

30th October 2009

## IS EVERYTHING OK? SHE ASKED ... ONE WEEK LATER!

DEAR DIARY, I bumped into my neighbour Katie yesterday afternoon. I gave her a lift home because I saw her walking up the steep hill of the high street, carrying heavy shopping bags. I don't know why I mention the heavy shopping bags because I would have stopped to give her lift with or without her bags. I guess I'm just trying to paint a picture.



Anyway, when Katie got in the car she said to me "are you alright?" I said "yes, fine thanks". Before I got the words "how are you" out of my mouth, Katie said "what happened to you the other night?" Well the puzzlement was written all over my face because I didn't have a clue what the woman was on about. What other night? Nothing remarkable happened to me!

She said "me and Paul heard you screaming your head off one night last week at about 1 o'clock in the morning. It woke me up and I sat bolt upright in bed. It was blood curdling and then I heard you saying 'get out, get out' and the screaming stopped about a minute later".

I said to Katie "you couldn't have heard me screaming anytime last week because I was working the night shift all of last week". She said "oh! I wonder who it was because I could have sworn it was you. Sounded just like you and it was so clear and nearby". She then went onto say "well I'm glad it wasn't you".

We had a little natter in the car and then went into our respective homes. It wasn't until I went to bed last night that I thought 'if Katie and her husband thought it was me screaming my head off, why didn't they come to rescue me'?

I'd be lying if I said we were close friends. We're not; but we're quite good neighbours. We invite each other around for barbecues. I keep an eye on their house when they go abroad



and they do the same for me. When they installed a pond in their back garden when my boys were little, they invited them round every week to have a look at the frogs in the pond and feed their massive collection of fish. We also share a really good gardener – I mean it's a good neighbourly relationship or so I thought. Not good enough for them to see what's happened to me when I'm screaming blue bloody murder in the middle of the night.

Alright, we've established that it wasn't me screaming, but up until I ran into Katie, it might have been me! And what did they do? A big fat nothing! Even if they didn't want to investigate in person, they could have at least called the police. Again... I know it wasn't me screaming blue bloody murder. But if they called the old Bill and they came to my house,

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they all would have discovered that I wasn't actually there but still, I believe that Katie and her husband should have seen if I was in need.

I must admit, my feelings towards Katie and Paul have changed now. I look at Paul as if he's a selfish coward who wouldn't come to the aid of a lone woman and I see Katie as a woman who acts as if she cares but she really doesn't. This thing has left me all confused. Confused because I know nothing happened to me – it's all hypothetical, but upset because if something *had* been happening to me, the people who I thought were good neighbours would have left me helpless and fending for myself.

What's worse is something did in fact happen to someone. If screaming and shouting was heard in the middle of the night in our neighbourhood, then someone, somewhere was actually in danger.

So this afternoon, I went across the road to Len, another neighbour. Len lives alone and talks a hell of a lot which is understandable because I think he's lonely. He also keeps his eye close to everything that's happening in our street so I went across the road to him; not even pretending I had an ulterior motive and asked him outright if he knew of anyone who'd been attacked in the last week or so.

Lonely Len kept me for ages. He knew what the screaming was about but it took him about 45 minutes to get to the point.

Apparently, the woman at No. 21's cat was being chased through the back garden late one night. The cat ran into the kitchen via the back door but so did the fox. Len said either it was a little fox or an oversized cat-flap. Anyway, the woman at no. 21 went to investigate and became hysterical at the sight of the frightened cat whizzing around the kitchen being chased by a nasty little fox; hence the late night commotion.



I left Len's house an hour later than I expected having been told about the screaming and his dental treatment, his daughter's brush with the law. Then he made me pay a visit to his living room cabinet collection of knives and swords and the fact that he used to be a butcher and could section a cow blindfold in under 7 minutes. We also had a short visit to his greenhouse where he's growing what to me looked like a little city of marijuana. I couldn't be 100% sure, but it was pretty hot in that greenhouse and the lights in there were as bright as the sun. The greenhouse smelt potent and Len was banging on about his new found 'exotic' plants being great for his glaucoma. I left with a large sprig of thyme... well at least I think it was thyme!



DEAR DIARY, at least I know where I stand with my neighbours. If Len could butcher a cow, then he'd be the right person to call in the middle of the night if I were under attack – whether it be a fox or a man wielding a cosh. As for Katie and Paul... they're good for an enjoyable neighbourly barbecue but they're not



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the sort to come running if I were to find myself screaming blue bloody murder in the middle of the night!

*August Mayfield*