

Global short stories competition

Winners December 2008

The Shoplifter

Esther Newton

Mary didn't want to go to jail.

"I didn't mean to do it. I'm not bad," she said, her pale blue eyes awash with tears.

She looked at the man. The shopkeeper. He looked at his wife. Well, Mary supposed it was his wife.

They were wearing matching fluffy green jumpers with zig zags, spots and other jumbled patterns on them.

"I know that look, woman," the shopkeeper shouted, his bright beady eyes boring into his wife.

"Don't you go feeling sorry for her. You always feel sorry for the shoplifters. Believe any old sob story, you would."

Mary watched his wagging finger, watched it weave its way from the wife to her, Mary.

"I know your sort. You're from that council estate. I bet you're a Griffiths. It's always a Griffiths."

"I'm not. My name's..." Mary stopped herself. Mary. Her name was Mary Bennett, but she couldn't tell them that. If they thought taking an apple was bad, then what on earth would they think when they found out about the terrible, terrible thing that she had done?

"That's it. Tell us your name, love. We can help you," the shopkeeper's wife said.

"Shut up, Vi. She can tell us her name so we can call the police and they can sort her out."

"She must only be about seven," Vi said, folding her arms across a chest larger than any Mary had ever seen before.

Mary opened her mouth. She was eight and a quarter, actually. She closed her mouth. They didn't need to know that. They didn't need to know anything about her at all. She had never stolen anything in her life, but today she had slipped an apple into her pocket. But she was hungry, so very, very hungry.

"I don't care if she's a babe in arms," the shopkeeper's voice rose with each word.

"Roger, don't be so ridiculous."

Roger's finger was wagging wildly, jabbing itself into that enormous bosom and his face was flushing furious shades of purple. Neither of them seemed to notice Mary anymore. She knew the bell would give her escape away, but it would be too late by then - as long as they weren't fast runners and Mary was extremely certain they weren't.

It all went according to plan. In fact, better than any plan. Roger was the first to notice what was going on, though he chose to chase her with his mouth rather than making any movement after her. Vi's voice carried to her as she hurried on, "Let her go. She hasn't even got the apple now. She left it behind."

Mary ran on and on until she was sure she could go no further. She looked at the streets and the lamps slowly coming to life. She looked into windows, seeing TV screens flickering and smelling dinners sizzling. A mother hugged a daughter and ruffled her hair. Mary stopped. Her Mum always ruffled her hair. She hated it. But right then, she would have given anything to have her Mum ruffle her hair.

Mary wanted to cry, to feel great, gigantic tears tearing their way down her face. Her Mum wouldn't ever ruffle her hair again. Mary had made sure of that.

She thought of her Dad. He used to swing her up in his arms. Right from when she had been a baby. She loved her Dad. And her Mum. She had committed every feature, every smile, every line to

memory. She'd had to do that because she wouldn't be seeing them ever again.

"Excuse me, love," a voice intruded upon her thoughts.

Mary swung round, feeling fear at the heavy breathing blasting into her ear.

"Sorry to startle you, love," Vi said, bending over and hugging her stomach, "blimey, that hurts. I haven't run in a long time."

Mary looked passed the older woman, waiting for Roger to race round the corner.

"Don't worry about him, love. He's rigging up all sorts of traps and tests to stop shoplifters. Proper shoplifters. Not like you. Now, now then, don't cry. Tell Vi all about it," Vi said, stooping and putting her arms on the girl's shoulders. "Nothing can be that bad."

"But it is that bad," Mary sobbed.

"You look like you could do with a bite to eat. How about you come home with me and I'll make you something nice. Then you can tell me all about it."

Mary was transfixed by the hairy wart on Vi's chin. She forced her eyes away, then looked back again only to be confronted by its twin just under Vi's nose.

"Now don't you worry about Roger. He's going to the bowls club straight from work. He wanted me to go with him, but it bores me to tears. What do you like doing, love?"

"I like ballet and gymnastics."

"How lovely. That's it, love. See, you've stopped crying now. Let's get home and have that bite to eat. Hey, I've got an idea. We pass the chippy on the way. How about some fish and chips?"

Mary's stomach rumbled. Fish and chips were her favourite. Her Mum and Dad bought fish and chips as a special treat. The image of her Mum and Dad filled her head once more, bringing with them a fresh wave of tears.

