

FUTURE PERFECT (story for Ayesha)

A young man finds his long lost grandmother.

Themes running through serial which we are hoping to tap into with this story:

A "first day of the rest of your life" vibe (everyone back after the Christmas break, Mrs Tembe having to make nice even though she's wounded inside having had her imagined future ripped out from under her and having to return to square one possibly permanently, Anthony starting his new job and uber-keen to make a go from the outset, and even Valerie having to adjust to chemo/illness being her life for the foreseeable etc), and -

People not being what they seem (Mrs Tembe covering her true feelings about the lost job, and Anthony concealing how much she's driving him up the wall) - the facades we present to the world/different situations.

Ade (Aidan, 23) is on the streets, scruffy, homeless. It's freezing cold, he's had little sleep, and he's very hungry. He loiters near a grocery shop, trying not to look conspicuous, thinking about stealing some food, but finds no opportunity - but entering the park, he notices something else: some young men hanging about, and watches them, desperation biting.

(At Emma's) arguing on the phone, Ayesha hangs up, ranting - flaming council tax people say she's run up a bill and they're getting threatening after they *say* they sent a final demand signed-for (*after* she did that stupid "Tell Us Once" thing for moving house and she *told* them once, but they obviously weren't listening) and she can't even *pay* it without the sodding slip and she stopped paying for her postal redirect months back so their final demand went to her Mum's (although luckily she knows Bren is off visiting Sierra, but still) - aaggh!

The loose gang of young men hang about, smoking, chatting, laughing, up to something. One, J (25), chats to a young woman, money changing hands, and they separate. The woman approaches a second member of the gang. Seeing her approach, the second man surreptitiously dips into a nearby bin for a tiny package (of drugs) to give to the woman. As soon as he is away from the bin, Aidan pops out of hiding, grabs a carrier bag (the drug stash) from inside the bin and legs it.

On different streets, Aidan nervously approaches a succession of likely types, trying to sell whatever is in the bag, but they all take one look at (scruffy, desperate) him and walk on. Hugely frustrated, he is wondering what to do when "Oi!", and he sees J and the other lads pelting toward him and runs.

A run down estate (Ayesha's old one), shouts and running footsteps echoing through the corridors as - Aidan (still holding the bag) turns a corner at full tilt to find a dead end, panicked. Hearing pursuit, trapped, Aidan thumps himself into a flat doorway in desperation, trying to disappear, but it's not going to work, the shouts nearer now - and he almost falls backward as the door opens to reveal Patricia (72) staring at him. Fearful as doom approaches, Aidan hesitates - and Patricia somehow jumps to the conclusion that he's her grandson (James), who she hasn't seen for years now. Realising that she's almost blind (and hearing J's gang perilously close in the stairwell), Aidan plays along, hurrying Patricia inside.

Patricia chatters away, so delighted to see him. Wired, Ade wings it (listening for echoes of danger all the time), quietly casing the joint for items of value - and what he sees and what Patricia says tells something about her (and her grandson, her only remaining family, who used to come and see her regularly before he went abroad looking for success) allowing him to make educated guesses as to what he "James" has been up to. Keeping an eye out as she

potters, Ade looks through unopened post for money, opening envelopes (taken aback by the contents of one letter) stuffing them down behind a chest of drawers - floored by his sudden change of luck as she returns with tea and cake, wolfing it down.

Still poking about, enjoying the fruits of this situation, Ade is hoping for more of the same, but Patricia's warmth eats at his defensive shell, and he can't help but feel touched by her vulnerability - unaware that fruit in her bowl is off, patches of mould in the fridge that she plainly can't see etc. Disturbed, he thinks about leaving but still can see J and the gang hanging around outside - and there is a knock at the door. Ade panics, relieved but still edgy as Patricia opens the door to Ayesha - after her post: it's not at her Mum's and she wonders if they delivered it to Patricia. Patricia is pleased to "see" her and asks her in to meet her "grandson, James" and look through her pile of post. Ade covers nerves, scrambling to hide the carrier bag, worried about the hidden post - though by this point a bit better able to answer questions as James. Ayesha declines Patricia's offered cup of tea (despite a desire to catch up with estate gossip) - but although she can't quite catch scruffy "James" out or put her finger on why he's wrong, there is something tweaking her antennae as she leaves (to look again at her Mum's for the post).

