

**u3a**

learn, laugh, live

# **ISE VALLEY NEWS**

**Kettering, Northants**

**Charity Number 1179738**

**January 2021**



*Let us hope that 2021 is better than 2020!  
If any of you have learnt a new skill in 2020, let  
us know about it, as we all need something to do  
during the new lockdown in 2021.*

# New Year Greetings to you all

## "Cuttings"

This fun and feisty little book is jam-packed with bite-sized snippets of wisdom born from the gardening experience of the great, the good and the very green-fingered. What do Joanna Lumley, Julian Clary and Justin Welby have in common? You'll find their favourite tips within the 160-pages...., along with a host of hints from well-known gardening faces such as Carol Klein, Roy Lancaster, Bunny Guinness, Mark Lane and Alan Titchmarsh: and from the horticultural élite working in private and public gardens across the globe. The appeal of this little book is further enhanced by sparkingly beautiful photography by Justine Stringer (aka @generousgardener) and engaging illustrations by Sharon Grosse.

Priced at an introductory price of £10 (plus postage & packing), this colourful and uplifting little book will be a perfect Christmas stocking-filler for gardeners, for the unexpected guest or indeed a little token for anyone with a window-box. Please fill in the form on our website and specify how many copies you would like. On receipt of your payment your book/s will be despatched by Royal Mail 2nd Class Post, un-tracked. We will do our best to get them to you within 2 weeks. Sold in aid of Gardening for Disabled Trust.

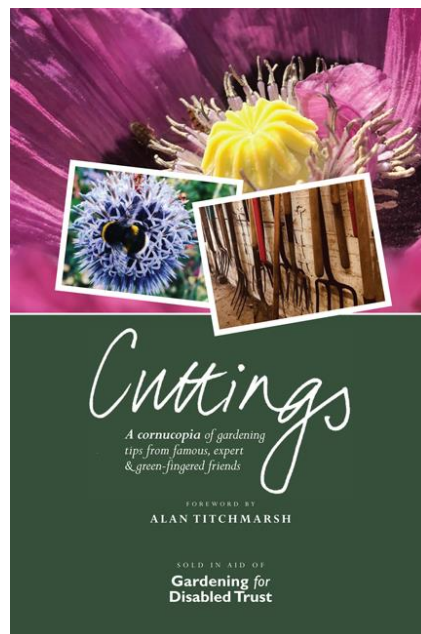
Best regards

Angela Goddard

Hon. Secretary

[www.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk](http://www.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk)

(arrived too late for our December newsletter)



# If anybody's got any ideas on how to fix my terrible condensation problem, please pop round anytime, the kettle's always on

## Answers to the December quiz

- 1 Books or DVD's
- 2 Compendium
- 3 Jigsaws
- 4 Spa treatment
- 5 Lego
- 6 Slippers
- 7 Tablet
- 8 Watch
- 9 Mobile phone
- 10 Ear rings
- 11 Teddy Bear
- 12 Make up
- 13 Underwear
- 14 Football

A priest was being honoured at his retirement dinner after 25 years in the parish. A leading local politician, who was also a member of the congregation, was chosen to make the presentation and give a little leaving speech at the dinner. He was delayed so the priest decided to say his own few words while they waited. 'I got my first impression of the parish from the first confession I heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional told me he had stolen a television set and, when stopped by the police, had almost murdered the officer. He had stolen money from his parents, embezzled from his place of business, had an affair with his boss's wife, taken illegal drugs. I was appalled. But as the days went on, I knew that my people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people.' Just as the priest finished his talk the politician arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and give his speech. 'I'll never forget the first day our parish priest arrived, 'said the politician.' In fact, I had the honour of being the first one to go to him in confession.'