"Here's a hanky, love. It's clean. Go on, wipe those eyes," Vi said and held out the floral cloth.

Mary took it and inhaled the sweet summery scent on its surface. She looked up at Vi. She looked like a mothball sort of lady, not a nice smelling one. Her Great Granny Edith was a mothball lady and Vi looked about her age. Mary looked at the warts once more. Great Granny Edith had at least ten warts, so perhaps Vi was a bit younger. Mary was also sure that Great Granny Edith wouldn't buy her fish and chips.

Vi held out her hand and Mary took it. They set off back the way they had come. Every now and then, Mary peeked out of the corner of her eye at her rescuer. Perhaps Vi would look after her now. Roger's rigid body and red face filled her mind. No, that wouldn't be any good, but perhaps Vi could look after her for a few hours anyway. But what would happen after that? She couldn't go home. She couldn't go home ever again.

The salty smell wafted closer, announcing that they had almost arrived at the fish and chip shop. Mary looked at Vi's smiling face. Would Vi be buying her fish and chips if she knew the truth? Would she still be smiling if she knew Mary was a murderer?

By the time they reached Vi's house, every chip and every mouthful of fish was gone from Mary's portion, leaving only bones and paper soaked in vinegar behind.

"Goodness me, you were hungry," Vi said, turning the key in the door.

Mary followed her in, surprised by the neatness and order.

"Make yourself at home, love. How about a nice cup of tea?"

Mary screwed up her nose.

"Squash? Coke?"

Mary's eyes widened in delight. She wasn't allowed Coke at home.

"Coke it is then. I'm not too fond of the stuff myself, so if you don't mind, I'll put the kettle on. I'm gasping for a cup of tea."

Whilst the kettle made all sorts of spluttering noises, Mary let her eyes roam the room. There were photos everywhere. Black and white ones of a very slim Vi and a handsome-ish Roger on their wedding day. Colour ones of babies being bounced on knees and family photos with grandchildren. Despite Roger's rants back at the shop, she could tell they all loved one another. Each and every

member of the family. Like her family had loved one another.

"There we are, love," Vi said, putting a huge glass of Coke in front of Mary.

Mary turned to her.

"I killed my parents," she said, then clapped her hands over her mouth.

Vi didn't hesitate for even a second. "Here's a choccy biccy to go with it. Now then, what's this about your parents?"

"I killed them."

"I'm sure you didn't, love."

"I did and they're going to send me to jail. I don't want to go to jail."

"You're not going to go to jail and you didn't kill your parents."

"I did. We were going to the zoo. It was my birthday. Two days ago. I wanted a computer, but they didn't get me one. We were in the car, almost there. I was being silly, saying horrible things. Mum turned round. She looked so cross. Dad turned to her and told her to leave it. Then we hit something. It was horrible. There was blood everywhere...a man came over...said they had to be dead. They weren't moving. Mum, nor Dad. I knew the man was right. They were dead. And I killed them."

"And so you ran."

"Yes, I ran," Mary said, her shoulders shaking as she gave in once more, "I didn't mean to. I love them."

Vi took Mary in her arms, letting the girl place her head on her shoulder until all her sobs were spent.

"You look like you could do with a bit of a rest. The spare bed's all made up," Vi said, "go up and have a little sleep. And don't go worrying about Roger. I can handle him. I've been handling him for far too many years than I care to think about."

Mary smiled. Sleep. That sounded good.

She didn't know how long she slept for. The knock downstairs jolted her awake instantly. Roger. Or the police. But Vi wouldn't have turned her in.

Voices came through the floorboards. High voices. Excited voices. They were coming upstairs.

Thundering closer and closer. She held her breath, then punched it out.

The door burst open. Light blinded her. Hands reached for her. Perfume filled her nostrils. Expensive perfume. Familiar perfume.

"Mary, oh, Mary," a deep voice. A croaky voice. A familiar voice.

"Mum! Dad!" Mary said, letting herself be caught up in their embrace. "You're not..."

"No, they're not, love. They're fine," a voice came from the doorway.

Mary looked up at Vi. The older woman winked.

"A few scratches and bruises, that's all," Mary's Mum said, "But never mind, thank goodness this wonderful woman saw us on the news. It's all forgotten now."

"See, they're just fine," Vi said, "and so are you, love. So are you."

