

“Being Guarded”

a story by Romilly Norton-Smith (Chestnut; Lauriston Primary School)

As Camilla White arrived for work that morning, she was determined not to be daunted by the fact that she was different from her colleagues. Since the beginning of February that year, she'd been spending her working hours in a government office and five months later was still indirectly treated with hostility by those among her who had worked there for at least fifteen years longer. “Just a few more years and they'll get used to me” was what she always told herself when doubt crept into her mind.

She walked briskly into the corridor and checked the general notice board, in case anything on it concerned her. She was always slightly against the idea of having a general notice board when her and her colleagues could just send around an email if anyone needed anything mentioning.

Camilla spotted a memorandum. It wasn't just that it was typed instead of hand written, or that it was written on a piece of office printer paper, what made it unique was that it was in Latin. She skimmed through the lines of undecipherable text wondering if she could try and translate it all. But it was 9am and it would be suspicious to be seen away from her desk. Camilla memorised the last sentence, “Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?” so she could at least find out what this meant.

Back at her desk Camilla googled the phrase: “Who guards the guards?”, a quotation from the Roman poet Juvenal. Camilla, whose own name she knew was Latin for acolyte or newcomer, was intrigued by this memo and wondered if it had some connection to her or to her colleagues, she thought about hardly anything else all day.

At 9 o'clock the next morning, glancing at the noticeboard, Camilla saw that the strange memo had gone, and thought she might have imagined it. Camilla put it out of her mind and got on with her work. And she would have forgotten about it had she not then thought she saw it in someone's bag. “What's that in your bag?” she asked, “Nothing, just scrap paper”. Camilla was doubtful but she didn't have the audacity to enquire further.

A few hours later Camilla saw the memo again, it was screwed up in the kitchen bin. Unfolding it Camilla realised there was more writing on the reverse but didn't have time to read it. So she put it in her bag and opened it when she got home. The Latin was translated into English on the other side. The memo said Camilla's boss was planning to use staff records to steal their money.

Camilla was shocked, she thought the safest thing to do would be to call the police as soon as she got into work. But as she approached the building the next day she could already hear sirens and see her boss's face staring out of the window of a police car. So I guess someone was guarding you after all, Camilla mused.

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