

It Never Rains But It

by Anne Charles

‘Eugh!’

‘What, daddy. What did you say?’

‘I said ‘eugh’!’

‘Why, daddy? Why did you say that thing?’

‘Because, my sweet. A nasty dribble of cold rain keeps sliding down my back.’ Daniel smiled down at his five year old daughter Susie who was clutching his hand as they hurried to school through a sudden squally downpour.

‘You should have put your coat on and picked up your brolly before you came out. Mummy made me do that.’

‘Clever mummy’ Daniel said jovially, trying not to sound sarcastic. *I bet she did*, he thought. ‘But when I came out to meet you, it was nice and bright and sunny’ he continued. ‘Aren’t I a lucky daddy to meet up with you!’ Again, in a hearty manner. Never mind that his ex-wife had rung him earlier to say she had to get to a crucial meeting so he would have to do the school run. She did not give Daniel time to demur before ringing off. Cursing and swearing, Daniel had quickly grabbed a jacket, slipped on his shoes and rushed to meet them, not noticing the gathering clouds. Daniel was conflicted. He loved the idea of walking his precious daughter to school. Loved holding her little hand as they chatted about their doings since they last saw each other. But, and it was a big but, his time was also limited. He had a major deadline to meet so needed to deposit said daughter as quickly as possible so he could get on with it.

It wasn’t so much that he minded about looking after Susie – he loved it generally and today would have been the start of his weekend to have her but, normally this would have started in the evening when he would pick her up and take her to McDonalds for tea before they settled down at his flat for the weekend together. Why his ex-wife couldn’t have waited a few hours before taking off was extremely disrupting; no matter, so long as Susie was not aware of the issues between her parents.

After dropping Susie at school Daniel raced back to his flat to complete his work. It was difficult, requiring cross checking, fact checking as well as a well

considered opinion. He worked for an American company, the headquarters of which were in Chicago. Daniel worked in the London office but his current project was issued from Chicago. Headquarters had insisted that it be delivered by close of day this particular Friday. Daniel assumed it would be sent via London.

He was able to work from home two days a week. A quick cup of coffee and he got on with his report which was nearly complete bar a final few tweaks. He barely paused for lunch. He just needed to do a final double check read through before pinging his final report off and was so engrossed in his work that he jumped when the phone rang.

‘Mr Scott? It’s school. I understand that you are supposed to be picking Susie up?’

His mind racing, Daniel decided he would have time to collect Susie, install her in front of the telly for half an hour then he would check his work and send the paper off. He was surprised to note that it was still raining so he grabbed the car keys, found the car parked at the end of the street and drove as quickly as possible to school. The headmistress was severe, Susie was distraught. Apologising profusely to both, Daniel urged Susie to come with him.

Susie stamped her foot.

‘But we haven’t got Moggie!’ she howled.

‘That’s fine, we’ll collect him after tv time. I just need to do a quick thing for work’. Daniel checked his watch. ‘Not coming, not coming, need Moggie now!’ Susie was heading for a full scale tantrum. Daniel reckoned it would be quicker to go get Moggie than to try to appease her. With the headmistress still looking cross and clearly wanting to finish her school day, Daniel hurried Susie, only slightly appeased, to the car. He should still have time to retrieve Moggie from Susie’s house and get back to his flat in time to dispatch his report.

Daniel had retained a key to the old marital home, in case of emergencies, and so he let himself and his daughter in.

‘Quickly Susie, where is Moggie? Is he in your bedroom? Run darling.’

But Susie could not find Moggie. Tired and wailing she sat on the hall floor refusing to move without her precious soft toy. Daniel ran upstairs. He looked under the bed, he pulled back the duvet; precious minutes were ticking by. Eventually he found Moggie on the floor under her discarded dressing gown.

Susie grabbed Moggie, Daniel grabbed Susie and ran for the car through the drizzle that was still falling. *Maybe, just maybe, if the road gods help.* But it was clear that the gods were not in helpful mood. The Friday rush hour was well under way; not only that but there were no parking spaces near his flat. Cursing under his breath, he managed to get Susie and Moggie installed in front of the TV. He could skim through his papers just to make sure there were no glaring errors before sending it off, but when he turned the TV on, the children's five o'clock programme was just beginning.

Daniel sank to the floor groaning. He had missed the deadline. Bang went his bonus, bang even went his prospects of promotion. It could even end his employment, you never knew with the Americans. He sat in a miserable heap on the floor beside his daughter who was chatting away now that she had recovered from the awfulness of a late pickup from school and finally finding her beloved Moggies. Assuring her that he was still listening Daniel went to the kitchen for a much needed grown up juice and some squash for Susie.

'Did you know' she was saying, 'Mrs Robertson told us this today, did you know, that it is not the same time all over the world. In Japan it is probably night time right now and then on the other side, I think in America or somewhere like that it might only be lunch time.'

Daniel stared at her. 'You beauty!' he exclaimed. Of course, it was not yet close of play in Chicago. Maybe, just maybe, everything would work out alright. 'Come on, upstairs, you can talk to me while I just do something on the computer.'

An hour later, as they were tucking into the fish and chips with lots of tomato ketchup, delivered to the door, Daniel got an email acknowledging receipt of his report and congratulating him on his timely submission.

Daniel almost collapsed with relief. Glancing out of the window as he poured himself another glass of red, he noticed that not only had it stopped raining at last, but the sun was just peeking out from the clouds.