

Ain't Misbehavin' – *Lolita Chakrabarti*

Deanna Selby had had her heart broken one too many times. So when she finally met Dublin's finest, Billy Seymour and he seemed to be for keeps, she wanted to keep him. Of course, she'd learnt that you have to be your own person, do your own thing. Live in each other's pockets and you head downhill from there. So when Deanna's little sister had suggested a holiday in St Lucia to visit relatives and relax a little, Deanna had said yes.

'I'll miss you,' Billy had said.

'Would you rather I didn't go?' asked Deanna, a little worried.

'Of course not. You'll have a great time. Enjoy yourself,' Billy had smiled.

'And you?' she'd asked.

'What about me?' he'd asked back.

'Will you enjoy yourself?' she said biting her lip as she spoke.

Billy knew where this was coming from. Deanna had married young and after a few years had found out that her beloved husband had been cheating on her for a long time. She had been devastated, found it very hard to trust anyone again. It had taken him a whole three months before she let him even kiss her. But he had been very keen on Deanna and he pursued her regardless. He felt like he understood her and slowly the trust had developed. They had been together for almost a year now although Deanna was still reluctant to move in with him. He would wait, he knew she was worth it.

'I'll pine for you, you know that,' he said, with an affectionate glint in his eye.

She laughed. That was why Billy was so good for her, he made her see how ridiculous she was being but he didn't judge her for it. He just stood by her, steady and straightforward.

Billy climbed onto the bed and started to sing very loudly,

**'In Dublin's fair city, where girl's are so pretty,
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone....;**

'Hold on!' said Deanna grinning. 'Who's this Molly Malone then?'

'Deanna Selby.....I meant Deanna Selby, of course!' said Billy, pretending to have been caught out.

Deanna burst out laughing and chased him round the flat till she caught him and tickled him into an apology.

So Deanna had packed her case with mounting excitement. She hadn't seen the family in St Lucia for almost ten years, she'd been a teenager back then. So much had changed, and Grandma wasn't getting any younger. Well, she thought, none of us are. Billy came to see them off at the airport.

'I'll call you all the time,' Deanna said, to reassure herself really.

'Okay, if you want,' he replied, squeezing her hand.

'I'll really miss you.'

'Snap,' he said, and quietly sang in her ear,

**'Blue sky's smiling at me, nothing but blue skies do I see,
Blue-birds singing a song, nothing but bluebirds all day long.'**

She smiled, they kissed and she was gone. Off on an adventure.

The flat was cold when he returned, and though he and Deanna didn't live together, it still felt as if she was missing. Ah well, he thought, it's only two weeks, what can happen in two weeks.

Deanna settled in at Auntie Clover's house and the fresh air and the blue skies made her feel brighter than she had for a long while. She missed Billy terribly but worse than that she wondered if she'd blown it, would someone take him away from her, nothing lasts forever, does it. Poor Deanna, she knew this was a fearful reaction from the disappointments of her marriage but she couldn't help herself. As soon as she could, she called Billy. She got his answer machine.

'Leave a message after the beep,' came the soft Irish tones of his voice.

'Hey Bill! Just me. Arrived and all that. Speak to you soon,' she hung up feeling ridiculous.

Over the next few days, she and her sister, Rashelle, did the tour of all the relatives. No one would let them leave without a big meal, so they ended up spending a lot of time eating good food, chewing the fat, and becoming a part of the family again. It was a fantastic time. Of course every morning Deanna would call Billy, but every time she would get the answer machine. What was he doing? Where was he? Why wasn't he at home? 'Leave a message after the beep,' came the all too familiar message, it was driving her nuts.

'Where are you?' she asked eventually, unable to get the anxiety out of her voice. 'I keep calling but you're never there. I don't understand if you don't want to speak to me must say. It's better to be honest with me. Please I can't bear this answer machine message. Talk to me!' and with that she slammed the phone down and rushed into the room in tears.

Rashelle had heard the commotion and knocked softly on the door to her sister's room.

'Dee? Dee? You okay?'

Deanna let her in and explained how miserable she felt, that she thought she was being taken for a ride, that he wasn't calling her back and it had almost been a whole week. Rashelle listened sympathetically, and then disappeared for a moment leaving Deanna feeling terrible. Rashelle came back five minutes later, clutching a handful of paper.

'What's that?' asked Deanna.

'Messages from Billy,' replied Rashelle, 'Grandma left them in the drawer of the phone table where she always keeps messages but forgot to tell you they were there.' Deanna grabbed the bits of paper and started crying all over again.

'What is it now?' asked Rashelle.

'He says he misses me terribly, that he's been given an extra load of work so he's spending most of the evenings at the office cos it distracts him and he wants us to move in together and that he loves me,' Deanna collapsed into a heap of happy tears.

'Honestly,' shrugged Rashelle, 'if you weren't my sister, I'd scream.'

The two women started giggling, and Deanna gave Rashelle a bear hug before walking over to the phone in better spirits.

She dialled Billy's number but the old message had been changed. Deanna listened as Billy's voice played on the machine. 'I'm not here at the moment but please leave me a message after the beep, and Deanna, if that's you, this is for you.'

There was a crackling sound, and then music started to play and Louis Armstrong's familiar voice sang over the phone.

**‘No one to talk to all by myself,
No one to walk with but I’m happy on the shelf,
Ain’t misbehavin’
I’m saving my love for you’**

Deanna started to laugh and Billy’s voice came back on the line, ‘D’you hear that you crazy woman, ain’t misbehavin’, I’m saving my love for you.’

Deanna hung up the phone and Rashelle was waiting to hear the news.

‘You’ll never believe what’s on the answer phone...’ she began and explained it all to Rashelle, who burst out laughing.

‘Well, you can’t leave it like that!’ said Rashelle.

‘What d’you mean?’ asked Deanna.

‘Here’s what I think.....’ and Rashelle told Deanna her plan.

Billy got home from work later than expected. He opened a bottle of beer and collapsed on the sofa wondering what to do with his time. He needed to relax. A bath, he thought, as he lay on the sofa. He saw the answer machine flashing and saw that he had a message. He pressed the button, guessing that it would be Deanna, upset and concerned. He hated these messages, they upset him. The message played. ‘Hi Billy! Hit it Rashelle,’ The out of tune strumming of an old guitar played. Deanna sang to the tune of Ain’t Misbehavin’,

**‘I miss you madly, you are the one,
St Lucia’s sadly the last place I’m having fun,
Would love to move in,
I’m sending my love to you-hoo-hoooo.’**

The message ended. Billy giggled into his bottle of beer. They were so well matched. He would have a bath and start to clear the cupboard so that she had somewhere to unpack her clothes. How exiting!