Highly commended
SEA HARVEST
Peter Kearns

There are some mind pictures taken in moments of great emotional trauma which cannot be eradicated by the passage of time. Whether it is caused by good or bad, the vision remains imprinted, branded in our heads forever. This story of Cordelia and me will remain with you, like it is with me, never to leave. But first I must tell you how our family, my parents, my brothers and me, survived.

Living as we did between the sea and Slieve Donard, our lives were not only shaped by both but also depended on both. Remote and self-sufficient, as hard as the rocks that our father heaved out of the enclosures to make way for our living. The fields, yielding little, made us rely on the sea for its nourishment. And we fed them as we fed ourselves. Sometimes the sea fed us in the most unexpected ways.

Wrack, kelp, seaweed; gathered like any other crop, harvested for generations along the coast. We would wade out into the water and lay loaf-sized stones of about six to eight inches in diameter. Every so often we had to turn them to prevent the sand completely covering our efforts. Wang wrack, knotted knob, big and small bladder wrack, box and black and lazy wrack, and the sea-whistle; all this carried to the fields, in the seaweed creels after floating ashore.

From I was no age I knew that it was twelve donkey-loads to the acre, all cut with the saw-toothed sickles. Our beds, as we called them, could yield up to twenty carts full; provided it was not washed away in the storms. The further out to sea we went the better the kelp. It took time to grow. Two years for the lazy wrack, three for the box and up to four for the wang.

My father rolled up his trousers, the three boys stripped off and my mother and I held up our petticoats. Everyone helped in the harvest. Even when she was heavily pregnant, mother would stand on the shore, directing our ways.

We would listen to stories of what was found tangled in the kelp that would scare us awake at night. Half-eaten corpses of poor souls, fallen from the boats of fishermen. Sharks, conger-eels and unidentified sea creatures lurked ready to pounce, suck the blood out of our toes or worse, or so we imagined.

A year before our discovery, I had taken Scorcha by the hand down to watch the boys swim about. Like seals in the water the boys the boys frolicked and dived. Then they started inspecting the Wang wrack and were quite a distance out from the shore. The tide was in. The sun had sucked a sea layer and was holding it in a thin vapour above the sparkle of the waves. There was a calmness about the day, even though the boys were constantly disappearing in the dips and troughs. They were waving to me, beckoning me in.

I couldn't make out what they were trying to tell me. There seemed to be a lot of seaweed about in a sort of an island. Gulls were diving into a floating mass adding to the cacophony of boys and spilling surf. My brothers wanted me to join them but I held Scorcha.

I knew I shouldn't have left her. I knew she would not understand where I was going. I knew when I told her to wait and not move until I came back, that she wouldn't. Her look told me she wouldn't. I knew it when I did get back. And I still know it now.

All night long we searched on the beach, while father and some neighbours searched the sea in their black tarred, currachs. No one said it was my fault. Mother's eyes took on a new haunting look. They were forever red and staring, scanning the shoreline. She rarely left the beach. In her dishevelled hair and windswept clothes she appeared ghostly and began to scare me.

Three months of numb despair dragged until our uncle found the child in his kelp. I never thought it would be a relief to find a dead person, but I am ashamed to say, I was glad when that child was buried.

Life slowly dripped back to some sort of normality. It was going to take a long time for us to get our mother back.

It was going to be difficult to get her to leave her daily coastal scanning, even though Scocha had been found.

It was as though she had lost her soul in the waves. It was going to take a long time for the sea to apologise, but it did.

Our coastal house had been made from the timbers washed up on the shore. Our furniture from the bits of offerings the sea provided. Much of that, was salvaged from the passing boats whether offerings or takings. I remember a white horse came up the beach one bleak winter's morning. Walked out of the sea from God knows where. Not a sign of a storm that particular night. Not like the night that the sea threatened our very lives.

It was a purple day, blowing grit hard down from the mountains, then from sea spray and back to land. It whipped my skirts and my red hair knotted up. During the darkness of night the build up forced the tide and it rose more than we had seen it. Horizontal rain stung our faces when we stepped out for turf for the fire.

All that night we could hear creakings from the sea, above the downdraughts, strange sounds, almost name calling, but could see nothing. It might have been the voices of the dead sailors, or the wind, or the birds.