## January Quiz

1. In what year was the first iPhone released?
2. The tallest building in the world is located in which city?
3. Who directed Pulp Fiction?
4. Where is the original Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh housed?
5. How many actors have played the role of James Bond?
6. What company is also the name of one of the longest rivers in the world?
7. In Monsters Inc. what is Sulley's full name?
8. How many children does Queen Elizabeth have
9. Beirut is the capital of which country?
10. 'Stash' is a range of perfume from which Sex and The City actress?
11. How many players are there in a rugby league team?
12. Who voices Elsa in Frozen?
13. In tennis, what piece of fruit is found at the top of the men's Wimbledon trophy?
14. What does GIF stand for?
15. In the Harry Potter book series, which character is described as having a "wild, tangled beard"?
16. What's the name of the dog in The Simpsons?
17. What was the first single to be released by the band Oasis?
18. How many hearts does an octopus have?
19. Eye of the Tiger is from the soundtrack of which 80s film?
20. In the Bible, which character is known for building an ark?
21. The Hawthorns is home to which English football club?
22. Who authored The Hunger Games book series?
23. What currency is used in Turkey?
24. Which iconic soap character lost his first wife to electrocution by hair dryer?
25. Who originally sang Moon River?
26. Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived – who was Henry VIII's last wife?
27. Which American rapper released The College Dropout in 2004?
28. Which side of the road do people drive on in Australia?

29. What is the busiest airport in Britain called?

30. When is St George's Day?

## The Christmas Chair

By Kevin Hughes

**She hated the chair. She hated Christmas. She hated not being able to walk. She was only 21 years old, and had enough hate in her for a woman ten times her age. She couldn't let anyone know though. She had to be tough for her family, her friends, herself.**

**Two years ago she was a vibrant young woman. A potential National Team Volleyball Player. That freak accident when she fell over the Setter who was laying on the ground behind Carol after he had slipped trying for a dig. Carol had stepped back, only to have both her legs go out from under her. She missed the setter with her butt, instead it hit the gym floor - hard. Really hard.**

**And that was that. They all laughed at first, putting strong young female hands out to pull her to her feet, and then they saw the look of agony on her face. Then they realized that she was sitting up, but nothing below her hips was moving. Nothing ever would again. Her legs were dead. She had landed on her butt so hard, she had crushed the nerves that brought life to her legs. If there was any good news, it was that the crushed nerve was below the nerves that control the bowels and bladder, so she could still use the bathroom like a normal person. No bags, or diapers, or help needed. She was grateful for that. Especially after the first few months.**

**Those first few months were horrible. In every way. She went at rehab with the same determination and grit that had made her a Star Player. Her upper body now rivaled that of a professional gymnast or swimmer. Her legs, well, they had withered over the months, and all the smooth muscular curves she once took for granted, were gone. Then Mark, her fiancée (and even thinking his name made her grimace with smouldering half hidden anger), had broken off the engagement. He couldn't see a future with her.**

**"What am I supposed to do Carol? Wait on you hand and foot? Dance with other women every time we go out? Carry your chair up steps? They say you can still have babies, but how are you going to be able to pick them up, and care for them? I am not trying to be cruel, but practical. I can't be responsible for you every moment of the day. You are disabled now, and a handicap."**

**Carol remembered looking at him and thinking, 'It is like I am seeing him for the first time. Practical is just another word for Cruel. Responsible is just another word for Coward!' It was a good thing for Mark that Carol couldn't get out of her Chair and chase him. As it was, he had to run down the hall, as she wheeled after him; not yet good enough to catch an able-bodied person - her arms and coordination hadn't developed to that level yet. Besides, it was a standard hospital chair, which means it was basically a piece of crap. Only good enough to carry dead legs to a car, or down the hall to X-Ray, or Rehab. With the chair she had now, she would have caught him long before he found escape and safety by closing the elevator doors. She sat in her chair, in the Hallway, screaming epithets that, while creative, were as ineffective as her legs at actually doing anything other than just to sit there. Hot words, hanging in the cold air, until the sting of fresh**

tears washed away even the will to speak.

But it was Christmas now. Two years had gone by. She was going to turn 21 the day After Christmas, and as usual, her Family was taking her out for her Birthday on December 23d, so that her special day would be before Christmas, and then she could enjoy Christmas, without being an afterthought. She used to love that about her family, how they made her special. Now, well, "special" had a whole different meaning, and she hated being special. Her Family meant well, she would never let them see her dark thoughts, thoughts that scared even her. If her sister knew the real reason she didn't want to drive a car - that telling everyone the expense of fitting out a car to be driven by hands and arms only wasn't worth the few times she would have to drive it - was just an excuse so that Carol wouldn't test her dark thoughts out, well, her sister would freak out. Suicide watches mean depression. And Carol wasn't the depressed kind. She was a fighter, so she fought.

