

"Bedtime Story"

LIGHTS UP (but not much) on a dark bedroom, with a window and a bed and a chair and a door. Sounds of a rainstorm.

DELIA, six years old, scared, and a bit grouchy, peers out at the rain from under the covers.

A thunderclap; she pulls up the covers reflexively.

A creaking noise. She gasps, then stares hard at the door.

DELIA  
Who's there?

GRANDPA  
Oi?

The door creaks open. GRANDPA appears, carrying a candle. He looks like he used to be a thug in a Guy Ritchie movie. His manner is incongruously warm and peaceful. He speaks with a strong Cockney accent.

GRANDPA  
Jus' your old granddad.

DELIA  
Oh.

A thunderclap; Delia makes a little frightened noise.

Grandpa settles into a chair. They both watch the rain.

GRANDPA  
It's not supposed to rain in San Diego. Scary.

DELIA  
I'm not scared!

GRANDPA  
Oh, you shouldn't be.

He gets up to go.

GRANDPA  
Storm like this can come in handy.

DELIA  
Why?

GRANDPA  
Well, once it... sorted out a  
business dealing.

DELIA  
Why?

Grandpa sighs slightly, sits back down.

GRANDPA  
Right. Years ago, I did this gig  
for Charley Gold.

DELIA  
Who's Charley Gold?

Grandpa wonders what he's gotten himself into, and  
struggles to come up with an innocent-sounding phrase.

GRANDPA  
He, er... he worked with ponies.

DELIA  
Ponies!

GRANDPA  
Right -- if you wanted to bet on  
who was the fastest pony of the  
lot, you gave your money to  
Charley Gold.

DELIA  
Wow.

GRANDPA  
And this bloke named "Smooth," he  
was a...

DELIA  
What?

GRANDPA  
Oh, it's not important.

DELIA  
What?!

GRANDPA  
Smooth... helped blokes find girlfriends. And that's how he knew Charlie. He got Charlie this... great, great girlfriend. And she was... anyway. So Charlie had let his friend Smooth bet on a pony without any money; Smooth just had to promise to pay him back in a few days.

DELIA  
"Always always keep your promises."

GRANDPA  
Your mum tell you that, eh?

Delia smiles proudly.

GRANDPA  
Smooth had promised Charley to pay him this two hundred quid, but he'd... forgot, right?

DELIA  
Oooh.

GRANDPA  
And my job was to... remind people. When they forgot things.

He leans forward a bit.

GRANDPA  
It was raining, just like this. And outside Smooth's flat, he had this big, muscle, fang-y, guard... puppy.

DELIA  
Did he play with you?

GRANDPA

He would have. But I had a job to do. An' it was raining so hard, and the storm was so loud, that he couldn't smell me, and he couldn't hear me. He just stayed in his little doghouse, and slept.

DELIA

Aw.

GRANDPA

And I got into the flat, and I sat Smooth down, and took out my pliers....

He stops, looking like he wishes he could un-say that last word.

DELIA

What's a pliers?

Grandpa gestures vaguely.

GRANDPA

It's a... little... feathery thing. For... tickling.

DELIA

Did you tickle him? Did he laugh?

GRANDPA

Oh, he made all sorts of noises. But I said, "You promised him his money, Smooth."

DELIA

He should have kept his promise.

GRANDPA

You know? Smooth agreed. He said he was very sorry, and I took the money, and I left to get a bite to eat.

Another thunderclap; they look at the window again.

GRANDPA

If it hadn't rained that night, I  
might have spent that whole night  
playing with the little puppy.

Grandpa gets up.

GRANDPA

Years ago, that. Before I got a  
proper job.

DELIA

But why don't you work for Charley  
Gold any more?

GRANDPA

One day, Charley's friends decided  
he'd worked long enough, and...  
they gave him a big...  
retirement... party.

DELIA

Wow! Was it lots of fun? Did  
they --

GRANDPA

If you promise to go to sleep now,  
I'll tell you all about it before  
I go to the airport.

Delia nods solemnly.

DELIA

I always keep my promises.

GRANDPA

So do I, luv.

Grandpa walks to the light switch, shaking his head in a  
what-have-I-gotten-myself-into-now? kind of way. He turns  
off the light, walks out the door, and closes it behind him.

Delia watches the rain. There's another thunderclap; she  
flinches and giggles.

LIGHTS DOWN.