you have read or listened to some of the other Sterlington Stairlift Stories For Children you will know the stairlifts used vibrations to send secret messages to each other. To stairlifts the vibrations were not very different to the nurse making sounds through the balloon.

Maybe if Flower put her stethoscope in the right place she could hear the stairlift messages as well.

The End