

Cordon Bleu

“Hi love, I’m running late. Just popping to Sainsbury’s on my way home to get a couple of bits for tonight. Anything you need?”

“Why, what’s tonight?”

“Rosemary and Charles are staying – you’re dropping them off at the airport tomorrow, remember?”

“Is that tonight? I’d completely forgotten! And Spurs are on the telly tonight!”

“You’ll have to watch it on catchup. I’ve already made the cheesy baked potatoes; they just need heating up. Can you put them in on a low heat?”

“Can’t we just get a take-away?”

“No! Rosemary’s cordon bleu trained, and you know how fussy Charles is!”

“Are you sure about that? I got the distinct whiff of Waitrose ready-meal last time we were at theirs.”

“I haven’t got time to argue! Shan’t be long”

Funny how a ‘couple of bits’ often turned into three heavy bags she thought as she heaved the shopping up the front steps, shoulder barged the front door open and narrowly avoided tripping over a barricade of muddy boots, discarded school bags and dumped blazers.

“Kids! Can you clear your stuff out of the way please!”

“What’s for tea Mum? We’re starving! Can we have KFC?”

“No – Rosemary and Charles are coming. I’m cooking my chicken dish. They won’t be here until gone seven so you can have a small snack. Just don’t make a mess.”

The boys danced round her as she tried to put away the shopping, mimicking Charles’s lugubrious drone: *“Did I tell you about the birdie I potted on the ninth last Sunday?”*; and Rosemary’s cut glass received pronunciation: *“Jolly good turnout for the Rotary Club dinner dance, such larks!”*

“Cut it out you two! And Karen, PLEASE can you put away your homework. I need the kitchen table. Pete, run the Hoover round while I make up the bed in the guest room. Karen, can you make a salad? I’ll just get the chicken out of the fridge.”

She ran up the stairs to sort out the guest room. She tussled with the bedding. The duvet had somehow got twisted inside the cover and she couldn’t find the corners.

When she finally emerged sweating, but triumphant, she noticed that the cover was inside out and had to do it all again. Then the en-suite needed a bit of a clean.

Downstairs, she checked the front room. The boys were snacking on something in front of the telly. She sniffed the air suspiciously.

“The baked potatoes were meant for later! God’s sake Pete! Didn’t you supervise them? What the hell am I going to feed Rosemary and Charles now?”

She dashed into the kitchen to see if there were enough potatoes left and shrieked as she spotted the cat, face down in the bowl of chicken. The cat catter-scattered away and knocked the bowl to the floor, shattering it. Startled by the noise Karen had cut herself with the chopping knife and was bleeding into the salad.

The door bell chimed.

“Fish and chips?” said Pete.