

A MODEL MARRIAGE

Mark always thought he would make a great dad, but when he and Lucy became a 'serious relationship couple' and he had asked her to move in with him. It was then she told him that she was not able to have children and she did not blame him if he wanted to walk away. He was so in love that he asked her to marry him anyway and being a director of a rich transport company with bonuses coming in every month, she readily agreed. If he was being honest with himself right now, he struggled to imagine Lucy actually being a mother at all and felt that she was secretly happy about not being able to conceive and loved her job as head honcho at the village Garden Club, and most of all designing landscape gardens for personal clients. She was always busy. Mark had promised her that he would not change his mind about wanting children, but his thoughts lately always drifted to the joy he would get if he had a child to share his passion with model railways. Their loft had his prized model railway and model village.

Lucy and Mark's neighbours - Rick and Mandy, owned the semi next their own end-semi and were a couple in their early forties like themselves. Rick was the only breadwinner as an IT consultant and the only car owner. They had one child called Amy who was 14-years old, and she went to school by bus.

Rick and left Mandy and Amy early one dark morning with two packed holdalls in the only car they had and met Lucy at a pre-booked hotel on the outskirts of the village. Rick left via leaving a note to Mandy in their bedroom on his pillow. Lucy rang Mark from the safety of their hotel room later that morning and gave him the news of her adultery. Mark dazedly said OK and ended the call, then went to find solace in the loft with his adored model railway and village only to find it blitzed to smithereens. He assumed Lucy had done it before she left the house, and with the back of a spade, as Mark noticed bits of soil everywhere. Mark is a heavy sleeper, and they have a fully insulated loft, so he didn't hear anything and was distraught, thinking how she could be so cruel.

Lucy would have been gobsmacked to witness 'boring model railway Mark' go completely out of character with an electric hedge saw in the back garden, all over Lucy's prized rose bushes.

Amy should have been back from school by now. Mandy went downstairs to get her coat and shoes on and as she opened the front door there was Mark about to knock. "I'm so sorry Mark about Rick and Lucy. Can you drive me to Amy's school to see if Amy left with Rick or is still there with friends. She is not answering her mobile phone, and neither is Rick." They had no success at the school and told to go back home in case Amy was now there.

They found no sign of Amy in the house, so Mandy confessed to Mark. "Amy likes to smell all the roses in your garden and would secretly jump over the fence when she knew you and Lucy were out." Mark then remembered he had not shut his patio doors after leaving the house. But no sign of Amy on the ground floor or in the garden. Mandy went upstairs and noticed the loft ladder was down on the landing. She rushed up the ladder and saw Amy kneeling on the side of the demolished model village, carefully painting a small figurine of a person, whilst listening to music on her headphones. Once Mandy finally got fully into the loft, Amy turned to see her and smiled whilst taking her headphones off.

"It's ok mum. Dad picked me up from school and dropped me home. He explained in the car that you both can no longer live with each other, and he has grown close to Lucy next door. They will live in temporary accommodation for a while. He was too scared to ring you and didn't want me to ring you either. After dad left, I went into their garden to smell the roses, but then I saw the awful damage done. I was so angry that I went to find Mark as the patio doors were wide open. He wasn't around so I went upstairs and saw the loft ladder was down and shouted out for Mark but no answer. I made my way up there and saw all the damage. I know how Mark loved his railway and village so I knew it must have been Lucy who did it and no doubt Mark let out his anger on Lucy's roses. So, I forgive him."

After a hug from her Mum, Amy announced excitedly "My art teacher says I'm gifted, and she wants me to eventually go to Art College when I leave school. Look at the model village figurines I have repainted. See how they all look like people we know. This is your figurine!" Amy handed it to Mandy who started weeping. The artwork was extraordinary. She then looked about for the other people and was utterly amazed at her daughter's talent. She noted that there was no painted Rick figurine or one for Lucy.

Later, Amy asked Mark if she can come again to help paint everything that Mark repairs or replaces in the loft. Mark gave Amy a big hug and said "If it's ok with your mum, I could really do with a gifted artist like you Amy. Also don't worry about the roses, no matter how many of the roses you cut off they always grow back and with more blooms than before!"

Amy gave Mark the biggest smile, which was the true gift he needed.