

A Birthday Surprise

by Sho Botham

Lucy was a young looking, middle-aged woman, with a mass of shiny, unruly, greying hair, bright blue eyes and a smile that lit up the whole room. She was full of energy and had moved into the village nearly a year before. Her new friends were amazed at how much she could cram into a day and still make time for friends or offer a shoulder to cry on for anyone in distress. Everyone saw Lucy as a nice person, a very nice person indeed.

It came as a surprise when Lucy let slip to her new friends, gathered around the table in the village pub on her fifty-fifth birthday, that she had been married three times. This was something she didn't want them to know. But it was too late. She was going to have to tell them about her marriages.

“Husband number one,” said Lucy, “was a tall young man who was good at sport.”

She explained that she met and fell in love with him at the local tennis club. They were just eighteen and married by twenty.

“We were young and it didn't last,” said Lucy moving on to husband number two. She described him as a burly sort of chap with an expensive car, house and a very quick temper. There was an audible intake of breath from her audience of friends. She continued saying that they married after a short engagement. He bought her a yellow, sports car to use when he was at work in the city but she had to be home before him every night to avoid his temper.

Like the first marriage Lucy said, "it didn't last," and moved swiftly onto husband number three, describing him as a bad boy she fell in love with. She suspected that he dabbled in drugs. Looking around at her friends' faces, she said, "nice people don't necessarily fall in love with nice people. Lucy flashed that wonderful smile of hers and said, "when this marriage didn't last I decided on a change of lifestyle and here I am in the village with all of you."

Mutterings of sympathy oozed from around the table and Mary, who was sitting closest to Lucy, leaned towards her and said quietly, "we didn't realise that you had been married and divorced three times. You didn't need to tell us. You must have had some very tough times. You know that just as you are so nice and always here for us, we are here for you any time you need us."

Lucy looked at Mary with a hint of a smile and using a spoon to ting, ting, ting against her empty wine glass she stood up and said, "I didn't mean to tell you about my marriages but now that I have, you should also know that, yes, I have been married three times but there are no ex-husbands and there was never any need for me to get divorced."

Sitting down, Lucy asked her stunned audience, "shall we order some more wine?"