Her little brother Todd, was the only one who treated her like normal. For Todd, who was only five, he could only remember his big sister in a wheel chair. So he ignored the chair. It was just a part of her. Not part of his world. She loved him all the more for that. Everyone else, no matter how much they tried, couldn't hide the pity that lingered. Everyone thought it was their fault, or their burden to bear. It made her mad. It wasn't anybody's fault at all, it was a freaking freak accident! The only burden was on her shoulders. And that made her snort. "Of course, it is on my shoulders, my legs don't work!" She would laugh if it wasn't so unfunny. It was December 23d, and the whole family had loaded into the car to take her to her Favourite Restaurant. She hadn't been there since before the Accident. It was supposed to be a treat, her birthday, and make her feel special - she would once again, find that grit and tenacity that made her a Star. She would play the game of her life, and make her family think she loved the entire evening...and they would never know: She hated that chair. She hated Christmas. She hated her life.

He was alone. He liked this restaurant a lot. He was only eighteen years old. The waitresses would never even ask for his ID when they came to his table to get his order. They just assumed because he was six feet five inches tall, weighed close to 250 lbs, and had that hard eyed look that only people who had to survive tragedy, war, or poverty get. That look that says: "I am fine. Leave me alone." That he was of drinking age. He didn't drink alcohol, or soft drinks for that matter. He took strict care of what went in his body. "You are what you eat." Is one of the few sayings that he agreed with wholeheartedly.

He had been alone almost all of his eighteen years on the planet. A string of Foster Homes, a few bouts of being homeless on the streets, without food, shelter, or friends - had shaped him into independence. He was not a self made man, but he had made himself a man - way too early. The fire in his eyes had led him to seek knowledge, an edge, and money to alleviate both his poverty, and dependence on other people. His fortune was immense, but his wealth was mostly in his head. For he never wrote anything down. Not even the Code he was famous for writing for other people. Like Mozart, he wrote without notes, without mistakes, without checking for errors, like he was translating from a machine exactly what he heard. It had made him rich, since no one knew how he did it. A good programmer could write a 100 lines of code a day. A great one, a thousand lines of code a day. Shane could write thousands of lines of code a day- and did.

Code that never needed debugging, was never “beta”, and didn’t hide any worms, viruses, or secret puns. You got exactly what you needed and wanted. No more, no less. Shane wrote code - some in secret, some of it for secret clients, code that cost those self same clients, millions. And they all knew that was a bargain. Shane only told people he had a small computer business, and out here on the West Coast, that was enough for them to dismiss him as yet another geek, or nerd, trying to find the right Start-Up. Nobody but a few high placed (and equally high priced) Lawyers knew that Shane could buy and sell most Venture Capitalists entire funds, with just his personal wealth, let alone his own Hedge fund.

No one knew, because Shane didn’t want to be anything but Shane. He tried not to stand out anymore than his Six foot five frame would let him. He knew what money did to most folks, and he didn’t like it. He lived in an apartment, but one that you could see the Bay Bridge from. It was upscale but not exclusive. He lived on an upper floor, two bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms, and a balcony where he sat and watched the fog pour like milk into the bay. It was an apartment worthy of any young professional, and he was both. It wasn’t ostentatious, or showy. But it had class, understated elegance, and a warmth to it that you never really noticed until you compared it to something that lacked those traits. If Shane was an apartment - he would have been his.

He liked to eat around people, but not with them. That is why he chose this restaurant. It was a little pricey, but it had two top tables along one wall. Perfect for him to sit at, alone, without standing out. He ate there almost every night that he didn’t cook for himself. Sometimes as many as five times a month.

