SOMETHING OLD OR SOMETHING NEW?

'Who'd have believed it?!' Amanda's reaction to the news that Rebecca's husband had been unfaithful was one of shock. Amanda reflected on how lucky she was. Her husband was a good man.

That night Tom and Amanda sat down to a meal that he had prepared.

'Cheers!' Their glasses clinked together.

'I know you're still on the hunt for a job, my darling, Tom. There's no rush, you know.'

'I've got to see to the allotment tomorrow. I haven't done any gardening for a while.'

Strange. Wasn't Tom on the allotment just last week?

It was already dark when Tom returned the following afternoon. Maybe he had been working in the allotment shed.

'Sorry I'm back late,' he said. 'You know what it's like.'

What what's like?

'Of course I do darling.' Amanda kissed Tom's cheek.

What was that smell? Had Tom invested in some new aftershave, or was it...?

'Oh, you, er...'

'Yes darling?' came the gravelly reply.

'... You're looking happy tonight.'

'I'm always happy to see you, you know that.' Tom could charm his way out of any situation. But was this 'a situation'?

That night Amanda couldn't sleep. Leaving Tom snoring, Amanda went through his trouser pockets. There was a note.

'I love you Father.' The next part of the message consisted of blue smudges. Had they been caused by the torrential rain or by the tears of a child?

Did Tom have another family he had never told her about? Amanda had heard of other men doing such things. But Tom?

The pattern of late arrivals and mysterious disappearances continued. What had been a suspicion had become a certainty.

It was Christmas morning. Now was the time.

‘I know, y’know.’

‘What?’

‘It’s no good pretending.’

‘I don’t know…’

‘Do you think I’m completely stupid?’

Tom half-smiled. ‘I’m sorry, darling. I can explain.’

‘Yes?’

‘I wanted to be able to buy you the Christmas present you deserve.’

Amanda wished she had the emotional strength to laugh. ‘You call this a present?’ she screamed as the evidence of the note, now wrapped up into a ball, was hurled at her target.

Tom picked up the paper. Silence reigned.

‘I know I’ve been behaving a little strangely lately, coming home at odd times. That’s because I wanted to surprise you. ‘

‘Well, you’ve certainly succeeded!’

‘That note you’ve just thrown at me, must have been one that was given to me by a child.’

‘Tell me something I don’t know! The next thing you’re going to tell me is that you’re Father Christmas.’

‘That’s because I am. Here look at this.’ Tom handed Amanda two tickets.

I’ve been playing the part of Father Christmas, so that we could afford this holiday together.’

‘A Caribbean cruise for two?!’

‘I…’ Tom and Amanda hugged each other, in relief in one case, and in gratitude in the other.

Now the child’s note was stained by Amanda’s tears. Her husband really was the man she had always believed him to be.