

# Beryl Langley Sees All

by

Sarah Herdman



Published on behalf of the author by Bickering on Sea

© Sarah Herdman, 2022

All rights reserved.

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

## Beryl Langley Sees All

Beryl took a final glance around the room. Her room. Her world was here within these four walls. She had lovingly bestowed the whole of herself into these people who looked down on her now.

The diagnosis had come just six months back and while the tearing pain had ripped through those closest to her, she herself felt the deepest peace that she had known.

Life hadn't been easy. She had fought it every step and every breath and every time she had swum against the current, no matter how hard, she had known that each stroke she had given was spilt from her in protection, in passion, in love. Holding the eyes that she saw now - more important than her own.

She had seen her children grow strong, standing their ground, fixed in their faith and knowledge that they could be who they wanted to be. Their first steps to her last ones; guided by her rock-solid trust in them.

She remembered now the day that pride had burst from her heart during a simple music recital. A collection of pupils jigsawed together to perform their individual tunes that each had persevered with over the weeks gone by. And her baby girl walking to her turn; prizing open the pages as if they were glued together with treacle. She knew the fear that swelled inside as the fingers caressed the keys - slowly at first and then more surely as confidence crescendoed with the music. For a fraction of time all were lost in the moment before a slip, a trip in pace and a stumble. The note skewed and her girl's eyes widened in fear and ripped from the page towards her. Beryl's own breath stopped mid-bar but her fiery gaze nodded, her smile never faltering reassured her young pianist who, with regained comfort, recapitulated her confidence and continued to the end. Tumultuous applause echoed, but Beryl was deafened only by her love.

“Darling, it's not your abilities people see, it's your choices.”

She remembered now the day when, so young herself, her grandmother had left her. Her weak heart had clicked off like a light switch. They had found her with a full cup of strong tea still on her lap and her corgis lying at her feet. Something comforting in that, unlike the phone call with the news that she, as a child, had taken and then relayed to her own parents. The cycle of emotions she had navigated before final acceptance. Looking back now she could be so thankful for all that Granny had taught her. She had followed in her teaching footsteps; her exuberance for life; learnt to face her fears; learnt to give her time to the smallest of pleasures that her own children had craved. It was her own time to leave soon and she had taught the eyes that watched her now well.

“The ones we love never really leave us: losing someone is gaining something within yourself.”

And she remembered the day when her body had defied the doctors’ warnings, and bruised and battered had produced new life: a beating heart, a promise of hope, a prayer birthed in beauty. The pain of birth forgotten in a second as new eyes met hers. Her heart broken and mended within someone else. Times three. Times a multitude of stars that burned. Times that couldn’t be forgotten or destroyed by this time, this moment now.

“Don’t rush after other things; you’ve already got what you need inside.”

From her bed, those eyes watch her now. Her strength reflected back at her as a million memories flood her last breaths. She knowingly smiles her goodbyes and as her eyes close for a final time her children know that Beryl Langley sees all.

\*\*\*