With Ayesha out of the way, we fear for Patricia, especially as Patricia needs supplies from the shop and digs out cash (£50), and Ade sees the lads gone from outside. He takes the money, hugely relieved, can't believe his luck.

Ade is heading off with Patricia's money, apparently free and clear, when he hears shouting and ducks into the stairwell - only to see the lads (behind him now) going door-to-door, asking about him - banging on Patricia's door, intimidating as she talks about her grandson. Hugely torn (anxious for her), in a mad moment, Ade allows himself to be seen, and they give chase.

Cornered by J and the gang, desperate and terrified, Ade gives up the drug bag. J laughs, furious - he thinks that'll make them square?

Patricia is just as sunny when Ade returns, pleased when he hands over her shopping and counts out all her change - now she can do him a proper lunch. She can't see how badly beaten he is, barely able to stand. She can sense his emotion, however (although unsure of the cause), and sits him down, guilty for sending him out on errands. He accepts her kindness because he needs it so badly, admitting (generically) how wrong things have gone for him - which is, unfortunately, when Ayesha returns (having found her post, ostensibly to say goodbye, but really to check in on Patricia). He can't hide his beating from her, and now she knows he's a wrong-un. Edgy, Ade maintains (in front of Patricia) that he fell. Wary, (unsure of what Ade might do, but collaborating to keep the truth from Patricia), Ayesha moves him into the bathroom to patch him up - and expose the truth (as well as some of Ade's tragic background, how he ended up on the streets etc). (Not unsympathetic) she lays down the law - he has to tell Patricia the truth (hinting at police involvement etc). Ade squirms, hugely reluctant, and retrieves both her (opened) post and *the letter* (from earlier) - how can he tell her? He pleads that he should just slip away, they never have to see him again - *Ayesha* should tell Patricia as Ayesha obviously knows what's right (and he's just a scumbag who'd take advantage of an old lady). Taken aback by the letter, Ayesha quietly rails as Ade scurries out, appalled as Patricia calls through asking how many sausages he wants. On the landing, Ade hesitates in the stairwell, gutted.

In Patricia's hallway, Ayesha flounders (with the letter) as Patricia comes through - where is he? But a knock at the door, and Ayesha let's ashamed Ade back in. Hugely torn and barely able to face it (but revealing a conscience after all), he tells Patricia that he misled her, and

tries to come clean, so sorry that he isn't James (and he really is sorry) - but Patricia seems unable to take it in, and goes to continue cooking. Helpless, Ade looks to Ayesha.

Steeling herself, Ayesha talks to Patricia alone, trying to explain the letter (from a Consulate in Malaysia), but Patricia stops her - and we glimpse her distress (and sense that she has known since just after Ayesha moved that James died): they called and told her. But (aware of Ade limping off), Patricia insists that people make mistakes... it happens all the time. She goes to Ade and asks him to stay - please. Unsure and concerned for Patricia, Ayesha reluctantly spells it out – this isn't James. Silent and unreadable, Patricia reaches out, touching the contours of Ade's face: his forehead, eyes, mouth - she knows his face (though we know that she really doesn't). Ade tries to protest but Patricia won't hear a word of it and sits him down to eat. Ayesha is helpless as Patricia defends – neither of them has anyone else in the world. They have to make the most of this time, he'll probably be off on his adventures again soon! Torn but touched (even emotional), Ade plays along for her – his Gran knows him all too well.

Ade looks to Ayesha, concerned she will report him but Ayesha eyes him and Patricia (seeing that they each need the other desperately) - so she'll come back and check up on them tomorrow.

As she leaves, Ayesha can't help feeling a bit heart-warmed as she sees Ade struggling to wipe away tears as Patricia gives him a plate of food, fussing around him - promising to make him up a bed (on the couch etc), telling him that he can stay as long as he wants. He can make himself at home - like he used to.