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Lockdown Delusions

by Marion Umney

He had thought it would be good for them to have to spend time together. It seemed they had been growing apart for years what with his job and her being so taken up with the children and all her “projects”. He had expected that she would find it hard to begin with, being locked down. She had such a busy life, flitting here there and everywhere and he guessed she would miss it. He wasn’t exactly overjoyed by the idea either. It would require some adjustment to work from home but, he reasoned, it could be advantageous – a dry run for his retirement.

At first it was fine. She was a bit distracted, but that was to be expected. He did what he could to bring variety into their lives. He suggested a game of scrabble, getting a takeaway delivered so they wouldn’t have to cook; watching a film together. They could pretend they were going out to the cinema, something they hadn’t done for years. He suggested they went walking together, but she said she’d already had a walk while he’d been working; she was tired, why didn’t he go while she prepared dinner?

He acquiesced, of course he did, but he was disappointed. He had imagined them growing together again, rekindling some of the old magic, but they seemed to be greater strangers than before.

Then he started to notice odd things. He decided to surprise her with a cup of coffee while she was zooming with her book group. She jumped when he opened the door and tried to close the screen down, but not before he had seen a man’s face centre stage.

“I didn’t know there were men in your book group,” he said.

“Why shouldn’t there be men? I never said there weren’t,” she retorted.

She was right. He'd just assumed it was all women, but he still felt vaguely uncomfortable.

Then there was the time when Janie had rung.

"Can I speak to Mum?"

"She's with you isn't she? Socially distanced lunch in your garden?"

"No – that's not until next week."

He had to admit he didn't know where she was. And why should he? It was just that he could have sworn she said it was today she was going to Jane's.

When he told her Jane had rung, she looked bewildered for a minute.

"No darling – I'm sure I didn't say today. Janie's right, it's next Tuesday. I had a chiropractor appointment today, then bumped into Helen and as the Beach Deck was open we had lunch there. Sorry I should have phoned you."

It was only later when he was flipping through the calendar to see when his dental appointment was that he noticed it. Wednesday of next week – chiropractor. Nothing for today.

When he asked her she laughed. The laugh was brittle, distant.

"What is this darling, the Spanish Inquisition? I've got the chiropractor this week *and* next week". She was right. He was just being paranoid, and yet...