Through the racing moon shadows, we made out brilliant white spume appear where it shouldn't have been.

We had prepared to leave our cabin for the stone hut at the bottom of Donard when, thankfully, the wind abated. At last our hearts settled down to the fading roar of tide and tempest receding.

The morning gulls woke us at first light and I saw the sea a long way off, sucked out by the wind. Quickly we made our way down to the beach, to examine what offerings had been thrown up. The waves still bounced and fought against the stirring they'd got from the storm. We knew the procedure of the scavenging. Father tied the long rope around his chest, gave the other end to the boys and me to hold and he waded in. Barrels and what looked like spars or masts were bobbing over the breakers. There was a good chance of him getting hit by some of the debris.

Ship parts, sail ropes, canvasses, boxes and decking littered the frothing sea. A huge cask was hauled up the beach and the boys and I ran back to the start of the rope to inspect the prize. The lid was thumped off. It was empty. Four more barrels were rolled in. Again and again the rope with father, tied securely like human bait, was laid out only to be hauled back by his sons and me. The barrels were all empty. All that is, except for the last one.

Then something seemed to agitate father in the water. At first I thought he'd been hit by loose planks. He was wrestling with a cask and shouting something at the same time. Impossible to make out but we knew we had to get him out of the water quickly.

Once on the sand the barrel was tipped up and the lid tapped off. We rushed down the length of the rope but father's top half had already disappeared into the barrel. We could hear something that sounded like the crying of a rabbit or a pig or a cat. A white bundle was being held aloft.

Mother had been sitting on the dunes a little way off, watching. She knew what it was. Slowly she got to her feet. Now she was running towards us like a mad thing, tripping over her petticoats. Her eyes were blazing, tears were streaming down her cheeks. With arms outstretched she took the bundle from my father, pulled her shirt up and held it to her breast. Father was whimpering, he could have been crying. Mother was howling. It might have been from the pain of the baby sucking dry nipples, or the blessed saving of the child, but I think Scorcha played a part in her anguish.

Sitting in the wet sand with her legs under her, mother gently rocked the bundle back and forth. Father was holding her from behind, his arms around her waist, and the infant, and the boys and me completed the circle. The sea pounding in the background, the sky lit up with billowing, washed clouds, our hair blowing and tossing. And that's it.

That's the picture in my brain, never to leave. Our family made whole again.

Mother called her Cordelia, our pearl of the sea. She said she heard her cry in the night of the storm. No one else did.

All this was many years ago now, but still it's as vivid as yesterday. I can still smell the salt and feel the hairs in my mouth as I repeated quietly to myself 'Scorcha's come back, Scorcha's come back, Scorcha's come back'.

Father and mother have both gone to their rest now, old and satisfied. My brother's in America, gone to the work. Just Cordelia and me left, still scrapping the soil, still looking to the coast for what might arrive. No one came looking for the child. She was obviously Spanish or Portuguese, dark-eyed with black curly hair. Too young to speak, to tell us her secrets of where she came from or who she was. What was a boat that was used to the placid Mediterranean waters doing in the wild Atlantic waters anyway? We rarely met anyone to ask of shipwrecks. As long as the rent was paid each year, we weren't bothered. So the days turned to weeks and years slipped by and no one complained and Cordelia remained. Mother tried to keep her raven black hair under a bonnet, but it was impossible and if anyone had been bothered, would have recognized the child as foreign. The locals knew the child was from God and wouldn't interfere, it was, they understood, His will. Many are the families in these parts, who thank God for the sea's offerings.

There are times when Cordelia gets anxious about who she is and where she comes from. What were her own parents doing with her in a boat so far in the West? Was she a captive, a slave or a princess? We may never find out. Some day we may go to look for her family, if we don't leave it too late; if we knew where to look. We are both grey now, another few years and we won't be able to leave the sea and the comforting shadow of Donard. But, still we feel, Cordelia and me, that she was God-given or sent, like an angel; not to replace the lose of Scorcha. No, she was sent to us because we knew how to look after and care for the harvest from the sea.

Commended Cats Jane Wallis Hicks

So I told her. Barbara, I said, I won't be going to no Day Centre.

You'll have to go, Mam, she says.

Not on your life, Barb, I says. Not on your bloody life.