Tomorrow was Christmas Eve, and the Restaurant would close until the New Year. So this was the last night he could eat here this year, so he treated himself to an early Christmas Dinner. It was just after he ordered his dinner that he heard a small commotion. Not raised voices, but irritated bordering on getting angry voices. Two of them were female, and one was from an older man, and they all seemed to be angry and surprised that there were five steps down to the Restaurant Dining area from the bar.

At first, he didn’t see her, until she wheeled around the two women, and the older man - she was beautiful. Her eyes were fiercely burning cinders, if cinders were sapphires. Her hair was dark, long, luscious, and full. It hung down to her broad shoulders, and arms that were too thick for a woman, but perfect for a Goddess. She had a rich full face, with lips that could snarl, or soften at will. Just at this moment, they were very close to snarling. Her curves went down to her waist, where they ended abruptly in two scarecrow scraggly legs. Legs that looked like someone just took all the straw out of the scarecrow and left the jeans. He knew at once she had to have been an Athlete. A good one.

He listened in to the growing discussion. The stairs were too steep to take the chair down. There wasn’t any ramp. Carol could not navigate the narrow stairs in her chair like she could if they had been wider, or deeper. Carol (he had heard her name spoken several times, by the two women and the older man, and once by the little guy with them who had to be like five or six years old) - Carol kept saying: “It is no big deal. I forgot they had these stairs. We can go somewhere else. It’s fine. Let’s just go.”

Shane could hear the fury, the embarrassment, the anger, in Carol’s voice. He had been

there. A place where you did not want to be noticed, but found yourself the center of attention. He didn't know the details, but he knew the feeling. So Shane got up and walked over to the group at the top of the Stairs.

Carol did not see him coming at first. She just wanted to be anywhere but here. Her Dad kept insisting and pointing at the stairs, and telling the Manager that it was against code. She was embarrassed beyond belief. She had forgotten completely about the stairs, because when she had legs, she never noticed them. If they had been regular stairs, she could have leaned her chair back, and with care, taken a step down at a time, like a Mountain Biker would. But these stairs were not code. They were made back in the 1910's when the Restaurant was a Mansion. Beautiful wood, beautiful woodwork, beautiful design, but a horrible obstacle for a wheelchair were those five stairs. She just wanted to go. Then, she heard his voice:

"Excuse me. My name is Shane. I think I can help, if the young lady will let me?"

Everyone stopped to stare. A giant of a man, with a young face, stood with a gentle smile on his face looking at all of them, but especially Carol. He was huge, broad shouldered, with capable hands, and a no-nonsense demeanour. The older man spoke first.

"How, exactly can you help young man?"

"Well, Sir, if the young lady (and his hand made a sweeping gesture towards Carol) wouldn't mind putting her hands around the neck of a complete stranger, I could lift her from the chair, carry her down the steps and wait for one of you to bring the chair down to this level. If (he turned to look right at Carol) you can sit without being in your wheelchair, I could carry you right to your table and place you in a chair there. That is if there aren't wires or bags or something I don't know about attached to you or the chair."

(At that, Shane turned beat red, and stumbled a bit over his next words)

"I don't mean to embarrass you further Carol, I just don't know what is involved in being in a chair. I see a seat belt?"

Carol looked down: "Oh, that is to keep me in the chair when I lean over, because centre of gravity is all askew, and my upper body would pull me right out of the chair if I bent over too far. You just unhook it, and lift me up."

Without any hesitation, Shane did just that. Nobody could believe what they just saw. How in the world can a person move that fast? One minute the girl was looking down at her seat belt, the next she was held gently in his arms, with her arms wrapped around his neck. It was like they were some kind of freaky Adagio Act, and had rehearsed that move a thousand times. She looked natural and comfortable in his arms, and he looked, well, snuggled. A moment later, the older man, who turned out to be Carol's dad, folded the chair, and they all headed down the steps. Shane was being very careful, but his eyes were locked with Carol's. The Stairs navigated but forgotten.

Shane carried her to a table, placed her in a chair, and her arms dropped from around him with the slow molasses pace of regret and longing. Shane was in no hurry to break the contact either, but once she was in the chair and wiggled a bit to center herself, he left. Carol watched him go with a deep sense of sorrow. Something in her had surfaced for



a quick flutter. It was called Hope. And now that Hope, had fluttered away, as she watched him leave the table before anyone could even thank him.

