



## **SYCAMORE SEEDLINGS by Sarah Lovett.**

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this story, which is called 'Sycamore Seedlings' by Sarah Lovett.

### **Sycamore Seedlings by Sarah Lovett.**

The doorbell rang insistently. Jo was expecting a fruit and veg delivery but, when she opened the door, a stranger stood there.

'Johanna Springer?' he asked.

Jo was puzzled. What did he want? He wasn't wearing an identification badge but he looked familiar. Suddenly she realised why. She had seen him in the tearshop that week, and in Marks & Spencer's, where she went to buy her dinners for one. Had he been stalking her?

'No!' she said. 'I'm not. I've never heard of her!'

She went to shut the door. Something in his expression stopped her. He looked shocked, as if she had slapped his face.

'Please hear me out.'

'What?' she said, one hand on the door, still ready to slam it shut.

He looked shy, uncertain. 'Have you always lived here?'

'Why?' she asked.

He smiled, wistfully. 'My father has been talking about this town, about the sandy beach and the fishing boats. He's too ill now to ever come back here.'

Jo softened. 'I'm sorry to hear that.' Then she could have kicked herself for trotting out such a cliché. So many people had said that to her mother when her father had left home all those years ago. It was meaningless.

He smiled gently. 'It's OK. I never felt I knew him very well until recently. He worked away from home. He often stayed in a B & B here. He used to write to us and I wrote back to him at this address.'

'But this has never been a guest house. I've lived here for forty years. You've got the wrong address.'

He took a step back, a deep crease of worry between his eyes. 'I was trying to trace someone he knew.'



He looked so upset. Jo took pity on him. 'There's a Sycamore Close the other side of town. This is Sycamore Street. You must have got the name wrong. Would you like a cup of tea before you set off again?'

He tried to follow her inside, but she held up her hand. 'We'll drink it outside. Sit on the bench there. I'll bring it out.' She was still a bit suspicious.

Her kitchen window overlooked the front garden. She saw him look up at the sycamore tree. It made such a mess on her lawn with its little seedlings popping up everywhere. He bent down and plucked one up from the grass.

When she brought out the tea, he pulled a photo from his jacket pocket. It was a picture of her dad standing in front of her house, under the sycamore tree.

She nearly dropped the mugs. 'Where did you get that?'

He smiled. 'Dad sent it to me when I was seven. He said it was the B & B he was staying in.' 'But that's my dad and my house,' she cried.

His expression was triumphant as he looked at her. 'I think we must have shared him. I think you're my half-sister.'

She stared at him without a word.