

Bourne
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Kitten

by Victoria Cooper

She tiptoed across the landing, meticulously hopping over familiar creaking floor boards.

The moon shone through the criss-cross windows, and lit up her small night-gowned frame in a criss-cross pattern.

The downstairs voices that had woken her were now growing louder and she could feel the tension mounting between them.

“Bloody Hell, Bridget!” her father roared.

The ice cubes clinked against his glass as he slammed it down on the counter.

She shivered and hugged her knees as she sat down on the top stair.

“Rodney for God’s sake, keep your voice down, she’ll hear,” her mother ordered. The girl could hear the anxiety in her mother’s voice so she leaned forward trying to catch every word.

“It was only yesterday that I had to settle her down over the Clarke’s daughter you know they’re splitting up? I had to make promises.”

“You did what? What the bloody hell did you do that for?” The anger in his voice had risen and it made the hairs rise on Maddie’s already goose-pimpled arms.

“She wanted reassurance, that’s all; the poor Clarke girl had been bullied at school, you know how frightful they can be. I had to promise that we weren’t going to do the same thing, you know, split up.”

She heard her father rummaging in the ice bucket and pour himself another drink.

“Well now she’ll find out what a lying ...”

“Meow.”

The warm head of her grey kitten pushed against her legs and its loud mechanical purr shook its whole body.

Maddie stroked the white stripe on the kitten’s flat head, it lay perfectly between two almost translucent grey ears.

The kitten looked up imploringly and Maddie put her finger to her lips, “Ssh, I need to listen to Mummy and Daddy.”

“What was that?” her mother gasped, “oh God, do you think she heard us?”

“Well if she did, it’s about time she knew anyway. It takes two to make an accident and our marriage was always that. An accident from beginning to end.”