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Bright He Was Not

by Miriam Silver

I remember it was an ordinary week day, I'd walked the children to school keeping them entertained with how we were saving the planet, it was for them after all, I emphasized. I wouldn't be here when they ran out of fossil fuels. By the time we arrived both of them ran off shouting, 'we know all that, bye!' Not even a little kiss.

Quite right, that's the way it should be, they're becoming independent I thought to myself as I stifled my feeling of rejection and hurried to catch up Samantha, who I knew was on her way in our nearest coffee shop, a local meeting place for working at-home mothers.

"Hi there Grace," she welcomed me, "your cappuccino is ordered," and I settled down for a quick catch-up before going home and getting on line.

"Something wrong?"

"Not really, just thinking won't be long before the twins want to go it alone."

"Suppose that's when we can get back into the real work place," Samantha observed.

"Yes, you're right, only hope by then I haven't lost my place in the career chain," I reflected gloomily.

"Cheer up ole' girl! surely all your recent efforts of combining work, children, shopping, cooking and cleaning will pay off."

"I only hope so," I said as I finished my coffee, "must go, gotta get-on, washing to do!" I said laughing.

I decided to start the washing, ignore all the clearing up concentrate on my work, get ahead with that deadline and try to ignore the fact that my husband's job as a consultant to a politician is more important than mine, he says, giving him the perfect reason to be rarely around to help.

Putting all that out of my mind I immediately tackled the pile of dirty clothes, automatically emptying pockets and sorting. There they were, credit card receipts, for out of town hotels no less, came from his pocket all bearing the number of our joint account.

Stupidly I thought they must belong to someone else. Trevor's job does involve the odd night away, only in that Westminster room though.

'Impossible' I thought, 'we, us, the family haven't been anywhere since before lockdown.'

Here am I, blithely being a supportive wife and mother, at home, working on line, while apparently he has been spending relaxing days away from us enjoying who knows what company.

Not knowing what else to do I turned on the washing machine and went to make myself a coffee clutching those receipts.

Trevor and I met at a party, political one I mean, talked endlessly about the coming election, I knew he was the one for me, we had so much in common and I admired his intellect. We moved in together 6 months after that initial meeting, married when the twins were on the way, then came covid.

Meanwhile all I could do until it was time to collect the children was concentrate, 'no one's guilty until proven' etc firmly believing that my husband, the twins clever loving Dad, who always - meetings permitting, played football with them and I know how awesome he appeared to them.

I texted him, found an excuse, yes, he would come home early, read them their bedtime story. Give me time to collect my thoughts, mustn't make presumptions.

In spite of my resolutions, as soon as the children were in bed, I thrust those tell-tale pieces of paper under his nose trying not to cry.

"What on earth?" he exclaimed, going pale.

"Found," I said, adding, "as I was doing the washing, emptying pockets," at the same time ignoring the repetitive mantra in my head, 'bright he is not' as I watched him, unable to believe that such an intelligent man could overlook evidence of lies and deceptions.

"Explain those," I said, and walked away.