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Asking for Trouble

by Chris Robinson

“One for the road?” asked Dan downing the remnants of his pint and standing simultaneously. Matt laughed and handed Dan his empty glass. “You’re asking for trouble you are mate.” Dan shrugged his shoulders, grinned and marched to the bar. He knew his buddy was right. This was the third time this week that he had gone out straight from work. Popping to the pub for a quick one before going home to Gemma and the kids had become part of his routine but recently a quickie had become a whole evening, not leaving till last orders had been called.

Gemma was ok about it at first but just recently she had started getting more and more irritated with him. She would start on him as soon as he walked through the door shouting “where have you been?” or “what time do you call this”. Her biggest gripe was that he never phoned to say he was late. He had tried complying with that request for a while but stopped when she constantly moaned and shouted at him down the handset.

She was becoming a bore with her incessant nagging and snide remarks. So what if he went for a beer after work. Loads of people do it. She was being unreasonable. She would bang on about the kids and how it would be nice if he was there to help put them to bed but as far as he was concerned that was her job, not his. She didn’t work. In fact he didn’t know what she did all day. It sounded like one long round of coffee mornings and idle chit chat at playgroups. She didn’t have anything interesting to say anymore.

It was ok when Josh, their eldest, was born. She had gone back to work and the house was still clean and calm when he got home. Then Ollie arrived and Gemma cut her hours. Money was tight but they were coping. However last year Saskia arrived without prior agreement and Gemma gave up work completely. Dan was furious. He hadn't wanted a third child and he certainly hadn't wanted to work overtime and weekends to fund a basic standard of living. Not going to the pub to unwind after work was not a compromise he was willing to make.

Arriving home much later that night Dan smiled inwardly when he saw the house in darkness. He had got away with it tonight. There would be no ear bashing as soon as he walked through the door and he was relieved. He let himself in and noticed the living room light was on. Tentatively he pushed the door open and peered in. There was no one there. Gemma must have forgotten to turn the light off. Typical he thought. What a waste of electricity. He walked to the lamp by the fireplace and as he bent down to flick the switch he noticed something on the coffee table.

It was an envelope addressed to him written in Gemma's hand. He opened it shakily and read the brief note but all he kept hearing in his head was Matt's words from earlier that evening. "You're asking for trouble you are mate."