Hope did not flutter back in her heart, it swooped. For he was coming back, carrying a chair for himself.

"I hope you don't think I am rude for inviting myself to join you. But I am eating alone, and I figure if you will let me, it would be my pleasure to carry you back up the steps at the end of our meal. If you don't want me to, I can leave Carol." Again, he looked at Carol.

Carol looked back at him. Just like when they first met, a few moments ago, he didn't talk around her, or ask her parents, or sister, if she needed help. 'He talked to me directly. He sees me and not the chair!' Those are the thoughts that were running through Carol's head as Shane spoke, and looked into her eyes. Hope had to make room for a feeling she never thought ever to experience again. 'I am falling in love. Oh. My. God.'

"Shane, you can carry me anywhere, anytime, for ever." And they all laughed. Not Shane.

"I will hold you to that." And his smile at Carol made it a vow.

He pulled his chair up close to hers, and their hands quietly sought each other under the table. The conversation was fun and lively. Carol was not forced into putting on a strong front, for her family, or for Shane. She was, for the first time in two years - whole again. Her legs just a minor inconvenience, forgotten for a while. Little Todd gave the perfect ending to the wonderful meal and night. As Shane reached to lift Carol to carry her back up the stairs - her arms automatically reached around Shane's neck. A little tighter, a little closer, a lot more familiar than the first time she held on...little Todd might only be five, but he saw the look between Carol and Shane:

"Oh man, you aren't going to KISS HER ...are you?"

Everyone laughed, Then Shane, in a moment of boldness said: "Why not? It's Christmas."

It was their first kiss. It ended abruptly when little Todd said in a loud voice: "Yuck."

Which started the laughter up again. It was okay. They would kiss again, later, longer, lovingly.

She loved that Chair. She loved Christmas. She loved not being able to walk.

Those are the things that brought her Shane.

Until the day she died, many, many, many years in the future, she called that Chair: "My Christmas Chair."

By Kevin Hughes

With the new lockdown in force, please remember to ring your friends and other members, as we all need that contact with others outside of our homes. Thank you.

Next month's edition will have a For Sale or free to good home section – no not a means to get rid of your other half – just goods or presents that you would like to see gone. Let me know and I will add them to February's newsletter. [sylviadale@live.co.uk](mailto:sylviadale@live.co.uk) 01536 411865

**Poetry competition** – should any of you have the time (?) perhaps you would like to write a poem? You can choose a subject or follow the line - For 2021 I wish ..... Send them to me by the 30<sup>th</sup> January and there will be a prize for the winner. No, I am not judging them, someone else will! [sylviadale@live.co.uk](mailto:sylviadale@live.co.uk)

## New year

C	C	O	N	T	E	N	T	M	E	N	T	I	M
G	D	E	P	V	M	I	N	D	F	U	L	E	S
C	D	I	L	T	I	D	I	E	R	W	D	O	E
E	C	A	S	G	N	D	I	E	T	A	I	P	C
C	R	P	L	C	N	E	O	A	N	L	S	E	T
N	V	E	E	G	I	I	F	I	I	K	C	N	I
A	K	G	L	R	R	P	T	S	U	I	O	E	S
T	I	E	E	A	S	A	L	I	T	N	V	S	I
P	N	V	N	N	X	I	T	I	S	G	E	S	V
E	D	L	L	A	J	E	S	E	N	I	R	C	X
C	E	O	I	Y	C	O	D	T	F	E	V	E	E
C	R	S	E	I	E	D	Y	N	I	U	D	I	G
A	A	E	S	L	I	M	M	I	N	G	L	E	C
C	I	R	E	R	R	E	I	P	P	A	H	C	T

DISCIPLINED  
ACCEPTANCE  
PERSIST  
CONTENTMENT  
TIDIER  
OPENESS  
ENJOY  
RESOLVE  
GRATEFUL  
HAPPIER  
MINDFUL  
VISIT  
VISITING  
SLIMMING  
DISCOVER  
DIET  
KINDER  
RELAXED  
WALKING

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/1799527/>