That's when things got a bit heated, but if she says I pushed her, she's lying. She tripped on that that cast iron cat. Always hated that cat, me. It were Alb's mother's - looked like her too, same mean little eyes. I plagued Alb to throw it out, but he wasn't having any. Said it was an heirloom, been in the family for years. Some heirloom, I said. But he just set his lips, like always. Course Barb sided with him, saying how much she liked it. Liar - she were only saying it to spite me. She keeps it right there on the hearth. She'd like a real one, but I'm not having a sofa full of fleas and cat mess on my lawn. 'Sides Barb works all day so who'd be looking after it?

I know, I know, she took a hard knock, but it's her own fault. She'd fall heavy, our Barb. I been telling her, you need to go on a diet, my lady. Perhaps now she'll listen. Mind, she did look pasty when they loaded her into that ambulance. Awake, but pasty.

I recognised one of the ambulance men. Went to school with our Jimmy, he did. Snotty little urchin, as I recall. Candles hanging from his nose, and coat sleeves shined with snot. He looks tidy enough now. Has to, I suppose, being on the ambulances.

You used to live in Jewel Street, I said.

That's right, he said. The name's Smith, Vincent Smith.

And your dad worked in Simpsons. Small man, always wore a flat cap, I said. Aye, and spent all his wages in the King Billy, I thought. And your ma put newspapers on the dining table 'stead of a cloth. Our Jimmy kept on at me to do the same till I told him it were common.

The other one, a Gary something or other, asked me how Barb came to fall. So I just mentioned she liked a drop of whisky. It's the truth; she does. Ted Clarke gave us a bottle for Christmas and when Barb tasted it she said how nice it was. I didn't say she was a drinker. Well, she isn't, is she? I just said she likes whisky, no harm in that, and no word of a lie. Don't believe in lying, me.

Anyway, this Vincent winks at his pal and offers to make me a cup of tea. And then he says, how you going to manage on your own?

Used to it, I say and he pats me hand. He offers to phone someone for me, but I said I'd manage.

Independent, see. And he pats me hand again.

My God you should have seen his nails, and him a medical man. Black as a gravedigger's. All his family were like that; dirty. His mother let all the kids in the street kick footballs in her garden and she'd have 'em inside the house, no matter who they were. Jimmy told me they'd be up and down the stairs, jumping on the furniture, eating great wedges of bread and jam with no one attempting to keep 'em in check. I was always more careful who I let in my house. Jimmy was only allowed the better class of boy. Like that Clive Marshall from number twelve. His father worked in a bank. But our Jimmy was never interested in doing things inside the house, always out playing. Him and Barb the same, always in someone else's, never ours.

I'll say this for Vincent; he makes a nice pot of tea.

He asked after Jimmy and I told him a few white lies. Don't want the world to know Jim don't visit.

Not that I mind, he'd only bring that wife of his, that Gloria, with her dyed hair and lipstick enough to blind a crow. Wouldn't mind seeing the kiddies again, though. Him sending those snaps isn't the same.

The little girl looks like me, though, not a bit like her mother.

Vincent showed me pictures of his girls, nice little things they looked. Very clean I said, very clean.

Course it's too late for our Barb. I told her to give up that idea years back. If God had wanted you to get married and have kids he'd have sent someone decent. That Stuart Fielding? He wasn't even

English. From Glasgow? Somewhere up north. You want to find yourself a local boy, I said. Settle near your dad and me.

And didn't she chase after him to London. Came straight home when I telephoned, though. Your father's dying, I said. I told her it was her running off that brought on the stroke, she were always his favourite. Can't manage on my own, I said. She helped nurse him till he died.

You can't go back to London, I said. Not with the state my heart's in. Course he wouldn't move, wouldn't come down to her. Took up with someone he worked with, soon after. I knew he was no good; that's why I hid the letters.

After the ambulance took her I phoned our Ag's girl, Rita, to come round. She sits with me sometimes when Barb goes out of an evening.

I don't know why Barbara needs to go out. What's wrong with staying in and watching telly? Corrie's always good and Emmerdale's not bad... And there's quiz shows. Who turns up their noses at quizzes? Our Barb for one. Soaps not good enough for you, I say? And she folds her lips up tight, sulky madam. Gets more like her dad every day.

Well I'm not having the high brow muck she watches, on the big telly. If she wants to watch that kind of stuff then she can watch it on the portable.

