Belinda And Compromise

Belinda knew what she smelled affected her. Aromas created joy or alarm, energized or exhausted. She thought of moving but there was nowhere to go–everywhere had aromas she had to avoid because they degraded her, wearied her, repulsed her. She could not avoid breathing. She avoided smelling the unpleasant, masking aromas she found difficult.

She loved the smell of cookies baking, so she made chocolate chip delights regularly from frozen batter, despite its unsavoury food dyes and chemicals. She loved the smell of a rain forest, so she plugged a device creating something like that aroma into her bathroom socket, despite knowing the chemicals might be carcinogenic. She loved the smell of fresh leather, so she polished her vinyl couch with an aromatic leather polish–she was allergic to the chemicals.

She used perfume she loved. And deodorant.

Her difficulty was the aromas but she found revolting. Walking through a park, she avoided dog poop. On the street, because of the car exhaust, she used nose plugs. Dinners with relatives or colleagues were challenging–their aromas and the food's. Visiting someone depended on how they and their home smelled. Belinda offered deodorizers to friends and relatives, a suggestion poorly received–some sniffed, telling her she smelled of chemicals and looked vaguely plastic. Belinda rarely saw those people again, except for her sister, who she could not avoid. (When visiting her sister, Belinda chewed mints.)

In a world of unrelenting compromise, Belinda decided on a solution: a simple operation which would eliminate her ability to smell. She went into a hospital, and the operation, woke and immediately regretted it. She could smell nothing.

She quickly returned to the hospital for an operation to restore her sense of smell. She woke up, had a whiff of the hospital lunch and immediately asked to have her sense of smell unrestored. This happened several times until the doctors told her they would operate only once more. Belinda wrestled with the momentous decision. She knew she had to find a compromise if she was to live in the world and enjoy it.

She decided to retain her sense of smell. Life was about smelling the good and the bad, and living with it. Belinda dumped the chemicals, tried to eat organic and,

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when truly challenged, savoured roses.

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