

Mothers Are Slightly Insane

by Miriam Silver

She kept telling herself that at 65, she was still young, perhaps even slightly immature enough to make some changes in her life. For forty years she'd tried to be a good daughter, wife, mother and now here she was on her own, rattling around in a battered house, which needed all sorts of updating.

Once, long ago, it had been filled and noisy, now Roger had gone - albeit too early- the echoing silence was depressing, nothing to look forward to, not even reluctantly making dinner parties, and didn't want to do any repairing. It had outlived its life vis a vis herself as she told her daughter when she'd phoned today, she'd already received a good offer for it and was considering her future maybe with a companion.

Betty was tired, not only of the house, she'd spent too long supporting a busy Sir Roger, as he had become; pity he just missed elevation to the Lords, come to think of it, even if he had lived she doubted their old age would have been spent together doing things in her interest.

She couldn't remember why she'd married him, just the pressures of those times, that's what girls did, get married, have children and live in their husband's shadow. They'd grown apart long ago, he'd become overwhelming serious, had nothing else in his life except politics.

She won't miss the demands of being hostess to his colleagues, now could watch telly, not television, groan or laugh, make up for lost time, on reflection she should have married someone who made her laugh, she'd even begun to read books like 'Three men in a boat' again, watch Dad's Army, laughing made her feel better. She also chose funny outrageous TV programmes taking great satisfaction knowing how her late husband would have disapproved of such silliness.

She was doing just that when James, her eldest came in unexpectedly and asked her what she was laughing about. She hadn't taken any real decisions yet, didn't want to shock him, so didn't mention climbing in the Himalayas or learning to abseil as a way to fill the void left by the death of his father, instead she welcomed him.

"Nice to see you dear," at the same time noticing he looked at her in an odd sort of way.

"Everything all right with Julie and children?" she queried smiling.

"All's well, err!" he stammered, "just worried about you, on your own, hope you're eating and all that."

Trying not to look surprised at the concern coming from one of her children, she said, "oh! no need dear, I'm fine, just catching up on a long lost youth," and when he looked bewildered she added, "I'm thinking of taking up lots of new activities, need a companion first though. Dating agencies good place to start I suppose."

"Mum, you can't, your position, the neighbours..." he said barely concealing his disapproval.

"I'm glad you called, though of course your sister has already told you about the offer, it will make me a rich widow enough for..."

"Mum, stop. Liz and I have spoken," he sounded so pompous, just like his Dad.

"As I was saying when I was so rudely interrupted, now I could be a rich widow I'm seriously considering that offer and, will update my Dating Agency details."

He turned quite red and although almost speechless managed to add, "Liz said and I agree, that mothers are quite insane, that's why she's decided never to become one, you can't mean all of that, you don't know what you might find. Where will we go at Christmas or birthdays? Your only grandchild, what about him?"

"I'll let you know where I am, don't worry, perhaps you'll join us, be a bit squashed on a houseboat though. Such freedom, that and a motorised caravan, travelling, here I come!"