Reet comes in and she's wearing a cherry red tam with that old mauve three-quarter coat of hers and I pass an innocent enough remark. Red hat Reet? You know what they say about red hats, don't you? No, she says, all quiet like. What do they say Aunty Mag? Red hat, no drawers, my girl, I say. And she goes all huffy on me.

Offend or please I always speaks my mind, always have, always will. If they don't like it then they can do the other thing. She's frosty, but I ask her to make a pot of tea. Haven't had a drop past my lips since dinnertime, I say. And she chirps up all sarky-like, then how come this pot's got warm tea in it and there's a dirty cup in the sink?

When she brings me a cup, she's used the wrong one and there's not enough sugar, but she's still snippy so I don't say.

Then she phones the hospital and they can't say how long Barb'll be kep' in. And me on my own! It's all the foreign workers, I say to Reet. See no one speaks English in hospitals any more, so things are bound to be slow. Then Reet tells me I shouldn't be saying things like that. Well I know her man's a foreigner but I don't know why she gets so upset; he's earning a packet.

I told him, back when he used to come in to see me. I said, you're doing well out of us English. So he said he was born in Bristol was as English as me. He hasn't put a foot over my doorstep since. You married a funny bugger I said to her.

Five o'clock Reet says she's going to get tea for her boys. Can't they see for themselves I say, they're old enough and ugly enough. But she wouldn't listen. Said she'd be in later with a plate meal for me. It were casserole. Weren't bad. Lamb mind, not beef and she'd put great slabs of swede in it. She knows swede gives me wind, but I ate it. Got to keep my strength up.

She stayed for Corrie, then went home. I clicked to a game show but the people answering the questions were as dull as ditch water. I answered more questions than they did. Then I saw this so called comedy and I've heard funnier things at a funeral, so I turned the telly off and made a cup of cocoa. It wasn't as nice as Barb makes. She must have bought a different brand this week.

When I went up, the bed's as cold as charity; blanket's not on. Of course, Barb wasn't here to turn it on for me. So I switch it to high and go back downstairs while it's warming.

Back in the kitchen there's something scratching at the back door. Gives me quite a turn till I heard the meowing, knew then it had to be that ginger stray that's been hanging round the last week. I open the door to scare it away and the darned thing strolls right in bold as brass, heading straight for an old saucer set on the floor by the sink. Sits there purring, it does. Well, I'm not stupid, I can read the signs. Barb's been feeding it behind my back. And there's a half-eaten can of Puss-Chunks on the windowsill, tucked in behind the curtain.

So there I am, with the back door wide open, standing in an almighty draft and like to catch my death.

Mark my words, I thought this cat's not leaving without its belly filled. So I bolt the back door. I mean you never know who's about, nights, and fork out the cat food. It eats the lot, then rubs against my legs like it's looking for a pat - doesn't get one though.

I go back to the living room for a warm and it follows after me, like a dog. I sit on the sofa and it jumps on my lap, settling down nice as you please. You've done this before, my lad, I think. But it's warm on my knees, I'll give it that. Like a hot water bottle.

When I make my move, cat jumps off and follows me up the stairs, but not getting in my way, like.

Not wild and jumping. I get into bed and it stretches on the eiderdown, over to Alb's side. Hadn't the heart to move it. Alb liked cats, used to feed sardines to the strays on his allotment.

Alb died in this bed; didn't want to die in the hospital, he said, so I kep' him home. Died early in the morning, 'bout three o'clock. They say a lot of folk pass over in the early hours, and when he went the house felt... emptied.

It's like that now.

I'd put the wireless on, but when I'm by myself with the wireless playing I fancy I can hear someone calling to me behind the music. There's never anyone there when I turn it off.

Imagination, Mam, just imagination. That's what Barb would say.

Mind, with that cat purring so loud, it's not like I'm on my own.

I'll ring Barb first thing in the morning, tell her I've been thinking things over and I'll give the Day Centre a go. It's only two days a week, after all. Might do me good to get out of the house, and there's bound to be someone there that I know. Doesn't Olive Taylor go there? And Barb says they play Bingo. Used to like a game of Bingo, me. Won twenty pounds once, down at the Legion. And there's a singsong, Thursdays. Still got a good voice, me. I'll tell Barb I'm sorry she fell and that it'll be all right if she wants to keep the cat.

That'll please her.